

# spa exchange

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## President's Column

Irving B. Weiner, PhD  
*University of South Florida*

At the 2005 APA meeting in Washington, DC, I served as discussant for a symposium on "New Developments in Psychodiagnostic Assessment," which was organized by Steve Strack and included papers by Jim Choca, Yossi Ben-Porath, and Robert Tringone. The topic of the symposium gave me an opportunity to challenge an often heard disparagement of the practice of psychological assessment, and I want to begin this President's Message by repeating my comments. This particular disparagement can be called the "Rip van Winkle slam," and it takes the following form:



"You folks [reference to assessment psychologists] are out of the last century. In the 1960s the three most widely used tests were the Wechsler, the MMPI, and the Rorschach. If I had gone to sleep back then and done a Rip van Winkle, without waking up until today, what would I find? The three most widely used tests are still the Wechsler, the MMPI, and the Rorschach, and I wouldn't have missed a thing. The way assessment is practiced is old hat and behind the times, and that's why it doesn't deserve respect as a worthwhile specialty in the 21<sup>st</sup> century."

After reciting this Rip van Winkle slam, I told the APA audience that nothing could be further from the truth. Criticizing a psychologist for using an assessment instrument that dates from 1921 (Rorschach), 1939 (Wechsler) or 1943 (MMPI) is like criticizing a physician for using a stethoscope, just because the instrument has been around a long time. The truth of the matter is that assessment psychology is a vibrant, dynamic, and constantly evolving field of study and practice. Let me speak here just about psychological tests, without getting into the integration of data from diverse sources that characterizes properly conducted assessments.

Our most widely used measures have changed considerably over the years, refined and refurbished by fresh conceptions, the lessons of experience, and the implications of research

findings. These changes include revised content, modified scoring and interpretive procedures, expanded normative and cross-cultural reference data, and newly emerging areas of application. Such changes are ongoing even as this message is being written (e.g., the development of the RC scales for the MMPI and the collection of new non-patient reference data for the Rorschach Comprehensive System).

In addition to the revisions and modifications of existing measures, there has long been a steady flow of new tests and a burgeoning literature concerned with the psychometric foundations and practical applications of assessment instruments. With so much to read and learn, assessment clinicians are hard pressed to keep abreast of the knowledge necessary to practice competently. I can practice dynamic psychotherapy as I did in the 1960s, with a patient appropriate for this treatment approach, and be doing a good job. But if I practiced assessment as I did back then, without the revisions, refinements, and new measures that have been developed since that time, I would be incompetent. I would be incompetent if I practiced assessment after being asleep for just the last 20 years, or 10 years, or even 5 years, and my being out of touch with current methods and materials would violate the APA Ethics Code. Much remains for us to do, in order to continue improving our methods, but let it not be said that assessment psychology is asleep or standing still.

Turning now to SPA matters, I am pleased to report some new plans that are being implemented by the Board of Trustees. First, as way of involving more members in the governance of the Society, we are revising our committee structure. Historically, the SPA committees have consisted only of Board members. In the new structure, our committees will continue to be chaired by a Board member, but most committees will also include non-Board Society members appointed by the President or committee chair. We anticipate that committee members will communicate actively with each other, set an agenda of tasks for themselves, and

report regularly to the Board concerning their progress. The work of these expanded committees should help to advance the goals and purposes of SPA while at the same time providing increased opportunities for member participation in Society affairs.

Second, as a way of extending new opportunities for participation to our student affiliates as well, we have created an SPA Student Association. Our student affiliates have been notified that they have automatically become members of the SPA Student Association, without any cost to them other than the student affiliate dues they would ordinarily pay. Our plan is to have most of the SPA committees include at least one student member, and we would like eventually to have a student representative serving as a voting member of the Board of Trustees. We are presently working with some groups of students to help them organize this new Student Association, which in time should have its own governance structure, including provisions for electing officers, and will be able to make its own plans for what it would like to do.

I hope that all of you have seen the Rorschach White Paper prepared by the Board of Trustees and published in the October, 2006

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## Special Topics in Assessment Peer Consultation Alan Schwartz, PsyD Section Associate Editor

Among the roles intrinsic to most day-to-day activities of psychologists, particularly those involved in assessment, the psychologist-as-consultant may be the most ubiquitous. Even beyond the clinical, face-to-face work with patients and clients, our consultative work with medical professionals, employers, courts, business and academia accounts for much of our practice. However, when faced with the need for guidance, support and professional clarity, the role of peer consultation plays a crucial role in informing and expanding our knowledge and ability to serve as consultants to others. Our formative experiences as peer consultants are often in graduate school. Many of us could likely recall images of ourselves as graduate students huddled around test manuals or desperately searching for divine guidance on one-point versus two-point responses. Supervisors provide another window into how psychologists talk with one another around professional work, though unlike peer consultation among professionals, it is evaluative and hierarchical in nature. The need to talk with our colleagues for support, guidance, and often frank answers to important questions has evolved into many forms beyond the simple conversation; a virtual peer consultation group (i.e. the list-serv) can be found for nearly any topic a psychologist may want assistance with. It is much to our advantage as a profession, to continue to develop avenues through which we can share our expertise with each other.

This section of Special Topics in Assessment provides two perspectives on peer consultation in the realm of assessment psychology. In the first article, Barbara Domingos explores how graduate students can be introduced and taught the essentials of peer consultation through particular didactic experiences as well as modeling of consultative behavior among teachers. It is a welcome reminder that our conversations with each other serve as examples to our students on how we want them to communicate with their peers. The second article by Amy Gulino highlights the importance of peer consultation for her in forensic work, reminding us of those experiences when others look to us as experts, even though we have difficulty seeing ourselves that way.

## Teaching and Modeling Peer Consultation in Graduate Psychology Training

**Barbara Domingos, PhD, ABNP, ABSNP**

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Among practicing psychologists, the value of peer consultation is widely accepted as a very important part of one's own continuing education. The Ethical Principles of Psychologists and the Conduct Code (2002) explicitly endorses the importance of consultation among professionals. Section 2.03 of the Code states: "Psychologists undergo ongoing efforts to develop and maintain their competence." Principle B: Fidelity and Responsibility states in part, "Psychologists consult with, refer to or cooperate with other professionals or institutions to the extent needed to serve the best interests of those with whom they work."

Consultation is valued and supported independent of the activity (e.g., psychotherapy, research, assessment, organizational processes, teaching) in which the consultee engages the consultant. In all cases, the goal of the consultation is to enhance the consultee's skills in order to provide clients with the best possible care. Macklem, Kalinsky, & Corcoran (2001) stressed the importance of peer consultation and peers working together for mutual benefit. Most importantly, peer consultation does not involve evaluation. Peer consultants are responsible for providing feedback and support to colleagues.

Yet, it has been my observation (based on a limited N, I admit!), that graduate students are often surprised (and pleased) to hear that their teachers seek out consultants when processing aspects of their own clinical work. This observation of "student surprise reaction" might be related to the idealized quality in which some students hold instructors or just to the expectation that if you teach a subject, you know it well enough to practice it without needing any further assistance. Indeed, we know that this is not the case.

In this article, I will discuss how it is not only important for students to learn about consultation as part of curriculum content, but to also to observe their faculty actually engaged in case consultation. Professional training, in this case training as clinical or school psychologists, involves the presentation of increasingly challenging curriculum content as well as support with synthesizing, integrating and interpreting case information. In addition, that reflects the course of graduate training in psychology as students move

to higher and more sophisticated levels of integration and synthesis. In assessments, for example, how do we, as professionals, operationalize the findings of the tests and what language do we use? How do we provide accurate diagnosis and case conceptualization that will flow to important and appropriate recommendations? When we develop a treatment plan and/or complete a psychological or neuropsychological evaluation, we must link and operationalize the findings. How do we integrate test results with information obtained with projective techniques like the Rorschach test or the Thematic Apperception Test? Especially with the often subtle results obtained with personality assessment, it is a challenge to quantify, qualify, and integrate all of the information. The primary questions are, "How can we best serve this client?" and "How can we use our colleagues to support this learning?"

