

The Pennsylvania Psychologist

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Mental Health Parity Goes Into Effect January 1: Loopholes in Coverage Still Remain

The new year marks an important milestone for providers and consumers of mental health services. The Mental Health and Addictions Parity Act of 2008 will go into effect on January 1, 2010. This federal law extends parity in mental health and substance abuse services to most Americans who are covered by commercial health care plans, including those who are covered by self-insured (ERISA) plans. It requires parity between mental health and medical benefits for all aspects of plan coverage, including day/visit limits, dollar limits, coinsurance, copayments, deductibles, and out-of-pocket maximums. It applies equally to in-network and out-of-network services.

However, PPA members are urged to be careful about overestimating the reach of mental health parity, as approximately 1.5 million Pennsylvanians (25% of commercially insured persons) have single family coverage or work for employers with 50 or fewer employees and are exempted from the parity law. The law also permits insurers to continue to exclude diagnoses and to continue to use managed care procedures designed to control costs. No plan is required to provide mental health or substance abuse services, but if they do they have to be at parity. Plans that have unexpectedly high costs as a result of the parity legislation can apply to opt out of the parity requirement if carefully defined criteria are met. However, nationwide it is expected that parity will increase costs less than one-half of one percent. Similar predictions on the cost

of parity have proven accurate when individual states have enacted and had experience with mental health parity.

It is estimated that the parity law will increase outpatient psychotherapy utilization in Pennsylvania by about 10% for those covered by parity (Knapp, 2008). If this is so, how can the cost estimates of the impact of mental health parity be so low? First, mental health expenses account for only 6% of total health care expenditures (Mark et al., 2007). Also, outpatient services account for less than one-third of overall mental health costs (including medication

management and monitoring); the other high-cost modalities are inpatient hospitalizations, residential treatment care, and medications. Per unit of service, outpatient psychotherapy is inexpensive compared to other modalities of treatment. Finally, it is expected that easier access to outpatient psychotherapy will reduce the need for more expensive services such as inpatient or residential treatment or medications.

Will insurance companies react against parity by dropping mental health coverage or tightening up authorizations or other cost-control methods? At the time this article is

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Antitrust Rules and Discussion of Fees by Psychologists

Samuel Knapp, Ed.D.

Rachael L. Baturin, MPH, J.D.

Periodically, PPA members will pose questions, or voice concerns, about insurance reimbursement on our listserv. Because discussion of fees among psychologists is subject to antitrust law the Electronic Media Coordination Committee (EMCC) asked PPA staff to clarify what is legally permissible. We all wish to protect PPA and its members from legal sanction, while promoting open discussion of matters important to listserv participants.



Dr. Sam Knapp



Rachael Baturin

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Science Fiction and Psychology

Samuel Knapp, Ed.D., Director of Professional Affairs

Science fiction (SF) literature, or the use of speculative scientific advances within the art of fiction, may have special meaning and interest for psychologists. The origins of SF are debatable, but certainly Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein* was one of the classic works. Later Jules Verne and H.G. Wells had literary and commercial success as SF writers in the 19th century. However, during most of the 20th century, SF was "ghettoized" because it was largely "pulp fiction" (so named because it was printed on cheap paper) directed at adolescent males with stereotypic plots and characters (such as *Buck Rogers*). Over the years, however, science fiction has moved into the literary mainstream as evidenced by Ray Bradbury winning a Pulitzer Prize for *The Martian Chronicles*, or the success of *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *Star Wars*, *Star Trek*, and other productions. SF has evolved as an art form, with a highly dedicated fan base and subgenres, such as "hard SF" (which relies on a basic knowledge of science), "cyberpunk," (named after "punk rock" where marginalized individuals live in a dysfunctional society), or "slipstream" (falling between science and mainstream fiction).

