

Obituary

David Christian Rowe



David Christian Rowe (September 27, 1949–February 2, 2003)

David Christian Rowe died on February 2, 2003, at age 53. He was diagnosed with end-stage liver cancer in October, 2001. Not content to live by others' expectations, and showing his characteristic willingness to challenge conventional wisdom, he then lived well over a year past the doctors' prognosis. During that long year, David did the things he'd always done—he read broadly and deeply, he wrote letters-to-the-editor on a number of topics expressing strong and well-informed opinions; he exercised as completely as his failing body would allow; he kept in contact with students, colleagues, and friends; and, especially, he wrote research articles.

In fact, he wrote research articles with even more than his usual passion, knowing that he was presenting his ultimate contributions. Those articles will still be entering the publication stream for some time to come.

David Rowe's career was a testimony to the developing concept of Consilience. E. O. Wilson (whom David admired), in his book by that title, defined *consilience* as "the dream of unified learning," or more completely, as the "jumping together' of knowledge by the linking of facts and fact-based theories across disciplines to create a common groundwork of explanation." David was, at heart, fulfilled and nurtured by

this type of commitment to multidisciplinary, as is evidenced by the fact that he spent the majority of his career in multidisciplinary departments of Human Development and Family Studies, rather than in traditional Psychology Departments or behavioral genetics institutes. He is well known, and his research career is celebrated in many disciplines, including developmental psychology, social psychology, personality psychology, evolutionary psychology, criminology, biology, molecular genetics, and methodology. But his “favorite home,” the subdiscipline to which he paid greatest allegiance, was behavioral genetics. David published a number of articles in *Behavior Genetics* over the course of his career, and in 1998 was nominated for President of the Behavior Genetics Association. It is fully fitting and proper that his first professional obituary would be published in *Behavior Genetics*.

David received a degree in Social Relations from Harvard in 1972, and did his graduate work from 1973–1977 at the University of Colorado. At Colorado he studied with and began to collaborate with Robert Plomin. David published over 170 research articles and three books during his shortened 27-year career. He served on the faculty at three academic institutions, Oberlin College from 1977–1982, the University of Oklahoma from 1982–1988, and the University of Arizona from 1988 until his death.

To behavioral geneticists, David is well known for his substantive work on shared and nonshared environmental influences; for his seminal work on the heritability of parenting behaviors; for his twin studies of antisocial behavior; for his work on the covariance structure of race differences; for his modeling of the interplay between intelligence, education, and social class; and for his work blending behavioral and molecular genetics. He made important methodological contributions to the simultaneous modeling of means and covariances, to DeFries-Fulker Analysis, and to modeling specific sources of shared and nonshared environmental influences. He was especially proud of his 1994 book, *The Limits of Family Influence*. He was also a major contributor to the collection of the Add Health data, serving as the primary behavioral and molecular geneticist in that well-known survey of over 90,000 adolescents across the United States. David was a self-taught and very competent molecular geneticist and was excited about the new possibilities in molecular

genetics. To find the genes for the phenotypes he was interested in he mastered many laboratory techniques, acquainted himself with the major biological databases, and closely followed all new developments in statistical genetics. He had many plans at the interface of behavioral and molecular genetics that will not be realized.

David had a great sense of humor and a fundamental respect for other people. The University of Arizona gave him an award in 2002 for his scientific contributions. Many of his old students, now spread out all over the country, flew to Arizona to attend the ceremony, a clear testimony to David as a warm and caring mentor. To all who knew him, David was characterized by an intense curiosity and by his commitment to the science of human behavior. David let empirical evidence, rather than personal agenda, guide his opinions, and he was known in many circles for his outspoken and sometimes non-politically correct views. Besides his passion for his work, David was an excellent tennis player, an avid cyclist, and, especially, a devoted husband and father.

David leaves behind his wife Carol Bender, to whom he was married for 28½ years, a son Scott, who will be a freshman at Washington University in St. Louis in fall, 2003, three brothers, and dozens of close friends and colleagues. At the 2003 meetings of the Behavior Genetic Association in Chicago, one of David’s former students, Kristen Jacobson, organized a special symposium honoring David’s work. Five speakers—Joe Rodgers, Edwin van den Oord, Irwin Waldman, Jenae Neiderhiser, and Jane Mendle—presented research talks that had been informed by their association with David. David’s wife, Carol, also presented a tribute to David’s life and work. The room was filled with friends and admirers of David Rowe. We all shared in a joint consilience, as we “jumped together our knowledge” in honor of the remarkable career of David Christian Rowe.

Joseph Lee Rodgers
University of Oklahoma

Kristen Jacobson
Virginia Commonwealth University

Edwin van den Oord
Virginia Commonwealth University