



# Bulletin of the American Academy of Clinical Psychology

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## President's Column



**Lawrence S. Schoenfeld, Ph.D., ABPP**

WELCOME to the first electronic BULLETIN for the Academy. A special thanks to the editors (Drs. George Kapalka and Rafael Art Javier) who spearheaded this venture with the oversight of the Board Vice President Dr. Chris Ebbe. Your Academy has undergone major changes recently. Our office has moved to San Antonio and we have a new part time Administrator. The Board members have taken on major tasks previously done by Central Office and this has reduced our overhead dramatically. We have reduced the size of the Board to six representatives (further reducing cost) and now Board members are elected at large rather than from a geographic region. Prospective Board members have been recruited who have interest and expertise in areas needed on the Board. In the Fall you will have the opportunity of electing three representative to the Board. All will make outstanding Board members.

I have served as your President for almost two years and will leave the Board at the end of this year after serving first on the examining board and now on the Academy Board. As I leave the Academy Board the structure is firm and finances are excellent. We have started a web based BULLETIN and CE program. The Web based DIRECTORY has been updated and is maintained. MENTORING is done regularly by Board members and former members of the Academy Board. Nevertheless all is not well. Our Academy (as well as all specialty academies) has an unclear status within ABPP. We do not sit on the Board of Trustees of ABPP. ABPP is in the process of again reformatting itself, and it is unclear whether roles will be left that justify the continuation of the Academy concept. Our role and function in the Board Certification process and as a member organization for Board Certified Clinical Psychologists needs revision and clarification. As I leave the Board I am pleased that Dr. Chris Ebbe will become the President and hope that under his leadership our role and function can be further clarified. Enjoy the BULLETIN and thank you for being a member and supporting the concept of Board Certification.

One last thought. This BULLETIN should be seen by the membership as a place to brag about your accomplishments, to discuss professional issues, and to be entertained. Please contribute (send to [cebbe@alum.mit.edu](mailto:cebbe@alum.mit.edu) for posting in the members news section).

## Notes From Your Editors: We Want To Hear From You



**Rafael Art. Javier, Ph.D., ABPP**

Dear Colleagues,

So, here it is! Our first electronic Bulletin is finally here. It represents our determination to embrace the technological advances afforded to us to create a dynamic and professionally attractive forum where our members are able to share their thoughts; are able to communicate their views about issues affecting our profession; to discuss treatment challenges that they have faced in their practices and offer their personal solutions; discuss recent treatment innovations; offer their views of treatment approaches for specific disorders; offer their perspectives about recent research findings affecting the profession; discuss current challenges in psychology, the crisis in the discipline (and ways to propel it toward the future); discuss areas of intersection with other disciplines and what we can learn from them to inform our clinical practice, etc. We also wanted to make sure that members can use the Bulletin as an academic and professional venue to publish and disseminate their research and theoretical work bearing on the discipline and treatment of patients. In other words, we want to make sure that this becomes YOUR BULLETIN.

To ensure quality we have gathered a talented group of contributing editors that agreed to lend their professional expertise in the service of the Academy, thus making our Bulletin a refereed publication. We are fortunate indeed to have so much talent among our ranks and hope that our collected talents find active expression in the kind of material we are able to publish in our Bulletin. For this first electronic issue, we have included general updates about the Academy and a proposal on how to keep our Academy moving forward by Christopher Ebbe. Also included is the "Academy Position on Diversity," seen as an essential part of the advanced competencies of the Board Certified Clinical Psychologist. Finally, you will find some suggestions and strategies for recruiting new members and the role of mentors in this regard.

A new addition to our Bulletin is the section "Special Feature," which seeks to include publications of well researched positions and then invite comments and counter arguments



**George Kapalka, Ph.D., ABPP**

from the members to be published either in the same issue of the Bulletin, whenever possible, or in future issues. For this issue, for instance, we have included two featured articles by two of our members, with an invitation for your reaction: "Social Constructionism, Scientific Realism, and 'g'" by James Stedman and "No Time or Place for Child's Play" by David Crenshaw. The first one seeks to examine the knowledge and reality claims of two important theories with great implications for our research and practice: social constructionism and scientific realism. The other offers an analysis of a painful trend about the role of playground in schools and how some schools are opting against playgrounds, with enormous consequences for child development during such critical years.

Moving forward, we hope to feature other special topics and are now requesting suggestions in this regard. A hot topic that we would like to focus on right away is the examination of the impact on our discipline of evidence-based approaches that are guiding the doctoral training of future clinical psychologists and the treatment approaches offered to patients. We are looking for a well-researched manuscript or manuscripts that can then serve as a point of reaction, with arguments and counter-arguments from other members of the Academy. We think that the fact that evidence-based approaches have taken such primacy in the kind and nature of the training we provide to our students and the clinical decisions we may make in the treatment of our patients that it may be time to pause and examine where we are on that score. Hopefully, we can get manuscript(s) with enough time to be able to elicit comments/reactions from other members and to publish such comments or reactions in the same Bulletin issue.

This is our first electronic publication of the Bulletin, and we are aware, as co-editors, that we have a long way to go in terms of better presentation of the material and design and encourage those of you with expertise in this area to come forward with your suggestions and, hopefully, with your assistance.

Thank you and let us hear from you.

## Keeping the Academy Moving Forward



### Career-Long Professional Development as an Alternative for the Future of ABPP

Christopher Ebbe, Ph.D., ABPP

#### Capsule Summary

ABPP has been the most reputable sanctioner of post-licensure competence for applied psychologists. Expansion of ABPP's sphere of activity to include career-long professional growth and development could result in considerably greater numbers of psychologists seeking Board Certification, as well as provide a valuable service for members.

#### The Problem

For years ABPP and many of its specialty Boards have struggled with low levels of interest in Board Certification from psychologists. The most significant long-term reason for lack of interest in Board Certification is state licensure of psychologists, which many practicing psychologists like to think of as confirmation from the state regarding their competence. Licensure does not ensure competence, of course, but rather certifies only that the individual is unlikely to harm clients. Nonetheless, practitioners like to think of licensure as the state's stamp of approval and are therefore reluctant to recognize the value of any demonstrations of greater competence.

The second most important reason for the chronic lack of interest in Board Certification is the conspiracy of silence in applied psychology regarding practitioners' actual behavior with clients. This secrecy is overtly justified by confidentiality concerns but is primarily motivated by practitioners' fears of criticism if others were to see their work. This fear is unfortunately rea-

sonably justified, given the inability of most practitioners to view the work of others with objectivity and within the context of the extremely complex tasks of evaluation and treatment. In order to create a climate that would maximize growth and learning, pre-doctoral training should help students to come to terms with their fears of incompetence and inadequacy, through objective yet accepting supervision. Unfortunately, supervisors have not been trained or expected to do this. Supervisors who recognize that they should not be "imposing" their styles and ideas on supervisees usually provide only benign oversight that glosses over supervisee inadequacies. Supervisors who are not so charitable simply condemn thoughts and feelings different from their own. Both types of supervision serve to establish the conviction on the part of almost all new psychologists that exposing themselves and their work is both dangerous and pointless, and this conviction is played out in their never seriously sharing with others their experiences as therapists and in seeking consultation only when there are potential legal problems. Most practitioners avoid case consultation groups with their peers out of fears of competition and of being humiliated. Most students and practitioners never overcome the haunting fear that to admit to uncertainty or to error is to admit to incompetence. (There are, of course, some competent supervisors, and a small number of practitioners have found understanding and insights in supervision and now realize that revealing themselves and their work can be an extremely useful experience.)