When students finish their formal coursework and training, it becomes a challenge to try to recreate an academic environment unless they are actively involved with clinical cases and are involved in peer consultation. Workshops are time limited and geared to satisfying requirements. Formal supervision, while an important professional activity, is usually for the purpose of satisfying formal postdoctoral requirements for supervised hours, after which the relationship becomes consultative. A consultative relationship shifts the supervisor-supervisee role differential because it is interactive and mutually informative. Supervision is a more controlled environment than consultation. In supervision, the supervisor controls the case, whereas in consultation, the consultant offers input, but the consultee has freedom to accept or not accept consultant input and controls the case (Macklem & Kalinsky, 2000).

Peer consultation is directed toward assisting students in accessing peers as part of professional socialization processes and in moving case formulations to a higher level of integration and synthesis. In an article about peer consultation groups, Lewis, Greenburg, and Hatch (1988) note that unlike supervision, peer consultation groups provide acceptance and the reassurance of hearing that other

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## Peer Consultation

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professionals have questions in their work. Vasquez (1992) noted the importance of knowing the boundaries or competence consistent with the APA Ethical Standards (2002) and engaging in reading, research, continuing education and consultation. In one assessment practicum class with which I am familiar, for example, students review each other's case material and then meet to discuss suggestions. They distribute material to a partner, who then takes this material home and evaluates it as part of preparing for a consultation session. This activity occurs twice during the semester and helps students gain confidence in their ability to offer constructive ideas about an ongoing case and to hear how their input is received and integrated by a fellow student. This model is similar to how licensed psychologists consult with each other in non-legal and non-adversarial situations. In another class, dedicated to clinical research, students critique each other's design and analysis, with the goal of both facilitating their own consultative skills and enhancing the work product of a peer.

Still another level of helping students understand and accept peer consultation is providing the role model of a respected professional who brings a complex and subtle case to class. Indeed, it is important for students to have direct opportunities

to observe faculty members work with each other as an additional component of modeling consultation in a collegial format. We know, for example, that students may think of faculty members who are in charge of monitoring their progress as so advanced that they are without the need to attend to their own professional growth. However, in addition to being consistent with APA Ethical Standards (2002), high level consultation should carry professionals to the next level to provide better service to clients. In the class situation to which I am referring, one faculty member presents material to another faculty member and to the class, with the class serving as consultants. Generally, the case has already been the subject of consultation with a colleague. Students are provided with the opportunity to ask clarifying and processing questions about case information as they would with a fellow professional. The instructor also asks questions with the intention of modeling questions that might be asked during peer consultation. Student feedback from the activity has been consistently positive and, in summary, discussing, teaching and modeling peer consultation for graduate students in clinical and school psychology, is intended to introduce a new skill and to support compliance with APA Ethical Standards (2002), as well as to help students focus on professional growth through their careers.

In conclusion, we are frequently involved in cases for therapy or assessment that combine issues and questions which could include cognitive functioning, academic achievement, executive function, other cognitive processing

skills, and emotional functioning. Our diagnoses and recommendations may be based on subtle and complex distinctions, especially when we are integrating personality assessment measures like the Rorschach test and the Thematic Apperception Test with other measures. Some of the goals of peer consultation are accurately making fine clinical distinctions, integrating personality assessment with cognitive skills, academic functioning, and other processing issues, and making appropriate recommendations that best serve the client. The ability to best serve our clients remains the most important underpinning of peer consultation in particular and professional growth in general.

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## When the 'Expert' Needs an Expert: Peer Consultation and Forensic Assessment

Amy D. Gulino, PsyD

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The American Psychological Association (APA) refers to consultation as the ideal way for the licensed psychologist to acquire support and guidance within the clinical realm. While the APA differentiates between consultation and supervision based upon one's licensure status, the concept of consultation continues to imply a hierarchical approach to receiving feedback from a colleague with more credentials, expertise, or experience within the field. The use of peer supervision, however, implies more of an egalitarian collaboration between professionals. This form of supervision is the ideal accompaniment to the rather authoritarian systems involved in forensic assessment.

In my work, I am often called upon to assess parenting capacity, juvenile delinquent treatment needs, and appropriate services for children who have suffered significant forms of abuse. The nature of completing forensic assessments for a state social service agency involves being entrenched within a strict social order of caseworkers, casework supervisors, lawyers, and judges. Most of the individuals involved in this system have little to no knowledge of the limits of psychological testing. Hence, within this environment the assessor is often asked to explore referral questions that are vague, nondescript, and/or indeterminable. As with all forms of assessment, the search for the ideal referral question involves clarifying and qualifying the realities of assessment outcomes.

The courts and human service agencies offer an enticing view of the psychologist as an 'all-knowing expert' on human behavior. They often request that psychologists make determinations that are well beyond the scope of our abilities. These may include referral questions as to whether a parent will continue to engage in child abuse, definitively determining whether a child has suffered sexual abuse, or a child's "adoptability" (which was one of the most disturbing referral questions I have received to date). As a newly licensed psychologist, the court's faith in me to make such determinations is quite impressive, albeit highly inappropriate and undeserving.

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## The Teacher's Block Personality Constructs and Social Psychology—Conceptual Scaffolding

Pamela Pressley Abraham, PsyD  
Immaculata University

Why is it important for a teaching psychologist to integrate constructs and processes from social psychology literature and research when teaching Rorschach variables, scoring, and interpretation? Socializing students who are taking assessment classes into concepts from social psychology promotes the cross-pollination of ideas and hopefully provides a context for a greater understanding of people's thoughts, feelings, and behavior. A simple question to the class such as, "Are we happy when we think about ourselves?" sparks inquisitiveness, and creates a dialogue about self-esteem and the affective components of formulating a self-evaluation. Classroom discussion can be enriched by data from the field of social psychology.

Research findings from social psychology can inform Rorschach interpretation. Social psychology constructs may include self-discrepancies and self-focusing, reasons why we withdraw from self-awareness, the need for positive self-esteem, the actual and ideal self-concept, the stability of self-worth and self-esteem, and private versus public self-consciousness. For example, the more self-focused we are, the more likely we may be found to be in a bad mood or unhappy (Csikszentmihalyi & Figurski, 1982; Flory, Raikkonen, Matthews, & Owens, 2000), and experience anxiety and other clinical problems (Ingram, 1990; Mor & Winquist, 2002). In certain circumstances, mirrors increase our self-awareness which makes us notice self-discrepancies and can temporally lower self-esteem (Duval & Wicklund, 1972; Wicklund & Frey, 1980). Social psychology findings demonstrate that individuals withdraw from self-awareness or change behaviors to be consistent with personal or societal standards (Carver & Scheier, 1981; Duval, Duval, & Mulilis, 1992). Other areas from social psychology that are able to contribute to the understanding of self-esteem on the Rorschach include understanding our need for positive self-esteem (Leary & Baumeister, 2000), the match between the actual self and ideal self (Higgins, 1999), self-worth varying depending on life circumstances (Heatherton & Polivy, 1991), the stability of self-esteem for some (Trzesniewski, Donnellan, & Robins, 2003) and the varying nature of self-esteem for others (Kernis & Waschull, 1995; Schimel, Arndt, Pyszczynski, & Greenberg, 2001).

One question that arises for Rorschach teachers is whether or not Rorschach

variables are powerful enough to capture the information derived from social psychology research. A recent article by Langer (2004), for example, addressed this issue with regard to understanding the meaning of pairs and reflection responses on the Rorschach. Langer bridged social psychology and Rorschach research to test the relationship of pair and reflection responses via the Egocentricity Index as a way to understand self-other perceived similarity with custody litigants. He utilized the broad concept of interpersonal perception (perceived similarity) in order to understand the meaning of reflection and pair responses based on a relational context. This type of understanding and contribution may well help distill the inconsistency in research on the Egocentricity Index. By the way, pairs were not found to be associated with the same psychological construct as reflection responses. What does this mean for the interpretive process in relation to the question raised at the top of the paragraph? How do we teach this material to students and encourage their integration of this research in applied clinical settings that involve Rorschach testing?

