From the Editor:

The end of any semester at Derner typically evokes bittersweet sentiments among students and faculty; most are excited to have completed another portion of the program, proud of recent accomplishments, and eager to enjoy at least a small bit of summer relaxation and/or travel, while at the same time they are anxious about the impending workload of the next semester, uncertain of how to find the energy to work on their dissertation or new project, and fearful that without an increase in graduate assistantship funds, one order of Chinese takeout will have to somehow last for three nights instead of two. On top of these things, this spring semester seemed particularly bittersweet. In April, we learned the results of the APA site visit in December: Derner received 7 years of APA reaccreditation, thanks to the incredible work and dedication of Dr. Muran, with a great deal of support and assistance from Dr. Barber, Dr. Jackson, and all faculty and students. Along with this sweetness, however, we bid farewell to two beloved professors, Dr. Ross and Dr. Kissen, who have spent the majority of their careers at Derner and are now retiring. The contributions of Pat and Mort are immeasurable, Pat as a professor, administrator, and assistant dean, and Mort as a professor, supervisor, and very often a yoga instructor. They will be truly missed at Derner. The upcoming retirement of Dr. Coleman Paul should also be acknowledged, as he played an active and important role in the Derner community for many years.

Personally, these bittersweet feelings are still present as I leave Derner and begin internship in July. I want to thank everyone who supported the regeneration of the Day Residue and all who contributed. I am confident that the students taking over editing responsibilities will continue to improve upon what we have started and work toward strengthening connections between students, faculty, and alumni.

Sincerely,
Laura Shapiro

Dr. Bornstein with three members of his workgroup—Christy Denckla, Wei-Jean Chung, and Trisha Balbert—after receiving the Martin Mayman Award at the SPA Convention in San Diego. See Page 12 for more details.
Proficiency in Personality Assessment: A Student-Friendly Guide

Christy Denckla, M.A.

Derner graduates are early career psychologists who enter the job market with a rich background in psychological and personality assessment. This is an area of expertise that the APA has recently acknowledged as a specialty, which exceeds general training in assessment because it formally recognized personality assessment as a proficiency in 2010. This means that personality assessment is now identified as a professional specialty defined by a core set of psychological knowledge and skills, much like neuropsychological or forensic assessment.

As students, we can be aware that the path to proficiency begins in our graduate training with our formal coursework and practicum experiences. We continue to develop the skills that will leave us eligible to apply for proficiency during internship and postdoctoral training. Among the core skills expected to demonstrate proficiency include the ability to integrate assessment data from three different domains (self-report, clinical interview, and performance-based data).

The Society for Personality Assessment (SPA) has taken a leadership role in developing the application process and standards for proficiency. According to Dr. Mark Blais, Chair of the Proficiency Committee at SPA, the most important thing that students should know about the proficiency process is that we should track all testing hours acquired during our graduate training to include our coursework, tests administered, the type of test, client characteristics, and who our supervisor was. For those students interested in ultimately applying for proficiency in personality assessment, the path begins right now! If you would like to learn more, please refer to Dr. Blais’s column in the The Exchange, SPA’s biannual newsletter at [http://www.personality.org/exchange.php](http://www.personality.org/exchange.php). Also, the Graduate Student Association of SPA (SPAGS) will be an ongoing resource for students.

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Prolonged Exposure Therapy for PTSD

Emma Forrester and Edna Foa, Ph.D.

This year’s Lindenmann Lecture was presented by noted trauma researcher, Dr. Edna Foa. Dr. Foa’s lecture focused on her technique for treating PTSD, Prolonged Exposure Therapy (PE). She presented a general overview of the treatment as well as statistics supporting its efficacy in treating trauma. The following day, Derner doctoral students had the opportunity to attend a six-hour workshop with Dr. Foa, where she was able to explain the theory and administration of PE in more depth. During this workshop, first year student Emma Forrester sat down with Dr. Foa and spoke about her history in the field, her work with rape victims and veterans, and where she hopes to see trauma research and treatment go in the future.

Emma Forrester: Can you tell me how you became interested in studying trauma? I know you were working with other anxiety disorders before that.

Dr. Foa: Well, I actually was interested from a theoretical point of view. I started with a theory of emotional functioning and I thought “Well, how do people approach this, this interesting event?” And I didn’t think that it was trauma or not trauma, but the idea came to me that we don’t really dwell on positive things. If you had a wonderful wedding you don’t think about it too much, but if you had a terrible event you think about it, so, what’s the mechanism and the process to get over it? Then I decided that I would study rape victims because nobody paid a lot of consideration for them, and they would be more honest. I didn’t even know that I was studying PTSD at the time because it was before PTSD came into being. So that’s what my motivation was. And then once I saw these patients, I said “We need treatment for them.” And there was not treatment for them because this was 1980 and we didn’t have a treatment for PTSD. That’s how I started to develop a treatment for PTSD. It came from emotional processing theory.

EF: So coming from this theoretical standpoint, how did you go on to develop PE?

