spa exchange

The President's Message
Reflections and Thanks
Robert F. Bornstein, PhD
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I write this column just having returned from our Annual Convention in San Francisco—another terrific Society for Personality Assessment (SPA) conference. Echoing the theme of our Convention, "Evolving Proficiencies in Personality Assessment," this issue of the *Exchange* is devoted to the Proficiency in Personality Assessment. Thanks to the hard work of Hadas Pade and David Streiner, we are able to present in this issue a collection of articles related to the personality assessment proficiency by distinguished members of SPA who have been involved in this initiative, in various ways, for a number of years. Following up on the terrific talks we heard in San Francisco, I am grateful to our colleagues who contributed to this Special Issue.

This is also my final President's Message—my last opportunity to connect with SPA members through my column in the *Exchange*. I'd like to take this opportunity to look back on these past several years, and forward to the future of personality assessment, and SPA

Looking Back

When I ran for the presidency of SPA in 2013, I offered three priorities that I thought would serve us well. First and most important, I hoped we'd find ways to increase student involvement and influence within our organization. We've certainly been successful in that regard—although this is due primarily to the great work of Society for Personality Assessment Graduate Students (SPAGS) board members rather than anything I've done. Our students' engagement in SPA governance and their participation in the annual meeting have both increased substantially during the past four years; I am grateful for the leadership and commitment of recent SPAGS Presidents Christy Denckla, Michael Roche, Ryan Marek, and Emily Dowgwillo, and current SPAGS President Crista Maracic. We have come a long way, but we are not done: As I transition to Past President I look forward to working with SPAGS President Elect Adam Natoli

to help our student members become even more involved in personality assessment practice and research, and continue to have a strong voice on the SPA Board of Trustees.

Second, I suggested in 2013 that we should strengthen connections with neighboring fields. It is human nature to affiliate with those who think like we do, and though this is a natural tendency it can lead us to be narrow and parochial in our thinking. I believe that like all mental health professionals, those of us who specialize in personality assessment can benefit from increased contact with colleagues in other areas of psychology, and with colleagues outside psychology as well. Our annual meeting represents an ideal venue for the occasional invited address focusing on an interdisciplinary topic relevant to personality assessment, and during the past few years we have had several Master Lectures that helped strengthen these interdisciplinary connections. Dan McAdams's talk on life narratives, John Cacioppo's presentation on the neuropsychological underpinnings of personality and individual differences, Nadine Kaslow's lecture on competencies and proficiencies in psychology, and Simine Vazire's talk on replicability and rigor in psychological research represent four excellent examples of this ongoing effort.

Finally, given the rapid evolution of our diagnostic systems and the changes taking place as new data accumulate, continued attention to the role of personality assessment in personality disorder classification and diagnosis is crucial. Several years ago *Journal of Personality Assessment* (*JPA*) Editor Steve Huprich initiated a new section of the journal entitled "Personality Assessment in the Diagnostic Manuals," and this has been a great success. ICD–11 and PDM–2 are about to be published, and it won't be long before we're debating *DSM–5.1*. SPA must continue to take steps to ensure that ideas and findings from personality assessment help shape the next generation of diagnostic systems. By doing so we can help strengthen

the empirical rigor and clinical utility of these frameworks, enhance pedagogy, and improve patient care.

Looking Ahead

Bob Archer will take over as SPA President on September 1, 2017; our society is in good hands. Next year we'll be celebrating the 80th anniversary of SPA, and publication of the 100th volume of *JPA*. Please do join us in Washington, DC, to celebrate these events—and also to celebrate some of our other recent accomplishments. These include:

- Renewal of our contract with Taylor & Francis (T&F) to publish *JPA* through the next decade (and hopefully beyond). Our partnership with T&F has been, and continues to be, strong. It has been a pleasure to work with Kevin Bradley, Ngoc Le, Catherine Ott, and other colleagues at T&F these past several years; I look forward to working with them for many years to come.

- Enhanced support for international members, students, and early career psychologists, as well as increased

In this issue...

Proficiency in Personality Assessment
An Introduction to this Special Issue and Overview
Hadas Pade, PsyD
SPA Proficiency Coordinator

Dear *Exchange* readers, I am excited about this Special Issue of the *Exchange* dedicated to the Proficiency in Personality Assessment. Many of you have already heard about the proficiency and perhaps reviewed some of the materials readily available on the Society for Personality Assessment (SPA) website. Below is a brief overview of the proficiency and the application/recognition process. I hope that you find this *Exchange* issue informative and motivating. The proficiency committee and the Board of Trustees are currently developing one brochure about the proficiency for psychologists and another to inform and educate the public. We will let you know when those are available for distribution. Thus far, many of you have expressed support for the proficiency in personality assessment. I hope we can turn such positive sentiments into applications.

Personality Assessment is a recognized proficiency by the American Psychological Association's Commission for the Recognition of Specialties and Proficiencies in Professional Psychology. It entails a basic (rather than advanced) standard for clearly established expectations for personality assessments in the field. Such a standard has not existed before. Applications for most psychologists include a basic application form with demographics, a current CV, and a written report with testing data. For those with advanced credentials in assessment, the process is simplified. Each application is reviewed by three psychologists who have established expertise in assessment. A Proficiency Report Review Form is utilized to evaluate each report, and feedback is provided to each applicant regardless of recognition status. All application materials, including the review form, are available on the SPA website: http://www.personality.org/about/proficiency-application/.

The Proficiency Report Review Form was developed and edited by quite a few SPA members, many of whom have been long-term leaders in the field of personality assessment. The form addresses five main components that are considered integral to effective assessment reports: comprehensiveness, validity, integration, client-centered, and overall writing. Each category includes several items for a total of 22 items for the entire review form. These categories and included items are relevant across settings and populations, with perhaps some slight variation. Thus far, interrater reliability using the form has been consistently high.

If reviewers determine that an applicant meets proficiency, the applicant is then endorsed for approval vote by the SPA Board of Trustees. Regardless of recognition status, applicants receive detailed feedback, including reviewers' ratings and comments, in the hope that such information helps enhance their level of skill. Applicants are also offered an opportunity to provide feedback about the application and recognition process via a brief and anonymous online survey. There are no ramifications if an applicant is not deemed proficient. Applicants are welcome to contact the Proficiency Coordinator with questions or concerns at any time before, during, and after the process. The Proficiency Coordinator often consults with members of the proficiency committee to further ensure the process is useful and fair. The overarching goal of the proficiency is to further enhance and maintain the standards in our field and best serve the public.

For questions about the proficiency please contact us at proficiency@spaonline.org.

Martin Mayman Award: James Kleiger and Piero Porcelli with presenter Steven Huprich.

Proficiency in Personality Assessment and Diversity
Perspectives from the SPA Proficiency Committee
SPA Proficiency Committee

Diversity considerations are vitally important in psychological and personality assessment (e.g., American Psychological Association, 2003; Brabender & Mihura, 2016; Dana, 2000; Smith & Krishnamurthy, in press; Suzuki, Onoue, & Hill, 2013). Graduate-level assessment courses, along with practica and internship training, aim to address various aspects of diversity in assessment training and practice. One way to help ensure this is a continued effort post licensure and throughout one's professional career via the Proficiency in Personality Assessment.

