

## A Tribute to Barry J. Zimmerman: The Origins of the Studying and Self-Regulated Learning Special Interest Group and His Contributions

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At our AERA Business Meeting this year in New Orleans, I was honored by an invitation from our Chair, Dr. Heidi Andrade, to briefly describe the origins of our SIG and provide a tribute to Dr. Barry J. Zimmerman for his dedicated contribution and service to our intertwined because Dr. Zimmerman is a founding member of our SIG and has continually lent support and direction. The invitation to make this presentation was based on my co-longevity and leadership in the SIG. Simply put, Dr. Zimmerman and I are the last remaining founding members of the SIG since its inception in 1986. The 25th anniversary of our SIG serendipitously coincided with Dr. with Dr. Zimmerman's retirement, sparking other tributes in his honor at this year's meeting.



Dr. Barry J. Zimmerman &  
Ms. Diana Zimmerman

During the preparation and delivery of this presentation I have to admit that my memory has faded a bit. It has been 25 years. Fortunately, I augmented my fallible memory with past newsletters published by previous SIG officers. Most notably, I drew heavily from a 1994 Newsletter written by my friend and then chair, Dr. Amy Strage, in which she recounted the SIG's origins and early sessions. So thank you Amy for contributing much of the more objective content.

Our SIG originated in 1986 when AERA was held in San Francisco. A group of researchers at UC Berkeley and Far West Laboratories were spearheading a large federally funded project called the Autonomous Learning Project that focused on academic studying. The principal investigators, John Thomas and William Rohwer Jr., organized a one day preconference meeting at Far West Labs and invited a number of researchers whose work addressed issues of learning in academic contexts. Among the attendees were Dr. Zimmerman and myself. I was invited because I was employed as a graduate assistant on the project. Dr. Zimmerman was invited for more obvious reasons. From this meeting the Academic Studying SIG was born with Barry Zimmerman as one of our most prestigious charter members.

Descriptions of our early conferences illuminate the focus and direction of our SIG that includes the mystery of our name changes. In 1987, we sponsored our first sessions in Washington, DC. The symposium was entitled "Promoting Effective Studying," and the paper session was called "Student Learning and Study Strategies." These catchy titles actually attracted some attendees. In the 1991 meeting held in Chicago, Dr. Zimmerman suggested that we change our name from Academic Studying to Studying and Self-Regulated Learning.

The membership supported his motion, but the name mysteriously reappeared as Studying and Self-Directed Learning in 1992 when AREA was back in San Francisco. The SIG name controversy was fueled by power grabs, ego clashes, and general histrionics characteristic of educational researchers (Bol, 2011).

In addition to our name change, another crisis emerged that threatened our very existence. Strage's quote from the 1994 Newsletter best captures this crisis:

“We are at a crucial turning point. This year we just squeaked by. Our membership dropped significantly from the year before, so much so that we had exactly the number of members necessary to qualify for one session on the program. Last year we had a cushion of over two dozen members. And so the question is this: Are we going to revitalize or are we going to run the risk of (not so slowly) ceasing to exist?”

The crisis was averted and Dr. Zimmerman prevailed in changing our SIG name to Studying and Self-Regulated Learning. We now have a robust and active membership in no small thanks to Dr. Zimmerman.

Dr. Zimmerman has made numerous contributions to our SIG that has promoted its viability and success. The SIG name change provided broader appeal and better alignment with the key terms and phrases appearing in the literature. Dr. Zimmerman also suggested that we co-sponsor sessions with the Motivation in Education SIG to attract researchers with related interests. We could always count on him to give invited talks during our business sessions, participate on panels, and serve as discussant or chair in order to draw attendees and potential members. His recruitment efforts extended to encouraging his own doctoral students to join our SIG, present their research, and assume leadership positions. Many of our members and current or former officers are Zimmerman's students. Just his consistent attendance was remarkable. He even attended the business sessions scheduled during the dinner hour when fine restaurants and revelry beckoned.

Finally, Dr. Zimmerman was supportive and gracious to our fellow members. On a personal note, he not only inspired my work but expressed interest in my research and offered sage advice for improvement. He wrote letters of recommendation for my promotions. Certainly, I am not the only recipient of such support and kindness among the SIG membership.

In conclusion, we are sincerely grateful to our founding member, Dr. Barry J. Zimmerman, for his outstanding and dedicated service to the Studying and Self-Regulated Learning SIG of the American Educational Research Association. Though we have used the occasion of his retirement to present this tribute, we sincerely hope that he will honor us with his continued involvement in our SIG.



**Dr. Linda Bol**

(Note: This article was originally published in our SIG Newsletter, Summer 2011)

# Honoring Barry J. Zimmerman: His Achievements as an Educator, Collaborator, and Theorist

AERA Annual Meeting, New Orleans  
April 10, 2011

## Session Participants:

**Chair:** Héfer Bembenutty (Queens College - CUNY)

**Chair:** Timothy J. Cleary (University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee)

**Chair:** Anastasia Kitsantas (George Mason University)

- **Barry J. Zimmerman: An Innovative and Dynamic Contributor to Self-Regulation Theory and Research;** Steve Graham (Vanderbilt University)
- **Barry J. Zimmerman's Work from a Metacognitive Perspective and His International Impact;** Marcel VJ Veenman (Leiden University)
- **Barry J. Zimmerman: An Educator with Passion for Developing Self-Regulation of Learning through Social Learning;** Maria K. DiBenedetto (Baruch College - CUNY)
- **Barry J. Zimmerman: An Expert Mentor through Cyclical Phases of Self-Regulatory Feedback;** Marie C. White (Nyack College)
- **Barry J. Zimmerman as a Collaborating Scholar;** Dale H. Schunk (University of North Carolina - Greensboro)

## Abstract:

The objective of this interactive symposium is to honor the personal, professional, and scientific contributions of Professor Barry J. Zimmerman, Distinguished Professor of Educational Psychology and Head of the Learning, Development, and Instruction area at the Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York. Among the most important of Professor Zimmerman's contributions include his theoretical and assessment innovations along with his creative applications of self-regulation theory across diverse domains of functioning, such as academic, athletic and health. Of equal importance, however, is recognizing and honoring the social grace and humbleness with which Dr. Zimmerman carried out his life work along with the lasting impact that he has had on the careers and lives of colleagues and students. A distinguished panel of speakers has been assembled to discuss and provide examples of how Zimmerman's contributions have impacted their personal lives, research interests, and professional careers. Attendees of this symposium will also have the opportunity to share their perspectives, engage in lively discussion, and to draw on a wide range of topics and fields impacted by the work of Professor Zimmerman.

# Gathering after the Symposium



# Dinner after the Symposium