Dr. Foa: Well, I had seen rape victims before, and treated them as phobias. They were avoidant and they were upset, and so mostly I treated them with in vivo exposure because of the avoidance. Once I realized that these memories that are haunting them are something that doesn’t happen in phobias, I realized we had to do something with those memories. Then I came up with the idea that if we help them to repeat the memories, so many things happen. They create a story, they create a narrative which is easy to digest. They actually realize that a lot of the negative memories that they have were not so, and the reason why they kept on thinking it was their fault, their blame, is because they never really
allowed themselves to go back into the memory and check what happened there. So the idea was that allowing them to check, and also the idea of imaginal exposure, it will help them differentiate between reliving or retraumatizing and telling a story about what happened in the past, and that they are survivors. They are not in danger from the story like they were in danger in the past.

**EF:** Now you’re working with veterans. How did you get interested in that?

**Dr. Foa:** The VA came to me. Actually, before that there was a study in the VA that compared PE to simple therapy. You know, treatment of talking about what happened, a kind of counseling. And I was asked to be the supervisor, to arrange all the supervision. So that’s how I got involved with the VA. Later on, because the treatment was quite successful, the VA decided to disseminate PE, and that’s how I started to work with them. Then, in Israel, I was working with veterans because the treatment is really disseminating more among veterans than among civilians.

**EF:** Where do you see the field of trauma research going in the next few years?

**Dr. Foa:** Well, I think one of the very problematic issues is dissemination of information. Therapists don’t want to change. If they learn psychodynamic psychotherapy and they are comfortable with it, or if they learn CBT and they don’t want to learn psychodynamic, people are reluctant to change. So that’s one barrier. The other barriers are the systems. If the system allows for once a week therapy, for example, in the VA it is easy, but in the Army it is more difficult. So you need disparate systems. And so there are lots of barriers for implementation. So that, I think, is one of the major issues that we will have to deal with, because we do have good services. They are not perfect, but there is no perfect service for therapy either. So I hope that we will go more and more towards evidence based treatments and that people will not be allowed to do psychodynamic therapy unless we have evidence that it works. Just like you are not going to use medication that you feel like you like and you feel comfortable with—if a physician has a patient with diabetes and he said, “I don’t really connect to insulin. I think that relaxation training and exercise would be enough.” But the patient has severe diabetes and relaxation training and exercise don’t reduce it. If he said, “I’m not connecting,” he would lose his license and there would be a complaint. In psychotherapy, this is not the case. Everybody can do whatever they want. So I’m hoping that the system will encourage evidence based treatment. And I hope that they will encourage people to study psychodynamic therapy to see what patients benefit from psychodynamic therapy and how to give psychodynamic therapy in a way that will be efficient.

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**Derner’s Own Internship Consortium**

*Michael Kestenbaum, Jonathan Jackson, Ph.D., and Jairo Fuertes, Ph.D.*

This fall, four Derner students will begin their internships at various sites participating in the newly developed Derner Internship Consortium. We sat with Dr. Jackson to hear what led him to successfully implement the internship program for doctoral clinical psychology students.

During our discussion, Dr. Jackson elaborated on the many factors that contributed to the foundation of the Derner Internship Consortium. In particular, he spoke of the overarching problem with the matching process. “I’ve been overseeing the internship process for fourth year students for several years,” Dr. Jackson said. “And ever since I took it over, there’s been an imbalance, a national imbalance. There are more students applying for accredited spots than there are accredited spots. And every year...there would be a small number, sometimes none, but more typically a small number of students, who would not match.” This occurred despite the fact that the students not matching were strong academically and had had sufficient training to make them competitive for the match. Understandably, for some of these students, it was a major blow to their confidence, not to mention to their overall professional and personal plans. “It really affected the entire class, the morale of the whole class,” Dr. Jackson explained.

Dr. Jackson eventually learned about a potential solution to this problem in the form of an affiliated internship that a doctoral program could create. Although such a program could function exclusively for students of the particular doctoral program or could consider applicants from other programs, Dr. Jackson set out, at first, to operate the Internship Program for Derner students only. Basing his ideas on how other programs operated similar internships, Dr. Jackson saw an opportunity for such an internship to assist current students in obtaining high-quality internship experiences and to add to the distinction of the PhD program at Derner. According to Dr. Jackson, “there was nothing stopping anybody with the resources and the will to create an internship” for a doctoral program. As Dr. Jackson said, “The wheel had been invented.” But how to copy the design of said wheel while also adjusting the designs for your particular needs? This is the question that Dr. Jackson slowly answered as he set out to build the Internship Program from scratch.
Two years ago, there was consensus among the administration and faculty that an in-house internship would enable current students to worry less about the 5th year while focusing more on the earlier training years, and that it might enhance the value of the program to prospective students. Dr. Jackson and the Derner administration viewed the internship as a unique addition to the doctoral program, as most other APA-approved PhD clinical psychology programs do not offer their own internships. However, though much more was needed to make it a reality, the all-important factor of will was present. “Since I proposed the internship,” Dr. Jackson stated, “the role of moving ahead and bringing it to reality was also mine.”

Early on, Dr. Jackson and other members of the Derner faculty met and spoke with individuals from different universities who had experience building internships within clinical psychology doctoral programs. In large part due to the consultation received from his colleagues at other universities, Dr. Jackson understood that he first needed partners, potential sites to join the Internship Consortium. As such, he approached several locations and pitched the idea. These particular locations were sites where Derner had a history of placing externs, where Dr. Jackson had established relationships with the supervisors and training directors, and where said trainers might be receptive to the idea of participating in an internship. Where he received positive responses, Dr. Jackson followed up with these locations by discussing with them the details of the internship.