The Proficiency Report Review Form (Society for Personality Assessment, 2015), developed to assess proficiency, is composed of five main categories (comprehensiveness, validity, integration, client-centered, and overall writing) via 22 individual items that address diversity throughout. In addition to one item that specifically addresses diversity in the interpretation of test results (under the umbrella of validity), diversity permeates many of the other criteria for proficiency. The proficiency review procedure approaches diversity from the stance that individualization of our work is critical in personality assessment and report writing to accurately represent the individual in appropriate life contexts.

The concept of comprehensiveness and inclusion of relevant background addresses attention to an individual's specific upbringing and demographic factors that are relevant to the assessment. Validity assumes that cultural factors are considered when utilizing norms and interpreting test results, including recognizing limitations and potential problems with such data. Integration inherently brings together information about the person assessed, including personal context and situation and unique characteristics, in a meaningful way. Client-centered writing further helps ensure that the individual, rather than scores and measures, is the focus of the report. It helps personalize the descriptions to make them meaningful and useful for that specific individual, which includes diversity-sensitivity. Overall writing takes into account the report reader and further helps ensure that information is delivered in a readable and understandable manner.

Culturally competent services are also discussed in the Development of Achievement Levels (National Council of Schools and Programs in Professional Psychology, 2007) and entail conceptualization and integration of information in an individualized manner. The Proficiency in Personality Assessment specifically addresses such integration and individualization of information. Psychologists proficient in this area of practice apply their general knowledge of diversity and individual differences in a way commensurate to the standards of practice. They consider diversity factors and the individual context of each client when accepting referrals, developing assessment goals, choosing measures to administer, analyzing test scores and related norms, making interpretations, writing reports (including diagnosis when applicable, and recommendations), and finally, when communicating assessment feedback to clients and/or third parties involved. Personality assessment psychologists must be aware of individual diversity factors that may hinder or enhance the likelihood of individuals following through with assessment recommendations. They also have to keep up to date with developments in the field, whether specific measures, updated norms, or other relevant issues.

The members of the proficiency committee (Hadas Pade, Radhika Krishnamurthy, Bruce Smith, Virginia Brabender, A. Jordan Wright, Anita Boss, Gregory Meyer, and Ginger Calloway) collaborated on this article to address the question: *How does the Proficiency in Personality Assessment support and enhance the concept of diversity in our work?* The various responses are included below. First and foremost, the committee notes that "Proficiency in Personality Assessment must include knowledge of the application and limitations of assessment instruments and methods to various populations. One hopes that evaluating a psychologist as proficient implies that s/he is sensitive to and competent in assessing diverse populations."

> "Personality assessment has always been about individual differences. It's hard to imagine that any psychologist in the current era is not aware of the tremendous diversity in our population, and the need to either adjust assessment techniques to the individual, consult a colleague who is knowledgeable about the relevant topic, or assist

the person in finding someone who can do the evaluation properly. Proficiency in Personality Assessment would reflect the current ethical obligations for psychologists to maintain their competence in this area, to explain and qualify their test results based on cultural considerations, and/or to seek assistance with the assessment when necessary. We are obligated to treat everyone fairly, and to make every effort to understand each individual's perspective. If we are using a test that has no norms for a particular culture, we should explain the limitations of the assessment and seek to provide information that answers the referral question in ways that take each individual's uniqueness into consideration. In other words, regarding the topic of diversity, Proficiency in Personality Assessment has the same requirements as the practice of psychology in all other contexts."

"Fundamentally, the Proficiency in Personality Assessment supports and enhances the concept of diversity in our work by fostering idiographic understanding. Our job as personality assessors is to understand as best we can how a complex and rich set of characteristics come together in the life of a single individual. This cannot be done without knowing that person's historical experiences embedded in a social-cultural matrix."

"The people we assess don't exist in a vacuum. They live their lives in the contexts of their ethnicity, gender, age, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, religion, ability or disability… and are pervasively influenced by them. Attunement to such facets of life experience is indisputably a necessary component of effective personality assessment. The proficiency initiative draws important attention to this matter and urges us to develop and maintain diversity-related competence in our assessment work."

"Above all, professional competence requires a particular set of attitudes

Why We Should All Become Proficient

Stephen E. Finn, PhD
Center for Therapeutic Assessment

A Troubling Encounter

Several months ago I attended a joint meeting of our local Capitol Area Psychological Association and the Austin Psychiatric Society. There was an interesting and well-known speaker, and 40–50 members of both groups had turned out for dinner and conversation. I found myself seated next to a young psychiatrist I had not yet met, Dr. A, and over the salad course I asked questions about his background and practice, which led to very convivial conversation. Eventually, Dr. A asked about my work and whether I had any specialties, and I said, "Yes, psychological assessment." For a moment, I saw a slight shadow cross the man's face, and then he fell silent for a moment and changed the topic. It didn't require much clinical acumen to see that my response had discomfited him, and after a moment I inquired, "Do you mind if I ask…? You seemed uncomfortable when I told you what kind of work I do. Am I right?" Dr. A apologized if he had been rude, and said it was nothing personal, and that I seemed to be a "nice man" and a "good person." However, he went on to say, he had never found psychological assessment to be that helpful, and in his training at a large medical center, he had seen instances where testing had actually harmed patients. I expressed curiosity, and Dr. A appeared to be encouraged by my non-defensive attitude. He then told me a series of tales of incompetent psychological assessment, where overly confident assessors had made claims about test results that were either completely wrong, taken out of context, or were communicated very badly to the people they tested. Over dessert, I told Dr. A that I was appalled at the experiences he had recounted, that the assessments he had witnessed were very poorly done, and that I could see why he had such a negative view of psychological assessment. I then encouraged him not to "throw the baby out with the bathwater," reminded him that there are incompetent practitioners in both our professions, and offered to email him a few articles illustrating how assessment can be helpful. He accepted, and we finished our conversation as the speaker was introduced.

I went home that night feeling sad and troubled by this encounter, in part because it is not the only time I have seen the consequences of incompetent psychological assessment. In fact, if I am honest, when I receive previous assessment reports in my practice on clients I am assessing or seeing in psychotherapy, I often find myself wincing at their poor quality. Thankfully, this is not always true, and there are plenty of excellent psychological assessors in the field. Also, when I attend the Annual Convention of our Society for Personality Assessment (SPA)—as I just did in San Francisco—I fly home inspired and grateful to have been in the presence of hundreds of competent, ethical, and caring colleagues. SPA is doing a lot to further the practice of psychological assessment—and personality assessment in particular—and among these efforts is the initiative to register psychologists who are proficient in personality assessment.

Why It Is Important to Apply for Proficiency

I am fully behind SPA's Proficiency in Personality Assessment and I want to tell you why. I realize that (1) all of us are busy people, (2) many of us breathed a sigh of relief when we got licensed and vowed to NEVER go through another accreditation process in our lives, and (3) at that this point with your SPA proficiency certificate and $4.00 you can get a cup of coffee at any Starbucks. (Translation: right now, proficiency will not get you that many tangible benefits in your career.) So why go to the trouble?

