

SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

Newsletter

December 2010

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

President's Message

Greetings to all Psychologists!

Things have been moving forward in the psychological community in the great Central Valley. After much effort, we now have an online home: <http://www.sjvpa.org>. The path to get us here was complex, and involved a lot of turns and surprises, especially as our knowledge base about our needs was not too strong. However, this process gave us a chance to really look at how we do things, and how we can meet our needs on the web, and I am confident you will find the new website a strong move to update our organization and workflow, as well as a chance to present ourselves publicly to a larger audience than before.

My current favorite feature of the new website is its calendar of upcoming events. The calendar lets us advertise continuing education events well ahead. Additionally, it runs a seamless registration for the events. This means you can pay for the event ahead with your credit card, and have it all taken care of by the day of the event. It should also lighten the load on the ever-helpful Sullivan Center staff and postdocs, who have been doing by-hand registration for these events. We are lucky enough to have one of the preeminent researchers on the Rorschach as part of our community, and Thomas Shaffer, Ph.D., ABPP, has consented to provide us with an update on the Rorschach Inkblot Method on January 10th. Please check out the description of this event elsewhere in the newsletter, as well as online, where you can now register for it.

Another exciting feature of the new website is our publicly available Find a Psychologist feature. This feature allows general members of the Central Valley community to query SJVPA member's interests and availability, and get solid contact information. This feature has the potential to become a strong referral source. We just need more of our long term members to sign back up for SJVPA, and this resource will really build to a strong offering for the community.

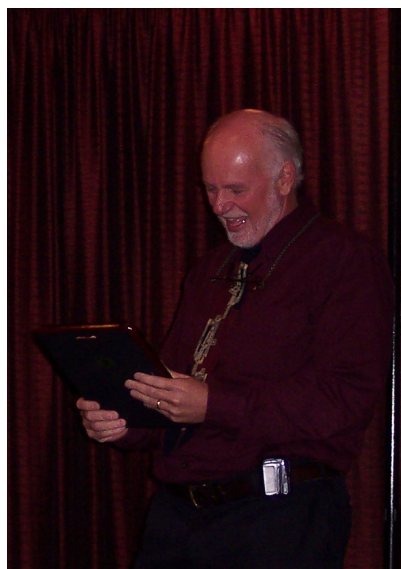
Speaking of membership, I wanted to point out that with the new website we have been able to improve our membership timing strategy. Before, since membership was done by hand, you joined for a calendar year. This meant joining in December was a bad idea- one month of membership for the price of a full year? It was a bad bargain. However, with our new website capabilities, we now sign you up for a full year from when you join- if you join December 28, 2010, you will be a member until December 27, 2011. You get your full year of membership, regardless of when you join. Take advantage of this improvement and join today.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Finally, I would like to end this column by recognizing our Distinguished Psychologist of the year, Michael Petrovich, Ph.D. Many of us know and have worked with Mike throughout the many years he has contributed to our community. In heartwarming appreciation of all of his work, Mike was celebrated at the SJVPA 2010 Awards Banquet on November 8th. Mike has worked tirelessly as an advocate for Psychologists in the Central Valley, has supervised countless interns and postdocs, and given freely of his time and expertise to help many study for both the EPPP and the infamous Oral Boards of the past. He also initiated a planned giving campaign, in which SJVPA annually supports a local charity that is increasing the mental health of our area.



Mike is most proud of his work as the Chair of the School of Unlimited learning, (SOUL) an EOC sponsored charter school in downtown Fresno

which serves low income youth who have difficulty in mainstream schools. He has been involved in this venture for the past 7 years. His Kaiser interns provide free educational support and counseling and the school recently graduated 75 kids from the program, many of whom are the first in their family to finish high school. We really are luck to have such a talented, giving individual in our midst.

I have enjoyed very much being deeply involved in SJVPA this year, and I look forward to many more years of involvement in our thriving psychological community. Thank you for joining with me to make SJVPA the vibrant organization we share.

Amanda Mortimer, Ph.D.
Current President, 2010

San Joaquin Valley Psychological Association

Election Results for 2011 Board Members

Thank you to everyone who returned their ballots. We received unanimous support for the following slate of Officers:

Past President-----Amanda Mortimer, Ph.D.
 President -----Errol Leifer, Ph.D., ABPP
 President Elect -----Linda Hewett, Psy.D.
 Treasurer-----Kathy Sullivan, Ph.D.
 Secretary----- Elisabeth Ganiron, Psy.D.
 CPA Board Representative-----Debbie Kotler, Ph.D.
 Student Representative-----Luisana Perez, B.A.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

The San Joaquin Valley Psychological Association Continuing Education program is proud to announce

Thomas Shaffer, Ph.D., ABPP
The Rorschach Inkblot Method:
Eighty-eight Years of Controversy

This presentation will take place January 10, 2011 at The Daily Grill located at 7855 N. Palm Ave. beginning at 6:30PM.