The third culprit in the low interest level in Board Certification is the lack of clear standards of competence in the profession itself. While APA accreditation standards give some general guidance regarding educational content and process, they are general and encourage programs to "set their own standards," which will then be used in their own accreditation evaluations! APA's Ethics Code does provide some prescriptive and proscriptive instructions that relate to competency, but it does not attempt to deal with competence comprehensively or in detail.

Psychology has been for much of its history a cacophony of competing "schools," and only lately has there been a serious movement toward "integration." APA has recently moved to address the competence issue,

through the work of a task force that has produced a set of “competency benchmarks” for various levels of doctoral training (including the point of licensure, which is essentially the same now as Board Certification). This competency benchmark work has paradoxically provided an opening to bring the issue of post-licensure competence to the profession’s attention. Using this model (or another model of our own), there is opportunity to better define the competencies appropriate for Board Certification and to define levels of competence beyond that of initial, entry-level Board Certification in a specialty.

Psychologists have been notably unable to agree over the years on the best methods of treatment, due possibly to the essential infancy of the profession itself, but recent efforts to investigate and promulgate empirically supported treatments, the psychotherapy integration movement, and the competency benchmarks work, all suggest that the profession is ready to reach an adequate consensus on at least basic principles of psychological assessment and treatment (and therefore on critical treatment-related behaviors on the part of practitioners) and by implication is ready to recognize, therefore, that there are definable levels of competence beyond licensure.

Since APA is an organization composed mostly of practitioners with only basic credentials (doctorate and license), it has naturally been resistant to establishing any higher standards of competence than licensure, although it has usually recognized verbally that Board Certification is valuable.

Since the profession has been so silent on the issue of specific competence definitions and measures, most practitioners have no idea themselves of what competence might be and are therefore not engaged in self-assessment or professional growth beyond state-required continuing education and occasional efforts to expand their own practices. Most, therefore, have no motivation to seek or demonstrate advanced competence.

There have been high hopes that specific benefits (panel preferences, higher pay or bonuses, entry into certain types of work, etc.) could make Board Certification more valuable, but by and large this has not happened. While there is a status value to Board Certification in professional work, the practical benefits have not prov-

en to be a significant incentive for generating applicants (except perhaps in one or two specialties), and there is no reason to believe that this will change in the future.

In an effort to survive, ABPP chose in the early 1990’s to change from being a guarantor of a high level of general competence (“excellence”) to being a guarantor of readiness to practice a psychological specialty. This provides a service to the public, although examining for entry into a specialty is a guarantee of only minimal competence and will ultimately be of only limited value to the public. (Surely we expect practitioners to get better at what they do after entering the specialty, so why are we not attending to this improvement?)

Similar to licensing’s gatekeeper function, ABPP has basically a gatekeeper position with respect to those motivated to seek Board Certification. After the candidate is “through the gate,” ABPP has no positive program to assist or involve them in further development or growth. It is therefore not surprising that participation in the Academies is minimal. More activity and participation could be generated if ABPP had some “positive” program following Board Certification (beyond simply inducing more people to pass through the gate), instead of just the “negative” function of gatekeeping.

### **A Proposal To Take Members “Beyond Board Certification”**

Current applicants for ABPP Board Certification are motivated by some combination of (1) desire to pursue competence or excellence, (2) desire to gain specific benefits tied to Board Certification (such as pay), (3) desire to gain competitive advantage over other practitioners, and (4) desire for status. If there is little to be gained in the future in the way of specific benefits, and if we refrain from appealing overtly to motives for competitive advantage and status, then it would seem that only by involving people more in terms of their desire for competence or excellence can we generate more excitement and involvement in Board Certification and in the membership work of the Academies. If members were involved in an ongoing program of career-long learning, consultation, and achievement, they would be even more enthusiastic in urging others to apply.

It is suggested that increasing the positivity of ABPP’s image in the professional and healthcare communities is only likely to be possible if ABPP is perceived to be ac-



tively contributing to the ongoing competence of those who are Board Certified (not just evaluating it once at an entry level). The natural respect and acceptance of ABPP will not increase over what it is now if ABPP continues to be a gatekeeper only. No marketing effort can change that. One way that ABPP can improve its image is to be more involved in the professional growth and development of its members.

ABPP will be most successful and useful to psychologists by enhancing and expanding its role in the establishment of standards and aspirational goals for post-licensure practice. ABPP could more formally join the APA benchmarks effort, but it may be appropriate for ABPP to make clear to the professional community that it is in charge of defining post-licensure levels of competence.

ABPP, through the academies, could offer to diplomates in each specialty a career-long learning program, which could provide selected, significant articles to read; study materials for learning groups on specific topics; instructions for establishing and running peer consultation groups; descriptions of a sequenced series of growth steps, including self-assessment tools and exercises; instructions for various kinds of pro bono services for the community; instructions for a periodic, structured evaluation of one's work by a peer or consultant using work samples; and other such materials. These would be sent to the member on a schedule (or on request), based on the member's own growth path. The learning program for members could be developed by volunteers and sent through e-mail for the most part, with perhaps one hard-copy mailing per year of additional materials. A few more paid staff would be needed for the additional administrative paperwork, mailing, and tracking required, but these could be paid for through the income from the educational program. Continuing education credits could be offered for some of the learning activities in the self-development program (reading articles, completing comprehensive self-assessments that include written self-reflection, etc.), and charges for these credits could support the program.

It will be argued that not enough people will want to participate in a program of career-long development, but I believe that a surprising number of people will wish to participate, because right now there is a total vacuum in this regard (continuing education programs

for re-licensure being regarded as hugely ineffective), and we know that there are a fair number of psychologists who are motivated to seek Board Certification by the desire to be the best that they can be. To maintain the image of ABPP, it is probably best to restrict the development program to those who achieve Board Certification, but if it were open to others, the paying clientele would be even larger. A survey effort could be made to get an initial idea of the number of people who might be interested in the career-long learning program, although that number could change once it became more clear what the quality of the program would be. (APA Divisions might also be appropriate for providing these sorts of career-long learning programs, but ABPP needs an expanded reason for being, and this could be it.)

ABPP could also define aspirational goals, standards, and expectations for an entry-level, a journeymen-level, and a master-level of practice in any specialty and could also offer examinations for the two post-entry levels of achievement. This would make clear that all practitioners are expected to advance along this road of professional development as far as they individually can, so that life-long learning becomes real rather than mere words. Judging from the personal experiences of many therapists, the journeyman level (when one finally feels that he or she "really" understands clients and what needs to be done to help them) occurs after an average of seven years of post-doctoral practice, and I would venture that progress toward the master level would involve another ten years after that.

The entry level of Board Certification would be defined as including those who have just achieved the knowledge necessary for the specialty and have developed personal attributes that do not interfere with treatment outcomes. These psychologists can usually figure out what to do but not always quickly. This level is a cut above licensure.

The "journeymen" level would include those who make quick, comprehensive, and accurate assessments of clients, whose manner of relating to clients provides significant enhancement of the likelihood of therapeutic success, and who know in advance which approaches and interventions are likely to work best with each client.

The "master" level would not be restricted to luminar-

ies such as Beck, Ellis, and Masterson but would encompass those truly expert and effective therapists who have enhanced journeyman qualities, who are respected and admired by their peers, and whose consultation is valued and trusted.

If desired, levels of passing for each examination could be established, also, such as “pass,” “pass with distinction,” and “pass with excellence.”

Clearly the work of defining additional levels of standards and developing fair and reasonable examinations would take much effort and several years, but it is an opportunity to energize our members by inviting their participation, and we do have many diplomates in every academy who are well qualified to take on this task. It would be most appropriate to have entry-level certification examinations administered only by journeyman or master level diplomates, and journeyman and master level examinations administered only by master level diplomates. We would not predict that large numbers of members would take the advanced examinations (perhaps twenty percent at most?). Grandfathering all current ABPP's who have had seven or more years of post-licensure experience to the journeyman level could be considered.