Supporting Basic Standards for Practice

First, I maintain that it is time for those of us who believe in personality assessment to support basic standards of competent practice. Less and less training on personality assessment is being done in graduate training programs (Evans & Finn, 2017), with the result that new practitioners do not always have the grounding they need to handle complicated assessments. Also, in my experience, the types of clients referred these days for personality are extremely complex, in comparison to 25 years previously when many more "average" clients underwent psychological testing. On top of this, personality assessment is a rapidly evolving field; there are new tests (e.g., the Crisi

Wartegg System; Finn, 2014), new versions of old tests (e.g., the MMPI–2–RF; Ben-Porath & Tellegen, 2008), and new paradigms of assessment (e.g., Collaborative/ Therapeutic Assessment; Finn, Fischer, & Handler, 2012). It is difficult for even experienced practitioners to keep up with the field, with the result that many simply do not. Proficiency will help ensure that applicants are using generally accepted tests and practices.

Affirming Our Own Competence

In my mind, ethical practice means constantly reviewing our own competence and using trusted colleagues to help ensure that we are up to snuff! I do this in various ways: attending CE workshops at the SPA annual meeting and other venues, reading the latest articles on personality assessment, asking colleagues for consultation on my assessment cases, requesting feedback from clients and referral sources about how they experienced my assessments, and occasionally paying various experts to review my assessment reports. Applying for proficiency is another way to ask for outside feedback on our work, and although this can be anxiety provoking, I can't think of a better context in which to take this kind of risk. Currently, you do not need proficiency to practice personality assessment; the proficiency review process is confidential and no one even needs to know that you have applied, let alone whether you were recognized. And the expert reviewers are kind, helpful, and invested in helping you achieve proficiency. Also, the application process is easy and painless, and I can promise you, you will get a lot back.

Learning Through Feedback

Here I can speak from personal experience. When Hadas Pade invited me to be a proficiency reviewer, I tentatively agreed, but said that I wanted to go through the normal proficiency review process myself. Besides making my own judgment about the experience, I had another agenda: I wanted to see how the kind of collaborative assessment reports I write would be seen by the expert reviewers. I am happy to tell you that I "passed" and was recognized as proficient, and that the reviewers were very respectful of the context of my assessment report and the

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Applying Proficiency in Personality Assessment as a Guide for Training and Supervision

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As described throughout this issue of the Society for Personality Assessment (SPA) *Exchange*, the American Psychological Association's recognition of personality assessment as a proficiency (American Psychological Association, 2011) aims to support our profession's efforts at maintaining quality standards for this passionate endeavor which we practice. In addition, proficiency serves as a communication to our colleagues about our skill and as a notice to the public that personality assessment is a valued and serious enterprise, requiring training and diligence. While the Proficiency designation is intended for licensed professionals providing assessment services (SPA, 2015a) there are implications and opportunities for the concept and application of proficiency to inform our training of students and in working with colleagues in supervision.

"Psychological testing is impossible to learn. As such, therefore, it is impossible to teach."—Smith (1998)

Students who undertake learning personality assessment have, as they say, a heavy lift ahead of them. Rather than a singular endeavor, personality assessment is the complex intermingling of skills, both technical and artful, interpersonal and intrapersonal, requiring one's best scientist and clinician selves. Achieving competency, in itself, is a hard-fought endeavor (see Krishnamurthy & Yalof, 2009). We are fortunate as a specialty to have a wealth of advanced and sophisticated resources to assist teachers and supervisors in training students (including the brilliant collection on teaching and learning by Handler and Hilsenroth, 1998). Though, as Exner (1998) observed (in a somewhat more sanguine tone than Smith, above), "Learning to do personality assessment is neither easy nor quick" (p. xxiii). It is no wonder that learning personality assessment is troublesome and anxiety provoking for many students (Fowler, 1998). While the juggling of blocks, pencil, cards, and stopwatch on the Wechsler scales and the verbatim noting and incisive querying can be maddening on the Rorschach, among the most daunting challenges must be the construction of the assessment report. It is in the final product of the report where myriad elements, processes, information,

conceptualization and integration of findings hopefully coalesce into a coherent and helpful picture of the individual assessed (Groth-Marnat & Horvath, 2006). And like the proverbial "finger pointing away to the moon," it is in the report that we see the "heavenly glory" derived from all of the difficult work that preceded it (Clouse & Allin, 1973). With this in mind, the testing report can serve as the central target around which the various components of proficiency can be discussed and assessed. Specifically, this can be accomplished with the use of the Personality Assessment Proficiency Report Review Form as a guide (SPA, 2015b).

Using proficiency as one frame for the training of students in personality assessment can provide the structure and clear expectations for both trainees and supervisors. This runs counter to the self-imposed mantra I recall creating for myself early in my training: "There is only one way to write a testing report: the way your supervisor tells you." The focus on proficiency as evidenced in an assessment allows trainees and supervisors to address the skills, techniques, and knowledge required for the critical tasks of personality assessment. While many skills are prerequisites for arriving at the writing of the assessment report (e.g., theory, methods, administration, scoring, interpretation), report writing should be introduced early in the educational process and particularly early in internship training (Blais & Eby, 1998), affording it the time required for developing competence.

The Personality Assessment Proficiency Report Review Form provides five main criteria for evaluating the testing report. Each criterion is broken into components that contribute to the overall proficiency in completing the report. The criteria address comprehensiveness, integration, validity, client-centered elements, and overall writing. Comprehensiveness involves inclusion of basic client information, referral source, referral question, history, and behavioral observations around which students can structure their reports. Even this initial organizing structure, which is integral to teaching and supervision of assessment (Fowler, 1998), also serves as an important anxiety-reduction technique for many new at report writing. Many beginning students

may be reluctant to ask about the mundanities of format, beyond what they may see as examples from their supervisors (another helpful source of training is Blais & Eby, 1998). The integration of findings is arguably the most difficult element of proficiency, requiring the integration of cross-methods of interpretations and resolving contradictory findings. The expectation set forth in the proficiency framework is that the information that is conflicting is presented in a way that facilitates the reader's understanding. While this process is a key part of what occurs in assessment supervision, "showing the work" in the report challenges students to not only understand these conflicts, but also to present them in a nuanced way. The validity section highlights the data-based and interpretive elements of the report, referencing diversity issues and ensuring that the conclusions follow from what has been presented. The client-centered criterion ensures that the report concerns the individual being assessed ("person-focused"), not just present peels of data that coalesce in a broad, theory-based report, an often-lodged criticism (Exner, 1998). The individual should emerge as the student "paints the picture" of the individual being assessed (R. Selznick, personal communication, April 3, 2014). The proficiency guidelines also challenge the student to provide clear, reasonable, and sufficiently detailed recommendations. Although this is the payoff of the assessment process and the most practical and applicable section of the report, it is often bereft of guidance for the consumer (Harvey, 2006). Here, the student is likely to rely heavily on the supervisor whose experience in clinical practice can often fill in some of the concrete strategies for translating conclusions into solutions. The final component of assessing proficiency with the Proficiency Report Review Form is a global assessment of overall writing, which covers language (e.g., clear and jargon-free), organization, grammar, and the appropriate use of testing scores and responses.

It would be developmentally unfair to expect trainees to function as seasoned professionals. Yet, with a goal of proficiency and guideposts that can assist in shaping training and supervision (distilled into a

Assessing Proficiency in Personality Assessment
Tying Teaching to Research and Practice
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The proficiency certificate designation in personality assessment implies demonstration of necessary training, knowledge, and competence. This is what the certificate says. I participate in the review of applicants for proficiency designation and recognize the experience, time, energy, and skill required to develop and submit a comprehensive report for peer review. So, hats off to whomever earns the certificate. However, as a society concerned particularly with assessment, is there a need for the Society for Personality Assessment (SPA) to "assess" whether or not the certificate is paying dividends to those who earn it? That is, are there ways to evaluate the external validity of being proficient in personality assessment?