The locations that agreed to participate in the Internship Consortium are: the Student Counseling Center at Adelphi University, the Village Institute for Psychotherapy in Manhattan, the William Alanson White Institute in Manhattan, and the Employee Assistance Program in the Corporate Office of North Shore Long Island Jewish Hospital. Each location had had experience with Derner students working there in some capacity. Just as important, each site, in particular the White Institute, was interested in affiliating with Derner’s Internship Consortium because of their ambitions to keep doctoral training relevant and to encourage more analytic ways of working with patients. “I did anticipate a receptiveness on the other end,” Dr. Jackson exclaimed, “and that was very much the case.”

Three of the participating sites agreed to take two part-time interns, which equates to three full-time interns among the three locations. Additionally, the Employee Assistance Program accepted a trainee who had previously trained there as an extern. Placement at the sites will be half-time. As such, interns will accrue a total of 2,000 hours by the end of their respective training years. Each site will require that interns treat patients in a variety of modalities: individual, group, couple, etc. Individual supervision by a licensed clinical psychologist, group supervision, case conferences, and didactic training will also be offered at every site. In addition, interns will attend weekly didactic/case conference meetings at Derner throughout the year, taught by Derner faculty in their respective areas of expertise, including, for example, trauma, short-term therapy, group therapy, diversity, etc.

During the process of building the Internship Consortium, Dr. Jackson was able to apply for an APA-sponsored stimulus grant that was specifically designed to assist start-up internships and encourage existing internship programs to undertake the costly and time-consuming steps of applying for APPIC membership and APA accreditation. The grant provides support over a two-year period for start-up costs. By gaining this grant of slightly over $20,000, Dr. Jackson has been able to apply the funds to accreditation costs and student stipends. For example, students will receive a stipend of $3,000 from the grant, in addition to the $20,000 that the internship sites will provide. He also said that the grant has heightened the confidence levels in the internship from Derner administration and the respective training affiliates. “When you’re applying for a grant, you have to be clear about your goals and your ability to reach them,” Dr. Jackson said. “It’s in consideration of your articulated goals and your ability to assemble the needed resources that you are awarded the grant.”

Once the foundation had been laid, it was then time to initiate the matching process for those Derner students who had applied to the Internship Consortium. As with many aspects of the internship process, Dr. Jackson had to learn how to receive applications through the Training Director online portal. Of the 22 students applying for internship this year, 11 applied for the Derner Internship Consortium, and approximately half were granted interviews. Through the mechanism of the National Match, four students matched with the Derner Internship.

There were barriers and difficulties that were hurdled and overcome in order to attain the successful beginning to the Internship Consortium at Derner. As Dr. Jackson expressed, “There were a lot of little bumps that I tripped over along the way. Everything that I tripped over I have learned from. A lot of unforeseen problems, but we’re charting the course.” For example, Dr. Jackson stated how he was initially unfamiliar with the matching process from the vantage point of an Internship Training Director. Specifically, he had to determine how many applicants to rank for the Match and how to distribute those who matched to different training sites according to their unique experience and competencies.

Although Dr. Jackson was very much “on his own” for much of the work involved in setting up the Internship Program, he had the encouragement of his colleagues at Derner and a key resource in the form of the APPIC Mentorship Program. Through this program, he was in contact with Dr. Gayle Norbury, who currently directs the Mid-Atlantic Internship Consortium and acted as his APPIC mentor throughout the internship-building
A glimpse into the professional achievements of Derner doctoral students throughout 2012-2013.

Dr. Jackson has continued to implement new strategies to further improve the quality of the Derner Internship. For example, he is currently preparing an application to obtain APPIC membership, which will grant the program permanent access to the National Match. Two years from now, Dr. Jackson expects to begin application for APA accreditation once outcome data are available for those who worked as interns in the program. In addition, Dr. Jackson wishes to reach out to other locations to add to the current roster of internship training sites, and to eventually add five more intern spots with said locations. Specifically, Dr. Jackson would like to add a hospital as well as smaller clinics and centers. Dr. Jackson emphasized that he is looking for independent entities with their own staff and their own approaches to treatment and commitment to training.

Dr. Jackson emphasized how the willingness of each site to participate in the Internship demonstrates their dedication to training and their fundamental drive to establish connections with those contributing to the mental health field. The model of independence, good practice, and ambition that these locations embody sets a positive example for students who may be inspired to establish themselves according to such a model. “I think of the Internship as emerging, taking shape.” Dr. Jackson affirmed. “That’s the tenor. That’s the flavor that I’d like for it to assume. The important thing this year was to get it started. And we did.” Although the Internship will certainly grow, Dr. Jackson does not predict that it will replace the current general internship matching process. “I don’t foresee the Derner Internship replacing fully the internship training opportunities that students now seek,” Dr. Jackson stated. “I see it as being complementary to it, an alternative for students who want to consider it.”

Hopefully, the success of the Derner Internship Consortium will demonstrate what is required in the current doctoral training climate and assist graduate students as they prepare to enter the professional world.