Do psychologists have anything unique to offer SF? Some psychologists have directly contributed to SF. Dr. Alice Sheldon, who wrote under the name of James Tiptree, had a doctorate in experimental psychology. The James Tiptree Award goes to the science fiction or fantasy writer who explores issues of gender. Dr. Lawrence Shoen, who has a doctorate in cognitive psychology, has been an innovator in developing the Klingon language. Dr. Will McIntosh, a psychology professor, has written for *Asimov's Magazine*, including a short story that included a side plot where correlation gets confused with causation. In that story, among other things, government authorities in New York noted "the denser the population of males bicycling and the higher their average age, the lower the incidence of violent crime" (McIntosh, 2008, p. 89), and then started a crime reduction program of having older adults bicycle around the city. Writer Daryl Gregory, from State College, is not a psychologist, but is married to PPA member Dr. Kathy Bieschke, and included a psychotherapist in his short story, *Second Person, Present Tense*, although he claims that his wife "bears no resemblances to the therapist" in the story (Introduction, 2005, p. 86). His story builds upon neurological oddities and theories of consciousness (Gregory, n.d.).

Psychologists, or mental health professionals, appear in SF works from time to time, although none of the representations are especially notable, except perhaps for the telepathic Counselor Troi of *Star Trek, The Next Generation*, or Dr. Kate Heightmeyer of *Stargate-SG1*, who counsels characters regarding vivid dreams and conflicts that come from sharing one's body with an enemy character, among other stressors. Isaac Asimov's *Foundation Trilogy* includes psychohistorians who, with massive amounts of data, predict future events with a high degree of reliability.

Appreciation is expressed to Drs. Steven Cohen and Marolyn Morford who reviewed a previous version of this article.

Does SF have anything unique to offer psychologists? Psychologists, as a whole, tend to like good quality fiction, so it would be no surprise that they like good quality SF. According to Dr. Marolyn Morford, "perhaps the interest many psychologists have in science fiction draws from the ethical and very human struggles with the unknown, the perceived threats, the social conflicts, and the internal struggles that can be given in metaphorical fiction." Another science fiction reader, Dr. Steven Cohen, adds that "every good science fiction book deals with psychology and asks questions such as, what is humanity? What kind of family structure and relationships shall we have? Or what should be our relationships to strangers?" For example, feminist Ursula K. Le Guin (the daughter of anthropologist, Alfred Kroeber, who wrote *Ishi, the Last Yahi*), explores gender issues, and Kim Stanley Robinson explores environmental issues and cultural clashes in his Mars trilogy. Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (later made into the movie, *Blade Runner*) considers what distinguishes humans from machines, and his novel, *Through a Scanner Darkly*, speculates on the implications of Roger Sperry's research on split brains. Television programs such as *Star Trek* or *Battlestar Gallactica* explore questions such as, what is the essence of humanity compared to the intelligent life of sophisticated machines or how do we resolve conflict that threatens our existence? Although good SF can be diverting and entertaining, it can also appeal to psychologists because it presents fresh perspectives on enduring questions. Readers with additional thoughts on the relationship, if any, between being a psychologist and having an interest in science fiction can contact me at sam@PaPsy.org. 📧

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ANTITRUST RULES...

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The Sherman Act

The Sherman Act of 1890 was enacted to prevent large corporations, such as railroads or oil companies, from colluding in setting prices for their services. For example, railroads which were nominally in competition with each other, knowing that customers had no choice but to use their railroads, entered into agreements

to all charge the highest rate possible. Since that time the Sherman Act has been supplemented by other laws including the Clayton Antitrust Act of 1914, the Federal Trade Commission Act of 1914, the Celler-Kefauver Act of 1950, and other acts of Congress. The penalties for violations of these acts are high, including monetary damages and criminal penalties (potentially prison time).

In 1975 the United States Supreme Court applied the Sherman Act to professions, resulting in standards which

prohibit health care professionals from organizing to boycott particular insurers or force higher rates among commercial health care insurers. Enforcement of antitrust laws by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) or Department of Justice has included successful actions against dental, physician, and medical supply companies. When professional associations have attempted to set fee schedules or negotiate reimbursement collectively,

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Below are examples of questionable actions developed by PPA staff. Please cover the right side column, read the example, make your decision on its legality, and only then read the analysis and response.