This question came to me during a research class in which students participate in a seminar designed to generate dissertation ideas. The program is practitioner focused, so the research has to be practical and applicable to clinical work. One of the exercises that I find useful is thinking of different ways to answer a research question. This "challenge," if you will, gets everyone thinking about the sequence of (1) research question, (2) research method, and (3) research analysis, and also demonstrates the process by which finding an answer to even the simplest research question can take many twists and turns.

Let's suppose, for instance, I told the class the following: "Lifelong learning is a part of professional development. One of the ways to continue to develop professionally is to seek opportunities to prepare and present work for peer review. Having peers review work can be very rewarding on a personal level. And, for those of you interested in personality assessment (everyone raises their hand!), there is the proficiency designation offered by SPA. However, before you move forward with something like this, you'd first want to determine if it's worth it. So, as a first step, you'd probably want to determine if earning a proficiency certificate in personality assessment has benefitted individuals who have earned the certificate. In other words, does it really make a difference in practice application? How can we study this question? Let's generate some approaches."

1. Why not ask just the psychologists who are deemed by SPA to be proficient in personality assessment to tell you about their experiences? We could do a qualitative study of sorts, get a random sampling of names from a registry, come up with a few questions, request 30-minute phone appointments (accompanied by an Amazon gift certificate as a show of thanks!), and ask if and how the certificate has made a difference in their professional life. We can look for themes across answers to questions. We might find that certificate recipients feel immense pride in having their work endorsed by colleagues. We might find that fees went up after the certificate was awarded, so there has been a financial benefit. We might also find that in court, being proficient in personality assessment, particularly when the certificate has the backing of the American Psychological Association, adds gravitas to the psychologist's curriculum vitae and presumptive expertise.

2. Why not get on the survey bandwagon and request completion of a 10-item survey related to the implications of proficiency standing, with anchors from 1 to 7, and get some descriptive data? Maybe we can get a larger number of participants who have earned proficiency status to complete a 10-minute survey, to learn how they rate the value of the certificate along several dimensions.

3. Why not do an analogue study in which we provide undergraduates with descriptions of two psychologists' training, with the only variant being that one psychologist is described as licensed and deemed proficient by SPA, whereas the other psychologist is described as being "licensed?" (We could add in something about "board certification," but that might be for another study!) We include a reasonable referral question about someone who is experiencing anxiety and depression, and was recommended for personality assessment. We simply ask which of the two psychologists would you refer to, and why? How many endorse the psychologist proficiency certificate?

4. We then adopt a different slant: We provide the same information about the two assessors when the case has forensic versus non-forensic implications. Does the forensic piece make a difference when it comes to referral choice? We can also do a comparison by race, gender, ethnicity, and age; by prior history of treatment versus no treatment (to the extent someone opts to disclose), and by prior history of treatment with psychological testing vs. no testing.

5. Let's add some more information. We give another group more detail (e.g., cost of application, criteria against which report is assessed, qualifications of reviewers, status associated with proficiency) and see if additional information affects referral decisions for both the forensic and anxiety-depression personality assessment cases.

6. We might also add just another piece to our evolving research program: Have students in clinical psychology who have not yet taken a class in personality assessment read two reports that are exactly the same (i.e., both written by a psychologist whose signature line includes "Proficiency Certificate in Personality Assessment awarded by the Society for Personality Assessment"), except that one report has more background information about the assessor (e.g. gender, age, ethnicity, race)? We then ask the reader to rate the report on a few basic dimensions (e.g., readability, response to the referral question, recommendations). One group gets a report with the signature line "Licensed Psychologist and Proficiency Certificate in Personality Assessment awarded by the Society for Personality Assessment," and one group just gets "Licensed Psychologist" as a name, but nothing else. Does the addition of background information about the assessor influence perceptions of quality of work?

The permutations can go on and on, but the exercise is a good one. In the end, if the teacher can tie assessment and advanced standing to income possibilities for students, it connects students to real life, with long-term practice implications as personality assessors. While we do not have data yet on the benefits of pursuing Proficiency in Personality Assessment through SPA, and while we recognize that personal/professional benefits to psychologists are of course important, a main goal of proficiencies is to protect the consumer and protection of our clients from poor-quality or even harmful reports by those who may not meet proficiency expectations and may not be aware of it. So, with that in

Proficiency and Ethics
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The word proficiency does not appear in the American Psychological Association *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* (2010). However, the concept of proficiency is closely related to the standards on competence. The *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* states that "Psychologists provide services, teach, and conduct research with populations and in areas only within the boundaries of their competence, based on their education, training, supervised experience, consultation, study, or professional experience" (American Psychological Association, 2010).

There is an important difference between competence and proficiency. While competence is the ethical floor, beneath which psychologists should not fall, proficiency includes striving for the highest standards, which is not only aspirational but achievable.

According to Knapp and VandeCreek (2012), "the word ethics could refer to either the minimum standards, the legal or mandatory floor adopted by the profession, or to voluntary efforts to live out high moral ideals" (p. 4). The floor approach emphasizes regulations and enforceable standards, but this is an incomplete view of ethics. The concept of positive ethics is a movement away from punishment and anxiety-producing components of ethics. Positive ethics broadens psychologists' understanding of ethics in a larger context, sensitizes psychologists to ethical implications of decisions on a daily basis, heightens awareness related to ethics beyond the office, and assists psychologists in balancing competing ethical demands (Knapp & VandeCreek, 2012). Within the area of competence, enforceable standards require psychologists to acquire and maintain minimal formal qualifications, while positive ethics involve striving for the highest standards including proficiency.

How can psychologists know if they are proficient, or even competent? In general, psychologists can ascertain if they have become proficient in a certain area of practice after submitting their work to external feedback. Although the most obvious example of external feedback is when students attend doctoral programs in psychology and submit their performance to the feedback and evaluation of faculty and clinical supervisors (Knapp & VandeCreek, 2012), it is more difficult for practitioners to demonstrate competence in areas or with techniques after they have left their doctoral programs. Psychologists may also want to develop expertise in areas of psychology that they did not study in graduate school. For example, many practicing clinicians were educated before the R–PAS or even the Comprehensive System was being taught in graduate programs. "Psychologists can obtain proficiency credentials in some areas such as biofeedback certification. In other areas, no such credentials exist. There also may not be a uniformly agreed upon sequence of experiences, sequence of study, set of readings, workshops, classes, or examinations for psychologists to become proficient in other areas" (Knauss, 2004, p. 4). However, the Society for Personality Assessment (SPA) has now provided the opportunity to demonstrate proficiency in assessment.

Competence is especially important in assessment. This includes using tests that are reliable and valid, using the proper test(s) to answer the referral question and being properly trained to administer, score, and interpret the test(s) used. This has become even more challenging as tests are being developed and revised more rapidly. Testing is also being used for a wider variety of referral questions, such as reinstatement of parental rights and appropriateness of bariatric surgery and other medical interventions. Cultural competence is essential in all areas of psychological practice. In relation to assessment, cultural competence refers to understanding the client's unique world view and ethnic, linguistic, racial, and cultural background. For example, individuals from diverse backgrounds differ with respect to responsiveness to speed pressures and willingness to elaborate on answers. Also, clients from certain backgrounds may value the relationship over the task, or may experience disrespect if the procedure is not fully explained (American Psychological Association, 2003). Accurate diagnosis requires culturally appropriate assessment instruments or the knowledge of how to adapt them (Knapp & VandeCreek, 2012).