Registration for this event is now open at <http://www.sjvpa.org>, through our calendar of upcoming events. Please register to reserve your space!

Although the Rorschach Inkblot Method (RIM) has experienced intervals of calm, it has also been characterized by times of controversy and fracture; the RIM is currently in such a period. This lecture will briefly provide a background on the RIM before coding and interpretation were unified and standardized by John E Exner, Jr., then address the period of national and international use of the CS, the introduction of current national and international norms, the impact of Exner's death and the beginnings of the first new US Rorschach system for administration, coding and interpretation in forty years, the Rorschach Performance Assessment System (RPAS). The goals of this lecture are not to provide coding or interpretative information to enable participants to implement in their clinical work, but rather to provide an historical overview of a widely used assessment tool to the psychological community and to increase the awareness of new opportunities for those in our community who frequently use the RIM in their clinical practice.

Dr. Shaffer is a renowned Rorschach expert and researcher who also teaches and runs a private practice. Please join us to hear this excellent speaker and the latest in the field. This is also an opportunity to meet with your fellow Psychologists and enjoy some amazing gourmet food! Continuing education credit for one hour is pending, although the presentation is free, a \$7 fee will be collected for credit.

Please visit <http://www.sjvpa.org> to see our calendar of upcoming event and to register for this training. Register early to reserve a seat, and enjoy the convenience of paying the continuing education fee online.

***CPA is approved by the American Psychological Association to sponsor continuing education for psychologists.**

***CPA maintains responsibility for this program and its content**

CLINICAL CORNER

Clinical Corner

by Mel Hamel, PhD.

Prologue: As I mentioned in earlier editions, this section of the SJVPA Newsletter has been a daydream (not a very large one, mind you) of mine for a while, now. The simple idea is to have a section of the Newsletter that gives us some information relevant to our clinical work. Topics might range across: clinical conceptualizations, case studies, diagnostic issues, pertinent research, assessment and intervention techniques, therapist phenomenology, day-to-day administrative issues, etc., etc. What I hope is that I shall not be the lone contributor to Clinical Corner. The wish is to engender contributions, large or small, from our SJVPA ranks. There are a lot of good, intelligent, savvy, articulate psychologists in our community. Many useful contributions to the community have been made and are needed again for the community to flourish. So, I shall continue the effort and hope what follows is at least curious, if not interesting. Anyone wanting to contribute writings on clinical matters is encouraged and will be appreciated.

Something to think about...

If there are any neuropsychologists/neuroscientists reading the Corner this quarter, I have a few conceptual puzzlements and could use some neuroscience help.

Globally, my curiosity is about human somatosensory systems that evolved purposefully and adaptively under certain environmental conditions a long time ago. The conditions under which our CNS and related sensory systems developed can be imagined through the help of archeology and geology. Let's posit that conditions were such that they fostered a simple lifestyle. The natural surrounds likely provided the predominant source of human stimulation. Although weather, predators, and such threats would, to be sure, provide episodes of elevated stimulation and, consequentially, high systemic arousal, the bulk of early hominid and homo sapien existence was likely populated by large segments of relatively low stimulation/arousal. Perhaps arguable, it seems to me that, again, absencing times of elevated anxiety/duress/hardship/etc., most of our primal ancestors likely lived most of the time attending to the mundane tasks of gathering, hunting, and eventually farming. My view is that those lifestyle conditions, in the main, gave rise to periods of attention, concentration, and sensory stimulation that was markedly less than what we have nowadays.

Somewhat arbitrarily, we could say that for about the past century, the conditions surrounding our long-time-in-evolution somatosensory systems have changed. Moreover, in the past twenty years, they have changed dramatically. I am wondering what happens when environmental change occurs with such rapidity that there is really no traditional way for evolution to keep up. We all pretty much concur that the human brain is neuroplastic. How does that adaptive aspect respond to what have truly been radical and rapid changes in the surroundings to which our sensorium and mental processes must respond. Here are a couple of examples of what I am wondering about.