Antitrust Vignette	Analysis
The Transylvania Psychological Association passed a resolution to revoke the membership of any of its members who charged patients less than \$100 for an hour of psychotherapy.	Here, a group of independently practicing psychologists is trying to enforce a higher fee instead of letting the marketplace determine fees. This would violate the Sherman Act.
Dr. Brown is an employee of a large hospital where many of the staff are on strike seeking higher wages. He is considering joining his fellow employees.	Employees may organize to collectively bargain for higher salaries. This is not a violation of the Sherman Act.
A group of psychologists in a local community is angered by the low rate offered by the ABC Insurance Company. They meet and compose a letter in which all 15 of them say that they will boycott this insurance company until rates are increased.	These independently practicing psychologists are trying to obtain higher fees by acting collectively. This would violate the Sherman Act.
The Transylvania Psychological Association announces it is unethical for psychologists to refer any patients to professional counselors, under any circumstances.	The issues here are similar to the case of <i>Wilk v. American Medical Association</i> , where the AMA was successfully sued under antitrust provisions because of its policy that it was unethical for physicians to refer patients to chiropractors. The AMA alleged that chiropractic methods were unscientific, but the court determined that the practice was designed to reduce competition and so was a violation of the Sherman Act.
In Lincoln County Transylvania, two large psychological practices merged, so that 30 out of the 65 psychologists in the county now worked for this new practice.	It is unlikely that this would be a violation of the Sherman Act, but the result might differ in the unlikely event that there were no other providers of mental health services besides psychologists, or the new group comprised a large majority of all psychotherapists in this and nearby counties.
Several psychologists discuss how much they dislike the ABC Health Insurance Company. They collectively agree to refuse taking new ABC referrals until the rates are increased. One of the e-mails reads: "If we can convince 20 of our fellow psychologists to drop this company, we might be able to get them to increase their rates." Other e-mails urged psychologists to write to ABC about their fees, and encouraged others to threaten to drop out if fees were not changed.	It is okay to complain individually to the ABC company, but it is not legal to coordinate activities with others to do so. The e-mails could be retrieved to provide evidence that such misconduct occurred
The Transylvania Psychological Association has urged its members to write to Congress to get an increase in Medicare reimbursement levels.	Individuals can organize collectively to influence governmental policies, including the fees for government-run health insurance programs.