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**CONGRATULATIONS! Derner students matched at the following sites for the upcoming 2013-2014 year:**

Albert Einstein Early Learning Center  
Bellevue Hospital Center  
Beth Israel Medical Center  
Brooklyn College Counseling Center  
Columbia University Medical Center  
Derner Institute Consortium  
Jacobi Medical Center  
Kings County Hospital Center  
Lenox Hill Hospital  
Lincoln Medical Center  
Lindner Center for Autism & Developmental Disabilities  
Manhattan Psychiatric Center  
Massachusetts General Hospital  
MercyFirst—Abuse Treatment  
New Jersey VA Medical Center  
North Central Bronx Hospital  
Northport VA Medical Center  
UMass Amherst Counseling Center

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**Student Accomplishments**

A glimpse into the professional achievements of Derner doctoral students throughout 2012-2013.

**Trisha Balbert, M.A.** presented a poster, “Development and Preliminary Validation of a Self-Report Measure of Counterdependency: The Social Styles Scale” at the Society for Personality Assessment (SPA) annual meeting in San Diego in March 2013. She also presented a poster, “Counterdependency: Development and Validation of a New Self-Report Measure” at the Association for Psychological Science (APS) annual convention in Washington, DC in May 2013.


**Kristen Capps, M.A.** received an Honorable Mention Award for her poster, “Relationship between In-Session Patient Crying Behavior, Therapeutic Interventions, and Patient Characteristics,” presented along with Anthony Mullin at the Adelphi University Research Day in April 2013.

**Wei-Jean Chung, M.A.** presented a poster, “Interpersonal Dependency and Detachment as Moderators of Treatment Outcome in Psychiatric Inpatients” at the Society for Personality Assessment (SPA) annual meeting in San Diego in March 2013. She will defend her dissertation, “Interpersonal Dependency and Detachment as Moderators of Treatment Outcome in Psychiatric Inpatients” in June 2013.
Student Accomplishments [continued]

Student Spotlight: Marie Barnett, M.A.

Throughout her third year, Marie has mastered the art of multitasking to an especially impressive degree. In July 2012, Marie began a predoctoral fellowship position at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSKCC), which continues through August 2014. She is in the process of publishing her second year project, which is a qualitative study involving adolescent survivors of cancer, and has devoted her research to the experience of self-disclosure among young cancer survivors. She has recently presented several posters; she presented “Parent and Peer Attachment Quality and Posttraumatic Growth among Adolescent and Young Adult Cancer Survivors” at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Oncology Society in February; “Self-Disclosure of Cancer History in Adolescent and Young Adult Cancer Survivors” at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Psychological Association in March; and “Cancer-Related Self-Disclosure among Adolescent and Young Adult Cancer Survivors” at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Behavioral Medicine in March, Adelphi’s Annual Research Conference in April, and the MSKCC Survivorship Research Symposium in May. She received the award for Outstanding Graduate Poster Presentation at the Adelphi Research Conference. Along with her work through MSKCC, Marie is an extern at Maimonides Medical Center and continues to see patients at Adelphi’s Center for Psychological Services.


Christy Denckla, M.A. began her term as President-Elect for Section 10 (Graduate Students and Early Career Psychologists) of Division 12 (Society of Clinical Psychology) of the APA in January of 2013. The January newsletter has come out: [http://div12sec10.org/?page_id=15](http://div12sec10.org/?page_id=15) and she’s looking forward to the meeting in Hawaii this year. In March 2013, she presented two papers at the Society for Personality Assessment (SPA) annual meeting in San Diego. She also presented a poster, “Proximal and Distal Detachment Predict Different Mental Health Outcomes” at the Association for Psychological Science (APS) annual convention in Washington, DC in May 2013. Additionally, Christy coauthored a book chapter, “Multi-Method Assessment of Resilience” to be published in the upcoming book, “Multi-Method Clinical Assessment,” coedited by Dr. Robert Bornstein.


Clara Hungr, M.A. will propose her dissertation, “The Relationship of Patient Interpersonal Problems to the Alliance and Outcome in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Brief Relational Therapy” in June 2013. Additionally, she is the recipient of the Sanger Dissertation Award.


Valentina Stoycheva, M.A. won the Robert Muroff Creative Writing Scholarship at Adelphi University in Spring 2013. She was recently appointed Co-Chief Editorial Assistant of *Trauma Psychology News*. She also coauthored a paper along with Emily Singer and Dr. Joel Weinberger entitled “Implicit Processes and the Normative Unconscious: Empirical Findings and Relevance to Clinical Practice,” which will soon be published in *Psychoanalytic Psychology*. Additionally, she will defend her dissertation, “The Priming Effect of Self-Report Therapeutic Alliance Measures on Patients' Intimacy Motivation and Perception of the Therapist” in June 2013.

Jackson Taylor, M.A. is a recipient of a Psi Chi National Chapter Graduate Teaching Assistantship Grant ($3,000). The grant supported his efforts as a Diagnostic Testing Teaching Assistant for five first-year students during the spring 2013 semester.