Marketing can be confined to two issues: (1) ensuring that all practitioners know about ABPP Board Certification and view it as a fair and competent evaluation, and (2) establishing in the minds of psychologists that ABPP is contributing actively to the career-long professional growth of its members and that it establishes the standards for Board Certification and for post-initial-level certifications of achievement. It is critical that payers and sanctioners understand that there are several levels of competence beyond licensure and that those levels are important to those who receive services, as well as to those who pay for them, and it is even more important to establish in the minds of psychologists that professional growth and development beyond licensure are expected and that paths of growth and development have been mapped out for them (by ABPP).

For higher level examinations and for the peer evaluation program, having evaluators who can understand comprehensively a candidate's conceptions and treatment behaviors is absolutely critical. A certain percentage of current diplomates can do this adequately, and

this skill can be developed by others, if it is held up as an aspirational goal and if its potential benefit--lifting the curtain of secrecy surrounding clinical work so that we may recognize our relative strengths and weaknesses and learn from each other--can be made clear. We claim that we can do this already for clients (an objective, non-judgmental, comprehensive understanding), so there is no reason that we cannot aspire to do this for ourselves and our colleagues. ABPP could be the champion of this enlightened approach. There are already several internship programs that use this approach for training, and their experience can provide a basis for development of the approach as the ground for career-long development.

It may be objected that this proposal would simply make ABPP even more “elitist” than it used to be, but acceptance in the field that there are definable levels of competence beyond licensure (which is already indisputably true but not widely acknowledged), and the establishment of definitions and standards for levels of competence beyond licensure take the elitist criticism totally out of play. Not everyone has the innate abilities, intelligence, or drive to achieve journeyman or master level competence, but that has nothing to do with elitism, and just as now, entry-level Board Certification is within the reach of most psychologists. Some current diplomates will object to having to take more exams (or being put in the position of stopping without taking all of the possible exams). Accepting that there are higher levels of competence than initial-level Board Certification may mean acknowledging that one is not at the most advanced level and may not be able to achieve a more advanced level. This could lead to resolving one's lingering status issues (or whatever else is driving one to “have to” achieve the top level), which would mean that one could be better able to model self-acceptance for one's clients!

### **The Alternative**

ABPP can continue to exist in its current form without disappearing. This is an honorable path, although the outcomes may not all be very palatable. “Hot” specialties such as forensics and neuropsychology will continue to grow in numbers of diplomates, but most others will slowly decline into marginal organizational feasibility. On the other hand, even in areas such as clinical, there will always be a certain, even if small, num-

ber of people who are drawn to Board Certification. If ABPP's sphere of activity does not change, a way must be found to serve these small numbers of psychologists in various specialties that is inexpensive yet maintains the standards appropriate for Board Certification. The current Board and Academy structure may be sufficient for this, although the dues per member would probably have to increase.

The current proposal offers an exciting and worthy alternative, which has the promise of giving ABPP something to do beyond initial-level Board Certification. It is hoped that this proposal will be considered seriously by diplomates in all areas, since even if it is not adopted, it may spur further creative thinking about how to make Board Certification more valued and valuable.

### Survey Regarding Lifelong Learning

We would like to gather responses to the article in this issue regarding a career-long professional development program that could be sponsored by the Academy. Please e-mail the author (at [cebbe@alum.mit.edu](mailto:cebbe@alum.mit.edu)) if you would be interested or potentially interested in such a program. Your comments would be welcome as well! (If you prefer, you may also call and leave a message with your response and ideas at 909-626-5579.) We plan to solicit this same feedback using our membership e-mail list in the near future, probably through SurveyMonkey.com, so to reduce duplication, please respond only once.

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### Academy Position on Diversity

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At its November, 2007 meeting, your Executive Board ratified the following statement regarding diversity, which has been placed on the homepage of the Academy's website ([www.aacpsy.org](http://www.aacpsy.org)):

The American Academy of Clinical Psychology supports all efforts to promote the ideals of fairness, justice, and equality in all aspects of life in our nation. Accordingly, the Academy advocates for Board Certification policies and practices that encourage and support all interested persons to become Clinical Psychologists and to become Board Certified, regardless of their culture, ethnicity, gender, age, socioeconomic status, religion, sexual orientation, or physically challenged status. The values of the Academy include (1) that these factors shall not diminish the sense that any individual may have that he or she is appropriate for the profession and that he or she is appropriate for Board Certification, and (2) that these factors shall not interfere with the fair and just administration of application and examination procedures for Board Certification in Clinical Psychology.

The Academy is committed to putting forth public information consistent with this stance, to advocating for

application and examination procedures to be consistent with this stance, and to welcoming all persons as Fellows of the Academy independent of such factors.

An essential part of the advanced competencies of Board Certified Clinical Psychologists is awareness of and sensitivity to the diverse influences on personality and behavior of the above factors. Board Certified Clinical Psychologists take these factors into account in an aware, skillful, sensitive, and judicious way when arriving at assessment and treatment planning decisions and when carrying out all services (and they consult with more knowledgeable colleagues when necessary to ensure that such factors are appropriately considered).

Holding these values of fairness, equality, and justice in no way implies specific stands by the Academy on affirmative action, a multicultural society, or the nation's immigration policy.

The Academy welcomes comments and suggestions from the public, from applicants for Board Certification, and from Fellows of the Academy that relate to

these values and commitments.

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## Strategy For Recruitment Candidates for the Clinical Board Examination

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James K. Besyner, Ph.D., ABPP

As you are undoubtedly aware, ABPP would like to expand the ranks of board certified psychologists. With the emphasis on solid, journeyman psychologists being expected to pass the examination, we all hope that more candidates will come forward. I doubt that we are being overwhelmed with applicants. In the American Board of Clinical Psychology (ABCP) meetings, a main topic of discussion is always how to recruit these candidates. What will entice them--professional and/or personal pride?; recognition of peers?; money? Often we, and I suspect you, are asked by seemingly good prospects "Why should I bother with that process?"; "What's in it for me?"; or "Why do I need to be board certified?"

In an effort to recruit members of my local psychological association, I recently published the following article in which I attempted to get colleagues to look at board certification in a way that attempts to equate our board certification with that of medicine. Maybe there is nothing different under the sun in my article to convince them, but I also realized that no one had actually presented them with an article inviting them to look into our process.

Here is that article for your perusal. Perhaps you might also use these arguments with prospective candidates you encounter.

### **Have you ever considered becoming a "Board Certified" Psychologist (i.e., a Diplomate of ABPP)?**

Consider this scenario: Your primary care provider just told you that you may have a heart problem, and she wants to refer you to a cardiologist. Would you want to consult a "board certified" cardiologist or a "non-board certified cardiologist?" Board certified, of course!

For comparison sake, let's say your primary care doc has just suggested that you, or your loved one or a dear friend, might benefit from obtaining the services of a psychologist. Would you want to see, or have your fam-

ily member or friend see, a board certified psychologist or a non-board certified psychologist? I'll bet you are saying to yourself "Hey, that's a bad analogy! There are a lot of good "non-board certified psychologists in practice." Indeed there are.

And so, the analogy breaks down. Why? We have board certification available for psychologists, don't we? Indeed we do and have since 1947. That year, the American Board of Examiners in Professional Psychology (ABEPP) was formed in conjunction with, but separate from, APA with three separate boards available to examine psychologists and certify their expertise: One in "Clinical Psychology," one in "Personnel-Industrial Psychology," and one in "Personnel-School Psychology." (And, you might find it interesting to note that a 48% of those initially board-certified psychologists were women back in 1947!)