1. Let's reasonably assume that, under early conditions, periods of attention and concentration were typically on stimuli of low complexity, not so pluralistic, not so diverse or multiplistic in nature. A hunter might sit for long hours in

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waiting; a gatherer might walk and look for extended periods of time; a farmer might toil heavily, but nonetheless his /her levels of sensory stimulation and the demands for attention and concentration could remain quite low. We might think about the last time we weeded the garden or planted flowers. Fairly mundane, I suggest. What happens when attention and concentration systems that were grown on stimuli of that ilk become immersed in surrounds that are, in terms of stimulus value, very multiplistic, diverse, intense, and ubiquitous? What do such conditions do to levels of systemic arousal, habituation, dissociation, etc.? Is it possible that the CNS neuroplasticity will respond to this stimuli-flooded environment? To illustrate, in less than 40 years, television news programming has changed from an anchor person reading the news items to rapid and frequent cuts from video segment to video segment, a scroll with more date moving across the bottom of the screen, and headlines or other data on the left/right margins of the screen. I have tried repeatedly, and it is likely a shortcoming of my CNS and sensory systems, but I still can not read the scroll and simultaneously hear what the broadcasters are saying. It seems to me that we are increasingly presented with audio and visual stimuli that are brief, frequent, diverse, and increasingly attention-commanding, e.g. the automatic increase in sound volume when the television cuts to commercials. What will happen to attention and concentration systems and sensory processes that were cultivated under much less stimulating conditions?

2. Similarly, there was a famous scholar in the Middle Ages (I am quite poor at references.) who used to say that wherever he traveled he carried his entire library with him. This was because he had memorized the not-inconsequential number of books he owned. Indeed, there were times when history was transmitted only through memory and storytelling. My understanding is that, memory, as a neuropsychological function, can be enhanced by systematic practice. What then will be the neuropsychological impact of the large-scale, systematic practice of not memorizing? Technology is fast obviating the need to recall many things that once were part of our daily cognitive functioning. When was the last time you remembered a telephone number, that is beyond the time it took to program it into your phone? I'm not sure what "Favorites" means in computer/phone/i-whatever parlance. But, I am pretty sure it means that you do not need to recall your most used web sites, e-mail addresses, etc. How will this affect human memory function, if at all?

3. Psychodynamic theory teaches us a lot about the human processes of introjection and projection. Often enough, we therapists become involved when these, and other processes, create problems in people's lives. Typically, the problems involve relational (self and other) difficulties when external world relationships and experiences of self and other run afoul of the introjections and/or projections of the internal world. What will be the psychological consequences when there is minimal external world input to lay bare the faulty introjections and projections? For example, what has the advent and evolution of web-based dating relationships taught us with regard to object relations and projective processes? What does it bode when, as I heard yesterday, that six times the communication occurs daily on technological media (Facebook, Twitter, texts, etc.) than does face-to-face. How will object relations be affected when a number of people seated at a restaurant table or standing in a circle at the mall are on a phone texting, sometimes to one of the others in the same group! I can not help but wonder about the abundant opportunities for misunderstanding or miscommunication.

4. As you read this, right now, look away for a moment and decide which way is North. Do the same for West, too. Did you do that without consulting your GPS? There was a time when virtually anyone would know the directions of the com-

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pass. Moreover, people would navigate by stars, geologic formations, and other guiding line-of-sight objects. (This also loads on 2. above. If you forgot those landmarks, you were lost!) Lately, have you seen anyone use or try to read a map? It is simultaneously comical and sad, about the lost abilities to navigate the environment.

It seems to me that, at a minimum, a consequence of these kinds or changes in our surrounds is greatly increased dependency and vulnerability. Have you ever been headed somewhere new and your navigation system failed? Or, just imagine how you would fare if the power went out, for a very long time. But, my primary wondering is what might be the effects of all this change on our CNS and sensory systems. How about some thoughts and feedback from the neuroscience people on what the rather radical changes in our sensory and relational worlds might mean?

Revisiting a prior article...

In the April Newsletter, I included some information on the Tao Te Ching. Among that was this:

A Taoist Proverb

Right is not right and *so* is not so.
If *right* were right and *so* were so, then
Right would be so clearly distinguishable from *not right*
And *so* would be so clearly distinguishable from *not so*
That there would be no reason for argument.

The intimation here is that there are rarely situations when what is *right* or *so* is not argued/debated. Mostly, there seems to be something to the contrary, enough so that an unequivocal position can not be reasonably taken. Accordingly, it seems specious to assert being absolutely right. How much more true is this proverb when it comes to interpersonal relationships, personal values, beliefs, etc.