Another emerging area of competence involves electronic communication, including assessments administered electronically or over the internet. There are both pros and cons to computerized assessment. It is important that clinicians not "rely on computerized administration, scoring of results, and interpretations to expand their competence into areas when they lack appropriate education, supervised training, experience, and credentialing. In these situations, the clinician is not qualified to evaluate the validity of the computer-generated results and interpretations for the clients tested. This places both the clients and the clinician at risk" (Knauss, 2013, p. 4).

The importance of emotional competence should not be underestimated. Emotional, social, health, and other problems can interfere with psychologists performing effectively, as well as lead to ethical misconduct. Standard 2.06 of the *Ethical Standards for Psychologists and Code of Conduct* (American Psychological Association, 2010) stresses that psychologists should refrain from beginning an activity when they know, or even should know, that there is a substantial likelihood that their personal or professional problems will prevent them from doing their job in a competent manner. According to Fisher (2017), "Signs that personal problems may be interfering with work-related activities may include intense emotional reactions to students, supervisees, research participants, colleagues or clients/patients" (p. 106). Furthermore, Standard 2.06b requires that, "When psychologists become aware of personal problems that may interfere with their performing work-related duties adequately, they take appropriate measures, such as obtaining professional consultation or assistance and determine whether they should limit, suspend, or terminate their work-related duties" (American Psychological Association, 2010). Unfortunately, it is often difficult for individual psychologists to determine when they become impaired or when their competence is compromised. However, practicing good self-care is one step to avoiding impairment.

Impairment is not the only reason to make a referral in relation to competence considerations. An important aspect of competence also involves knowing when one has reached one's own limits and recognizing when one's knowledge, skills, and abilities are inadequate. At these times, alternatives need to be considered, such as making a referral or seeking consultation (Knapp, Younggren, VandeCreek, Harris, & Martin, 2013). For example, a psychologist may be an excellent personality assessor

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Proficiency in Personality Assessment
A Graduate Student Perspective
Emily A. Dowgwillo, MS
Pennsylvania State University

This year, the Society for Personality (SPA) Convention theme, "Evolving Proficiencies in Personality Assessment," was particularly appropriate for its graduate student members. After all, our task as graduate students is to spend these years growing into proficient researchers, proficient scholars, proficient clinicians, proficient assessors, and perhaps even proficient educators and mentors. Although a graduate degree is by no means synonymous with proficiency, and we hopefully never stop learning, our graduate school years are a vital time in our own growth and development.

One of the challenges that accompanies this growth and development is balancing an emerging sense of efficacy and confidence, that comes with training and experience, with humility and an accurate appraisal of our weaknesses and limitations, which research suggests is associated with certain positive therapy outcomes (Nissen-Lie, Monsen, Ulleberg, & Rønnestad, 2013; Nissen-Lie et al., 2015). Although this research has not yet been extended to the assessment literature, it would follow that a similar sense of humility and openness toward constructive criticism might similarly benefit patients in an assessment context. Feedback from clinical supervisors and research mentors helps us as graduate students to strike this balance during the course of our training. However, similar mechanisms for direct feedback, consultation, and supplemental training after graduation are, at times, less obvious. The Proficiency in Personality Assessment application process spearheaded by SPA is one formal process that provides assessors with an explicit, unbiased evaluation of their assessment skills after graduation and licensure.

The Proficiency in Personality Assessment recognition has been gaining momentum over the past few years due to the hard work and commitment of the proficiency coordinator and the proficiency committee. As a first-time visitor to the SPA proficiency website (http://www.personality.org/about/proficiency-application/), I appreciated how clearly and concisely the website articulated what proficiency in personality assessment was, why it is important, and what benefits may come from a proficiency recognition. I was also able to easily find clear and concise answers to my questions about the application process and was impressed with how consistent the information was across parts of the website (webinars, frequently asked questions, handouts, etc.). Based on the information from the website, I felt that I would be able to confidently submit an application for proficiency once I became eligible.

Because the proficiency process is targeted at licensed individuals who are providing personality assessment services, the material on the website is, understandably, not targeted at a graduate student audience. However, it seems like this may be a missed opportunity given that today's graduate students are tomorrow's assessors. Because the standards identified as part of the proficiency recognition remain the same regardless of experience, introducing the standards more formally as part of clinical training would be an important and helpful first step toward setting future licensed assessors on the path to proficiency. Introducing SPA and the proficiency recognition to students early on in their training also has the added benefits of making students aware that this recognition is out there (making them more likely to perhaps seek out such recognition after becoming licensed), gives them a standard to work toward, gives them practice writing reports that try to meet that standard, and helps provide structure and confidence for a process that at times can feel like trial and error.

While there are many ways that these standards could be introduced as part of graduate training, a couple of initial ideas come to mind. First, having a section of the SPA proficiency wbsite targeted at those responsible for training and supervising graduate students could expand the scope of proficiency and highlight the importance of the proficiency standards for all individuals providing personality assessment services, not just those who are licensed. Resources for supervisors or instructors could also be expanded to include material that emphasizes why these criteria are important and/or provides examples where the criteria were met or were lacking in some way. However, one easy-to-implement first step might be to explicitly identify the Proficiency Report Review Form as a useful tool for supervisors and instructors to use when providing feedback on student's reports. The use of this form would identify key aspects of report writing for students, instilling good report writing habits early on that can later be refined with practice and experience. Using the Proficiency Report Review Form would also help students to identify areas of improvement early on in their training.

Although much of good assessment practices and report writing is learned from experience, communicating SPA's proficiency criteria at the outset of training and instilling good habits early on would be helpful. Additionally, formalizing proficiency resources targeted at students may make the proficiency process and the standards identified by SPA more visible within graduate programs.

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Remembering the 2017 SPA Convention and Preparing for SPAGS Elections

Emily A. Dowgwillo, MS
Pennsylvania State University

Every year, I look forward to attending the Society for Personality Assessment (SPA) Convention, and this year's conference in San Francisco did not disappoint. I would like to thank Dr. Bob Bornstein and all the SPA Board of Trustees for their continued support of and investment in the graduate student members of SPA. Thank you for encouraging and accepting Society for Personality Assessment Graduate Students (SPAGS)-sponsored programming targeted at graduate student interests and concerns. Thank you for providing funding to support graduate student research projects and travel to the annual conference, and thank you for giving graduate student members a voice. This support is truly appreciated and is one of the many reasons I continue to come to the Annual Convention year after year.

I would also like to thank the SPAGS Board and our distinguished guests and panelists for all of the hard work that went into making the conference a success. At the SPA Annual Convention, the SPAGS-sponsored student social (organized by Jaime Anderson and Adam Natoli) was a great way for students to meet our distinguished guest for the evening, Dr. Christopher Hopwood, and get to know one another in a more informal setting over delicious food and drink. Our SPAGS-sponsored panels (organized by Leila Wu and Emily Dowgwillo) introduced students to a number of the well-validated and reliable personality assessment measures that are at the very foundation of our field; taught students about different statistical approaches to analyzing time series data; and answered student's questions about attaining post-doctoral, clinical, and academic positions after graduate school. Finally, the SPAGS-sponsored Student Diversity Lunch (organized by Jaime Anderson, Adam Natoli, and Crista Maracic) not only allowed students to meet our distinguished guest, Dr. Joni Mihura, but also gave them a forum to discuss important sex and gender dynamics in personality assessment.