<p>Dr. Jane Smith conducted a survey of local psychologists and determined the amount that they each charge for psychotherapy services. She published the results of the survey in a local newsletter.</p>	<p>It is not a violation of the Sherman Act to publish objective data. Individuals may use this information as part of their decision whether or not to stay with a particular insurer. Unless there was evidence of an effort to organize group action against an insurer it is not illegal.</p>
<p>Dr. Bill Jones was bothered by the low rate offered by ABC Insurance and writes a letter complaining about the low fee. He is unaware that the only other psychologist in his small town had written a similar letter two months ago.</p>	<p>Individual psychologists may certainly express their discontent to insurance companies. This is not a violation of the Sherman Act. Even if Dr. Jones knew that the other psychologist wrote a letter, there would be no violation of the Sherman Act, assuming that there was no coordinated effort on the part of the psychologists to work together to force higher fees. It is impossible for us to describe a “critical mass” of letters which will create the presumption of a coordinated effort. Perhaps two letters would be sufficient to trigger an investigation, if the letters had highly similar language. Perhaps 20 letters would not trigger an investigation, if the letters had highly dissimilar phrasing, came from geographically different parts of the county or state, or were spread over several weeks as opposed to several days.</p>
<p>A member called the Transylvania Psychological Association (TPA) and asked for a recommendation on how much to charge for an hour of therapy. The staff person gave a dollar figure that TPA recommended for psychotherapy.</p>	<p>Professional associations should not recommend fees. If the association gave out a recommended fee schedule, this would be a violation of the Sherman Act.</p>
<p>A member called the Transylvania Psychological Association and asked for a recommendation on how much to charge for an hour of therapy. The staff person reported the average and range of charges based on a recent survey of its members.</p>	<p>It is permissible to report objective information about salaries. This is not a violation of the Sherman Act.</p>
<p>Dr. Blue is having trouble with billing a managed care company and seeks guidance by posting a request for information on the listserv of the Transylvania Psychological Association. Later she announces to the listserv that she is resigning from ABC Health Insurance Company because of billing difficulties.</p>	<p>Dr. Blue is not urging collective action against ABC insurer. This is not a violation of the Sherman Act.</p>
<p>Dr. Green is having trouble with billing a managed care company and seeks guidance by posting a request for information on the listserv of the Transylvania Psychological Association. Dr. Green states that “many other psychologists have told me that they intend to resign” and predicts that “if the panel gets too small, then they will have to raise fees to attract more psychologists.”</p>	<p>This is a difficult vignette to analyze. At times there is a fine line between posting an observation and making a call to action. Although the statements in this posting were all phrased in an objective manner, the question is whether an objective person would construe them as a call to organized action. Often these are made on a case-by-case basis. Typically listserv moderators will issue comments or cautions about such messages, as they could easily lead other psychologists to clearly cross the line into Sherman Act violations.</p>
<p>The Transylvania Psychological Association is contacted by several psychologists, who complain that the ABC insurance company is decreasing its reimbursement rates. The Transylvania Psychological Association writes to the insurance company and asks it to explain how it determined its new reimbursement rates.</p>	<p>The association is simply asking for the rationale behind the determination of the reduction of fees. It is not asking the insurance company to increase the reimbursement rates. This would not violate the Sherman Act.</p>
<p>Dr. Black posts on the listserv that ABC insurance company is going to reduce its rates, and states that he is sending a letter asking it to increase the rates. Dr. Black did not ask other psychologists to write letters to the insurance company or post a copy of his letter to the listserv. Later ABC insurance contacts Dr. Black and says that it is going to be increasing the rates because it heard from him and five others. Dr. Black posts a thank you on the listserv thanking psychologists for writing to ABC insurance company and telling the listserv that the insurance company decided to increase its rates.</p>	<p>This is a complex vignette requiring careful analysis. Dr. Black did not ask the members of the listserv to contact ABC insurance company. However, in his follow-up e-mail he thanks listserv members for writing to the insurance company and states that the reimbursement rates are going to be increased as a result of the insurance company receiving the letters from other psychologists. This probably does not violate the Sherman Act, but it is very close.</p>

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being written, it has been reported that one insurer in the Western United States has started an authorization requirement after the 20th session (its previous benefit limit was 20 sessions) and one self-insured company in Pennsylvania will be starting authorizations for outpatient psychotherapy. There may be other efforts to minimize the cost implications of parity, but so far most insurers appear to be trusting the accuracy of the low cost estimates for parity made on the basis of actuarial experience. ❏

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Check out PPA's Career Center

The Membership Benefits Committee would like to remind all PPA members that the new online Career Center is up and running! Simply click on the green box labeled "Career Opportunities" on the right hand side of the PPA home page (www.PaPsy.org). This is a resource for both job seekers and employers/recruiters.

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the FTC has consistently found them to be in violation of antitrust provisions, resulting in considerable fines including damages (DeLeon, Mays & Cullen, 2006). To our knowledge, no groups of psychologists have ever been successfully prosecuted under the Sherman Act.

Constraints on use of listserv

The salient criterion of illegality is joint action by independent practitioners with the intention of monetary gain or advantage. As licensed psychologists, we are all considered independent agents for the purpose of setting fees and reimbursement schedules. The e-mail lists which most state psychological associations offer could provide a "paper trail" in the event that the Department of Justice wanted to investigate an allegation of antitrust violation. Therefore:

- ♦ The PPA listserv cannot be used for discussions intended to organize psychologists to pressure private insurers for more money and
- ♦ PPA staff are not permitted to recommend fees when members call asking for such recommendations.

A real world example highlights how these constraints operate. Several years ago, a PPA staff person attended a meeting of a regional psychological association, where concern was expressed because a local insurer had reduced fees. When the discussion shifted to ways the association could band together to fight the fee reduction, the PPA staff person said that he would have to leave the room because if such a discussion continued, his mere presence in the room placed PPA in jeopardy of violating the Sherman Act.

