

SPA Exchange

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Presidential Address

Finding Personal Meaning in Personality Assessment

Barry Ritzler, Ph.D.

For my final presidential address, I wanted to speak personally to the SPA members in attendance at the San Diego Midwinter Meeting—especially those who regularly attend. Why do we consider personality assessment important enough to join the Society and come to these meetings even if it means traveling across the entire U.S. or halfway around the world? Why have we made personality assessment a major part of our professional activity? In other words, what existential meaning do we find in personality assessment?

At the San Diego meeting, I presented a list of the meanings personality assessment has for me. What

follows is a version of that list condensed for the *Exchange*.

1. Personality assessment provides systematic procedures for finding order in human psychological functioning.

Personality assessment helps to fulfill a basic need I think I share with most psychologists to discover regularity and consistency in human behavior to avoid confusion and provide direction for decision-making and behavior in professional practice.

2. Personality assessment discriminates individual differences.

How can we understand the uniqueness of ourselves and others? I am both amazed and reassured that no two Rorschach protocols are nearly identical. In comparing Rorschachs of different people, we seldom have to go beyond the first card to see clear differences in the formal and/or content properties of the responses.

3. Personality assessment allows us to know another person well.

It facilitates the kind of connection and closeness to others that forms the social fabric of our lives. This sense of contact and mutuality is particularly strong in feedback sessions when I am discussing assessment results with a client. The client's active participation and feedback in those sessions complements my efforts to communicate



Barry Ritzler

and strengthen the important feeling of a working alliance.

4. Personality assessment distinguishes us from other mental health professionals and enables us to do what we specifically have been trained to do.

A psychologist's unique contribution to mental health as a profession is psychological assessment. Much has been discussed about the rights of our clients, but a right that often is overlooked is our right to practice our profession. Personality assessment, more than any other activity, uniquely fulfills that right for psychologists.

5. Personality assessment enables me to be an expert.

As a child, I enjoyed hearing adults talk about adult technical matters: my parents planning a vacation, my mother sharing a recipe with a friend, my father explaining the Yankee's chances of winning the World Series. One of my favorite TV shows was "This Old House" in which numerous experts discussed plumbing, plastering, wiring, and

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Presidential Address

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other procedures needed to remodel a house. I had little desire to be a plumber, plasterer, or electrician, but I loved to listen to an expert. I still do. I would rather listen to John Exner interpret a Rorschach or Eric Zillmer discuss the psychological consequences of head trauma, or Carl Gacono describe a psychopath than drink beer—and that's saying a lot! I especially appreciate the realization that I can handle a set of assessment results—something I wondered if I could ever do when I began as a graduate student.

6. Personality provides a challenge—a puzzle to solve.

Every other Sunday, I work the acrostic puzzle in the *New York Times Magazine*. I love cryptograms and when I was in high school I did every extra credit story problem in the math textbooks. Give me a problem that requires creative integration and transfer of knowledge to new situations and you don't have to call me for supper. In between the *New York Times* acrostics, a Rorschach Comprehensive System structural summary will do just fine.

7. Personality assessment has added a new meaning to my experience.

Although I was a college student in the '60s, I did not spend much time with political activism. Since the SPA Board of Trustees began to visit Capitol Hill, I discovered that I enjoyed the opportunity to present our concerns to congressional staff members regarding managed care and to complain of the severe

limitations it places on personality assessment. When my own Congressional representative, Marge Roukema, played a major role in the passing of corrective mental health care legislation, I felt a small, but satisfying glow of accomplishment.

8. Personality assessment has become my primary vehicle of teaching psychology.

Whether in the classroom, with small consultation groups, or in larger workshops, enabling others to learn the difficult procedures of assessment has never failed to provide a stimulating variety of challenges.

9. Then, of course, there is the special camaraderie of SPA

which this year took on a more international flavor with the Rorschach Society meeting in Boston and more international members in attendance in San Diego. In other words, personality assessment helps meet my affiliation needs.

Though this list may be exhausting, it is not exhaustive. I am fairly sure that personality assessment means even more to me and I am certain that you have other items of your own. For me, it seems accurate to say "I assess, therefore, I am." ☘



The Teacher's Block

Jed Yalof, Ph.D.

On Teaching Report Writing to the Beginner: A "Top 3" List of What to Expect

Teachers and supervisors of assessment devote a substantial portion of their instructional energies into helping students and trainees learn how to translate history, observations, and test data into descriptive clinical narratives. Typical report writing strategies involve categorizing reports into referral, history, observations, interpretations, diagnostic impression, and recommendations. Report format, style, and length may vary across settings and clinical need, but the essence of diagnostic understanding can be culled from these six categories.

The gap, however, between providing students with a model for internalizing how to think about diagnostic information and their ability to actually pitch stylish reports that are sources of pride to teachers and supervisors requires sensitivity to developmental issues in report writing. Here are a few tongue-in-cheek "truths" about teaching report writing to beginning clinical trainees to which all teachers and supervisors can surely attest:

1. Students need help making sense out of the Bender-Gestalt results.

Decisions about where to place the Bender-Gestalt in a test report are almost as frustrating to the beginner as are decisions about where to seat relatives at a family function. The Bender might be found straggling

behind at the end of a review of the WISC or WAIS visual-spatial tasks. Then, it may reappear in either a separate paragraph devoted to a discussion of the Bender results and/or as part of a discussion of personality variables because "the client erased several times and commented 'I can't draw' when performing the Bender task." In addition to uncertainty about where in the report to place Bender findings, beginners also have dilemmas about how to interpret the Bender in relation to neurological impairment or organicity. For example, a supervisor may find the Bender described as having "ruled out organicity" or "being suggestive of a learning disability." The analytically-minded student might even try to use the Bender to support an object relational inference because of the "overlap, penetration, and closure difficulties noted on a few of the designs." If you know what to do with the Bender, please let me know!