In 1968, ABEPP shortened its name to the American Board of Professional Psychology or "ABPP" as it is known today. ABPP is the parent board of 13 current boards ranging from Clinical Psychology, through the following "Psychologies:" Forensic, Clinical Neuropsychology, Counseling, Couples & Family, Group, Cognitive & Behavioral, Clinical Health, Rehabilitation, Psychoanalysis in Psychology, School, Child & Adolescent, and Organizational-Business, to name them all.

If ABPP has been around so long, why hasn't board certification in Psychology become what it is in Medicine, i.e., a credential that one expects to obtain in one's specialty area and that many jobs require? I believe there are several reasons, not the least of which was the confused mission of ABEPP/ABPP. On one hand, the organization wished to mimic the board certification process of medicine with the expectation that all or most practitioners would obtain board certification; on the other hand, it wished to set the bar so high in its examination process that those who passed would be considered the top experts or the elite in their respective psychological specialties. If you talk to psychologists



who have been aware of ABPP for over 20 years or longer, they will probably share with you the perception that ABPP exams are very difficult to pass. Many of our “vintage” colleagues can tell you of colleagues (or themselves) who sat for the examination and failed. Some colleagues sat for the exam several times and failed. The perception was, and maybe still is, that most psychologists fail the exam. That belief is not borne out by ABPP data. Most examinees pass. Although the failure rate was somewhat high, pass/fail rates have remained fairly steady over the years. I would say perception and reality were likely a product, in large part, of the confused mission of ABPP.

So what is the situation today? In recent years, ABPP has strongly affirmed its mission to become the primary board certifying entity for professional psychologists. The credential is seen by ABPP as obtainable by solid competent, ethical professional psychologists. Today’s examiners for the various ABPP boards (i.e., members who have passed those board examinations themselves) are encouraged to keep this new emphasis in mind when conducting examinations. These guidelines for examiners are well documented. I invite you to view the on-line examination manual for Clinical Psychology in which instructions to examiners repeatedly emphasize where the bar should be set. (Visit [www.abpp.org](http://www.abpp.org) and follow the link for the Clinical Board examination manual.)

### **Why would you want to become board certified? Why did physicians ever want to become board certified?**

I would argue that becoming board certified by ABPP, the most recognized and long-standing board certification organization for Psychology, allows you the distinction of having been examined by peers in your profession. Although the bar is being set for solid competent psychologists to pass, becoming board certified still requires work and rigorous examination. It is not a matter of just filling out an application and sending in money. Once you pass the board certification examination process, you may market yourself with that credential.

*Consider this: As we are all aware, the public doesn’t understand the distinction between medical doctors and psychology doctors. Just as they would choose a*

*Board Certified Cardiologist, they just might choose a Board Certified Psychologist as well.*

Here are some other tangible benefits of ABPP Board Certification to name a few:

- Recognition within the profession of Psychology
- Reciprocity in licensure and bypassing of some requirements (e.g., oral exam in TX)
- Significant reduction in liability practice insurance premiums by American Professional Agency
- Pay bonus for military psychologists of \$2500 or more per year; “A one step salary increase” for VA psychologists (over \$2600 in 2007 dollars/year), cumulative over the years

### **What is involved in obtaining certification by an ABPP board?**

There are three stages to the process. Briefly, the stages are:

Stage 1: Your application will be reviewed to make sure you qualify for the board to which you are applying, including having an unrestricted license to practice in one state. (See [www.abpp.org](http://www.abpp.org) for more detailed information.) Additionally, a written examination is required by some boards such as the American Board of Clinical Neuropsychology.

Stage 2: Submission of videotaped (or “DVD’ed”) work samples to be reviewed by an examination committee. If you pass, you are admitted to candidacy for an oral exam (stage 3). (Senior option: If you have over 15 years of postdoctoral experience, many of the boards offer an option by which you submit an expanded “professional statement” and do not have to submit work samples.)

Stage 3: The same examination committee will conduct a face-to-face oral examination with you. (The exam is between three and four hours in length for the Clinical Board and is similar for other boards.)

If you pass the oral examination, you will be notified shortly thereafter (not in 6 weeks as with the many state licensing boards) and you will be allowed to present yourself as board certified by that board and sign

“ABPP” after your doctorate. Many of the boards also have associated academies that you may join once you pass the examination. For example, the American Board of Clinical Psychology has the “Academy of Clinical Psychology” in which you automatically become a “Fellow” once you pass the Clinical exam process (and pay your dues, of course).

If you are interested, I invite you to visit [www.abpp.org](http://www.abpp.org) for more in-depth information. I share ABPP’s renewed mission to make board certification a reality for most practicing psychologists. Further, I would love to see many of my psychologist colleagues, and members of our local association in particular, obtain this ABPP credential. As you might imagine, the Clinical Board is the largest of the thirteen ABPP boards. I am both the treasurer of that board and the coordinator of the “intermountain region” of the United States. In this latter capacity, it is my responsibility to set up Stage 2 and Stage 3 examinations of Clinical Psychology candidates in all of Texas and many other “intermountain region” states.

**If you have any questions, give me a call at 214-857-0534 or email me at [james.besyner@va.gov](mailto:james.besyner@va.gov).**

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## Mentoring Guidelines

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At its March, 2007 meeting, your Executive Board adopted the following guidelines regarding mentoring of Board Certification candidates:

One of the functions of the American Academy of Clinical Psychology is to encourage applicants for Board Certification in Clinical Psychology and to assist them, if needed, to prepare for the examination. As part of this effort Academy members volunteer to serve as mentors for applicants who would like this assistance, at no cost to applicants. (The fact that mentoring is available does not suggest that all applicants “need” or should engage in a mentoring relationship in order to be able to pass the examination, but it is available to all and useful particularly for those with special concerns or questions.) This mentoring activity is guided by the following principles.

1. Mentors will advise those mentored regarding the application and examination processes, including qualifications, the preparation of work samples, and prepara-

tion for the oral examination. Those mentored may be new applicants or those who have taken but not passed the examination, and may be applicants for either the regular or the “senior” examination.

2. After the applicant contacts the AACP President to request a mentor, a mentor is assigned by the AACP mentoring coordinator. The mentor will contact the applicant to offer his or her services.

3. Contact with mentors will usually be through telephone or e-mail. Face-to-face meetings may occur occasionally, if geographically feasible, but the relationship is an advising rather than a teaching relationship, and this mentoring can almost always be accomplished through other than face-to-face means. There is no limit to the number of contacts, as long as both parties are willing and feel that the contacts are still useful.

4. Guidance to those mentored may include explanations, tailored to the needs of each applicant, of the philosophy, structure, and rationale for the Board Certification processes, as well as explanation of the viewpoint and expectations of examiners, which will help those mentored to better prepare their “personal statements” and work samples, know how to describe their practice orientation and procedures, and be prepared to answer questions about their work samples and about ethical issues in the examination. Hopefully the comments and advice of mentors will serve to put the examination in an appropriate context and allay any unnecessary anxiety on the part of applicants.

5. Mentors may read professional statements, if requested, but comments will be limited to matters of incompleteness or ambiguity. Mentors will not view, read, or give specific advice regarding the content of any written or recorded examination materials. Advice will be limited to information that helps the applicant to understand what is needed for the examination process and how his or her materials may be viewed by examiners, that will enable the applicant to respond to the examination process to the best of his or her own ability.

6. Mentors may raise questions about possible deficits in the applicant’s professional knowledge and skills, but mentors do not tutor applicants or take on the task of upgrading the knowledge and skills of applicants, except by occasionally recommending readings, cours-

es, and supervision that might be helpful and that are carried out without the involvement of the mentor.