Actions permitted under the law

Employees are permitted to band together to advocate for higher wages from their employers. However, psychologists who have contracts with managed care companies are not considered employees and have no right to bargain collectively.

Associations are permitted to, and do, advocate for higher reimbursements under government programs – it's called lobbying – to change the law, or to seek redress for harm perpetrated by others. This advocacy may take the form of a lawsuit, a request for regulatory action, or a protest march. Listserv discussions of such actions directed at the government, rather than a private insurer, would be legal.

Issues for future consideration

The laws that prohibit professional associations from advocating for higher fees with commercial insurers may seem unfair. The Sherman Act was enacted more than 100 years ago to address abuses caused by the "captains of industry" who used tactics to undercut the free market system, benefit only themselves, and to harm the public. An argument could be made that the Act was not written with the intent to apply it to professional associations, and PPA, as well as individual members, might not like how the law is applied to psychologists. Nonetheless, these are the rules in place, and until they are changed, we must follow them.

When in doubt about whether something you intend to say or do may run afoul of antitrust law – wait!

Consult with PPA staff if you doubt the legality or propriety of what you intend to post. A delay in posting is a small hardship when compared to an FTC complaint against you and/or PPA. ❏

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The Philosophy Behind Psychology: A Reminder for Graduate Students

Craig Strohmeier



As an undergraduate student I enjoyed several classes on philosophy, but eventually I decided on psychology as a major because I

considered it to be philosophy's practical application. Nonetheless, in graduate school it seems that time constraints and curriculum requirements for accreditation allow little time to formally cover philosophical inquiry within the psychology coursework. In addition, Heath (2002) surmises that instructing graduate students in methods of philosophical investigation is largely avoided because it may compromise a student's perception of the psychological material as representative of concepts that embody an immutable truth to be learned and practiced. It is a scary thought to believe that what we are studying may not be enduringly truthful, and the methods that we intend to put into practice may not be the most virtuous way of doing things! In response to that daunting prospect, and the realistic limitations of a focused psychology curriculum, philosophy in psychology graduate programs is minimized at best and altogether ignored at worst. This is surprising given that before psychology was recognized as an independent discipline, one of the first experimental psychology labs was created by a philosopher. Academic philosopher and physiologist,

Wilhelm Wundt, combined the two fields and began his search for the universal laws of the mind (Laungani, 2004).

This article highlights some of philosophy's contributions to the field of psychology, and will hopefully encourage other graduate students to continue to explore the ongoing relationship between the two disciplines. Initially, psychology graduate students may be resistant to this suggestion. Those who are unfamiliar with philosophy may believe that once one delves into its depths they will travel down a slippery slope of abstraction where all signs of practicality and scientific thought are lost. Although I sympathize with this reservation, I propose that an emphasis on some aspects of philosophy will actually shed light on its relevance to scientific inquiry, especially in areas such as research and psychotherapy.

In stark contrast to a man in a lab coat, looking through a microscope, the research methods of science were initiated by philosophers, rather than what we would traditionally consider "scientists." By the 1700s philosophers had provided a framework for studying the natural sciences (i.e. biology, chemistry, earth science, etc.) by postulating that the most reliable form of investigation was through direct observation of natural occurrences (Anchin, 2008). Philosophers recognized the esteem that natural scientists received for their discoveries and integrated the philosophy of naturalism into social science research. Naturalism, a precursor to the logical positivistic philosophy of

empiricism, is a philosophical system that regards the research and experimental methods of the natural sciences as the most reliable way of studying social science phenomena (Anchin, 2008). The philosophical position of anti-naturalism, or humanism, is naturalism's opposite (naturally). Anti-naturalism considers phenomenology and an individual's subjective human experience as the focus of research (Anchin, 2008). For the most part, the distinction between naturalism and anti-naturalism is regarded in research as quantitative and qualitative methodology, respectively. Although quantitative research is currently more popular, both methods hold the same merit as a philosophical method of scientific inquiry. Altogether, what appear as stable and unquestionable methodologies are actually distinctly articulated branches of philosophy.