2. Students need help reporting on "Ideation, Mediation, and Processing."

If students thought that Rorschach scoring was hard, wait until they try to interpret "ideation, mediation, and processing." It is not unusual to see these three constructs integrated in a way that makes it appear as if this part of the report was constructed in a parallel universe, unrelated to the client to whom the rest of the report is devoted! The teacher can discuss the merit of synthesizing IQ findings with information derived from the ideation, mediation, and processing sections of the Rorschach into a section entitled: "Intelligence and Thought Organization." Then the teacher can take early retirement!

3. Students do not need help integrating the MMPI and Rorschach findings, or so they think.

Students actually seem relieved when they can distinguish the presence of relatively discrete MMPI symptom clusters from the massing of TAT, Figure Drawing, and Rorschach data. However, for those of us reared on two-point codes, it's a whole new ball game, or at least extra innings. The integration of MMPI and Rorschach research requires keeping up with new literature that includes exposing one's students and supervisees to the works of Finn, Greene, Ganellen, and Meyer. Such statements as "The client endorsed MMPI items suggestive of a symptom picture in which...predominate" can no longer stand alone; instead, they need follow-up with other tests and measures that are sensitive to different levels of experience and which construe similar constructs differently. If anyone questions you on this, they can do 100 push-ups or read Greg Meyer's recent article on MMPI and Rorschach!

For the next "The Teacher's Block" column, I am interested in getting information about how teachers grade students in an introductory Rorschach scoring course: How do you grade them and what is the hardest part about the grading process? I would very much appreciate your sending me a brief, one-page response by July 30, 1997. Please send your responses to my attention at Immaculata College, Box 682, Immaculata, PA 19345. Thank you in advance for your assistance. ☘

From the Editor:



Virginia Brabender

Over my years of participation with the *Exchange*, one discovery that I have made is that frequently, graduate instructors use newsletter articles as assigned readings for courses in personality assessment. One reason for this, I think, is that aside from their quality, the articles are written in a colloquial way which makes them reader-friendly. In this issue, we are pleased to publish a rather extensive article by a well-known and respected member of SPA, Nancy Kaser-Boyd, on the issue of the use of the Rorschach in the courtroom. We have attempted to facilitate the use of this article for teaching purposes by printing it in a cohesive way, sparing the busy instructor from the usual cut-and-paste activities. (See pages 7 through 10.) Dr. Kaser-Boyd and I would welcome any responses you might have to her thoughts in this area. I will publish at least some of the letters I receive in the next issue.

A warm welcome is extended to Radhika Krishnamurthy as she joins the Editorial Committee of the *SPA Exchange*.

Virginia Brabender
Virginia Brabender

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SPA Exchange

Personal Column



Joan Weltzien

Robert Bornstein and Joseph Masling

have recently published *Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Developmental Psychology* via APA Books.

Virginia Brabender, Pd.D.

recently accepted the position of Associate Dean and Director of The Institute for Graduate Clinical Psychology at Widener University. Dr. Brabender succeeds **Dr. Jules Abrams**, founder of the program. Dr. Abrams, also a member of SPA, will continue to serve on the faculty of the Institute.

Anne Evans

completed a half hour video tape interview on the "Prevention of Violence" which aired throughout Los Angeles' numerous cable stations. As a forensic psychologist, her specialty is in capitol cases. She is always interested in networking with others involved in furthering the knowledge of violence prevention.

Neil Hibler

is soliciting interest for sharing normative information for police and fire-fighters. He is planning a nationwide effort to get information to establish test norms for public safety personnel using a variety of psychometric instruments. The intent is to provide up-to-date standards for interpretation that will aid entry screening and fitness for duty evaluations. Interested parties are encouraged to write or call the

Special Psychological Services Group, 1201 Lee Highway, Suite 480, Fairfax, Virginia 22030-2222; phone: (703) 385-7122.

Milton Lessner

wrote a charming anecdote regarding his experience in working with **Starke Hathaway** as his first professor of psychology at age sixteen at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio. At the time that he was taking the class, he was unaware of Dr. Hathaway's achievements and delighted in discovering that his original inspiration was from a person of such importance.

Robert Lipgar

reported that he will be delivering presentations on research using the Q-Methodology to explore the effectiveness of Group Relations Conferences at the AK Rice/Tavistock tradition in the training of leadership and on Bison's Concept of Leadership as the "Quality of Contact." The presentation will be at Turin, Italy, and at the International Society of Political Psychology in Krakow, Poland, in July, 1997. The AK Rice Meeting was held in Houston April 3-6, 1997.

Claude McDowell

received a Doctor of Psychology degree from the American School of Professional Psychology, Hawaii Campus, in October of 1996. He received the Raymond Cattell Award for his clinical research project entitled "Diagnostic Efficacy of the Rorschach Comprehensive System Interpretive Search Strategy." He presented a paper on the study at the SPA meeting in 1996 in Denver. He began a post-doctoral fellowship at the Castle Medical Center in Hawaii in August of 1996. He also

co-authored with **Marvin Acklin** a three article series on Rorschach Interrater Reliability.

Stephen Safran

has founded the International Network for Projective Drawing and Pictorial Symbolism as a nonprofit organization to foster the professional and scientific use of these techniques. He is the editor and publisher of the *HTP Viewpoint*, now in it's second issue. For information or a copy, contact Dr. Safran at 6 Edgewater Lane South, Nyack, New York, 10960, or call (914) 353-0207.

A "perk" for me, was a complimentary copy of the first volume of the newsletter which is most interesting ...Joan.

Catherine Skillestad

received licensure in the state of Texas in September, 1996.

Chris Stout

has been appointed Illinois State Representative of the Association for the Advancement of Psychology. The appointment was made by the Executive Director of the association. In addition, he has an article to be released in the upcoming issue of their quarterly, *Advance*. Dr. Stout has also co-authored articles to be published in *Professional Psychology* and *The Independent Practitioner*. He has an upcoming international publication that has been translated in three languages. His "Complete Guide to Managed Care" has reached "best seller" status. He has been invited to appear in *Contemporary Authors* and will be collaborating on his sixteenth book on treatment planning (along with software) to be published by John Wiley & Sons later this year.

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Barry Ritzler, Ph. D. SPA President

Robert Lovitt, Ph.D.