Returning to our example on the self, if we view ourselves as relational (Anderson & Chen, 2002) and examine the self as a social construct (Mussweiler & Strack, 2000; Mussweiler & Ruter, 2003), we may ask how our relationships with others influence our sense of self? How do others' perceptions of us, and under what perceptual circumstances, does the opinion of others contribute to our feelings and self-satisfaction? Self-esteem consists of self-schemas (Markus, 1977), including beliefs that are sometimes stable (Trzesniewski et al., 2003), and at other times varied depending on one's sensitivity to pain and criticism (Baldwin & Sinclair, 1996; Kernis & Waschull, 1995; Schimel et al., 2001). How does this information contribute to understanding the stability of self-esteem? In addition, if the match between actual and ideal perceptions can determine self-esteem, then learning about self-discrepancies would be important. All these points bring to mind that psychological constructs from a social psychology perspective provide valuable insights otherwise missed when understanding is limited to a single area of psychology.

Rorschach assessment teachers who integrate material across content areas to include foundation material from social psychology

and other areas, such as multicultural psychology, help students appreciate interconnections between important components of the curriculum. Assessment draws from and informs other content areas as well. Teaching assessment in isolation, without integrating constructs and processes, deprives students of seeing the integrating aspects of the curriculum where the goal is to teach integration. Integration across assessment measures is necessary for the student to learn how to combine discrepant data points into an integrated psychological report. Likewise, attempts to integrate and synthesize information from multifaceted aspects of the human condition, from all foundation areas of psychology, promote flexibility in thinking thereby sharpening student's ability to practice conceptual scaffolding.

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### SPA Bulletin Board

SPA members are invited to submit brief announcements for the SPA website's Bulletin Board. Our initial guidelines are that messages must relate to personality assessment and be of a non-commercial nature. Postings may include such things as educational opportunities (e.g., workshops or conferences), scientific notices (e.g., recruitment of subjects or co-investigators), information about new measures, and position openings. Assessment materials or books for sale or wanted by individuals are acceptable if they are basically non-commercial.

Please submit postings by email to the SPA webmaster. Include your contact information (member's name, email and mail addresses, and telephone number). Postings will be removed after 3 months but will be re-posted upon request.

Phil Caracena, [rorscan@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rorscan@sbcglobal.net)  
SPA Webmaster

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(Volume 85, Number 2) issue of the *Journal of Personality Assessment* (pp. 219-237). This document should be useful to assessment psychologists who as teachers or practitioners may be called on to affirm, as stated in the article abstract, "that the Rorschach possesses reliability and validity similar to that of other generally accepted personality assessment instruments, and its responsible use in personality assessment is appropriate and justified." To continue this thrust in preparing informative statements for professional and public consumption, the Board has established two new task forces: a Task Force on Standards for Practice of Personality Assessment, chaired by Bruce Smith, and a Task Force on Guidelines for Education and Training in Personality Assessment, chaired by Chris Fowler. We expect the work of these task forces to involve both Board and non-Board members and to result in written statements that will have a positive influence on our field.

Let me conclude with two items of encouragement. First, do make a note in your calendar for March 22-26, 2006, when our Annual Meeting will be held in San Diego. You will receive shortly, or have already received, a brochure describing the very attractive program put together by Virginia Brabender and Anita Boss, and you should not miss this opportunity to experience as well the San Diego setting and the warmth and stimulation of an SPA meeting. In addition to the workshop offerings, moreover, the CE credits you will be able to earn at no extra charge from attending the Master Lectures and symposia could have a dollar value in excess of your registration fee.

Second, when you pay your SPA dues, do consider including \$20 for membership in the International Rorschach Society. Being part of a strong and growing international community of Rorschach psychologists, as represented by the international society, builds on our own strengths as advocates for well-taught, well-practiced, and well-respected personality assessment. Engagement with like-minded colleagues from around the world is also a way of enriching one's life, as it has for many of us who have attended the International Rorschach Congresses that have been held most recently in Sao Paulo, Lisbon, Boston, Amsterdam, Rome, and Barcelona. The 2008 Congress has just recently been designated for Brussels, Belgium, at the nearby University of Leuven.

Assuming that this hits right around the New Year, here's wishing everyone the best of everything for 2006!

## Advocacy Corner

**Bruce Smith, PhD**  
*SPA Advocacy Coordinator*

The big news on the advocacy front is our final victory in the fight for new CPT codes for assessment. After a campaign that lasted nearly 10 years, Medicare has now approved codes for psychological and neuropsychological testing. As faithful readers of this column know, SPA has been intimately involved in the process of getting approval for the new testing codes. We conducted the surveys that helped establish the empirical base for the new work values, and Radhika Krishnamurthy and I participated in the meetings in which the proposed new codes were considered.

The problem with the old codes was that they did not include professional work values. As a consequence, the reimbursement rates were unfairly low. The new codes include work values approximately the equivalent of psychotherapy and should result in approximately a 25% increase in reimbursement rates for testing. (Interestingly enough, the Medicare committee decided to reimburse personality assessment and neuropsychological assessment at the same rate.)

In addition to the codes for psychological testing (96101) and neuropsychological testing (96116), there are now codes for testing by technician (96102 and 96117) and testing by computer (96103 and 96118). As of January 1, 2006, the old codes for assessment should be discontinued, and billing should be done

under the new codes. For more information on how to bill Medicare and third party payers using the new codes, see the SPA website.

Other news: the issue of untrained individuals being allowed to do assessment under generic licenses seems to have quieted down. In addition to our own efforts, we have involved the Practice Directorate, and the crises in Indiana and Maryland appear to have abated. In order to be proactive, however, the Board of Trustees has decided to develop a position paper on the minimal standards of education and training for assessment practice.

We have also been alerted to potential problems with the Association of Family Court and Conciliators (AFCC) who are devising guidelines for mediation and custody that seem to freeze out psychologists and marginalize assessment. Ginger Calloway has been on top of this issue and working with the AFCC as well as the Practice Directorate to deal with the problem. Basically, what we are learning is that threats to assessment practice can come from more or less anywhere; we rely on the membership to keep us informed so that we can take action.

Finally, in case you have been living in a cave the past year or so, the official statement of SPA on the use of the Rorschach has been published. It can be found in JPA as well as on the SPA website. I would be interested in any feedback—particularly any information about how members may have used the document.

## SPA Foundation

**Bruce L. Smith, PhD**  
*President, SPAF*

The SPA Foundation continues to enjoy good health. As you know by now, the Foundation was established to accept charitable contributions and to disburse funds for the betterment of personality assessment. Because the Foundation is a 501(c)(3) corporation, contributions are generally tax-deductible as charitable gifts. The Foundation supports students through dissertation grants and travel grants (to present at SPA Meetings) as well as supporting research that will benefit the field of assessment. Currently, we are raising money to support research on the utility of assessment. It is our hope that we can fund empirical research that will demonstrate the efficacy of using assessment in the delivery of mental health services. This kind of research is often difficult to get funded through traditional channels, and we hope to make up for that lacuna.

As a great fund-raiser once said: sit quietly for a few moments and consider what the maximum you can give. Once you have come up with a figure...double it and write a check...

Thank all of you for whatever you can do to support our profession.