Another important area to consider philosophy would be in the direct, clinical work of psychology: psychotherapy. Professionally, the investigation of relationships, love, work, responsibility, justice, and tolerance has been the primary duty of philosophers for thousands of years. Ancient Greek and Roman philosophers who provided direct advice and service to others regarding social and emotional dilemmas were known as ethicists (Allen, 2008). Ethicists led discussions with individuals about various behavioral concerns and problems in living, or ethical issues,

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Member News



Congratulations to **Frank M. Dattilio, Ph.D., ABPP**, who had two new books released this fall.

Cognitive-Behavior Therapy with Couples and Families: A Comprehensive Guide for Clinicians. New York: Guilford Publications.

This state-of-the-art text provides an overview of the development of cognitive-behavioral couple and family therapy and its underlying principles and constructs. It also integrates aspects of neurobiology, attachment, general systems theory, mindfulness, and emotional regulation.

The Family Therapy Treatment Planner (2nd ed.). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

This is the second edition of Dr. Dattilio's Treatment planner on family therapy, which offers a step-by-step guide to writing treatment plans for 38 different family-based problems. The format is accepted by most managed care and third-party payers who require treatment plan outlines on family therapy interventions. ▮



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THE PHILOSOPHY BEHIND PSYCHOLOGY

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in a manner that has some resemblance to the work of practicing psychotherapists or psychologists today. Therefore, philosophical ethics provides a relevant starting point for those still hesitant towards integrating philosophy into their study of psychology. Investing some time in studying the philosophy of ethics can help illuminate one's own standard of conduct, which will inevitably assist in navigating ethical dilemmas within the field of professional psychology (Knapp & VandeCreek, 2006). Furthermore, Allen (2008) warns, "Science can lead us astray here if we misguidedly believe that psychotherapy should be conducted from a value-neutral stance (and science cannot be conducted from a value-neutral stance either)" (p.166).

With evidence-based practice growing as a standard for the application of psychotherapeutic techniques, there is a risk that philosophical inquiry will be compromised if researchers use empirical support as a substitute for philosophically, and scientifically, questioning why something does what it does (Woolfolk & Richardson, 2008). When the questioning angle of a philosopher is lost, so is the pursuit of a scientific practice. Simply testing techniques without an in-depth understanding of the theoretical and philosophical mechanisms through which they have evolved has been likened by some to an unscientific enterprise of "product testing" (Woolfolk & Richardson, 2008, p.29). Therefore, it will be important for graduate students to remember the philosophical foundation of techniques evaluated in a randomized controlled trial. Elliot (2008) reiterates, "Psychotherapists and psychotherapy researchers today must master not only methods of working with clients and studying psychotherapy, but also the philosophical assumptions that underlie those methods" (p.41).

As the reader can see, it is nearly impossible (I dare not say that it IS impossible, as this would be unscientific and philosophically incorrect) to avoid the philosophy behind psychology. Philosophy's roots extend firmly to the earliest days in the field and will continue to be present in future advancements. ▮

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The ABPP Specialty Diploma in Group Psychology

The American Board of Professional Psychology (ABPP) Specialty Diploma in Group Psychology has its origins in Division 49, Group Psychology, of the American Psychological Association. With the seminal discussions of the formation of an Academy of Group Psychology dating back to the late 1980s, the formal process of application for specialty recognition and affiliation with the ABPP spanned a series of years in the early 1990s. By 1999 there were 30 Specialty Diplomas in Group Psychology awarded by the ABPP.

When candidates make their way through the steps of application and successfully complete the examination process in Group Psychology they are awarded membership in the American Academy of Group Psychology. The Academy is administrated by a board of directors elected from the membership. The purpose of the Academy is to promote the practice of group psychology. To quote from their Web site at www.aagp.net:

The Academy's mission is to educate the professional community to the value of the Diplomate for both the individual practitioner and to the development of the entire discipline of "Group Psychology." The Academy serves as an independent body, whose major function is the recruitment of psychologists to sit for the Diplomate examination offered by the American Board of Group Psychology.