Throughout the conference, students were updated and reminded about SPAGS-sponsored activities (thanks to Trevor Williams and Adam Natoli) through both the SPA Covnention app and SPAGS Facebook page. The SPAGS Facebook page is a great way to communicate with the SPAGS Board and other graduate students interested in personality assessment throughout the year. Please consider visiting our Facebook page for more information.

Finally, SPAGS elections (organized by Ryan Marek) occurred in November, giving the new board ample time to prepare for and transition into their new roles at the SPA convention. I look forward to working with the new SPAGS Board: Crista Maracic (President), Adam Natoli (President Elect), William Bryant (Secretary), Trevor Williams (Member-at-Large), Sindes Dawood (Member-at-Large), and Chloe Bliton (Member-at-Large) over the course of the coming year.

SPAGS truly benefits from the diverse perspectives and experiences of its members. Board membership is a great way to develop and demonstrate leadership skills, to provide a service to the field as a student, to become more involved in SPA, to influence SPAGS programming, and to take advantage of a number of invaluable networking opportunities with other SPA members. My time on the Board has been an invaluable experience, and I would encourage our student members to consider running for a board position. This year, elections will be held for the following positions: President (3-year term that spans the President Elect, President, Past President positions) and three Member-At-Large positions (1-year term). Interested applicants will need to comprise a personal statement of no more than 750 words. A call for nominations should be going out in the fall with more information.

Beck Award: Nicole Cain and presenter A. Jill Clemence.

Mary S. Cerney Award: Zara Wright and presenter A. Jill Clemence.

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Public Affairs Corner
Bruce L. Smith, PhD, ABAP
Public Affairs Director

There are two issues that dominate our concerns at this point. The first has to do with health care financing and its effect on assessment practice, and the second involves the re-emergence of threats of poorly trained—or untrained—practitioners having psychological assessment added to their scope of practice.

With the future of the Affordable Care Act uncertain, the financing of health care remains as is for the time being. Nonetheless, the threats to reimbursement for psychological services in general, and assessment in particular, remain. The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services is likely to be under pressure to cut the Medicare budget, and history has shown that when they do so, they engage in a lot of "nickel and dime" cuts. This is likely to impact the reimbursement for psychological assessment by Medicare, and as you know, Medicare tends to set the bar for private insurers as well. We are working closely with the American Psychological Association Practice Organization (APAPO) to try and ensure that assessment services are appropriately valued.

The second issue is equally serious. Once again, we have several states in which there are attempts to broaden the scope of practice for master's-level practitioners or others in the mental health field to include psychological assessment. While we have no opposition to individuals with degrees other than the doctorate in psychology practicing assessment per se, we do object to allowing individuals whose background does not include education and training in assessment to practice it. As you know, personality assessment is a highly specialized set of skills, and one cannot practice competently simply by reading a test manual. Recently, there was a move in Arkansas to de-license psychologists, which would have the effect of allowing a wide range of individuals to practice. Fortunately, the Arkansas Psychological Association was able to defeat this attempt. At present, there is a move in Ohio to replace psychology, social work, counseling, etc., licenses with a generic "mental health" license that would not distinguish among the different disciplines in terms of scope of practice. We are supporting APAPO's effort to defeat this bill as well.

The above brings me to an extremely important point. These issues only serve to underscore the importance of the Proficiency in Personality Assessment. It is our goal to have as many practitioners of assessment certified as proficient as possible. If we are successful in this effort, we can establish the proficiency as the basic level of competence for the provision of assessment services and in this way protect the public from inadequately trained individuals offering substandard care. I firmly believe that this effort is vital if we are to protect the reputation and future of what we do. I urge all Society for Personality Assessment members who do practice assessment—whether in clinical, forensic, school, or other settings—to apply for proficiency status. The health of our profession depends on it.

Thursday, March 16, 2017, Poster Honorable Mention: Theresa Andare with presenter Robert Archer.

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In 2018—Celebrating 80 years and the 100th volume of the *JPA* journal!

Join us in Washington, DC, March 14–18, 2018, for the SPA Annual Convention and our 80th Anniversary celebration at The Washington Marriott Georgetown. This Washington, DC, hotel is host to the Atrium Restaurant and the Court Lounge. The 12,000 square feet of venue space is perfect for our Convention. Dupont Circle is close to the hotel, along with the Reagan Airport which will make travel more convenient.

The Washington Marriott Georgetown
1221 22nd Street NW
Washington, DC 20037
Telephone: (202) 872-1500

Accommodations:
Single/double $219.00/room

Promotional information with details about the 2018 Annual Convention will be available on the SPA webpage at www.Personality.org. Select the Convention Tab/General Information.

Cutoff date for reservations: 2/19/2018

2017 Annual Convention Poster Award Winners

Thursday, March 16, 2017

First Place

Discriminating Between Self- and Other-Deceptive PRD in Disordered Eating Populations
Emily Tyne O'Gorman, Jaclyn A. Siegel, and John E. Kurtz
   Villanova University, Villanova, PA
E-mail: eogorman@villanova.edu

Honorable Mention

Rorschach Performance Assessment System (R–PAS) in Assessing Psychotic Functioning Among Patients with Schizophrenia in Brazil
Philipe Gomes Viera
   Universidade Sao Francisco, Sao Paulo, Brazil
Donald J. Viglione
   Alliant International University, San Diego, CA
Anna Elisa de Villemore-Amral and Fernando Pessotto
   Universidade Sao Francisco, Sao Paulo, Brazil
E-mail: philipevieira@ymail.com

Somatization and Covert Measures of Psychological Health and Self/Other Representations
Theresa Andare and Maria Christoff
   University of Detroit Mercy, Detroit, MI
Laura Richardson
   Massachusetts General Hospital/Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA
John Porcerelli
   University of Detroit Mercy, Detroit, MI
E-mail: theresaandare@gmail.com

Saturday, March 18, 2017

First Place

Differentiation-Relatedness and Partner-Violence in Urban Women
Cathleen Lalonde and John Porcerelli
   University of Detroit Mercy, Detroit, MI
E-mail: cathleen.lalonde@gmail.com

Honorable Mention

The Moderating Role of Personality Functioning in Multimethod Assessment of Interpersonal Dependency: Evaluating Implicit-Self Attributed Test Score Discontinuity

Adam P. Natoli and Robert Bornstein
   Adelphi University, Garden City, NY
E-mail: Adam.natoli@gmail.com

MMPI–2–RF VRIN–r and TRIN–r Utility: Does Detected Invalid Responding Impact Substantive Scale Criterion Validity?
Danielle L. Burchett, Coraima Enriquez, Kayla Marshall, Brittany Smith, and Stella Ornelas
   California State University, Monterey Bay, Seaside, CA
Jaime L. Anderson
   Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, TX
David M. Glassmire
   Patton State Hospital, Patton, CA
E-mail: dburchet@gmail.com

2017 Award Winners

2017 Bruno Klopfer Award

Leslie Morey, PhD

2017 Samuel J. and Anne G. Beck Award

Nicole Cain, PhD

2017 Mary S. Cerney Student Award

Zara Wright

2016 Walter Klopfer Award

M. Brent Donnellan, Robert Ackerman, PhD, and Courtney Brecheen
Paper: *Extending Structural Analyses of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale to Consider Criterion-Related Validity: Can Composite Self-Esteem Scores Be Good Enough?*

2016 Walter Klopfer Award

Anthony Rodriguez, Steven P. Reise, and Mark G. Haviland
Paper: *Applying Bifactor Statistical Indices in the Evaluation of Psychological Measures*

2016 Martin Mayman Award

Piero Porcelli and James Kleiger
Paper: *The "Feeling of Movement": Notes on the Rorschach Human Movement Response*

President's Message

support for diversity; these have all been reflected in substantial increases in funds available to support travel to the annual SPA conference, and in funds available for research.