Robert Lovitt

- ✂ Born and raised in a rural farming community, Barry Ritzler did not fit in with the big city “sharpies.”
- ✂ Barry Ritzler received an unsatisfactory grade in his first graduate level assessment course emphasizing the Rorschach.

These events encapsulated in a history of interpersonal sensitivity and academic excellence make SPA President Barry Ritzler an engaging and distinguished colleague and gentleman.

Barry was born in Michigan City, Indiana, on Lake Michigan. He was raised in a small farm community not far from South Bend. Committed to country life and conservative values, the senior Ritzlers believed in a strict adherence to work and productivity. The “big city” with its fast life style and unpredictability were elements from which they sought to shield the young Barry. As a matter of fact, Barry has described himself as a youngster as a “country kid who was intimidated by the city kids.” He was a straight arrow—a pleasant, nice kid without fashionable pettiness or meanness when he was a young boy and adolescent. When he finally got to the big city in his high school years, he really had a hard time. He was just not sophisticated...but he was able to survive. He managed to flourish and eventually dominate the other kids (He probably ate their lunches!) because he was a good athlete, smarter than most, and well...he was Barry. In spite of becoming a forceful

figure, he remained a “good kid.” Even though he was well-behaved and even won a good citizenship award in high school, he was still able to retain the admiration of his classmates as well as the “roughians” in the big city.

These early years laid the foundation for Barry becoming a leader in his chosen field of psychology and then, an understanding and warm mentor for students and younger colleagues in the Society. He went to a small rural elementary school which had four classrooms with two grades per room. There was just one teacher for both grades. She would teach one grade for a while and then the other. It was during this time that Barry developed his capacity to process complex information and to understand multiple levels of communication. He would do his work quickly so that he could pay attention to the more advanced material being presented to the higher grade... thereby gaining an advantage over the other students in his grade. In this setting, he developed a core Ritzler trait—he was always a step ahead of his classmates.

Independent thinking abilities and a wish to define his own values took early root. As noted above, Barry’s parents were conservative, strict, and committed to rural life. As might be expected, his dad attempted to get him interested in growing crops, taking care of the land, hunting, and fishing. At an early age, Barry discovered that he was more interested in reading, thinking, and seeing relationships between ideas and events. Tensions developed between father and son as Barry

stood his ground and developed his own life direction. He simply was not interested in shooting, trapping, and skinning animals. His life, however, continued to be protected and isolated. Having limited contact with other children except in school, limited contact with minorities, and limited contact with intellectual role models, Barry became lonely and contemplative. Although not completely comfortable with a sensitive, intellectual son, Barry’s parents respected his “unusual leanings.” A tension persists to this day at the core of this loving although sometimes contentious relationship.

Barry admits that he was thought of as a “goody-goody” in elementary school—a fact that didn’t prevent him from finding outlets for his engaging sense of humor and youthful high energy. Because he was a bright youngster, he would get bored easily and occasionally got into trouble—not too much trouble because he knew just how far he could push the limits and just how much he could get away with. During one episode in the second grade, he painted his teeth black while in class but received only a gentle reprimand. Because there were few outlets for his high energy level, these younger years were characterized by a great deal of solitary activities.

Barry’s life adjustments began when he entered the big city of South Bend, Indiana, after the seventh grade. He was severely reprimanded when his parents found out about his involvement in a fist fight. Because they were seriously opposed to violence, aggressive displays of behavior were not only unwelcome, they were not to be tolerated.

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Ritzler

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Conflicts with the family continued following high school. Barry wanted to go to the University of Chicago; his parents strongly objected. They wanted him to stay out of any big city. Because he was a compliant youngster, Barry obeyed his parents. The family finally settled on Manchester College which was located in North Manchester, Indiana. This small liberal arts school boasted a strong religious orientation and emphasized pacifism and peace studies. Even in this relatively small town environment, socially sophisticated settings and cosmopolitan people continued to intimidate him. In the midst of 1400 students, Barry felt that his social development was still somewhat delayed. He did, however, continue to look for outlets for his high energy levels in socially appropriate venues. He became editor of the school newspaper and was a member of the drama club.

What has become somewhat of a lifetime dancing career was initiated when he starred in the play "Oklahoma" as a dancer. This fascination with dance developed as a result of interactions with his mother. She began by teaching him ballroom dancing and then progressed to square dancing. Barry currently expresses this particular interest in Israeli dancing. Those who know him personally are familiar with the high energy lifestyle he maintains as demonstrated by his numerous professional and recreational activities which focus on dance, especially Israeli dancing. By the way, Barry also enjoyed his appearances in a major dancing role in "Brigadoon" and in starring roles in "West Side Story" and "The Fantastics."

Although his family firmly discouraged him from being physically aggressive, Barry never backed away from intellectual controversies. During his undergraduate career at the pacifist Manchester College, he wrote a number of controversial articles supporting John F. Kennedy's positions in handling the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Bay-of-Pigs Invasion. He also seriously questioned the wisdom of the school having a football team while somehow managing to earn and maintain the respect and friendship of the football players.

After working as an orderly in a local hospital, Barry developed an interest in psychology and began to focus on this area of study. Manchester College, however, had a limited psychology department...and Barry entered graduate school with minimal preparation. Wayne State University in the big city of Detroit was his choice.

One of the biggest hurdles he faced in graduate school was the transition from country boy to the more sophisticated and worldly Barry Ritzler that is today's SPA President. He was not accustomed to either the competition or the poise of the other students, so his early days at Wayne State were somewhat erratic. During this time, however, Barry discovered not only the big city and the opposite sex, but also personality assessment. It's interesting to note that the first assessment course he took taught the Klopfer Rorschach System and, lo and behold, our Barry got a "C"—considered a failing grade in this course. He was totally immersed in the process of growing up—that left little energy for focus on the Rorschach! The second time around, Barry was a teaching assistant and had his feet firmly planted on the ground. And so, the

stories about his grades had much more positive endings.