The American Board of Group Psychology (ABGP) is charged with the development and maintenance of standards and procedures for the examination in group psychology as well as the administration of the examinations. The ABGP is governed by a board of directors who are elected from the Academy membership and serve staggered 3-year terms. Those psychologists who apply for the Specialty Diploma in Group Psychology will be interfacing with the examination coordinator as well as others who may offer mentorship or consultation in the course of the application and examination process.

The American Academy of Group Psychology Web site outlines specific policy about eligibility, which in essence consists of holding a license in psychology in your state or province, graduation from an APA- or CPA-accredited program and having demonstrated specialty training and professional experience in the practice of group psychology. This step in the application process will require the collection of transcripts and documentation of training and experience. The forms for this application process are available at the ABPP Web site at www.abpp.org.

Many candidates report that they learned far more than they thought they would when they started the process.

Upon completion of specialty-specific eligibility, candidates are asked to provide a practice sample which is comprised of two separate tasks. The first is to answer a series of questions in the form of a professional statement that describes their work, theoretical orientation, continuing education, practice methods, and approach to ethical dilemmas in the course of daily practice. Many psychologists who have been through this process have found that writing the professional statement is both useful and thought provoking. In many ways this examination process is not any different from what most psychologists do in the course of peer review and consultation. The questions are meant to assist candidates in thinking about their work and their approach to the clinical tasks of group psychology.

The other component of the practice sample is a piece of professional work that candidates choose to share with the committee. The most common work sample product is a videotape of one's work with a group. Other work sample

formats may include written transcripts and audio tapes. This might be a therapy or counseling group, a consultation or supervision group, a lecture about group psychology, or a group psychology intervention of one kind or another. The purpose of the work sample is to allow the committee to see the work and to have sufficient exposure to know how the candidate goes about applying the principles of group psychology. The work sample also includes the candidate's responses to a series of questions that address the theory, intervention context, formulation of both group and individual psychology dynamics, summary and rationale for leader interventions, and a self-critique. The specific questions are available on the www.abpp.org Web site under group psychology.

In the case of those psychologists who have earned their doctorate 15 years prior to the date of application we also offer a senior examination. This format allows the candidate to submit a practice sample rooted in other professional activities such as professional writing, course outlines, audio or video material developed to teach or demonstrate group theory and/or technique or any previously prepared professional work product which allows the candidate to demonstrate their mastery of group theory and the application of group techniques. In the senior examination process the applicant may submit a CV or professional resume that documents postdoctoral training and experience as a group psychologist that is augmented with a fellow psychologist's attestation that the applicant has developed group skills at the postdoctoral level through coursework and supervision.

Upon the receipt of these materials, the examination coordinator reviews the materials and if necessary consults with fellow members of the Board to verify eligibility. Upon approval the candidate is scheduled for an oral examination with a committee comprised of a chair and two additional Academy members. The examination is about one-half day in duration and involves a variety of experiences.

Continued on page 10




THE ABPP SPECIALTY DIPLOMA...

Continued from page 9

Initially candidates are shown a video of a therapy group and are asked to make comments. The committee will then discuss the contents of the candidates' files including their experience in training, practice, and supervision as described in the application, the professional statement, and the work sample materials. Upon completion of the examination candidates will receive a letter from the ABPP central office notifying them of their results.

Most psychologists who have been awarded the ABPP Specialty Diploma in Group Psychology describe this as a long and detailed process that proved to one of their best professional growth experiences. The procedures are essentially a highly structured peer review process where candidates are asked to share their history, thoughts, and overall approach to professional practice with other group psychologists. The process is respectful, rigorous, and regulated. Many candidates report that they learned far more than they thought they would when they started the process. Many psychologists report their experience with the examination as requiring focus and discipline to organize their thoughts in order to convey their professional approach. Most everyone who has been through this experience seems to agree that this was a worthwhile professional experience. Those members of the Academy who sit on examination committees have very similar comments. They volunteer their time to review the candidate's materials and often have to travel to sit on a committee. All of us who engage in this work experience learn a lot about our candidates, our profession and ourselves.

We hope that this has been of some help to readers in terms of better understanding the process that leads to the ABPP Specialty Diploma in Group Psychology. Any member of the Academy who is listed on the Web sites cited above would be more than happy to speak with PPA members as well as offer advice, mentorship, and assistance in your decision to engage in this process. 