- Enhanced commitment to transparency in data collection and reporting. Thanks to the initiative of Chris Hopwood, at our Fall 2016 meeting the SPA Board of Trustees voted unanimously to become a signatory of the Transparency and Openness Promotion (TOP) initiative developed by the Center for Open Science (https://cos.io/top/). Also in 2016, *JPA* became a TOP signatory, ensuring transparency and enhancing replicability in the studies that appear in our journal.

We have much to look forward to, but challenges remain. As is true of all professional societies, recruiting and retaining early career psychologists is difficult. To increase young psychologists' interest in personality assessment, and in SPA, we must not only reach out to students at the doctoral level, but also to MA students and undergraduates. In the research domain, trends in federal funding tend to work against the kinds of research that assessment psychologists do (however, see my column in the Summer 2016 issue of the *Exchange* for a discussion of useful strategies in this regard). With respect to practice, there are increasing numbers of mental health professionals with varied degrees and levels of training in the marketplace—far more now than when I received my degree—and with these increasing numbers come increased competition for health care dollars.

Alongside these challenges lie opportunities. Psychology is beginning to carve out a niche within today's integrated health care/ patient-centered medical home model (see the 2015 Special Issue of *American Psychologist* devoted to recent work in this area). Advances in cognitive, affective, and behavioral neuroscience afford us wonderful opportunities to strengthen the empirical foundation of personality assessment practice and research, and develop a more integrative, multidisciplinary approach to testing and test score integration. As we reach out to colleagues beyond clinical psychology (e.g., developmental, social, and organizational psychologists) our work will be deepened and enriched. Advances in these related fields can inform what we do, and our insights can inform the work of our colleagues as well.

A Personal Note

When I was just starting out, after receiving my PhD from the State University of New York at Buffalo in 1986, I remember experiencing a form of the imposter phenomenon: Who was I to be playing the role of therapist? What right did I have to submit for publication my ideas regarding personality assessment and personality pathology? I experienced this most profoundly when, during my internship year at Upstate Medical Center in Syracuse, NY, I began working with a patient who was significantly older than I was at the time—a man in his late 50s. Thankfully, he did not do what I most feared (I actually had a nightmare about this early in my internship): He did not stand up, mid-session, and say something along the lines of, "Who are you to think you can help me—you're just a kid. I have neckties older than you…."

If working with an older patient primes the insecurities and self-doubts of a beginning psychologist, imagine what taking leadership of a professional society feels like. My imposter phenomenon experience, which had been dormant for some years, reawakened with a vengeance on September 1, 2015: Who was I to pretend I could be SPA President and run an organization of 1,000+ members?

Turns out I couldn't. The first thing I learned was that leadership of SPA rests not with one person, but with the entire Board of Trustees. I am tremendously grateful for the support I've received from my colleagues. The members of the SPA Board are incredibly committed; they devote countless hours to supporting the organization, working nights, weekends, and holidays without complaint. The same is true of our Central Office staff, Monica Tune and Sam Richardson. I could not have muddled through these past two years without the help of my friends on the Board and in the Central Office. Our society would not be the vibrant organization that it is today without their efforts. It has been an honor to serve as President of SPA.

Proficiency in Personality…

toward human beings, attitudes that affirm the worth of every person, regardless of identity status and that recognize that stigma attaches to some identity statuses. The proficient assessor knows that individuals must be understood in their contexts. This recognition is revealed in the assessor's identification of how certain particular features might aid or deter a person in his or her quest to harmonize with that person's setting. It is reflected in the assessor's awareness that just as individuals must sometimes change to adjust to their environments, so too must contexts change to meet the needs of individuals within them. This latter awareness gives rise to a demand for the proficient assessor to assume, at times, the role of advocate."

Clearly, the Proficiency in Personality Assessment does not assure one's competency and proficiency within the broad realm that is diversity, nor does it claim to do so. However, it certainly takes important steps toward the goal of providing diversity-sensitive personality assessment in today's diverse world.

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Why We Should All…

style in which it was written. But I was even more delighted to find out that several of the comments and questions I received made me think more deeply about my client and even to question my use of a measure that was outside my usual battery. In sum, I not only had the satisfaction of being recognized as proficient by my colleagues, but also of learning from their review of my work. I even found the anonymity of the process comforting, as I was certain that my reputation within SPA had in no way influenced their comments.

In closing, I hope that many of you reading these words will decide to apply for proficiency in personality assessment through SPA. It is the right thing to do for ever so many reasons.

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Applying Proficiency in …

handy review tool), we can set the stage for consistency across training experiences, sites, and supervisors. Of course, the expectations around proficiency are not meant to limit the expression or the creativity of supervisors or trainees. The personal voice of the writer is still valuable. Using the concept of proficiency and the helpful Proficiency Report Review Form to provide expectations for trainees and their supervisors is one avenue toward making learning and teaching personality—while maybe not less easy or quick—at least less impossible.

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Assessing Proficiency in …

mind, I invite SPA members who were on the fence about moving toward the proficiency to give it a try. It can be a very rewarding experience on several professional levels.

Proficiency and Ethics…

but have to refer a client who needs a neuropsychological evaluation. Similarly, specialized knowledge and skills are required for custody evaluations. Only in emergencies, or when appropriate mental health services are not available, can psychologists provide services for which they have not obtained the necessary training. According to Standard 2.02 of the *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* (American Psychological Association, 2010), this is to ensure that services are not denied. The services are to be discontinued once the emergency has ended or appropriate services are available.

As mentioned earlier, the field of psychology is changing rapidly, especially with regard to assessment. Some authors (Dubin, 1972; Koocher & Keith-Spiegel, 1998) have hypothesized that about a decade after the receipt of a doctoral degree, half of the knowledge received during training is obsolete. Thus, lifelong learning is necessary to maintain competence, and many licensing boards require continuing education in order for psychologists to renew their licenses. The foundation for lifelong learning is established in graduate school, as this is a standard of accreditation. There are many avenues for continuing education, including home study courses, webinars, continuing education courses, supervision, consultation, and formal coursework (Fisher, 2017).

How can psychologists provide evidence of their competence? Unfortunately, licensure alone does not ensure competence. In most jurisdictions, licensure is generic. Being a licensed psychologist does not indicate whether one is competent as a neuropsychologist, forensic psychologist, or personality assessor. In some areas of practice, it is possible for psychologists to provide evidence of their qualifications in an area through certification, such as through the American Board of Professional Psychology. Several years ago the British Psychological Society established standards for competence in occupational, clinical, and educational testing (Bartram, 1996). They used a competence-based approach to the certification of test users.