7. Mentors do not certify anyone's readiness to take the examination or speculate on an applicant's likelihood of passing the examination. If they choose to, mentors may offer comments regarding an applicant's professional strengths and weaknesses, if requested. Comments and advice of mentors are not communicated to ABCP or to examiners, have no bearing on the examination outcome, and may not be used to appeal an ex-

amination outcome.

8. Applicants are reminded that periodically members of AACP and of the American Board of Clinical Psychology offer workshops, at psychology conventions or otherwise, describing and explaining Board Certification processes and answering all questions about these processes, just as a mentor would.

## Special Features

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### Social Constructionism, Scientific Realism, and "g"

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James M. Stedman, Ph.D, ABPP

#### Abstract

Few would argue that for many years logical empiricism, in the form of operationism, constituted the underlying philosophy of science for psychology. Many believe that the remnants of operationism continue as psychology's philosophy of science, despite the demise of classical logical empiricism within philosophy itself. However, in the last fifteen years, at least three alternative philosophical positions have emerged to fill the vacuum left by logical empiricism's decline: social constructionism, hermeneutics, and scientific realism. Each has its unique theory of knowledge and ontology. The present paper seeks to examine the knowledge and reality claims of two of those theories, social constructionism and scientific realism, to work out how those claims would apply to a common psychological construct (generalized intellectual ability), and to offer a critique of each position.

#### Social Constructionism, Scientific Realism, and "g"

When psychologists describe the theoretical concepts and propositions current in the field, what sort of knowledge claim and what sort of reality claim are they making? Although these questions could be asked regarding any of our theoretical conceptions, it might be instructive to focus on one familiar example, generalized intellectual ability, "g".<sup>1</sup> In other words, what is "g"? Where, if anywhere, does "g" exist? What can be known about "g" with any degree of certainty? Obviously, these questions are probing the ontological and epistemological status of "g".

For a long time the psychologists answered these questions according to the philosophical principles of logical

empiricism. However, in the late 1960s logical empiricism was discredited within philosophy and declined. Though many would claim that psychology continued to follow the tenets of logical empiricism, some psychologists (and philosophers interested in behavioral science) began to propose alternative epistemological/ontological positions. Three major formulations took shape, specifically, social constructionism, hermeneutics, and scientific realism.

The present paper will focus on only two of those formulations, social constructionism and scientific realism, and will attempt three objectives. (1) We are aware that neither of these formulations is monolithic,<sup>2</sup> but in order to better focus on the epistemological and ontological claims each position would make about our example ("g"), we will select a representative proponent of social constructionism and scientific realism. (2) We will briefly review some of the critiques of each position. (3) We will consider whether either theory of truth can claim superiority.

#### The Social Constructionist Claim

We selected Kenneth Gergen (1982, 1994, 2001) as our representative because he is the most prolific advocate of social constructionism as an alternative philosophy of science for psychology. He has described social constructionism as a synthesis of hermeneutics, dialectics, critical theory, and the ordinary language school (Wittgenstein, 1953). In his 1994 book, Gergen presented an updated summary of the assertions of social constructionism as follows:

1. "The terms by which we account for the world and ourselves are not dictated by the stipulated objects

of such accounts.”

2. “The terms and forms by which we achieve understanding of the world and ourselves are social artifacts, products of historically and culturally situated interchanges among people.”

3. “The degree to which a given account of the world or self is sustained across time is not dependent on the objective validity of the account but on the vicissitudes of the social process.”

4. “Language derives its significance in human affairs from the way in which it functions within patterns of relationships.”

5. “To appraise existing forms of discourse is to evaluate patterns of cultural life; such evaluations give voice to other cultural enclaves” (Gergen, 1994, pp. 49–54).

Gergen states these propositions as the fundamental knowledge and ontological claims of his position. Signifiers (words) do not relate in “correspondence” to psychological realities or, for that matter, to other common forms of reality. Signifiers (words and language) take on meaning only within the context of social interaction and, in fact, the meaning of signifiers is created within social contexts. Words and language may indeed take on a “veneer of objectivity” (appear to relate to realities independent of the knower) if used in a common way by the group over a long enough period of time. Proposition 4 acknowledges Gergen’s large debt to Wittgenstein’s (1953) concept of the meaning of language in which words acquire meaning through patterns of exchange among humans. The final proposition acknowledges critical theory’s notion that “other cultural enclaves” have their own formulations of meaning; one community cannot claim superiority. There are no certain criteria for comparative evaluations of other enclaves, although Gergen does propose that perhaps some cross evaluation is possible through a pragmatic consideration of their impact on cultural life.

Gergen views his position as being in contrast to the “foundationalism” of the empiricist tradition. In discussing these two competing epistemological traditions, he rejects the formulation of Locke and the empiricist tradition which holds that knowledge of the real world is constituted by mental representations. Gergen’s knowledge claim is antifoundational and antirepresentational. Psychological knowledge, as formulated in theoretical terms and principles, are constructions of

linguistically interacting communities of social scientists, communities having a common set of propositional language assertions and their own criteria and methods for validating these propositions. These propositions are neither universal nor culture free. They warrant no truth about reality independent of the knower. Ontological assertions are also socially constructed. Gergen acknowledges that certain groups, such as scientists, can coalesce for lengthy amounts of time and “forge ontologies of substantial durability”, but they are never more than constructions of the group.

So what would Gergen assert as a knowledge claim about “g”? He must assert that “g” is the linguistic creation of the group of social scientists who constructed the term. Its meaning is tied to 19th and 20th century culture and history with no possibility of being more than a temporary linguistic agreement of the group. The methods of validation, purported to serve as “proof” regarding “g” and its correlates, are likewise constructed and can provide no increasingly certain knowledge. The ontology of “g” is “forged” by the group but “g” represents no reality beyond that state.

Social constructionism has been critiqued as follows. Although constructionism claims to be in direct opposition to logical empiricism, this claim has been disputed (Hibberd, 2001 a, 2001 b; Stedman, Hancock, & Sweetman, 2000). Hibberd (2001a) has shown that both logical empiricism and social constructionism share a commitment to the philosophical doctrine of conventionalism, holding that the meaning of some or all linguistic terms is not given by the things in the world. A second major objection is that social constructionists claim to be “mute” about reality “out there,” but do not avoid ontological claims implicit in their arguments. Stedman, Hancock, & Sweetman (2000) have pointed out that persons, existing as independent entities, is an implicit claim for constructionism. A third objection is that social constructionism denies any possibility of individual human agency, an assertion challenged by Greenwood (1991) and Martin and Sugarman (2000). Several authors have demonstrated that constructionism cannot avoid an epistemological relativism that would undermine any justification for continuation of psychology as a scientific enterprise (Greenwood, 1991; Martin & Sugarman, 2000; Stedman, et al., 2000). Finally, several have noted constructionism’s inability to decide between competing knowledge claims (Hibberd, 2001



a, 2001 b; Stedman, et al., 2000) and its inability to substantiate any moral claims (Richardson & Flowers, 1998; Stedman, et al., 2000).

### The Scientific Realist Claim

The term realism refers to both an ontological doctrine, holding that objects in the world, physical and psychological, exist independently of our knowledge of them, and an epistemological doctrine, holding that it is possible to have direct knowledge of these objects. There are several versions of scientific realism that have been proposed for social science (Bhaskar, 1978; Manicas & Secord, 1983); however, we chose the position articulated by Greenwood (1991) because he attempts to differentiate his position from both logical empiricism and from constructionism.