Sumru Tufekciolu, M.A. coauthored a paper with Dr. Chris Muran, currently under review, entitled “Pre-Treatment Axis II Diagnosis and Psychotherapy Process in Two Time-Limited Therapies.” She also coauthored a book chapter with Dr. Muran entitled “A Relational Approach to Personality Disorder and Alliance Rupture,” which will be published in the upcoming book, “Integrative Treatment for Personality Disorders.” Additionally, she is the recipient of the Sanger Dissertation Award.
I am a psychodynamically oriented psychologist working in a State Psychiatric Center. On any given day I can find myself leading group therapy surrounded by a dragon, God the Father, Michelle Obama and Mrs. Charlie Sheen…just to name a few. I can open a chart and read histories replete with matricide, necrophilia, pedophilia and brutal self-mutilation. I have a few physical scars (sometimes things do turn violent) and a few more emotional ones. How does a psychologist begin to process and make sense of (let alone conduct therapy around) acts and experiences that are considered to be unthinkable and beyond the pale of mere words? Fortunately, coursework and clinical training at Derner provided me with a foundation that enables me to engage in a continuing learning process; currently the focus is on engaging psychotic patients while managing the psychotic system in which they are to be treated. While of course many of the specifics are far outside of the scope of what we learn in any class (I did not learn how to restrain and seclude a violent homicidal patient in any of my electives), Derner does encourage us to develop an appreciation of ideas and a flexibility of thinking that are the crucial elements for succeeding in intense environments. I am passionate about the work and take comfort in knowing that psychodynamic therapy is an efficacious modality that enables me to truly help extraordinary individuals. As a psychodynamic therapist, I attempt to find meaning through theory, and this can be transformative for my patients and colleagues alike.

In almost a decade of clinical work with the severe and persistent mentally ill (initially in the Bronx and currently at the Manhattan Psychiatric Center) I have come to experience schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders as clusters of cognitive, sensory and affective processes that can be conceptualized with an elegant sophistication through psychoanalytic theory. In particular Klein, Bion, Winnicott, Searles and Matte-Blanco’s attempts to create an understanding of the landscape of the unconscious have been invaluable in producing a common narrative between clinician and psychotic client. While schizophrenia may be related to epigenetic factors, the biological matrix of the disorder manifests through highly idiosyncratic, primitive defenses (such as primary withdrawal, omnipotent control and projection) that are laden with personal meanings. Medication does little in the face of fixed symptoms and the accompanying traumas produced by mental illness, and it is only in the act of attempting to translate these personal meanings into a shared language through therapy that we find hope for recovery. Contemporary psychodynamic research and modern relational theory coupled with ideas generated by resources such as the Voice Hearer’s Movement can help to inform and guide the work. Furthermore, my experience has been that other disciplines (such as psychiatry and medicine) highly value the contributions that psychology can bring to a treatment team. Individual therapy, group therapy, testing and behavior planning are all recognized to be the domains of the psychologist, and we are often brought in to work with the most “unworkable” of cases. Interns and externs quickly become valued members of the milieu. And while the system is depriving and difficult, experiences at Derner taught me how to observe and work with process, a unique perspective that only a psychologist can bring to the table. With the impending release of the DSM-V it is more important that ever for us to work in settings such as State Hospitals and to take a stand for the value of meaningful, dynamically oriented conceptualizations and courses of treatment.

I encourage current students to seek out training opportunities with the severely and persistently mentally ill. Make the most of your experiences at hospitals and appreciate the fascinating and complicated patients whom you will have the honor of meeting. I further strongly encourage those who wish to expand upon their abilities to work dynamically with this population to apply for an externship at Manhattan Psychiatric Center; we highly value the experience, maturity and orientation that Derner students bring to training positions. Finally, consider doing your internship at an inpatient facility such as MPC; we have a long and proud tradition of accepting Derner students as interns and eventually offering them professional positions. These experiences will not be easy either emotionally or intellectually; however the contributions you can make both to the people with whom you work and the course of your own career are potentially limitless.

Alumni Spotlight: Paul Saks

Paul Saks, Ph.D.

Dr. Saks received his doctorate from Adelphi University in 2007. He completed his internship at Bronx Psychiatric Center and worked there as a Supervising Psychologist until 2012; he is currently a supervising faculty member at Manhattan Psychiatric Center, where he serves on the Admission Team, the Trauma Service, Psychological Testing Service and Forensic Committee. He teaches as an adjunct instructor at several universities and sees patients for therapy and psychological testing in Forest Hills, Queens. His interests include the application of psychodynamic psychotherapy with psychosis and severe personality disorders and the analysis of parallel process in group psychotherapy. If you’d like to speak to Dr. Saks about training opportunities at MPC, feel free to contact him at 646-672-6413 or p.saks@omh.ny.gov.
A Professor’s Reflections: Wilma Bucci

Wilma Bucci, Ph.D.

Dr. Bucci has been part of the Derner community for 30 years. While she has continually supervised dissertations, she stopped teaching Cognition and Emotion in 2008 to focus on research and other projects. Though she hadn’t planned it, in 2012 she began teaching the course again and reentered the life of a Derner faculty member.

Avigail Gordon, who was in my Emotion and Cognition class last semester, kindly asked to interview me for Day Residue. She sent me a number of questions, which I thought were quite interesting; I will respond to them in spirit rather than directly. So this is sort of a personal letter from me to Derner inspired and guided by Avigail.