During this pivotal time period, he also learned to drink beer, talk to women, and become just like the other guys. He was doing so well in his studies that he was offered an internship in the Lafayette Clinic where he was introduced to diagnostic testing in a clinical setting—and he truly enjoyed it. The "icing on the cake" of this experience was the opportunity to meet Sid Blatt who was involved in a colloquium on the Rorschach at the Lafayette Clinic. And Sid became an important mentor for Barry. After this, he moved on to Yale University for a post doctoral fellowship in personality assessment. It was at Yale that Barry initiated and completed some of his well known and frequently cited research with Sid. Also while at Yale, he became deeply interested in the Nazi Rorschachs; his analyses of the Rorschachs of these detested historical figures have continued to earn the highest respect. One of the strengths that Barry developed and took with him from Wayne State University—and found additional encouragement for at Yale—was his longstanding interest in, and commitment to, empirical research. Early in his career, he was able to form an amalgam of positive qualities that are still admired by his students and peers—a love of academics, a warm and accepting temperament, high energy, and high level intellect.

At this point in time, Barry considers the most important concerns in his life to be his family and his academic field. His students describe him as an exciting teacher who not only answers questions but is also interested—and involved—in their personal and professional development. He handles stressors well, is always available to work with

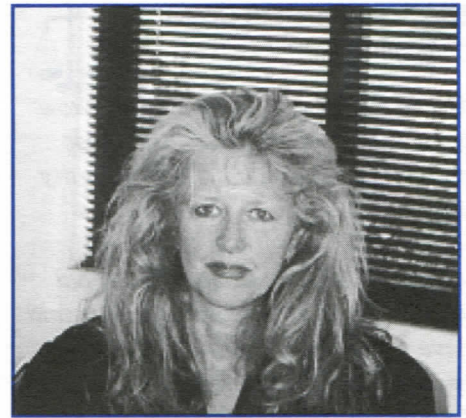
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Forensic Use of the Rorschach

Nancy Kaser-Boyd, Ph.D.

Psychiatry/Behavioral Sciences
University of California, Los Angeles



Nancy Kaser-Boyd

In a recent article, "Is the Rorschach Welcome in the Courtroom?" (1996), Weiner, Exner, and Sciara report on the forensic experiences of 93 participants in Rorschach Workshops who responded to a questionnaire surveying their experiences with the admissibility of their testimony about the Rorschach. Reporting on the previous five years of time, estimated to include more than 4,000 criminal cases, more than 3,000 custody cases, and approximately 800 personality injury cases, heard in 32 states, the District of Columbia, and "various Federal Courts," they conclude: "The Rorschach was seriously challenged" in just 6 cases and declared inadmissible in only one case.

This optimistic view may misrepresent the challenge of the present and future to Rorschach testimony. To begin with, Federal courts are now operating with the Daubert standard¹, a quite different legal standard for admissibility than the previous Kelly/Frye standard, where testimony is accepted if based on a scientific technique "generally acceptable" and reliable within the scientific community. In Federal courts, scientific credibility will now be determined by the presiding judge who is required to weigh whether the proffered testimony:

- 1) reflects scientific knowledge;
- 2) is derived by the scientific method;
- 3) is good science; and
- 4) can be applied to the facts at issue.

This standard has yet to be adopted in a majority of state courts; California has specifically rejected it², but indicated they might agree with the Daubert standard if California had an evidence code similar to that in the Federal jurisdiction. A recent article (Rotgers and Barrett, 1996) provides a way of thinking about the different levels of validity of theories and methods in psychology *vis a vis* Daubert.

Admissibility...

of Rorschach testimony probably isn't the real issue, even under Daubert. More likely than being ruled inadmissible, Rorschach testimony will be held to an increasingly high standard in the testimony itself. This is due partly to the emergence in the past several years of a literature critical of the Exner Comprehensive System (Gann, 1996; Wood, Nezworski, and Stejskal, 1996) and partly from the work of SPA colleagues who are working to improve the methodology of Rorschach research or present a balanced view of the test. For example, Dies (1996) mentions my Rorschach study on battered women in a group of studies he criticizes for using Exner's norms as a comparison group. This study was peer reviewed at the time it was published, and a number of other studies of Rorschach data on individuals who experienced trauma reported very similar findings; nevertheless, I can expect at some time to hear Dies' statement framed as a cross-examination question.

In Rorschach testimony in more than 40 criminal trials, it has often seemed that simple examples of the defendant's percepts were more telling and meaningful to the jury than the more formal discussion of scores and related research studies. Also, it seems a common strategy for the opposing counsel to take a simple, non-technical tact in cross-examining Rorschach testimony, usually along the lines of "Ladies and gentlemen of the jury...this psychological test is very interesting, but you can't honestly believe that psychologists can make meaningful conclusions about people with this test." A more detailed, technical approach will probably incorporate part or all of the criticisms laid out for lawyers in one of Ziskin's volumes (1988, 1996). The purpose of this article is to review the criticisms of Gann (in Ziskin, 1995) which attack the *credibility* of the Rorschach in court, to discuss some commonly asked questions, and to suggest possible responses.

Defending the Rorschach in Court

Following are some of the specific criticisms Gann and Ziskin (1996) raised about the Rorschach and the Exner Comprehensive System, plus a few possible responses noted in brackets.

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The Rorschach in Court

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1. *The Rorschach has failed to show consistently acceptable test-retest correlation statistics. The reliability data provided by Exner suggests that one could not tell from Rorschach scores obtained today what an individual Rorschach score would have been like a year ago or would be like a year from now.* Gann and Ziskin offer a number of examples, many of which, interestingly, are drawn from children and adolescents. [The authors seem unaware of Exner's careful exposition (Exner, 1982) of the developmental changes in particular Rorschach scores over time which are consistent with widely accepted observations about child development. This criticism (low test-retest reliability) may be seen as damaging to evaluations for criminal responsibility which attempt to capture a mental state at some time in the past. Suppose the question is framed as: "Doctor, you could not tell us that the Rorschach Mr. D. gave you three months after the homicide is the same as he would have given you the day of the homicide, could you?" A reasonable answer might be: "The Rorschach has a number of scores and indices; some are sensitive to situational factors, and some are very stable across time. (See Weiner, 1997, at page 7.) My opinion that Mr. D. was suffering from a Major Depressive Episode is based on an analysis of both situationally-determined scores and more stable aspects of his personality, together with the clinical history, which suggested that he was depressed and suicidal beginning about three months before the homicide."]