Greenwood holds the realist position, namely, that physical and psychological objects exist independent of our concepts of them and discourse about them. He refers to his theoretical position as a “semantic doctrine,” denoting his interest in how signs (such as words) relate to objects in nature. Greenwood asserts that theoretical propositions have linguistic objectivity, meaning that theoretical propositions are true or false depending on whether the postulated objects exist and have the properties and relations attributed to them. Further, as opposed to logical empiricism, Greenwood claims that the truth conditions of these theoretical propositions are independent of the truth conditions of the empirical laws which they are often employed to explain. The meaning of a theoretical proposition is determined by the theoretical model itself. As an example, cognitive psychology has developed theoretical models of cognitive processes by drawing analogies to computers and statistical processes. These theoretical models are tested for validity by observational studies; however, the truth conditions of these cognitive models are not determined by the empirical findings. Their meanings are determined by the analogous properties attributed to the models themselves.

Greenwood also holds for the possibility of epistemic objectivity. Although he concedes that it might often be difficult to establish the accuracy of theoretical models by observation, he argues that the relativist arguments of social constructionism have not become so convincing as to force the scientific realist to give up all hope for epistemic objectivity. He sums up by observing that

scientific realism entails a commitment to linguistic objectivity and points out that most scientific realists also hold for the epistemic objectivity.

On the social dimensions of action and mind, Greenwood asserts that human actions, social practices, and psychological states are indeed social in nature. They are performed by agents who operate within social conventions grasped by those agents, and the meaningful contents of our representations of those practices and psychological states are influenced by current culture and can change over time. However, he maintains that these social practices and psychological states are not constituted by the linguistic descriptions of them; they are constituted by their intentional contents and their intentional objects. For example, an agent's belief (a psychological state) that the Tower of the Americas is in San Antonio, Texas is constituted as a belief by the fact that she represents the Tower of the Americas (the intentional object) as in San Antonio (the intentional contents). Given these properties, this belief can be assessed for its linguistic objectivity and observation can determine this belief's epistemic objectivity.

The knowledge claim of Greenwood's scientific realism is that reality, physical and psychological, can be described according to the canons of linguistic objectivity and can be verified by observation. Regarding “g”, the scientific realist would assert that the properties of “g” can be linguistically described and these attributions to “g” can be verified by the usual means of factor analysis and observation of differences that ensue when differential levels of “g” are related to observed outcomes. In fact, “g” exists as something real in the subjects studied. It is even possible that “g” is a-historical and cross cultural at least to some degree, but only careful observation can increase our confidence in that conviction.

A very similar assertion was made by Meehl, who, later in his career, described himself as a scientific realist, as follows: “What sort of existential status ...do we impute to factors? For a scientific realist, a factor is presumably a physical entity possessing a quantitative property....The physical entity exists in the person, hence in the brain....The general intelligence factor g is ‘in’ the CNS” (Meehl, 1991, p 16).

The critique of Greenwood's scientific realism lies at the heart of the realist – antirealist debate. Antirealists assert that the "correspondence theory" of knowledge debate is over, having been won by the critiques of Wittgenstein (1953) and other postmodernists. They might grant Greenwood his assertion that objects, physical and psychological, can be described but would balk at his contention that these descriptions are about the reality of objects as they exist independently of the describer. Postmodernists would certainly dispute his claim that knowledge of these descriptions can be decided by observation; they would question how this is essentially different from the verification principle of logical empiricism.

### **Practical Implications for Psychology**

So far our discussion has stated the two theories, applied them to the construct of generalized intellectual ability, and pinpointed critiques of both. Perhaps the issues at stake might be clarified by pushing these truth claims further into the world of psychological research and practice, continuing with the example of "g". Factor analytic research on tests of intelligence long ago established the construct of generalized intellectual ability. Much additional research found relationships between "g" and other variables, such as learning. Clinicians use these research findings in many ways, such as predicting learning potential and justifying school placements. Funders of research continue to support studies of this construct. What would the two epistemologies claim about all of this and what would they have to say to funders about the value of research into "g"?

Social Constructionism views "g" as embedded in culture and history and, therefore, not a construct that is universal or cross cultural in any sense. Generalized intellectual ability and its relationships and predictions are constructions of a group (psychologists) and in no sense is "g" a discovered element of Being that will ever be known precisely, with increasingly certain knowledge.

The clinician's use of "g" might be sanctioned as a temporary construction used to explain and predict the behavior of the child as a conscious agent but would not represent any reality other than temporary and constructed group consensus. Again the clinician should not be deluded regarding the ontological status of "g". Funders also need to understand that research in psychology produces particular temporary constructions

but never final or even better facts about an existing reality.

The scientific realist's response would sharply contrast with constructionism. Scientific realism holds that objective knowledge is possible. As noted by Meehl (1991), a factor such as "g" exists as a measurable trait residing within human beings. Research on "g" extends our knowledge of something real that resides within the subjects studied and can explain and predict their cognitive behavior. Verification of the reality of "g" is confirmed by observation. Though the meanings attributed to "g" may change on the basis of future research, this change of meaning is not viewed as just another possible construction but as a refinement of knowledge of an existing human trait. Furthermore, that trait might well be somewhat cross-cultural and universal in nature. Only careful observation could rule this possibility in or out. While it is true that historical and cultural factors impact our understandings of "g", as Greenwood points out, these factors do not constitute the meaning of "g".

Clinicians, informed by the latest research on "g", can feel confident that their uses of "g" are trait-based descriptions of variations in human cognition and that their predictions are about something real. Funders would be told that their money is being used to extend knowledge that, while subject to modification, is knowledge that can be expected to lead to a more precise understanding of a real human trait.

### **Further Considerations**

The knowledge claims and their implications presented herein are split along modernist/realist – postmodernist/antirealist lines in the ongoing epistemological/ontological debate in philosophy. Neither position seems capable of overthrowing the other. So, are we left with only a faith-like belief to fall back on, a conviction that "g" is somehow real and can be known, or must we concede that "g" is a temporary scientific construction?

This dilemma generates another question. Is it possible that neither the modernist nor the postmodernist doctrines are adequate for psychology? As we have seen, postmodernist epistemology/ontology either traps human knowledge and understanding within the mind or, at best, within a collection of minds and adamantly asserts a lack of grounding for this knowledge in any real-

ity independent of linguistic constructions. However, modernist epistemology, since Descartes, has struggled with a similar trap. This trap involves the modernist assumption that proving one can know reality must proceed from the contents of the mind outward to the real.

Mortimer Adler (1987) outlined this dilemma in Ten Philosophical Mistakes. He begins with Locke's epistemology which holds that we are directly aware of our "ideas", a broad term Locke employs for all objects of the mind, e. g., memories, thoughts, perceptions, etc. Regarding this starting point, Adler states, "Those who hold the mistaken view of ideas as that which each individual directly apprehends – the immediate objects of which each individual is conscious – lock each of us up in the private world of his or her own subjective experience. It may be thought that, from the experience we have of our own ideas, we can somehow infer the existence of individuals other than ourselves, and of all the other bodies that, as a matter of common sense, we suppose to be the constituents of the physical world. However, since I can have no direct awareness of anything that is not an idea in my own mind, it is difficult to see how any attempt to argue for or prove the existence of an external reality can be carried out successfully" (Adler, 1987, p. 23).

Locke wished to avoid solipsism and attempted to correct the problem by declaring that the ideas in our minds are also representations of objects in the world. Regarding Locke's solution, Adler asserts, "On this understanding of what a representation is, how can our ideas (the only objects with which we have direct acquaintance) be regarded as representations of really existing things (of which we cannot have any direct awareness at all)? There is no satisfactory answer to this question. Nevertheless, illicitly converting ideas into representations somehow bolstered the ungrounded belief in an independent, external world of real existences, a world with which none of us, if imprisoned within the privacy of his or her own mind, could ever have conscious contact. The endorsement of this irrational belief is a mystery that has remained unsolved. The futile attempts to solve it have produced a variety of other mysteries, resulting in obscurities and perplexities that have riddled modern philosophy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries" (Adler, 1987, p. 26). The history of empiricism and the reactions against empiricism, such as social constructionism, commenced here.