I came to Derner in 1983, taught what I thought was my last class at Derner in Spring of 2008, but kept my work group going on Wednesdays for the next several years. I was gradually moving my research base to our space at the Pacella Parent Child Center at New York Psychoanalytic Society and Institute, and contemplating actual separation from Derner, when Chris asked me if I would teach Cognition and Emotion for one more year. Although I had taught that course for maybe about 20 years – since the early 1990s – it is a lot of work every time I teach it. I make changes every year, to keep the course timely and to keep myself interested. I also like to read the students’ work carefully and to give them feedback, so they have a chance to learn something, and that is very time consuming although (sometimes) rewarding work. (I know it is difficult for students to realize that paper reading can be as hard for the professor as paper writing is for them).

Since I had many research and writing projects under way, and since I envisioned how much work teaching the course would be, I said no, with considerable regret, to Chris. (As you might infer, I have a strong love/hate relationship with teaching that course, and I could go on in considerable detail about that). Then the heavy artillery thumb in the eye charm brigade came in; i.e. Jacques asked me to teach, emphasized how it would be good for the book I am trying to write, etc. and etc. So there I was, teaching the course in the fall, and then somehow or other – was I asked?? – teaching it again in the spring.

Am I glad I did it? Yes of course, how can I not be glad of the interaction with the students, and of the depth of understanding one can get from trying to teach complex material and being challenged by questions. Am I glad it is almost over? Yes of course. Would I want to do it again? Not this course at Derner, but I am happy to still have students working on our projects at several universities as well as here. We have a seminar that meets at the Manhattan Center about half the year on our research, and I get many invitations elsewhere to lecture and supervise on my theoretical work and our research. We now have a very nice website [www.thereferentialprocess.org] and people can go there to learn more about our research group and our publications.

But I wanted to make these comments more personal, about how it feels to be an outsider looking in at a place where I was such an involved and active insider for so many years. I have seen so many changes since I first came. I think I was the last person hired by Gordon Derner and I arrived at Derner the day after the weekend he died. I met the faculty for the first time assembled at a meeting in which they were trying - in various states of emotional disarray and dissociation - to somehow incorporate this relatively sudden and terribly personally meaningful event (though he had been sick for a long time). I have had many relationships with my colleagues over the years, but I think I know some of them whom I met that day in a different way because I met them then. After a while, Marty Fisher (whom some of the faculty may remember) very kindly realized they had a new faculty member there and some kind of welcome occurred. I felt an outsider then, for sure, and remained that way in some respects, as a researcher, for a while.

When I first came there were two tracks, a small four year track with a more intensive research component and a larger three year clinical track, and that made it a different kind of place than it is now. But there are still many different kinds of students, many different kind of faculty here today. I saw myself – still see myself - as on the interface between the theoretical clinical and research areas and I think there is still room and need for that here. To bring this around to my personal feelings about being an official outsider here now, I am glad not to have to fight the battles of various different sorts that I fought while I was here, and very glad to be out of officialdom with all its requirements and demands. Of course I miss the excitement – but it is interesting how the challenges can seem more like excitement when viewed from the outside and more like stress and acrimony when one is inside and one’s life and work are at stake.

Finally – to make the point that what goes around comes around – whatever that means - I will tell you what I did last Monday. I have been looking at the basic process that I call Referential Activity (RA) in many ways, in many contexts from the beginning of my career, even before I came to Derner. RA refers to the bidirectional process of connecting nonverbal experience including emotional experience with language, as this operates in therapy and in many other contexts. All my students have learned to score the RA scales, and we have now also developed computerized versions of RA.
and many other related psycholinguistic processes that operate in emotional communication.

When I began this work we looked at both the trait and state aspects of RA. On the one hand, some people seem to have consistently closer, faster connections between nonverbal and verbal systems, whether learned or innate, that show up in many different kinds of tasks; on the other hand, level of RA varies with interpersonal context and internal state. We let some of this basic research on the trait or competence component lapse with our current emphasis on the process component, but are now becoming quite interested in that again. Valentina Stoycheva (who is now in the fourth year here) and Sean Murphy (who graduated a year ago and is doing a post-doctoral fellowship with me now) worked together on a referential competence study during the last couple of years with some mixed results. Last Monday, Sean and I went over to the library to look at some early dissertations from my work group that focused on the trait aspect of RA. We were looking in particular for the dissertation of Jill Bowen who looked in depth at the trait component; Jill got some very interesting results that raise some interesting questions that we plan to explore further now, in a study aimed at partly replicating and partly extending her work.

Jill was my very first student here; she graduated in 1987. It seems serendipitous to pick up and continue Jill’s work in the last weeks of my teaching here. That visit to the stacks of dissertations was like a walk down memory lane as you can imagine. I have supervised about 3 or 4 students a year since I am here so you can do the math. The interesting thing is that I can vividly remember each one of them, their labor pains of producing the dissertation and the joy (in most cases) afterwards. It is a very special relationship to have a dissertation student, and it’s never lost. Even if one doesn’t see the person again, they are always ‘my students’, like members of my family; and Derner feels like and will continue to feel like my family as well.

Alumni Colloquium: Where Do We Go From Here?

Avigail Gordon, M.A.

Following up on a very successful program last year, Derner hosted “Where Do We Go From Here? – Part II,” in which alumni returned to help advise and guide current students looking to the future. Participants came from a range of different paths to help clarify for students the many possibilities available to us in life after Derner. Dr. Sherry Breslau, Dr. Glen Bromley, Dr. Thomas Cromer, Dr. Johanna Herwitz, Dr. Allison Rothman and Dr. Yasmine Saad imparted the wisdom of their experience to a gathering of students already in or considering entering the program.