2. *It is unclear whether the Rorschach is measuring "state" or "trait," and Rorschach research often explains low test-retest correla-*

tions by then labeling the variable the product of "state." [See Weiner (1996) and Weiner (1997) for discussions of the Rorschach and "state" vs. "trait" variables. If an index such as DEPI is elevated, a response can be supported with non-Rorschach data about the typical course of clinical depression with clinical data supporting depression before and up to the crime. The same argument can be made for WSum6; i.e., this score supports the presence of illogical and possibly psychotic thought, and this is part of the course of a disorder which was evident (from other clinical data) at the time of the crime.]

3. *Validity coefficients in an acceptable range would be impacted by low test-retest correlations. The Rorschach has not been shown to be a valid measure.* Much of the research validating particular test scores or indices appears in Exner's volumes, and is not published in peer-reviewed journals. [There are two peer-reviewed American journals which publish Rorschach research—the *Journal of Personality Assessment*, and *Assessment*—and a number of Exner's studies or studies of particular scores or indices of the Rorschach appear in these journals. Rorschach research also appears in European journals; e.g., *European Journal of Psychological Assessment*, and *Rorschachiana: Yearbook of the International Rorschach Society*. Incidentally, Gann and Ziskin's work is not peer-reviewed, and neither author has published any research study or article on the Rorschach in any peer-reviewed journal. Validity is not an "all or none" thing; for the Rorschach Method, it is more accurate to discuss whether the Rorschach is valid for a specific purpose. For example, can it validly distinguish between individuals who are psy-

chotic and those who are not?

Between those who are depressed and not? Between a real disorder and one that is malingered? Relevant here also is Weiner's (1997) point that the Rorschach has been found to be the second most researched psychological test, next to the MMPI, with about 95 articles published each year since 1974.]

4. *There are major problems with scoring the Rorschach and a low demonstrated rate of inter-rater reliability.* This argument is also repeated by Wood, Nezworski, and Stejskal, 1996. [See the detailed response on inter-rater reliability of Meyer (1996) and see Weiner (1997) at page 6.]

5. *It is likely that the Rorschach can be faked. When graduate students are instructed to change scores, they can change the actual content of their responses. If the clinician is relying on content to interpret Rorschach responses, he or she is depending on data that an individual can apparently alter at will.* Gann (1995) then cites Freuh and Kinder (1995) and others to support contentions that the Rorschach can be faked. [It is particularly helpful here to go to the original studies cited, because it seems that Gann has quoted selectively from these studies.]

6. *Protocols that deviate from the average number of responses are suspect.* [Here, it is crucial to be familiar with Meyer's article on R (Meyer, 1992) and with Exner's reply (1992).]

7. *Exner recommends "blind" interpretation; without blind interpretation, the interpretive process is infused with the examiner's biases.* [This statement misinterprets what Exner meant by "blind interpreta-

tion." Gann and Ziskin state that Exner recommended developing propositions only from Rorschach data and then ultimately integrating these postulates into a meaningful description of the subject. They then imply that Exner has recommended that the person who scores the Rorschach should be different than the person who administered the test. Exner (1974) actually states that blind interpretation has been a controversial topic in Rorschach history. While he suggests that interpretation begin in the blind, he does not suggest that final conclusions be based on blind interpretation, and he does not suggest that a separate scorer/interpreter be employed. Interestingly, he goes on to describe problems with the "cookbook" approach to Rorschach interpretation.]

8. *There is a lack of research with minority populations.* [While there is only one published study with Black children (Krall, 1983) and one with older Americans (Reichlin, 1984), a number of the published Rorschach studies have subjects from the ethnic groups represented in current American culture. There is also a considerable amount of cross-cultural research with the Rorschach. For example, see the work of DeVoss and Boyer (1989) for Japanese and Japanese-American populations; Abel (1949) and Sachs and Lee (1992) for Chinese populations; and the proceedings of the International Congress of Rorschach and Projective Techniques (last held in Boston, 1966) for Spanish-speaking populations.]

Other Frequently Asked Questions

These usually are framed as rhetorical questions to impress the jury; for example: "Tell me, Doctor, is the

Rorschach still used after all these years?" or "Isn't it the case, Doctor, that the Rorschach is no longer routinely taught in graduate schools in America?" For answers to these and similar questions, Weiner (1997) provides considerable current data on the clinical and research use of the Rorschach Inkblot Method. For example, he notes that a published survey of APA-approved graduate programs in 1993 reported that the Rorschach was being taught in 85% of graduate programs.

Weiner (1996) recommends a more global response to cross-examination questions taken from Ziskin's text, noting that the authors themselves state their book is not based on a scientific approach to the data and does not involve a comprehensive or impartial review of the literature. It might be additionally useful to know that Gann was a first-year graduate student with no Rorschach exposure at the time Ziskin approached him to write this chapter; this may explain why the authors confuse elementary psychometric concepts such as internal consistency and test-retest correlations.

When Should the Rorschach Be Used?

When deciding to use the Rorschach in a forensic situation, it behooves the forensic psychologist to know that Gann and Ziskin quote Exner stating:

"As you know, I have a strong belief that psychological evaluations have no real place in most litigations and should only be used after decisions concerning guilt or innocence or responsibility have been rendered to determine if some mitigating circumstances should be considered in rendering final judgments".

Exner has probably changed this view since he has presented forensic cases as a part of Rorschach Workshops which address mental state at the time of a crime. Note that the quoted comment seems aimed at psychological evaluations as a whole, not just the use of the Rorschach. There is a long tradition in clinical psychology to apply psychological test data to mental state at the time of a crime, and a number of textbooks by the esteemed psychologists Gann and Ziskin (1996) also state:

"In the second volume of his major work, Exner (1978) suggested that, by and large, the Rorschach is not a helpful test in child custody matters as this often involves questions of a predictive nature that are almost impossible to answer from most assessment data and particularly from Rorschach data."