It is beyond the scope of this article to attempt a defense of scientific realism that would somehow escape these epistemological knots. However, as a general defense of realism as most likely the superior knowledge claim and as more certain in the long run, one can point to G.E. Moore's argument against skepticism and for realism. Moore asserted that one need only to point toward a well known physical object, such as one's hand, to demonstrate that it exists and we can know it. Moore and Bruder quote G. E. Moore as follows:

"This, after all, you know, really is a finger: there is no doubt about it. I know it and you know it. And I think we may safely challenge any philosopher to bring forward any argument in favor of the proposition that we do not know it, or of the proposition that it is not true, which does not at some point, rest upon some premise which is, beyond comparison, less certain than the proposition was designed to attack" (Moore & Bruder, 1996, p. 143).

As applied to psychology, this quotation indicates that psychology would do itself no service by allying with epistemologies that are counter-intuitive. As Adler, Moore, & Bruder (1996) demonstrate, there is no compelling scaffolding for anti-realism except for a series of less certain philosophical assumptions. Hence, psychology would be better served to seek some form of scientific realism as its philosophical underpinning.

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#### Footnotes

1. Although the validity and utility of "g" continues to be debated (Pyrt, 2000; Sternberg, 2002), we believe the concept serves as a useful example to illustrate what the various positions would say regarding its epistemological and ontological status.

2. As noted, social constructionism is not monolithic. Rom Harre has been characterized as a social constructionist, although he has distanced himself from that position (Harre, 1999).

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### No Time or Place for Child's Play\*

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David A. Crenshaw, Ph.D., ABPP, RPT-S

When I imagine childhood at its best moments, I picture a group of children playing freely and romping at the seashore. They are making joyful sounds, running with abandonment into the water and then quickly retreating back to shore, only to race once again into the water to meet the relentless return of the waves. When they tire, they turn their attention to building castles in the sand. The Observer (<http://observer.guardian.co.uk/>) (May 6, 2007) featured an article by Vanessa Thorpe called, "No Time to Play at Flagship School." She reported the most expensive state school in Britain, the Thomas Deacon City Academy in Peterborough, was scheduled to open without a playground. A school official explained that, by providing no outside play space, it would avoid the risk of uncontrollable children running around during the break time. In the U.S., many parents in their relentless pursuit of obtaining every possible competitive advantage for their children have over-scheduled them nearly every day. This parental practice includes scheduling for their children after school activities such as tennis, swim team, piano lessons, chess practice, or Karate classes, or some other form of "personal development" or "productive activity." This frenetic activity is sometimes known as "parenting by resume." From preschool onward the concern seems to focus on building resume credits that position children for entrance to the best private schools and colleges. Free play with friends in the neighborhood is a rare treat for privileged children growing up today. The restriction of free play time, however, is not limited to children from affluent families. All children suffer. An article in the New York Times by Dirk Johnson (April 7, 1998) called, "Putting an End to Child's Play," reported the Atlanta Public Schools, like many school districts in the USA had eliminated recess in elementary schools, they viewing it as a "waste" of time.

#### Compelling Benefits of Free Play

Howard P. Chudacoff's (2007) new book, *Children at Play: An American History*, lamented the increasing intrusion of parents into the play of their children. Free play stimulates the imagination of children, allows for unstructured interaction between children that builds



important social skills, such as taking turns, sharing, negotiating, compromising, and experiencing mutual enjoyment from spontaneous playful activities. Dr. Chudacoff, a history professor at Brown University, also expressed concern about the commercialization of toys that limit the pretend and imaginative play potential. He observed that the toy industry has largely become a spin-off of the television and film industry based on licensing deals with major toy manufacturers. He explained that these toys come with their prepackaged back story thus limiting the playful, creative potential of such media promoted products. What is lost if children don't have a time and a place for free play? A large body of child development and early education research has validated the role of play in cognitive development. Indeed, the creation of imaginary situations, characters, and events lays the foundation for abstract thinking (Pellegrini & Smith, 2006; Singer, Golinkoff, & Hirsh-Pasek, 2006). Free play contributes to socio-emotional development by facilitating affective growth marked by practice in understanding, expressing and controlling emotional expression, and sharing emotionally meaningful experiences with playmates.

### **Impinging Cultural Forces**

While these important benefits of play are well known, the play of children has been co-opted by well-meaning adults, parents and educators who wish to maximize the growth and productivity benefits by scheduling to the brim the time that used to be available for free play. What is lost is too precious to forego. When lessons from the high performance culture of the adult corporate world are applied to the play of children, the value of play for play's sake is lost. If there is no time and place for such experiences it is a harrowing loss for children. Not one single moment of missed childhood in the form of wonder, imaginative exploration, or fantasy adventure can ever be recaptured. Plato and Aristotle both viewed wonder as the basis of all thought. A sense of wonder and mystery is one of the special gifts of childhood that sadly is lost all too quickly when children make the transition to adulthood. When adults take over the play time of children they fail to recognize the vast differences in the world of childhood versus adulthood. Goethe, the German philosopher and poet, noted that individuals often see in the world around them what they carry in their hearts. What children carry in their hearts and what they see in the world is often quite different from what adults carry in their hearts

and what they see in their world. Play is the natural language of young children, the younger the child the more this is true. Wittgenstein (1971) said, "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world" (p.117). If we limit children's play, we limit their language, and we limit their world. Freud expressed a similar view when he claimed: "Might we not say that every child at play behaves like a creative writer, in that he creates a world of his own, or rather re-arranges the things of the world in a new way which pleases him? It would be wrong to think he does not take that world seriously; on the contrary, he takes his play very seriously and he expends large amounts of emotion on it. The opposite of play is not what is serious but what is real." (Freud, 1908, p.143)

### **Natural Healing Properties of Play**

One of the amazing qualities of the imaginative play of children is the child's spontaneous and natural use of the play to work out emotional distress. If for example, a teacher reprimands a child, that same child might set up a pretend school at the end of the day, perhaps enlisting the help of a sibling or friend, then assume the role of the teacher and ream another child out. The child typically feels better and moves on to a new scenario or another form of play. Play therapists capitalize on these natural healing powers of play to address emotional issues that go beyond the stress of a day but rather represent ongoing conflicts or experiences with more complex emotional underpinnings or in some cases grief or trauma events in the child's life. When children are constrained in their opportunities to engage in free play, it constricts a healthy and natural outlet for resolving conflict and relieving stress. In addition, children in the course of their imaginative play often find solutions as they play out various alternatives; they spontaneously engage in creative problem solving. This happens usually when no direction or structure is offered by adults. It is fascinating as Beverly James (1989) pointed out that the traumatized child doesn't engage in free play. She described these children as "stuck" or "frozen." Play therapists have to teach these children that it is okay to play. They may not feel the freedom to play if their father is in jail or if there has been a sudden death in the family. Play for these children is stiff, constrained, lacking joy and spontaneity, and it doesn't relieve anxiety the way the play of non-traumatized children does.