In their years since graduation, the members of the panel have taken on an impressive array of responsibilities. Most spoke to the experience of running a private practice, while Dr. Cromer has worked primarily within the framework of hospital systems. Dr. Rothman and Dr. Saad represented the field of academia, holding part-time posts as clinical assistant professors. Several have worked for the New York Police Department, with Dr. Bromley who is currently employed there describing the excitement of a ride-along as part of his job (bullet-proof vest and all). Dr. Breslau specializes in group work, while Dr. Herwitz emphasizes couples and family work (with a focus on parent-child interaction).

To take full advantage of these amazing resources, after a brief introduction, the alumni representatives responded to questions from current students. Advice was sought in relation to what current preparations students could take or what to expect in terms of starting out as early professionals. These ranged from the broad (“What do you wish you’d known before you started your private practice?”), to the specific (“Do you worry about liability for suicidal patients and how do you approach that issue?”) While many student questions were explicitly directed to the future, some emphasized instead coping strategies that could be immediately implemented (such as a question regarding self-care practices). Faculty joined in, as well, with important questions about debt and factors contributing to the decision to follow this career path.

While there were more detailed answers to all questions, panel members emphasized that students can rely on the strength of their training to carry them through most situations. As students, we naturally worry about how to be best prepared for the careers we have only begun to imagine. Our colleagues on the other side of graduation have a very different view. In retrospect, they explained, they recognized that their excellent theoretical background and clinical skills helped them over any obstacles that arose and led them down the paths that landed them where they are now - financially secure and professionally fulfilled.

And of course, they added that there are other things to help us as we navigate the transition from pupil to professional. In answer to the question of how to protect ourselves from the emotionally draining nature of the work, Dr. Bromley summed it up in one word: "Run." As long as we keep going, and trust the path we’ve started down, with luck in a few years we will be the alumni returning to impart our wisdom to future cohorts who are only now taking their first tentative steps towards the path in the first place.
Schenike Massie: Why and how did you choose Derner?

Dan Sapen: I had my BA in philosophy, and had the opportunity to take courses that incorporated Freud in many ways—from the inadequate mention, as usual written by someone neither literate nor sympathetic, with respect to Freud and the tradition, given in the basic level Personality Theory course, to upper level courses on such topics as “Sincerity and Self-Deception” and Aesthetics, which drew heavily on depth psychology and various notions of the unconscious, a wildly popular Jung seminar given by a British Jungian that was standing room only, to this day the most popular course Vassar gave, and others that focused on post-modern theories that looked at psychoanalytic theory by way of such thinkers as Lacan, Ricoeur, and Derrida. The Jungian in particular seemed so much more welcoming and civil in the course of dialogue than anything else I had encountered, despite its size—it was the beginning of my questioning of the odd and distorted demonizing of Jung by quite literally every Freudian-inclined mentor but one, who tended to do to Jung, and worse, what the learning theorists who wrote the intro textbooks did to Freud—reduce him to an inaccurate caricature and then move on to things supposedly more important.

So, deep, symposium-style round-tables about Big Ideas were one of the things I had gotten used to, and wanted more of. Then, when I had a pre-interview with Lorelle Saretsky and she asked if I had ever heard of Kohut or Bion, and I hadn’t, it occurred to me, with some embarrassment, that I had barely scratched the surface. I wanted that sense of intellectual community again, and occasionally Derner offered a taste of that.

But first, my high school biology professor, Steve Farbstein, had been through analysis and was getting his clinical Ph.D. at the New School, and gave a weekly talk to a small group of interested students about Jung, Freud, and Adler, prioritizing no one over the other. He gave me books like The Fifty Minute Hour, not to mention some new-age physics, and some ideas began to brew that ended up working into my BA and MA theses as well as my dissertation.

When it came time to apply to grad school, I had been in analysis with an Adlerian, who recommended Derner, and recommended me to them, and I applied there as well as to several others around the country that didn’t seem entirely cognitive-behavioral and experimental—I really wanted to get away from New York—but the fact was, Derner was considered by everyone I asked in the business as head and shoulders above the other programs I was accepted to; it seemed the Long Island Expressway would be in my life a little—a lot, it turned out—longer.

SM: What was Derner like when you attended?

DS: “Like”—boy, what level to answer that one on? I remember a slightly musty, grey-brown rectangular set of hallways, some always closed, and some seemingly always alive with some furiously publishing professor with red-rimmed eyes and an ironic attitude of sarcastic welcome. I remember bagels, and Mike Lieppe cutting his hand; I remember talking too much about every idea that seemed at the time to call for it—and too often being rebuffed for doing what I had always done in groups of similarly intellectualized students and professors, examining each and every connection and implication. I did not choose my moments well at all. But I also learned that a desire to sensitively help those in pain, to use a format that invited personal truth, and a love of IDEAS, without political boundaries, was not shared in similar proportions by quite enough other students and professors. If it weren’t for one or two professors and classmates, it would have been a very lonely time. There are many ways to be devoutly religious and suspicious of your neighbor, and not all involve God or gods.

SM: Do you remember your group interview?