## The SPA Annual Meeting March 22-26, 2006 The Hyatt Regency Islandia San Diego, CA

### Registration

- Participant conference registration includes all conference materials; refreshment breaks; the President's Welcoming Reception on Thursday evening, as well as the Closing Reception on Saturday evening; entry to the scientific sessions, the master lectures, poster sessions, and the award presentations; and a collegial atmosphere to meet and interact with colleagues from around the world who are interested in personality assessment research and practice.
- Conference registration can be completed with the registration form found in the promotional brochure which will be mailed to the membership the first week of December 2005 or by accessing an online registration form through our web page ([www.personality.org](http://www.personality.org)). To ensure your participation, please register early and take advantage of the advance registration fee.
- Cancellations will be accepted for the Annual Meeting and/or a Workshop, less a \$75 administrative fee, until Wednesday, March 8, 2006. After that date no refunds will be granted.
- All participants are asked to complete the conference registration form and the workshop registration form and return it to the SPA office with the appropriate fees. (All presenters, workshop leaders, and award winners are asked to complete the conference registration form and return it to the SPA office.) In order to take advantage of the Advanced Registration Fee, your completed forms must be postmarked no later than March 1, 2006. Any forms postmarked after March 1, will be processed at the On-Site Registration Fee.
- All persons who register for the conference by March 1, 2006, will be mailed an Annual Meeting Program Book. Anyone registering after that date will have a Program Book in their registration packet at the conference registration desk.

- Non-members are encouraged to join the Society for Personality Assessment and take advantage of the Advanced Registration Fee for Members.

### Workshops

Workshops will be held on Wednesday, March 22, Thursday, March 23, and Sunday, March 26, 2006. No workshops are held on Friday or Saturday. Enrollment in the workshops will be filled on the basis of completed workshop registration forms and fees received. Continuing Education credits will be awarded to all in attendance at the entire workshop.

### List of Workshops:

- MMPI-2 Personality Psychopathology Five Scales  
*John L. McNulty / Allan R. Harkness*
- Clinical and Forensic Uses of the 16 PF  
*Michael Karson*
- Five Factor Model & NEO-PI-R  
*Paul T. Costa*
- Rorschach Assessment of Personality Disorders  
*S. Philip Erdberg*
- The Ethics of Psychological Assessment  
*Robert E. Erard*
- Integrating MMPI-2 and Rorschach in Feedback  
*Stephen E. Finn*
- MMPI-2 in Treatment Planning  
*John R. Graham*
- Polymorphous Perversion and Psychopathy  
*J. Reid Meloy*
- Psychological Damage Examinations  
*Stuart A. Greenberg*
- Presenting the Rorschach in Forensic and Clinical Settings  
*F. Barton Evans / Carl B. Gacono*

- Advanced Interpretation of the MCMI-III  
*Stephen N. Strack*
- Assessment of Competence to Proceed to Trial  
*Randy Otto*
- Rorschach Coding Solutions for the Comprehensive System  
*Donald J. Viglione*
- Assessment Supervision  
*Jed A. Yalof/Pamela P. Abraham*
- Adult Attachment Projective  
*Carol George*
- Advanced PAI Interpretation  
*Leslie C. Morey*

### Workshop Fees:

Member or Conference Registrant

Full-Day \$150 / Half-Day \$90

Non-Member or Non-Conference Registrant

Full-Day \$215 / Half-Day \$135

Student

Full-Day \$80 / Half-Day \$45

### Continuing Education Credit

As part of its SPA Annual Meeting program, the Society for Personality Assessment will present full-day and half-day workshops. The Society is approved by the American Psychological Association to offer continuing education for psychologists, and SPA maintains responsibility for the program and its content. The full-day workshops will offer 7 CE credits and the half-day workshops will offer 3.5 credits. CE credits will also be available, at no extra charge, for the two Master Lectures and for approximately 12-13 symposia sessions. A listing will appear in the Program Book.

### Airline Tickets

Call Alice Hapner at Travelink, Incorporated, at 1-800-821-4671 to find the best available air travel to California.

### Fees:

	Pre-Registration by 3/01/06	Postmarked after 3/01/06
Member/Fellow/Associate	\$175	\$225
Non-Member	\$245	\$295
Student	\$65	\$80
Member/One-Day Fee	\$100	\$100
Non-Member/One-Day Fee	\$130	\$130
Student/One-Day Fee	\$35	\$35
Student Volunteer	\$35	\$35



## SPA Annual Meeting

### Hotel Accommodations

**Hyatt Regency Islandia Hotel** is a unique find among San Diego hotels. Picture a resort-like landscaped setting in the heart of Mission Bay Park, offering panoramic views of the marina and the Pacific Ocean. Of Mission Bay hotels, ours is closest to Sea World, where you can grab some fun in the sun with your ocean-dwelling friends. Hyatt Regency Islandia is eight miles from the San Diego Convention Center and San Diego's central business district. For details on the hotel, see [www.islandia.hyatt.com](http://www.islandia.hyatt.com).

A jewel among hotels in Mission Bay, the hotel is located eight miles from downtown, six miles from San Diego's International Airport, a 1/2 mile from Sea World and 15 minutes from almost every attraction in the area. Enjoy a spectacular waterfront property adjacent to a full-service marina with magnificent ocean, harbor, tropical garden or city views. Steps from your door are lush gardens of San Diego, manicured grounds and a full array of water sports.

**Dining:** Looking for great Mission Bay restaurants? You don't even have to leave your hotel. Stop by the Baja Cafe, where you can enjoy San Diego fine dining with a casual Southwestern flair. Also prized among our Mission Bay restaurants is Islandia Coastal Grill, specializing in the freshest seafood, steak and pasta while showcasing lovely panoramic sunset views! Tower's Lounge offers the best margarita 'Shakers' in town!

**Parking:** For hotel guests, the parking rate is \$10 per day with in/out privileges. For the local participants, there is no charge for parking at the hotel during the day.

**Transportation:** All major and domestic airlines serve San Diego International Airport. Transfer time from the airport to the hotel, depending on traffic and weather, is 15 minutes. Cloud Nine Shuttle will transport you to/from the airport for \$9.50 each way; the hotel also has a pre-negotiated rate of \$13.00 with taxis bringing guests to their hotel.

**Recreational Activities:** Activities include a sun-splashed heated pool, sport fishing and sailboat rentals, and relaxing massages in our Massage Therapy Center. A plus among hotels in Mission Bay, the Hyatt Regency Islandia also offers easy access to activities such as tennis, golf, jogging and bicycle trails. Whisk away the cares of the day as you relax on one of the hammocks on our "Baja Beach" patio area or simply appreciate the tranquility of

our Koi Pond, located in the central courtyard of the hotel.

- California-shaped heated, outdoor, freeform pool available 7 am to 10 pm.
- New 16 person state-of-the-art hot tub that overlooks the Marina
- Sundeck with seasonal room service
- Sandy beach 3/4-mile from hotel
- Belmont Park, shops, bars, roller coasters, arcade and restaurants on beach
- Exercise room with exercise cycles, stair climbers and rowers, 6:00am- 12:00pm
- 25 miles, 18-hole Carmel Mountain Ranch Golf Course; 30 miles, 18-hole Carlton Oaks Golf Course; 40 miles, 18-hole Vineyard Golf Course; 6 miles, affiliated with Riverwalk; all with preferred tee-times when available
- More than 80 golf courses available in San Diego. The Hyatt Islandia is only 25-30 minutes away from 50% of the golf course
- Boat and bicycle rentals next door
- Deep sea fishing/seasonal whale watching
- Daily tours available with courtesy pick-up
- Discounted tickets to Seaworld, Zoo and Wild Animal Park and Legoland also available

### Hotel Reservations

Hotel reservations must be made directly with the hotel. To get the special conference rate, please inform the hotel that you are with the Society for Personality Assessment.

#### Hyatt Regency Islandia Hotel

1441 Quivira Road  
San Diego, CA 92101  
619-224-1234

Reservation deadline to receive the conference rate: **February 21, 2006**

Room Block Dates: **March 22-26, 2006**

Single Room: \$152 per night

Double Room: \$152 per night

Executive Suite: \$177 per night

One-Bedroom Suite: \$202 per night

SPA realizes that you have a number of options when securing your accommodations for the SPA Annual Meeting. We would like you to know that, in order to secure the block of rooms at a reasonable room rate, SPA has made a financial commitment to the Hyatt Regency Islandia. If the block is not filled, there are financial implications for SPA, as well as our ability to negotiate room rates for future meetings.