There is some consensus (see Rotgers and Barrett, 1996) that the issue of parenting capacity is not well addressed by traditional psychological tests. This criticism is relevant to the MMPI as well; neither test was designed to measure parenting capacity and there is little empirical data, outside of the area of child abuse, connecting particular test profiles to particular parenting practices or strengths and weaknesses. A simplistic use of Rorschach computer-generated hypotheses in evaluations of parents can lead to unfair and possibly damaging statements. Consider, for example, the implications of the following interpretative statements of a mother in custody court who otherwise appears to give very good mothering:

"A marked style is indicated in which a flight into fantasy has become a routine tactic for dealing

continued on next page...

SPA Exchange

The Rorschach in Court

continued from page 9

with unpleasant situations. People such as this can be assumed to have a "Snow White Syndrome" which is characterized mainly by the avoidance of responsibility and decision making... The self-image of this subject tends to be based largely on imaginary rather than real experience. Subjects such as this are often less mature and frequently have very distorted notions of themselves and others."

The well-trained Rorschacher can guess that these statements probably derived from too many (H) or (Hd) responses, and a look at the actual protocol reveals that this mother saw a number of figures from children's television and film. Common sense should have prevailed; that is, the psychologist should have tempered the computer-generated statements with this knowledge which perhaps could even have been mentioned as a strength, since this young mother obviously spent a good deal of time watching these films with her children.

Computer-Generated Hypotheses

A related issue is the inappropriate use of the computer-generated interpretive hypotheses. It is not necessarily "state of the art" work to use the interpretive program to interpret the Rorschach. A competent Rorschacher should be able to interpret the Rorschach summary scores and indices without the computer-generated hypotheses. The hypotheses themselves are clearly derived from the several Comprehensive System texts (Weiner, 1997 personal communication) and the Rorschacher should have a good working knowledge of these, includ-

ing the empirical research which supports particular scores. A hands-on approach will be more individually designed to the patient and, therefore, be less likely to expose a set of "hypotheses" from the computer that are not supported by life history or clinical data. The computer-generated narrative should be considered a professional to professional consultation to forestall turning over this material to the other attorneys, but an expert for the other side can demand the print-out, or use your scores to generate their own copy of interpretive guidelines.

Occasionally, an expert retained by the "other side" will assert that the scoring is wrong and will then re-score and re-run the computer-generated report. Unfortunately, in one recent case, the other "expert" (Psychologist B) made so many errors in his "rescoring" that it was a simple matter to retain a Rorschach Workshops faculty member to perform a third scoring of the Rorschach which validated Psychologist A's conclusions.

Conclusion

The debate over issues such as reliability and validity, whether spurred by those internal or external to the circle of Rorschach researchers, often becomes too complex for the non-psychologist and certainly too technical for the average juror. This is also true of Rorschach scores. For example, in the celebrated trial of Sirhan Sirhan for the murder of Robert Kennedy (see Kaiser, 1970), the *Los Angeles Times* wrote about the impact of Rorschach testimony on jurors:

"For more than a month, they have listened to such psychiatric verbal shorthand as C-prime re-

sponse, small animal movement, inanimate movement, large human response, pure form response, large M and small fm, large F and little c and TH column. It is debatable how efficiently the jurors have been able to translate such arbitrary terms into their meaningful emotional equivalents. But the mere effort has exacted a toll that was apparent Monday as they listened to still more of the same with faces that ranged a gamut of expression from boredom to stupefaction."

To attempt to minimize "stupefaction," it is advisable to simplify Rorschach testimony by picking several key variables or indices that document or illustrate the mental state (e.g., Schizophrenia Index, WSUM6, D, CDI, Ego-Impairment Index, etc.); by knowing the psychometric data on these scores (e.g., test-retest, interrater reliability, and the studies which have validated these scores); and by learning of any additional research which is relevant to the defendant (e.g., for battered women, there is now a small body of Rorschach literature on individuals who have experienced different types of trauma). To illustrate a particular point about a disturbed mental state, also consider choosing one or two responses which particularly communicate the patient's state. To a juror with little formal education in psychology, this simple approach will have more meaning and be more comprehensible than all of the more technical discussions of Rorschach reliability and validity.

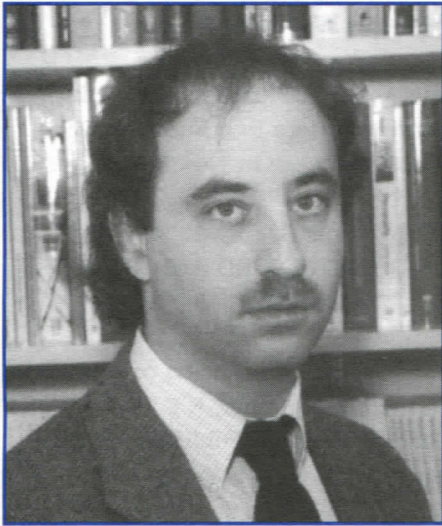
¹Daubert v. Merrell, Dow Pharmaceuticals, Inc., 113 S.Ct. 2786 (June 28, 1993).

²People v. Leahy, 882 P.2d 321 (Cal. 1994) ☞

For bibliographic information regarding all books and articles cited in this paper, please contact Virginia Brabender at Widener University.



Congratulations...



Robert F. Bornstein

to Robert F. Bornstein, Ph.D. and Robert Kaufman, Ph.D.

Drs. Bornstein and Kaufman have been awarded Fellowship Status in the Society.

Dr. Bornstein, Professor of Psychology at Gettysburg College, has published numerous papers examining objective and projective measures of interpersonal dependency. His other research focuses on conscious and unconscious determinants of personality, motivation, and affect. Dr. Bornstein received the Society's 1995 Walter Klopfer Award for Distinguished Contributions to the Personality Assessment Literature.