In 1979

Reflections

Nancy Chiswick, Ph.D.

What is that piece of one's past
That leads one forward into a lifetime
Of hearing and healing the wounds of others?
Is it the attempted fathoming of one's own hurts
And the piecing together of communal lore, the stories told
To make sense of what is, or is not?

Then once the road is chosen, the Olympic quest to get to the finish:
Hoops to jump through, mentors to please, the rush of new knowledge—
Long days and nights devoted to a singular goal.
And then the end is not the beginning:
There are more hoops and more long days and nights, more steps to take
Until at long last confirmation of the chance...to begin.

How does one so young have such audacity—to think that by caring enough,
And by knowing what others have done to shed light on this puzzle,
One can make life easier or at least less painful for the other?
And once that bar has been set and met, how does one so young
Have the strength to not succumb to the pain of so many voices?
Strength comes from within, from practice, and from the comfort and guidance
Of those who have gone before.

The hours spent in seclusion with those who find their way
To the couch are a perfect antidote and compliment to the role
Of teacher and guide to those coming next. Teaching something to someone
Makes it more understood by the teacher, even if not always by the pupil.
And meanwhile the context grows: love and loss, pain and joy, procreation of one's own
Are the lessons that inform the mid-way milestones.

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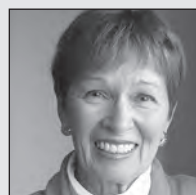


And then comes both success and failure; perhaps they were always meant to go
 Hand in hand. The first keeps one going, the second keeps one humble.
 The fifteen minutes of fame, when all is aglow with promise and praise;
 The electronic networks call for more, and the political networks offer
 Chances to do more good than were dreamt of in those days that now seem long ago.
 But how to handle the failures; not just those who come briefly and don't come back,
 But those whose complaints ring true, however hard they are to hear, or those
 Who choose to leave forever, and one knows deep down
 There might have been something that could have been said or done differently?

Somehow, the years speed up, perhaps akin to a spool of thread:
 The closer one is to the end, the faster it goes. And suddenly, there are others
 In the shoes you used to wear, asking for guidance and taking up the yoke.
 It is comfortable now, the routine is familiar and the setting has been chosen
 To match what feels right and good to be doing now.
 How kind fortune has been to smile so gladly on this time and place,
 And on one who hardly knew how good this match would be.

When suddenly, it is time to consign old files to the shredder:
 Children are spared indefinitely, but adults have only seven years grace,
 And then they go.
 The files are filled with years of longing and learning, on both sides of the couch,
 The weekly jottings, the appointment log, the telephone messages and insurance forms,
 The holiday cards sent long afterwards— all testify to change that was good.
 And then there are the empty files: just an appointment made and cancelled, never kept.
 Or worse: one appointment, a start made, never a second chance, no reason why.

There is more to do: mentoring the next to choose this path.
 Fewer days to do this work, but perhaps it is better and more refined.
 There is a sense of having distilled it to its essence,
 So that it saves time and hurt for those coming now.
 There is a sense of continuity and change, a hint of the end of the road,
 And the reflection gives one balance to take those last steps.



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- Licensure information
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- Announcements about in-person events
- Information on PPAGS, PPA's student organization
- Members-only password: keystone

The Pennsylvania Psychologist

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The following programs are being offered either through co-sponsorship or solely by PPA.

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Marti Evans (717) 232-3817

June 16-19, 2010*Annual Convention*

Harrisburg, PA

Marti Evans (717) 232-3817

November 4-5, 2010*Fall Continuing Education and Ethics Conference*

Exton, PA

Marti Evans (717) 232-3817

For CE programs sponsored by one of the Regional Psychological Associations in Pennsylvania, visit <http://www.PaPsy.org/resources/regional.html>.

Registration materials and further conference information will be mailed to all members.

If you have additional questions, please contact Marti Evans at the PPA office.

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*Pennsylvania's Psychology Licensing Law, Regulations and Ethics**

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For all Home Study CE Courses above contact: Katie Boyer
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