### What Play Therapists Can Do

Children who don't know how to play due to extreme constriction as a result of anxiety or children who can't play due to traumatizing conditions in their life can be taught to play. They can be taught by the empathic play therapist who eases them gradually into playful expression that allows them to discover how liberating free play can be. It releases them from the bondage created by their extreme anxiety or the trauma events of their lives. Perhaps the most important contribution the play therapist can make, given the emphasis on achievement at any cost in our highly competitive, driven culture, is to educate the teachers, parents, and school administrators in our respective corners of the world. In a culture that increasingly believes there is no time or place for children to freely play, we need to help parents, educators, and policy makers understand that the increasing restrictions on the spontaneous, imaginative play of children is akin to "theft of childhood." Play therapists should be among the strongest advocates of the healing, educational, emotional, and social values of the self-initiated, unstructured play of children. We need to help parents understand that far from being a waste of time, there is nothing more magical than simply joining children in play, when they invite us in, to take time to learn about their world of creative fantasy and imagination, to play a role assigned by them, or to just quietly but attentively listen and watch as they create, modify, and

communicate their world in the language they find most natural, the language of play. The song of the soul of a child is a melody composed of wonder and mystery, and the dance of a child's soul is playfulness. Before the music of the child's soul stops, we should advise adults to learn to dance—the dance of playfulness.

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## A Dialogue With Members: Looking For Your Opinion

### To List Serv or Not to List Serv: That is The Question

Lisa Grossman, JD, Ph.D., ABPP

As a new member of the Academy, I have been eager to meet and share ideas with other Academy members. When I read the recent email about the revision of the Bulletin, I wondered whether there was a list serv that would enable us to communicate more readily. When I inquired, I was told that presently, an announcement-only list serv is being developed, because in the past, members have not been interested

in multiple daily emails. However, it was suggested that an inquiry to the current membership might be appropriate.

As most of you, I am a member of several list servs and receive way too many emails every day. One more list serv is not particularly appealing to me unless it is clearly useful to my professional work. As a member of an APA practice division, I have opportunities for professional communication, but often this list serv is preoccupied with political machinations and complaints about APA and the profession. While very useful, I would love to be able to

discuss clinical issues in depth with senior clinicians around the country.

Because there are pros and cons to adding an expanded list serv for Academy members, I was wondering what other members thought about this idea. If there is little or no interest, then I'm

sure there will be other ways to communicate and share ideas, such as this Bulletin. If there is interest, then perhaps our leaders can explore ways for implementation. If you have any interest, please contact the Academy at [contact@aacpsy.org](mailto:contact@aacpsy.org).

## General Announcements

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### ACCP Website

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Christopher Ebbe, Ph.D., ABPP, FAACP

If you have not visited or used our Academy website, we hope you will take a look at it. The website ([www.aacpsy.org](http://www.aacpsy.org)) serves as a source of information about the Academy for potential diplomates and for the general public, and it includes several resources for members. (1) The member directory can be used by the public to locate a Board Certified psychologist and used by fellows to locate colleagues and referrals in other areas. (2) The AACCP tri-fold brochure can be printed out and used in fellows' offices, for public education, and in advocacy with third-party payers. (3) Continuing education opportunities, with APA CE credits, (see elsewhere in the newsletter for details) are located at Resources/Continuing Education. (4) Guidelines are posted for mentors who may be assisting applicants through the application and examination processes. (5) The member and academy news bulletin board keeps you up to date on AACCP business and on member news. (6) Recent Academy Bulletins are posted, as are (7) minutes of the Academy's Executive Board.

The bulletin board can be used to network and to share helpful information that can aid us in our quest to provide excellent (or at least "high quality") services and to continue in our career-long professional development. We can post address and phone number changes; awards received, elected offices, and other professional achievements; and anecdotal or research-based tips on practice specifics (a little known treatment method for trichotillomania; a particularly useful line of questioning in dynamic therapy; a new study on psychotherapy

with schizophrenia; etc.). Please send your announcements, news, tips, and suggestions for how to make the website more useful to me at [cebbe@alum.mit.edu](mailto:cebbe@alum.mit.edu).

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### Continuing Education

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Christopher Ebbe, Ph.D., ABPP, FAACP

The Academy is offering home study continuing education opportunities on our website (under "Resources" on [www.aacpsy.org](http://www.aacpsy.org)). Each course consists of reading a listed journal article and taking a brief learning test on the article. APA CE credits will be issued for passing scores (generally 70 percent). Due to copyright issues and the fact that few publishers, including APA, will allow us to post articles without sizeable reprint charges, we are unable to provide the actual articles to you online or by mail, so take a look at the articles' sources to see if you have ready access. Most are from APA journals, and APA members can obtain reprints of all of those articles for \$11.95 each. (See the Continuing Education page on the website for APA on-line ordering information.) Courses are for one or two credits each (and so are useful for filling in a small gap in one's state-required number of credits for license renewal). Credits are available for \$15 per article (members) or \$20 for non-members.

There are currently eleven articles posted, and we are adding more as we can. The Continuing Education Committee selects only articles that seem as if they would be potentially useful for Board Certified-level practitioners. If you wish to use this service, (1) check out the articles on the website (current list below);

(2) obtain and read the article of interest; (3) print out from the website the registration form, course evaluation, and learning evaluation for the article, and (4) fill out the three forms and mail them (hard-copy), along with your check, to Christopher Ebbe, Ph.D., ABPP, 943 Scripps Dr., Claremont CA 91711. If your score is passing, your certificate will be mailed to you. (Due to the costs of credit card processing, we are unable to take charges on-line at this time.) If you have other questions about the CE program, don't hesitate to ask them of me at cebbe@alum.mit.edu.

Continuing Education offerings as of 8-1-07

1. Successful Completion (Pass) of Stage II (Professional Statement and Work Samples) of Board Certification Examination in Clinical Psychology (ABPP/ABCP) (10 credits)

2. Keyes, C. L. M. (2005). Mental Illness and/or Mental Health?: Investigating Axioms of the Complete State Model of Health. *Jnl. of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 73, 539-548.

3. Peterson, R. L. & Ober, M. (2006). Reconsidering Assumptions: Half-Time Internships in Their Historical Context. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 37(6), 635-642.

4. Roland, A. (2006). Across Civilizations: Psychoanalytic Therapy with Asians and Asian Americans. *Psychotherapy*, 43 (4,) 454-463

5. Rodolfa, E.; Bent, R.; Eisman, E.; Nelson, P.; Rehm, L.; & Ritchie, P. (2005) A Cube Model for Competency Development: Implications for Psychology Educators and Regulators. *Prof. Psych.: Research & Practice*, 36, 347-354.

6. Roberts, M.; Borden, K.; Christiansen, M.; & Lopez, S. (2005). Fostering a Culture Shirt: Assessment of Competence in the Education and Careers of Professional Psychologists. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 36, 355-361.

7. Teri, L.; McKenzie, G.; & LaFazia, D. (2005) Psychosocial Treatment of Depression in Older Adults with Dementia. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 12, 303-316.

8. Widiger, T. & Trull, T. (2007) Plate Tectonics in the Classification of Personality Disorder: Shifting to a Dimensional Model. *American Psychologist*, 62, (2) 71-83.

9. Whittal, M.; Thordarson, D.; & McLean, P. (2005). Treatment Of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder: Cognitive Behavior Therapy Vs. Exposure and Response Prevention. *Behavior Research and Therapy*, v.43 (12), 1559-1576.

10. Roberts, M.; Borden, K.; Christiansen, M.; & Lopez, S. (2005). Fostering a Culture Shift: Assessment of Competence in the Education and Careers of Professional Psychologists. *Prof. Psych.: Research & Practice*, 36, 355-361.

11. Collins, Charlotte A. & Labott, Susan M. (2007). Psychological Assessment of Candidates for Solid Organ Transplantation. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 38(2), 150-157.

12. Culver, J.; Arnow, B.; & Ketter, T. (2007). Bipolar Disorder; Improving Diagnosis and Optimizing Integrated Care. *Jnl. of Clinical Psychology*, 63(1), 73-92.