Dr. Kaufman arrived in clinical psychology via a somewhat circuitous route. Between attaining his bachelor's degree and entering his Ph.D. program, he spent ten years in the arts. Perhaps not unexpectedly, his dissertation research was a Rorschach study of visual artists in which he attempted to describe the unique psychology of the artistic process by drawing on object rela-



Robert Kaufman

tions theory. His involvement with personality assessment, and specifically the Rorschach, has remained a cornerstone of his clinical practice and research interests. More recently, he has been very involved in using the Rorschach extensively with children, trying to better understand the dynamic compromises they must make to cope with untoward traumatic events in their lives. Currently, he enjoys his clinical work, research, training and supervision, as well as life with his family. His only struggle is how to maintain art as an integral part of a busy life. ❁

**Make plans now...
to attend the next
Midwinter Meeting
in Boston at the
Westin Copley Place,
February 18-22, 1998.**

Ritzler

continued from page 7

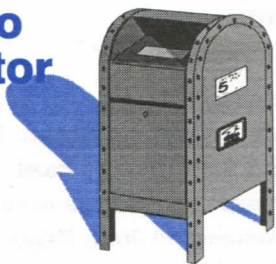
students, and serves as a positive and consistent mentor. In addition to Sid Blatt, Barry's most important recent role models have been Irv Weiner and John Exner. Irv introduced Barry to the complexities of journal editorial work. With Irv's support, Barry has served for years in the demanding role of associate editor of the *Journal of Personality Assessment*. In this capacity, he has had an ongoing influence on the quality of scholarship enjoyed by SPA members.

John Exner provided Barry with a role model for integrating research, teaching, and practice interests via his involvement as an instructor at Rorschach Workshops. Regularly received as an outstanding teacher, Barry exemplifies the finest in the scientist/practitioner model. Dancing, of course, continues to be important in his life because it allows him to attend to his more emotional and expressive side.

The major professional affiliation of his life has been the Society for Personality Assessment. In contrast to his early loner lifestyle, the Society serves Barry as an outstanding source for intellectual excitement within a highly motivated team atmosphere—a particularly important forum. He continues to serve as an associate editor of the *Journal of Personality Assessment*. And Barry believes that he has served as president of SPA at a truly good time because of the recent positive gains of the organization. He is respected, admired, and genuinely liked by both colleagues and students. Barry is a warm, constructive person who values the uniqueness of all the personalities he encounters. His fortitude and consistency are an inspiration for those of us who cherish him. ❁

SPA Exchange

Letter to the Editor



Stuart Wilson, Ph.D.,
FAClinP

I have returned from the 1997 Midwinter Meeting, March 12-16, in San Diego, exhilarated and moderately fatigued. A wonderful feast of workshops, symposia, and papers, including a New Book (NB) called "Abstracts of Presentations." The approach-approach conundrums were considerable!

The NB is a great beginning, uneven, unstandardized as yet. I hope it will make an appearance annually. Presenters who did not send in their paperwork for inclusion should be exiled.

The papers I heard from graduate students (under the aegis of Acklin, Perry, Viglione) already have a quality of tempered science—feats that astonished me. The profession is in good hands.

SPA is a friendly organization. Humor was abundantly present. Please keep the meetings on the West Coast so that I can attend each year.

My sample of presentations included: Difficult Scoring Issues in the Comprehensive System; Rorschach and Trauma; Plenary Session; The Authority of the Rorschach: Legal Citations During the Past Fifty

Years; Rorschach Round Table: Empirical Quality of the Comprehensive System; Controversial Discussion: Rorschach and MMPI Convergence/Divergence; Rorschach Psychology: Further Methodological Forays; and Paper Sessions on the Rorschach Paper I and Studies in Schizophrenia. Lest you think this letter contains no carping—psychologist-presenters, just like any other kind of presenters, do not respond to time limits on papers by cutting here and there. No, they just speak incredibly faster. Faster than my listening comprehension!

I would code the meetings:
W+ M^a.CF.FT.m^p+ (2) H.Hx, Sc, Fd, Hh, 5.5 COP

Editor's Note:
"Abstracts of Presentations" books were the result of creative and innovative thinking by **Manuela Schulze**, SPA Office Manager, and the hard work of both **Amira Caceres** and Manuela. ❧



Amira Caceres

Announcements

Summer Workshops

The American Projective Drawing Institute offers two **Summer Workshops** this year in New York City:

- (a) BASIC, July 22, 23, 24;
- (b) ADVANCED AND CASES SEMINAR, July 24, 25, 26.

The Clinical Application of Projective Drawings, Hammer, E.F. (Ed.), Charles Thomas, Publisher, 2600 South First Street, Springfield, Illinois, 62717, is suggested as preparation. For information write: Dr. Emanuel Hammer, 381 West End Avenue, New York, NY 10024.

Fall Workshop

A Two Day Projective Drawing Workshop is being offered in September of 1997 in Manhattan. It is called "A Projective Drawings Workshop for Mental Health Professionals." The co-presenters are Dr. Marc Janoson and Dr. Gerald D. Oster, author of *Clinical Uses of Drawings* (Aronson, 1996) and *Using Drawings in Assessment and Treatment* (Brunner/Mazel, 1987).

Dr. Oster will lecture on "Emotional Indicators of the H-T-P Using Drawings in Group and Family Therapy" and "Using Drawings in Assessment and Therapy."

Dr. Janoson will lecture on "Predicting Potential for Acting Out Drawings Reflecting a Thought Disorder" and "Appraising the Developmental Level of HFDs."

Drawings collected by the participants will be reviewed for structure

and content by the presenters. For more information, registration, brochure, and CEU status, contact Dr. Marc Janoson (212) 685-2073.