Here's an example of a clinical application of that proverb: A young adult couple were being treated for marital problems, most notably arguing. The wife had a particularly keen skill at inflicting verbal pain. The husband's own acid tongue was much slower to lash out, but ultimately it would arrive. In the meanwhile, however, he was quite masterful at passive-aggression aimed at deviling his wife. Some of her anger arose from OCD tendencies that compelled her to perfectionist standards for herself and those close to her. The husband, of course, was nothing close to perfectionist. These and other personality variables contributed to rather chronic, "running gun battles" between the two.

One session, it became clear that the OCD-type of thinking by the wife, coupled with long-term, almost perfect modeling of self-righteous indignation by her own mother, created an anxiety in the patient when she felt she was going to be "not right". That anxiety triggered anger/rage, affectively (not effectively!) used to oppress that which would threaten her own righteousness.

Reading this verse to both wife and husband led to an about 15 minute discussion of the verse and what it means. As soon as the couple realized and, indeed, felt the truth in the verse, they opened up to seeing that no one can really claim to be unequivocally "right". At their next biweekly appointment, they came in with a more positive

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air. When asked about the past two weeks, they looked at each other, smiled, and reported that their arguing had decreased to one incident total, down from about one every day or two. When asked how they had accomplished this very good improvement, the wife looked at her spouse and said they had agreed to remind each other about the senselessness of their arguments by saying: "If right were right...". This cue the two had developed reportedly helped them to be reminded of the futility of their fights.

Is Asian wisdom a cure-all? Of course not. But, aside from the very wisdom it conveys, it also offers something different. Something maybe different enough to catch a person's mind long enough for the seed of a new experience to nestle in and, just maybe, germinate.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PSYCHOTHERAPY and SPIRITUALITY GROUP A BRIEF REVIEW AND AN OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE

Submitted by: Mel Hamel, Ph.D.
 Lynette Bassman, Ph.D.

The special interest group for Psychotherapy and Spirituality concluded its eight-meeting term in October. We met biweekly for 90 minutes. Initially, the group convened at a Kaiser conference room, accessible due to SJVPA's non-profit status. However, as the group winnowed from its original ten to the eventual four regulars, we relocated to a group member's office for convenience and ambiance. As inaugural efforts go, we all were quite pleased with the process, content, and mutual investment. Our purposes for forming the group were many, including simply a chance to sit with other psychologists and exchange thoughts and experiences. More pointedly, however, we wanted to have a beginning dialogue among colleagues about the nexus of psychotherapy and spirituality; What do they share and can they/how can they be complementary, if not mutually agonistic.

The content of our talks was shaped around the text Beyond Happiness – Deepening the Dialogue between Buddhism, Psychotherapy, and the Mind Sciences (Watson, 2008). Generally, we found the book relevant to our purposes for meeting. Mostly, it presented theoretical and theological principles from the three identified areas for dialogue and some research findings from psychotherapy and the neurosciences. That information was, collectively, interesting, save for the psychotherapy segment, the content of which was well known already to the group. This was, perhaps, our only real disappointment, albeit mild, in the overall experience. However, the group was persistent at focusing on how to apply the principles from the text and our own general knowledge of spirituality to psychotherapy. A rich and connecting exchange of ideas comprised our meetings, including discussion of clinical cases and material relevant to the potential for a spiritual dimension to the treatment. Indeed, most meetings reserved time for meditation, with different methods/techniques/considerations introduced by the members. This experiential sharing was among the prime benefits of the group. Another major benefit was simply the collegial conversation and expansion of ideas through exchange. We all came away feeling positive about our collective interaction and what we learned from one another.

The group agreed that having another term of meetings was desirable. The group will begin meeting in early 2011 if there is sufficient interest, and all licensed psychologists are welcome to join. We would appreciate suggestions of texts around which we might focus our discussion. If you have any interest or suggestions, please contact us at either lbassman@alliant.edu or hamkcj@comcast.net.

MEMBERSHIP PAGE

Advertising Info:

Please send in advertisements, announcements, or articles of interest before the end of the preceding month to be included in the quarterly newsletter.

Send ad to marcellepratt@hotmail.com.

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The San Joaquin Valley Psychological Association (SJVPA) is a professional organization created by local Psychologists. It is a forum in which to discuss and present political, professional, and educational matters. SJVPA also has opportunities for professionals to earn continuing education units, an ethics board, and professional feedback opportunities. A disaster response team comprised of psychologists trained to respond to both natural and man-made disasters offers assistance to the community. SJVPA also recognizes and provides modest funds for worthy community services.