## New and Improved Workshop Offerings for the Mid-Winter Meeting

San Diego, March 22-26, 2006

Anita L. Boss, PsyD, ABPP

When you see a food or cleaning product marked "new" or "improved," you may often wonder what's really new, because the ingredients are rarely different. Hopefully, when you look at the workshops offered for the 2006 Mid-Winter Meeting, you will notice more than just a change in the packaging. A wider variety of assessment tools are in focus, as well as advanced interpretation, case presentation, and differing aspects of the assessment process.

In San Diego, SPA will be offering a wide variety of new workshops and workshops that have been offered less frequently. Regarding specific tests, Michael Karson will present "Clinical and Forensic Uses of the 16PF," which will not only provide introduction to varied uses of the 16PF, but will also include case discussion involving in-depth interpretation and applications of this instrument. The NEO-PI-R will be represented by Paul

Costa, one of the authors of the instrument, who will also focus on applications and interpretation, including cases of Axis I and II disorders. Carol George will return to present an introduction to the Adult Attachment Projective, which is rapidly gaining interest from researchers and therapists interested in the role of attachment in personality functioning and psychopathology.

The supervision of assessment is rarely given attention in graduate schools and training sites. In response to the need for techniques and ethical guidelines in this area, Jed Yalof and Pamela Abraham will offer a workshop on Assessment Supervision. Another aspect of assessment is giving feedback to clients. Stephen Finn is offering a practical, hands-on workshop entitled "Integrating the MMPI-2 and Rorschach in Giving Feedback to Clients."

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## Improved Workshop Offerings

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Participants will review cases and work in small groups to improve their skills in this area.

Reid Meloy and John Graham will also be offering workshops that are new to the SPA lineup. Dr. Graham will present the use of the MMPI-2 in treatment planning, focusing on the relationship of multiple test variables to treatment needs, motivations, assets and liabilities, therapeutic alliance, premature termination, and outcome. Dr. Meloy's workshop, "Polymorphous Perversion and Psychopathy," will include theoretical, empirical, and case-based illustrations to better understand and assess sexual perversion in the context of psychopathy.

In response to members asking for "more" when they attend SPA's typically intensive workshops, we are offering several advanced workshops. Stephen Strack's "Advanced Interpretation of the MCMI-III" will focus on honing MCMI-III assessment skills using the latest research, complex case examples, and the use of the MCMI-III with special populations and in forensic contexts. Les Morey will present an advanced workshop on the recent developments in PAI research and their implications for interpretation, particularly in terms of evaluating profile validity, as well as the application of configural scale constellations and supplemental indicators addressing targeted clinical issues. In "The Ethics of Psychological Assessment in Clinical and Forensic Practice: An In-Depth Examination," Robert Erard will increase his ethics workshop to a full day, as SPA members have often asked for additional time and case discussion in his workshops. To address that need, he will focus on ethical issues in assessment with even more depth for a richer understanding of the multi-layered and complex ethical concerns in both clinical and forensic assessment.

Rorschach and MMPI workshops, always important to SPA members, are well represented this year with research updates and practical applications. Phil Erdberg is offering the "Rorschach Assessment of Personality Disorder." This is an opportunity to benefit not only from the extent of Dr. Erdberg's clinical knowledge, but also to learn about the advances and applications of the Rorschach in this crucial area of assessment.

It will include in-depth analysis of case vignettes in combination with the applicable research. Barton Evans and Carl Gacono will be returning with their workshop, "Presenting the Rorschach in Clinical and Forensic Settings." This is an essential workshop for those who testify in cases where the Rorschach is used, and is also of importance to understanding the research that supports the use of Rorschach in clinical practice. Both of these workshops will be full days.

For half day MMPI and Rorschach workshops, SPA is pleased to offer Allan Harkness and John McNulty's workshop on the MMPI-2 PSY-5 Scales. This workshop will be focused on using the PSY-5 Scales to better understand the personality trait dimensions and individual differences that can be assessed with this newer approach to MMPI-2 assessment. Don Viglione will focus on "Rorschach Coding Solutions for the Comprehensive System." This workshop will involve intensive discussion and examples of coding predicaments and difficult decisions, providing more clarity and confidence when approaching both the inquiry phase of administration and coding the protocol.

Two leading forensic psychologists, Randy Otto and Stuart Greenberg, will also be returning to SPA in 2006. Dr. Otto will present "Assessment of Competence to Proceed in the Criminal Process," which will focus on the latest developments in competency assessment instruments, as well as other techniques required to assess trial competence. Dr. Greenberg's workshop will focus on personal injury evaluation, including his model for conducting psychological damage examinations. Both presenters will not only provide information about recent advances, but will also cover the applicable laws that form the parameters for these types of forensic evaluations.

You can see that we have not only new and improved workshops, but also well-attended essentials that are not offered every year. On behalf of the SPA Board, and as the Continuing Education Coordinator, I hope you now find yourself compelled to travel to San Diego next March to benefit from this workshop program. With such a wide variety of options, you cannot help but sharpen your assessment skills and learn about the latest applications and research. See you there!

## SPA Fellows

Congratulations to newly elected SPA Fellows

Alex Caldwell, PhD

Leslie C. Morey, PhD



C. Donald Morgan, PhD





## The Role of Psychological Evaluation in Parenting Capacity Cases

Alan J. Lee, PsyD

Hamilton, New Jersey

The utility of psychological evaluation and personality assessment has long demonstrated utility across many settings and applications. The utility and importance of psychological evaluation and personality assessment in parenting fitness or parenting capacity matters has increased in recent times, particularly in light of increased publicity to child abuse, neglect, and parental failures. Legislative changes such as the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA) have not only supported but directed states and their respective child protective service agencies and courts to focus expeditiously and carefully on moving foster children in jeopardy towards more permanent placement options. ASFA provides guidelines and timeframes to help mitigate potential shortcomings of having children in foster care without a permanent plan. More than ever, states and courts are compelled to understand a parent or caregiver's ability to appropriately provide for a minor child and for the state to take an appropriate course of action, which may include termination of parental rights if it is deemed that the parent is unfit or unwilling to adequately care for a minor child. States and courts often include the recommendations and opinions of forensic psychological experts in this undoubtedly important, complicated, and complex matter. Parental fitness is among several factors or standards that courts consider in the potential process of terminating a parent's rights. Even in instances where there may be no final termination of parental rights, the careful assessment of parenting capacity may offer many useful recommendations for the caregiver's rehabilitation and stabilization as to promote reunification (if the child has been placed out of the parent's care) or further stabilize a family's functioning (when the child remains in the home). It is important to recognize that assessing parental fitness in the context of terminating parental rights often differs appreciably from that in more traditional custody evaluation.

Parenting and caretaking to a minor child undoubtedly involves a wide range of behaviors, issues, decisions, and skills on the part of the caregiver. Similarly, the issue of parenting incompetence or unfitness includes a wide range of possible behaviors, issues, decisions, and skills. These might span the range of issues such as physical violence and abuse to a child, illicit drug abuse or dependence, acute mental health impairments, criminality or incarceration, and pervasive

instabilities in residence or homelessness. While many of these potential issues are closely associated to "psychological" or mental health issues, it is important to recognize that some issues, such as chronic homelessness, are not so obvious as to be psychological in nature. Arguably, some of these less-psychological issues may have strong psychological or personality underpinnings that contribute to or exacerbate such parenting problems. For example, a parent's inability to provide a safe or appropriate residence over time is not so much a psychological issue. However, a chronic pattern of severely dependent and passive behaviors and attitudes with poor planning, lack of assertiveness, and impulsivity may be very much tied into how and why a parent is repeatedly homeless or transient in his or her residence and, in turn, compromised in their parenting ability. Forensic psychologists and experts are often called upon to provide a rational and sensible nexus between psychological or personality issues or mental health conditions and its contribution or relationship to parental unfitness in a legal arena. Furthermore, forensic psychologists in this arena are often called upon to consult on issues of the parent's rehabilitation, anticipated duration of the impairment(s), and risk of recurring parenting problems as child protective agencies and courts attempt to manage the overall welfare of the family and child. While the full range of issues and competencies for the psychological and forensic examiner extend far beyond the scope of the current article, the reader is referred to resources such as Holderen & Walker 1985 (as cited by in Dyer, 1999), Grisso (1986), and Melton, Petrila, Poythress, & Slobogin (1997) for greater discussion of forensic evaluation in general and parenting fitness in particular.