Request for Proposals

Upcoming Special Issue of the *Journal of Personality Assessment*

Personality Assessment in Primary Care Settings

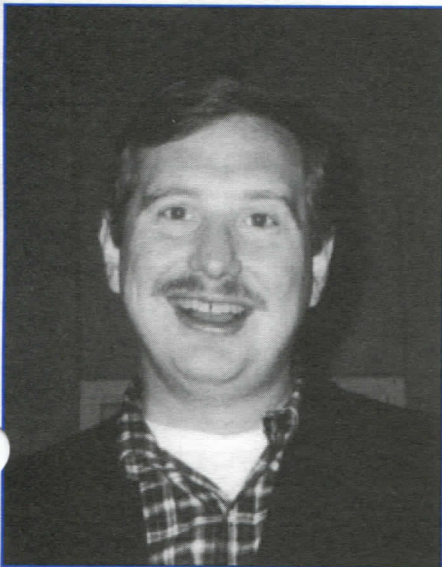
Primary care medical settings now assume a major role in our changing health and mental health delivery systems. They provide the opportunity to assess the relationship between personality, disease/health, and mental health conditions. Proposals, studies in progress, and completed studies are now welcome.

Send information to :
David Pingitore, Ph.D.
The Wright Institute
2728 Durant Avenue
Berkeley, CA 94704



Special thanks to Bill Haire

for all the wonderful travel and meeting arrangements that helped make the meeting in San Diego such a success!



Bill Haire breathes a happy sigh of relief!

News from the Central Office

Manuela Schulze

We have just gotten official notice from the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office that "Society for Personality Assessment" and "*Journal of Personality Assessment*" are now trademarked to us.

Dr. Marvin Acklin and a consultant are working on our web site. We will let you know when it will be available. Our domain name will be www.personality.org. One of the exciting features about our web site is that it will have a link to our publisher, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc. The site also provides an easy-to-use way to connect with other members, access registration and/or application forms, and much more.

SPA has been accepting credit cards for payment since the beginning of last year. This is an extra convenience for our membership. Many of you have already taken advantage of this new opportunity by using credit cards at the midwinter meeting.

If you teach and know students who are interested in joining the Society, please feel free to contact me at the Central Office for application forms. Also, look for the 1997 Membership Directory— it should be published by summer's end.



Manuela Schulze

Personal Column

continued from page 4

Alan Sugarman

wrote to share that he has been chosen to serve as a training and supervising psychoanalyst by the San Diego Psychoanalytic Society, an institute where he is the Assistant Director of Education. In addition, he has been promoted to Clinical Professor of Psychiatry by the University of California, San Diego. He teaches in both of these institutions and conducts a private practice in La Jolla, California.

Susana Urbina

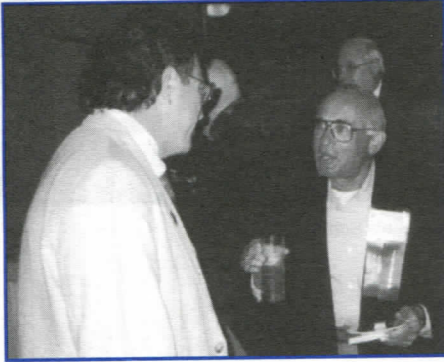
has co-authored the *7th Edition of Psychological Testing* with Anne Anastasi. The book was published by Prentice Hall and has been available since January, 1997.

Make plans now...

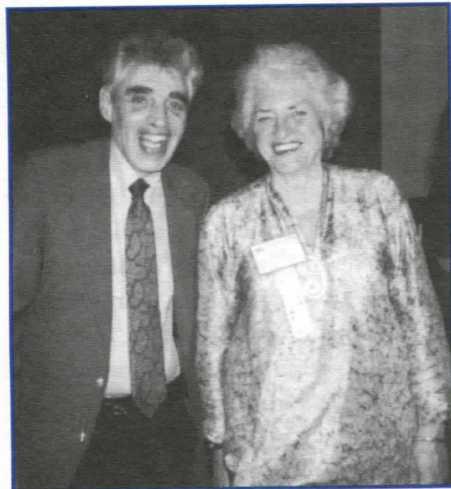
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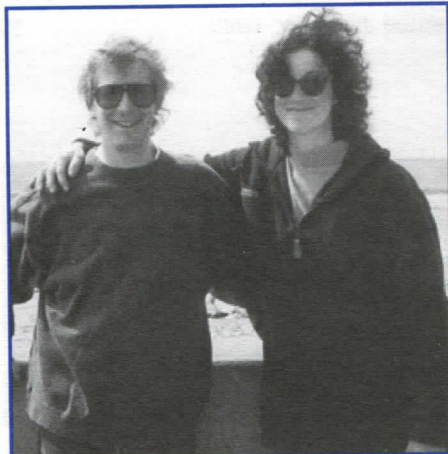
Scenes from the Midwinter Meeting in San Diego



Dr. Joseph Masling, recipient of the Bruno Klopfer Award, chatting with Barry Ritzler.



Zevorah Schachtel, widow of Ernest G. Schachtel, standing with Paul Lerner at the Marguerite Hertz Memorial Presentation.



Jed Yalof taking a break from the conference to "assess" the San Diego Boardwalk with his wife, Barbara.



Margot Haladay, recipient of the Samuel J. Beck Award, with her proud mentor, Len Handler.



Gregory Meyer receiving the Walter G. Klopfer Award from Bill Kinder.



Jerome Singer and Sandra Russ share a cocktail and a smile.



Nancy Kaser-Boyd enjoys a good story.



Bruce Smith charms the crowd.

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Barry Ritzler, Marvin Acklin, and Charles Peterson share a particularly important point of information (or finally decide where to go to dinner).



Rebecca Rieger, Larry Erlbaum, and Virginia Brabender smile for the roving photographer at the Midwinter Meeting reception.



Justin Padawer, Mark Hilsenroth, Robert Riethmiller, and Charles Wachler were ready to go out on the town after the cocktail reception.



And there were smiles all around the room...



Barry Ritzler makes just one more point!



Bill Kinder and Manuela Schulze catch up with Larry Erlbaum for just one more picture.



Gregory Meyer and wife Rhonda Dallas enjoy the camaraderie the Midwinter Meeting offers.

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The SPA Board

(Left to right) Bruce Smith, Bill Kinder, Roger Greene, Virginia Brabender, Len Handler, Sandra Russ, Connie Fischer, Stephen Finn, Barry Ritzler, and Paul Lerner.

SPA Exchange

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