The Proficiency in Personality Assessment is one way for psychologists to provide evidence of their competence in this area. Personality

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assessment has been recognized by the Commission for the Recognition of Specialties and Proficiencies in Professional Psychology (CRSPPP) via the American Psychological Association as a proficiency. However, neither CRSPP nor the American Psychological Association determines whether individuals possess proficiency. That is usually determined by independent organizations such as SPA. According to Hadas Pade, the Proficiency Coordinator for SPA, "The main goal of the proficiency is to establish a minimal threshold or standard in personality assessment services to the public. It suggests a level of skills that is expected, as a minimum, of all licensed psychologists providing such services, and to a large part, those who are supervising or instructing in personality assessment. The hope is to reduce poor- or low-quality services, often demonstrated by written reports, which may be unhelpful or potentially harmful to the client" (2015, p. 10). The process includes a report review rubric which will be available not only to clinicians but to instructors and supervisors to use as part of training.

The Proficiency in Personality Assessment fits perfectly with every aspect of the standards of competency in the *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* (American Psychological Association, 2010). The process can begin during graduate training, where assessment reports are reviewed by faculty and supervisors and proficiency is recognized following a review by three psychologists of a de-identified written report, as well as other documentation. This is consistent with the recommendation by Knapp and VandeCreek (2012) that psychologists should not consider themselves competent in a new domain until they have had another psychologist who is proficient in that field monitor or supervise them. Thus, Proficiency in Personality Assessment is a way for psychologists to provide evidence of their competence in personality assessment that is not only aspirational but achievable.

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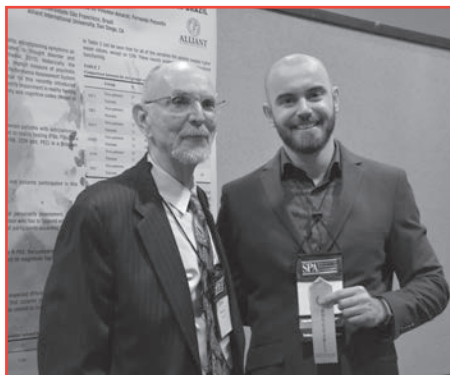
Walter Klopfer Award: Robert Ackerman and M. Brent Donellan (Courtney Brecheen not present) with presenter Steven Huprich.
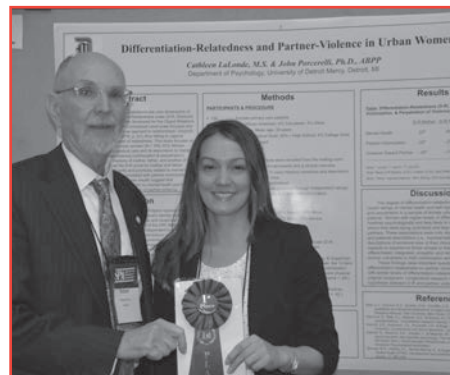

Walter Klopfer Award: Mark Haviland and Steven Reise (Anthony Rodriquez not present) with presenter Steven Huprich.

Thursday, March 16, 2017, Poster Winner: Emily Tyne O'Gorman with presenter Robert Archer.

Thursday, March 16, 2017, Poster Honorable Mention: Philipe Gomes Viera with presenter Robert Archer.

Saturday, March 18, 2017, Poster Winner: Cathleen Lalonde with presenter Robert Archer.

Saturday, March 18, 2017, Poster Honorable Mention: Adam P. Natoli with presenter Robert Archer.

Free Software

Most people use Microsoft PowerPoint or Excel to draw graphs, which, speaking as a researcher, I find most unfortunate. I find the vast majority of "features" to be totally useless (e.g., shadows or fancy fonts) or actually distort the data. Try drawing the same 3-D bar chart in the two programs, and you'll see very different results, both of which actually mislead the viewer. Unfortunately, dedicated graphing packages are usually quite expensive and may be out of reach for most grad students. If you're looking for a free—and excellent—program, take a look at Veusz (http://home.gna.org/veusz/). It is quite powerful, but the cost of this is a bit of a learning curve. Fortunately, there are many YouTube tutorials that can help you get started. Even though I use a commercial graphing program, I find myself using Veusz because of its many (actually useful) features.

Kudos

Nancy Kaser-Boyd, PhD, was advanced to Clinical Professor at the Geffen School of Medicine at University of California, Los Angeles, where she teaches advanced psychological assessment and violence risk assessment and supervises interns and post-docs in assessment.

—David L. Streiner

From the Editor...

...continued from page 16

and overall writing) as a framework within which we can teach personality assessment to our students. Along the same line, Jed Yalof proposes some ways teachers can use proficiency as a way to stimulate students' thinking about designing research projects.

Linda Knauss's article explores the ethical ramifications of proficiency and competence. The out-going President of the Society for Personality Assessment Graduate Students, Emily Dowgwillo, has addressed the issue of competence from a student's perspective. She has also written a second article, bringing SPAGS members up to date on what's happening in the group, which plays a vital for the future success of SPA. Finally, Bruce Smith, who is the Director of Public Affairs, discusses some issues that are of concern to the profession: possible cuts to the Medicare budget and attempts at the state level to broaden the scope of practice and to replace the licensing of psychologists with a generic one.
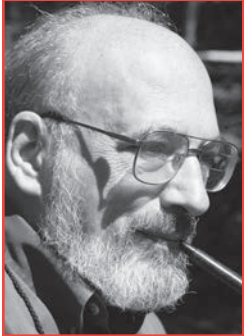
As always, a fascinating issue. And again, if anyone has something to brag about in the Kudos column, or is interested in writing a piece for the *Exchange*, get in touch with me at streiner@mcmaster.ca.

Saturday, March 18, 2017, Poster Winners: The winners with Robert Archer.

spa exchange

From the Editor...
David L. Streiner, PhD, CPsych

Back from San Francisco, and another very exciting annual meeting of the Society for Personality Assessment (SPA). As interesting as the talks and papers were, the best part was meeting friends, catching up on lives and careers, and just schmoozing. With each meeting I attend (and it feels like I've been going since Hermann Rorschach was a baby), SPA seems less and less a society, and more and more like an extended family.

This issue of the *Exchange* is quite a bit different from others, because almost all of the columns are focussed on a single theme: proficiency. As you are no doubt aware, SPA has played a leading role in promoting Proficiency in Personality Assessment, and it has now been recognized by the Commission for the Recognition of Specialties and Proficiencies in Professional Psychology through the American Psychological Association. It has been a long road to get here, achieved through the hard work of many in our society, and especially by Hadas Pade, who heads up the committee, which also includes Radhika Krishnamurthy, Bruce Smith, Virginia Brabender, A. Jordan Wright, Anita Boss, Gregory Meyer, and Ginger Calloway. There are two articles, one by Hadas and one by the committee, explaining its workings and what people should expect when they apply. Many thanks to Hadas for co-editing this issue and coordinating the authors.

Stephen Finn has written a guest column outlining the many reasons why those of us doing personality assessment should seek this designation, ranging from affirming our own competence to the feedback we receive from our peers. Alan Schwartz shows how we can use the proficiency criteria (comprehensiveness, integration, validity, client-centeredness,

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