Among the wide range of issues that are often considered in parenting fitness or competence evaluations are, but not limited to: mental illness or mental health; personality disorder; and parenting skills and parenting stress. While the lay public may often equate a mental illness or mental diagnosis (e.g. schizophrenia) with parental incompetence, the mental health and forensic professional is compelled to go beyond this more simplistic and linear view. The presence or absence of a mental condition alone is seldom sufficient to determine parental unfitness or fitness. However, it is more important to understand the nexus of how, why, and to what extent a

mental condition or illness may impact basic parenting and childrearing ability, skills, or responsibilities. Personality disorder has become an increasingly important factor in understanding parental fitness and capacity. The wide range of thoughts, feelings, behaviors, attitudes, and relational patterns that comprise one's personality functioning are often critical in understanding parental fitness. For example, strong antisocial personality traits often represent the underpinnings to and reflect patterns of irresponsibility, impulsivity, aggression, substance abuse, and criminality that may be tied in to poor parenting practices. Parenting skills and parenting stress are another realm of consideration in the parenting fitness evaluation. Heightened levels of parenting stress, whether generated from the child or caregiver's characteristics or both together, may contribute to a heightened risk of dysfunctional or poor parenting practices. Also, some assessment of a caregiver's knowledge base, and understanding of child needs and development and parenting practices is important. While these arenas represent some core areas for parenting capacity assessment, they are by no means exhaustive as other areas may certainly be critical for consideration and examination.

Some common and perhaps not-so-common psychological tests or assessment procedures are often employed in the parenting fitness evaluation. Most experts have largely agreed that there is no one or single test or procedure alone that is sufficient in making determinations or findings of parental fitness. Instead, a battery of tests and procedures is a useful approach. Such battery often consists of some cognitive and intellectual measures such as the Wechsler scales, but perhaps more so various self-reporting inventories and projective psychological methods to assess personality functioning and development. Common self-reporting inventories may include the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-2 (MMPI-2; Butcher, Dahlstrom, Graham, Tellegen, & Kaemmer), Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory-III (MCMI-III, Millon, 1994), and Personality Assessment Inventory (PAI, Morey, 1991). Common projective techniques and methods might include the Rorschach Inkblot Method (RIM, Weiner, 1998) and Thematic Apperception Test (TAT, Groth-Marnat, 2004). While a detailed and comprehensive clinical interview of the

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## SPA Members Honored Award Winners at APA Convention

The following SPA members were honored at the APA Convention

**Norman Abeles, PhD** Division 12 (Society of Clinical Psychology), Section IX (Assessment), Enduring Contribution to Education in Assessment Psychology.

**Robert Bornstein, PhD** won the Theodore Millon Award for Excellence in Personality Research.

**Constance T. Fischer, PhD** Division 32 (Humanistic), Carl Rogers Award and was also awarded the Immaculata University Sr. Kathleen Mary Burns Award for distinguished contributions to teaching and learning.

**Mark Hilsenroth, PhD** won the Society for Psychotherapy Research Early Career Award.

**David Lachar, PhD** Division 12 (Society of Clinical Psychology) Section IX (Assessment), Enduring Contributions to Training in Assessment Psychology.

**Charles Spielberger, PhD** APA Committee on International Relations in Psychology, Award for Distinguished Contributions to the International Advancement of Psychology.

**Edward A. Wise, PhD** APA Board of Professional Affairs, Award for Distinguished Professional Contributions to Independent or Institutional Practice the Private Sector.

### The Role of ...Cases

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examinee is critical, collateral interviews and record reviews are also important aspects given that defensiveness and self-promoting test-taking styles often influence personal accounts. Some additional more specialized inventories that contribute to parenting fitness evaluations often include the Parenting Stress Inventory (PSI, Albin, 1995), a 120-item self-report surveying various sources of parenting stress including the parent and child characteristics and other life stressors that may contribute to parenting dysfunction; Child Abuse Potential Inventory (CAPI, Milner, 1986), a 160-item self-report surveying various characteristics of an individual that may resemble child physical abusers; and Stress Index for Parents of Adolescents (SIPA, Sheras, et al, 1998). Dyer (1999) offered that the Parent Awareness Skills Survey (PASS, Bricklin, 1990) has also come to be used in parental fitness evaluations, and described some uses of the Michigan Screening Profile of

Parenting (MSPP). These various parenting-related instruments offer additional utility in forming and demonstrating the nexus of psychological issues to parenting capacity and fitness, and should be used in accordance with professional standards and specialty guidelines.

The assessment of parenting capacity and parenting fitness has taken on an ever-increasing importance in helping to answer important and more-overarching societal concerns such as child welfare and safety, especially in the psycholegal context of termination of parental rights and forming rehabilitative planning for compromised parents or caregivers. The role of the psychologist expert and examiner in this specialty field offers a unique and important role to understanding parenting fitness and capacity, and for child welfare agencies and courts to make helpful and appropriate dispositions in the interest of child safety and welfare.

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## Avoiding the Six Harbingers of Doom in Conducting Child Custody Evaluations

Linda K. Knauss, PhD, ABPP

Widener University

Ethical complaints related to child custody evaluations are one of the most frequent type of complaints received by licensing boards. This is because in a custody battle, someone always feels that he or she is the loser. Often that person is looking for someone to blame. Thus a conservative, risk-management approach is recommended when conducting child custody evaluations.

APA (1994) has developed *Guidelines for Child Custody Evaluations in Divorce Proceedings*. These guidelines stress that the role of the psychologist is to assess the best psychological interests of the child. The focus of the evaluation is on parenting capacity, the psychological and developmental needs of the child, and the resulting fit. According to APA (1994), the values of the parents relevant to parenting, ability to plan for the child's future needs, capacity to provide a stable and loving home, and any potential for inappropriate behavior or misconduct that might negatively influence the child should be considered. It is especially important to note that psychopathology may be relevant to such an assessment, but it is not the primary focus. Too often, child custody evaluations focus on the presence or absence of psychopathology, particularly within each parent to determine their appropriateness as a parent. *The Guidelines for Child Custody Evaluations in Divorce Proceedings* (APA, 1994), stress the fit between the child's needs, and the parents' capacity to parent.

Psychologists tend to rely heavily on psychological tests, even when the questions that need to be answered, (e.g., What is the best

visitation schedule?) are not relevant to test data. Psychological testing should certainly not be abandoned, but it should be balanced appropriately with other types of information or data (Woody, 2000). Courts give a great deal of weight to observational information from a mental health professional who has interviewed relevant parties and visited the location where the child might be living. These observations and interviews, supplemented by psychological testing is the approach of choice for child custody evaluations.

The decision to use psychological testing in a child custody evaluation should be based on the specific case and the questions the evaluator is being asked to consider. Not all child custody evaluations require psychological test data, and when testing is appropriate, there is no "standard test battery." The evaluation should be tailored to the unique characteristics of the case. However, any tests used should meet standards for reliability and validity.

In a study by M.J. Ackerman and M.C. Ackerman (1996), 800 psychologists were surveyed to determine, among other variables, what psychological tests were most frequently used in child custody evaluations. The personality measures that ranked in the top ten for both children and adults included in the MMPI (and MMPI-A), Rorschach, TAT, Sentence Completion, and projective drawings. The survey did not distinguish between the original and second versions of the MMPI. When deciding whether or not to use psychological testing as part of a child custody evaluation, it is important to consider

whether traditional or specialized instruments are needed, and which tests, if any will be helpful in answering the referral questions.

In his book, *Child Custody: Practice Standards, Ethical Issues, & Legal Safeguards for Mental Health Professionals*, Robert Woody (2000) discusses the six harbingers of doom. These are conditions that lead to ethical, regulatory, or legal complaints against mental health practitioners conducting child custody evaluations. However, these six problems areas can be avoided.

To avoid the first harbinger, avoid multiple roles. The role which the psychologist assumes is determined by the nature of the referral question. Malpractice issues could confront the psychologist who is appointed for one purpose and assumes a different role. A psychologist who interacts with an individual in one professional role and then becomes involved with that same person in some other role (professional or personal) is involved in a dual relationship.

If a person is functioning in the role of a person's (or family's) therapist, that psychologist can not also serve in the role of custody evaluator. Those roles are very different. As a therapist, psychologists often advocate for their patients. This is inconsistent with functioning as a neutral evaluator. In addition, the "other party" would not believe that the therapist was a neutral evaluator, even if the psychologist felt he or she could be objective.

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Bruno Klopfer Award—  
Connie Fischer

### 2006 SPA Award Winners

Samuel J. and Anne G. Beck Award—Richard W. Handel

Hertz Memorial Tribute by Steven Strack in memory of Timothy Leary

Mary Cerney Award—Samuel Liebman

Dissertation Award Winners—Matt Duffy, Nicole Contley,

Allison Willenbacher, Isra Saleh-Mohd



## Six Harbingers...

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In addition, a psychologist who serves as a child custody evaluator should not become the therapist for either party after the evaluation. If the case should go to court again, which happens more often than not, there is no longer an objective evaluator. Some judges pressure mental health professionals into multiple roles and this can be hard to turn down. However, dual relationships are inappropriate. Multiple roles, even if requested by the court or the parents should be opposed, and if insisted upon, the practitioner should withdraw from the case (Woody, 2000).

Second, complainants often allege that mental health practitioners over interpret or misjudge information or data. The APA *Guidelines for Child Custody Evaluations* (1994) recommend that psychologists interpret data from interviews or tests cautiously and conservatively, seeking convergent validity. In addition, psychologists should acknowledge to the court any limitations in methods or data used, such as questions of data reliability and validity. Over interpretation or inappropriate interpretation of data may be revealed by another mental health practitioner testifying in the same case. This does not usually come up unless the faulty interpretations are to the disadvantage of the complainant (Woody, 2000).

Third, psychologists should not give any opinion regarding the psychological functioning of any individual who has not been personally evaluated (APA, 1994). Psychologists need to have direct and substantive contact (not just meeting them in the waiting room) with anyone about whom there will be evaluative or diagnostic testimony. Attorneys will push mental health professionals to respond to hypothetical situations. It is easy to cross the line into malpractice by offering improper professional interpretations, opinions, or recommendations (Woody, 2000).

Performing child custody evaluations requires special and advanced skills. This is the fourth area. At one level, performance of a custody evaluation requires the same basic training and experience that is necessary to conduct any clinical assessment. Thus, the practitioner must be skilled in the administration, and interpretation of measures and techniques to be used as well as being familiar with the psychometric properties of the instruments used (Weithorn, 1987). While these skills are necessary, they are not sufficient. Education, training, and experience in the areas of child

and family development, child and family psychopathology, and the impact of divorce on children help to prepare psychologists to conduct child custody evaluations (APA, 1994).

Allegations of child abuse, neglect, family violence, or other issues may also arise during a child custody evaluation. If these issues are not areas of expertise for the evaluator, he or she needs to seek consultation, supervision or training in these areas. It is also important to be familiar with state laws addressing child abuse, neglect and domestic violence as well as the relevant state laws governing divorce and custody adjudications.

Fifth, any form of legal advocacy is likely to be perceived as inappropriate by at least one of the parties, because it appears to reduce the psychologist's objectivity. The role of the psychologist is as a professional expert, not as an advocating attorney who strives to present the client's best possible case (APA, 1994). If either the psychologist or the client can not accept this neutral role, the psychologist should consider withdrawing from the case. Psychologists must not allow bias or discrimination to influence their objectivity. This includes stereotypes and other preconceived notions that are not supported by data (Woody, 2000).

Finally, psychologists should not act as a judge, who makes the ultimate decision applying the law to all relevant evidence (APA, 1994). Here again, the proper role and functions require that psychologists leave the ultimate legal decisions to the court (Woody, 2000).

In conclusion, problems in child custody evaluations that lead to licensing board complaints or malpractice suits can be avoided or dealt with effectively by:

1. Maintaining appropriate professional boundaries.
2. Determining the proper role and function for the custody evaluation.
3. Following the APA Code of Ethics.
4. Adherence to the *Guidelines for Child Custody Evaluations in Divorce Proceedings*.

The legal system welcomes and needs high quality mental health services and practitioners, especially in child custody cases.

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## SPA Board



## Master Lectures

### Carl B. Gacono, PhD

Carl B. Gacono, PhD, is a licensed psychologist who maintains a clinical and forensic private practice in Austin, Texas. Formerly the Assessment Center Director at Atascadero State Hospital and later, the Chief Psychologist at the Federal



Correctional Institution, Bastrop Texas, he has over 20 years of correctional and institutional experience. He is author of *A Clinical and Forensic Interview Schedule for the Hare Psychopathy Checklist-Revised and Screening Version*, co-author, of *The Rorschach Assessment of Aggressive and Psychopathic Personalities*, co-editor of *Contemporary Rorschach Interpretation*, editor of "The Clinical and Forensic Assessment of Psychopathy: A Practitioner's Guide," and has authored or co-authored over 50 scientific articles and book chapters. He is the 1994 recipient of the Samuel J. and Anne G. Beck Award for excellence in early career research, the 2000 recipient of the Walter G. Klopfer Award, a member of the American Board of Assessment Psychology, and a Fellow of the Society for Personality Assessment. Dr. Gacono is sought as an expert in the area of personality disorders, criminal behavior, psychopathy and clinical, forensic, and research applications of the Rorschach and Psychopathy Checklists.

Dr. Gacono will review international and national trends in psychopathy assessment, will differentiate between Antisocial Personality Disorder and psychopathy, and will discuss the relevance of these issues to legal and forensic issues such as violence predictions and recidivism.

### Stephen E. Finn, PhD

Stephen E. Finn, PhD, founder of the Center for Therapeutic Assessment in Austin, TX, is a psychologist who specializes in the integration of psychological assessment and psychotherapy. Dr. Finn received his Ph.D. in clinical psychology in 1984 from the University of Minnesota. He currently is an Adjunct Clinical Professor of Psychology at the University of Texas at Austin, and is a fellow of SPA and of APA (Division 12). Dr. Finn is the author of *A Manual for Using the MMPI-2 as a Therapeutic Intervention*, published in 1996 by the University of Minnesota Press, and of numerous articles and chapters on psychological assessment and psychodiagnosis.

The title of Dr. Stephen Finn's Master Lecture is "Therapeutic Assessment: Definitions, Distinctions, and Clarifications." Dr. Finn will discuss what is and is not Therapeutic Assessment (big T) and therapeutic assessment (little T), and what is known about the relationship of Therapeutic Assessment, psychotherapy, and the very latest in his own thinking and research.



## SPA Local Chapters

Any local chapters that would like to meet during the 2006 SPA Annual Meeting just need to contact Paula Garber at [manager@spaconline.org](mailto:manager@spaconline.org) to be placed on the program schedule.

## References from The Teacher's Block

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## SPA Personals

**Robert E. Erard, PhD**, was recently appointed to the editorial board of the *Journal of Child Custody*. His article, "What the Rorschach can contribute to custody and parenting time evaluation," will be published in the next issue of that journal and as a chapter in an upcoming book on testing in custody cases by Haworth Press.

**Barton Evans, PhD**, recently relocated his practice from Bethesda, Maryland to Bozeman, Montana in the office of Dr. Charles Kelly, SPA member. Dr. Evans continues to practice forensic assessment nationally, especially in the areas of immigration court (such as asylum, extreme hardship, VAWA, and criminal matters) and consults on challenges to the use of the Rorschach in court. Dr. Evans can be reached by email at [bevans@bfevansphd.com](mailto:bevans@bfevansphd.com).

**Andrew W. Kane, PhD**, has co-authored *Psychological Experts in Divorce Actions, Fourth Edition*, published by Aspen Law and Business.

**Leslie C. Morey, PhD**, new SPA Fellow, is Professor of Psychology at Texas A & M University. He received his PhD in Clinical Psychology from the University of Florida, and has served on the faculty at Vanderbilt University, Harvard Medical School, the Yale University School of Medicine, and the University of Tulsa. He has published over 130 articles, books, and chapters on the assessment and diagnosis of mental disorders, with a particular focus upon the personality disorders, and his work has been cited over 2,000 times in the scientific literature. He is the author of the *Personality Assessment Inventory* (1991), *Interpretive Guide to the Personality Assessment Inventory* (1996), *Personality Assessment Screener* (1997), and *Essentials of PAI Assessment* (2003).

**Ed Wise, PhD**, recently received the 2005 APA Award for Distinguished Contributions to independent practice in the private sector. He is a fellow of SPA and consulting editor for JPA, while also serving as an ad hoc reviewer for numerous other journals. He is the Executive Director of Mental

Health Resources, a multi-disciplinary group practice in Memphis, Tennessee. *The Memphis Business Journal* recently nominated him for the Healthcare Hero Award for his collaborative work with the health care and business communities. Perhaps his most outstanding achievement has been the development of an Intensive Outpatient Program at this private practice. The success of this program receives ever-increasing national attention and has prompted large PPOs and MCOs to encourage its replication. Despite being a full-time private practice, Dr. Wise has published over 25 articles related to assessment, psychotherapy outcomes, and program evaluation at psychological methods, while working in outpatient, inpatient, forensic, and other community settings.

**Robert Yufit, PhD, ABPP**, published *Assessment, Treatment & Prevention on Suicidal Behavior* (2005, Wiley Press Publication).

## In Memory

**Ernest S. Barratt, PhD**, passed away on August 29, 2005 at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston. Dr. Barratt was world renowned as a psychologist and neuroscientist, held many academic appointments, was author or co-author of over 150 articles and chapters, and was the first elected President of the International Society of Research on Impulsivity. Family requests for contributions are to the Ernest S. Barratt, PhD, Memorial Fund in Behavioral Science, c/o UTMB Office of University Advancement, University of Texas Medical Branch, 301 University Boulevard, Galveston, Texas, 77555-0144.



## 'Expert' Needs an Expert

...continued from page 3

In the absence of consistent consultation, or pre-licensure supervision, the courts interest in predicting future behavior can be quite alluring at times. Providing the legal system with definitive predictions of human behavior is precisely what is needed, particularly in cases that involve assessing parental capacities. As well, the appeal of others' beliefs that you are able to make such conclusions is quite the narcissistic boost. The reality, however, is that one must find a way in which to maintain a system of checks and balances while completing psychological evaluations for the courts. While we all look forward to advances in psychological testing, the ability to predict the future will forever remain well beyond our scope.

Peer supervision is an ideal way to ensure data supported interpretations while also expanding the sources of data available to me. Amongst peers one can be held accountable to the confines of appropriate interpretive skills. More uniquely, however,

a relational component of peer supervision can allow for process-centered discussions. From this perspective the data used within the supervisory process is more inclusive than traditional models based on 'expert'-supervisee interactions. In other words, the assessment process can be looked at more closely, giving room for all aspects of the assessors experience in working with their client to be evaluated.

The relational model of supervision outlined by Frawley-O'Dea and Sarnat (2001) in their text, *The Supervisory Relationship*, serves as an ideal template for forensic peer supervision in that it relies heavily upon the supervisory dyad as opposed to the authority of the supervisor as an 'expert'. While their model of supervision is conceptualized for therapeutic work, their theory can be easily applied to the world of assessment. The emphasis on the mutuality found in a peer supervisory relationship allows for a reciprocal exchange of ideas. As well, this context permits for the analysis of transference and countertransference material can also be utilized to gain a better understanding of the client and their relational style. This allows for a combination of patient-centered, assessor-centered, and process-centered supervision

(Frawley-O'Dea & Sarnat, 2001). From this stance psychologists can analyze the parallels that exist between the legal, supervisory, and assessment processes, while avoiding falling into the trap of believing that oneself is 'all-knowing'.

Any experience with the legal system exemplifies the purely hierarchical nature of the judicial system. The persuasive pleas of the legal system can be quite influential, particularly when one is referred to as an 'expert witness'. This undoubtedly increases the potential for the professional assessor to want to assume a position at the pinnacle of the hierarchy. I propose, however, that the ideal balance to forensic work is involvement in an egalitarian form of supervision that can counteract one's draw to internalizing that title of 'expert'.

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## Dr. John Kurtz Joins SPA Exchange as Associate Editor

John Kurtz, PhD, faculty member at Villanova University, has joined the *SPA Exchange* as an Associate Editor. Dr. Kurtz specializes in adult personality development and gerontology, including dementia, head injury, and attention and learning disorders, and is an active researcher in the area of personality assessment, with special focus on the PAI. We are delighted to have John on board. He will be contributing a regular column beginning with the next issue of the *Exchange*.

## The Rorschach White Paper

**Barton Evans, PhD**

*Bozeman, MT*

**Jed Yalof, PsyD**

*Immaculata University*

For many years, the Exner Comprehensive System Rorschach has been a highly regarded as a model example of clinical research with important practical applications, but over the past few years it came under critique with respect mainly to its psychometric base. With this in mind, the Board of Trustees of the Society for Personality Assessment commissioned the Ad Hoc Committee on the Scientific Status of the Rorschach to develop a comprehensive statement examining this question. The work of this committee and the Board of Trustees led to the recent publication of the "The Status of the Rorschach in Clinical and Forensic Practice: An Official Statement by the Board of Trustees of the Society for Personality Assessment," which has also come to be known as the Rorschach White Paper (RWP). The RWP examines issues of Rorschach reliability and validity and its comparison to other major psychological tests

as well as the appropriate and ethical use of the instrument. In addition to summarizing relevant empirical findings, the RWP provides endnotes with specific references for each statement, a substantial reference list, and numerous tables of relevant Rorschach research. We encourage your reading of the RWP, which can be found on the website of the Society for Personality Assessment ([www.personality.org](http://www.personality.org)), or linked directly at (<http://www.personality.org/SPA%20Rorschach%20White%20Paper.pdf>). The RWP was also published in the October 2005 issue of the *Journal of Personality Assessment* (Board of Trustees of the Society for Personality Assessment 2005).

## From the Editor...

Jed A. Yalof, PsyD, ABPP, ABSNP



This issue of the *Exchange* has lots of information that should be of interest to members, especially as we anticipate the Mid-Winter Meeting in San Diego. Irv Weiner provides a perspective on assessment as well as updates about SPA happenings to the membership in his President's Column. Anita Boss, SPA's CE Coordinator, gives a summary of the excellent workshop offerings that will be available in San Diego. The *Exchange* also has information on conference registration. The *Exchange* has several articles

on clinical topics as well, including Pam Abraham, on the interface between social psychology literature and the Rorschach test; Alan Lee, on the role of psychological evaluations in parenting capacity cases; Linda Knauss on avoiding the "six harbingers of doom" in custody evaluations; and Barbara Domingos and Amy Galino on the role of peer consultation in assessment practice. We welcome John Kurtz as a new Associate Editor and thank Virginia Brabender, SPA President-Elect, for her regular contributions over the years. There are other items of note sprinkled throughout the *Exchange*.



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