DS: Very well! Brilliant technique. Kirkland Vaughns, still one of my favorite humans, if he doesn’t still know it, and a grad student, sat and stared at ten or so confused, nervous students, only speaking to admonish us not to talk about psychology. I was terrified and sure I came off
badly, but for much of the time, I remember having a nice sense of flow also. I had a bad hair day, was underdressed because though I had my one blazer pressed, I didn’t try it on and it no longer fit. I also knew in that room a few people I would want to be friends with. A couple made it.

**SM:** What is your best Derner memory?

**DS:** Bob Mendelsohn bringing his martial arts instructor to teach us the application of a rare Filipino style to protect oneself against a violent patient.

**SM:** Wow! What have you done since you completed the program?

**DS:** Lots of variety, and a few nice long-term gigs. I took forever to write my dissertation, partly because I had the mixed blessing of a clinical supervisor who trusted my work and kept me working as much as possible while I did what I promised friends who had graduated that I would never do: choose a dissertation topic I love too much. I have done clinic work, residential teens-in-trouble school psych; worked with special needs children; worked in nursing homes and physical rehabs with some hospice work; did some private work with performers, artists and athletes dealing with motivational blocks. I currently have a mostly full private practice in addition to working at two nursing home/rehabs, so that any new patients I take are at the expense of family time or gym time; I’ve begun to get back into music, recording some tunes properly that I wrote mostly before Derner; gotten back into my sport, boxing, training for old-guy tournaments and sparring as many rounds as I can get in each week with young guns I really should be avoiding. In 2008, my wife Dina and I adopted a newborn, Alyssa Jayne, and parenthood has been a rich and beautiful experience, and not at all an easy one.

It was hard to find a committee or the confidence to get on with my dissertation. In 2003, I had the privilege of meeting and working with editor John Peck, translator of Jung’s Red Book and a noted poet and analyst, who saw the potential in a project that had languished for a few years, as did a few influential musicians who cheered me on. Bob Mendelsohn was then good enough to agree to be my chair and helped keep the writing grounded and clear, and then my favorite publisher asked to publish it. The basic idea is that Freud’s avowed distaste and confusion over music is expressed in those very aspects of psychoanalytic theory that are least well developed, but that those flaws and empty spaces have been gradually filled in by the work of various post-Freudians, Jung and post-Jungians, and then I use two works by Miles Davis and John Coltrane as models for these psychological dimensions. Most gratifying of all was that I got an offer right after defending my dissertation to re-write it as a book for Karnac Publishers—now available at Amazon or the website of your choice, titled *Freud’s Last Chord: Discovering Jazz in the Resonant Psyche.* I have a friend from college who is a publicist, and has gotten me quite a lot of print, some radio and TV opportunities, and shortly a book release party in Manhattan that will feature good live jazz.

**SM:** Wow, congratulations! You’ve certainly had a busy career. Do you have any advice for current students?

**DS:** Yes. Don’t forget what it is in your own make-up that draws you to psychology. Remains curious and skeptical–do not mistake even the most intricate system of concepts for a dogma that must be adhered to. There is a dangerous human need that no amount of analysis can cure, which is the false comfort of believing you belong to a club that has all the answers, and knows exactly who the enemies and frauds are. No school of thought is a church. Be aware of that need within yourself, and fight it at all costs. That kind of thinking is behind all the worst impulses of humanity. I spend a few hours a week in online forums that exist for the purpose of exploring a certain range of phenomena through a depth psychology lens. Some of the dogmatic certainty and sheer bad manners come regularly from the very same people who chair departments and write widely respected books of theory and practice. The political and religious mindsets, the us-vs-them mentality of very well educated primal hordes, remain something that holds back the spirit of inquiry at a very primitive level. Be better than that – remain curious, read outside the syllabus whenever time permits.

Our field still has a lot of growing up to do, and treating the illusion of scientific certainty as a means of being superior to another bunch of analysts is something we should all be above by now. But the splits that formed our field over the past century–Freud and Jung, the different post-Freudian schools–are still happening. It is up to a community of self-aware individuals to read the originals, not the innuendo laden critiques that one’s own compatriots write about that “other” guy, and truly let the various metaphorical systems that are our best and only ways of putting psychological things into words, develop and cross-fertilize. Heed Bronowski:

> It is important that students bring a certain ragamuffin, barefoot irreverence to their studies; they are not here to worship what is known, but to question it.
> — Jacob Bronowski
> *The Ascent of Man* (1973), 360.

And, give the institute what it demands as quickly as you can and then devote the rest of your career to all that. I’m pleased with a lot of what I’ve done during a long stay at Derner and then after, but I would like some years back, if only I could have a do-over. Don’t make the same mistake. The rest of your career is the time for defining who you are and changing the world a bit.
**A glimpse into the professional achievements of Derner faculty throughout 2012-2013.**

### Honors

**Dr. Robert Bornstein** is the recipient of the distinguished Martin Mayman Award from the Society for Personality Assessment, presented to him at the Society’s annual meeting in San Diego in March 2013. The Mayman Award is bestowed annually by the SPA for an article that makes a distinguished contribution to the personality assessment literature as an outstanding case study, qualitative research project, or theoretical development. The Award was granted in recognition of the article, “Rorschach Score Validation as a Model for 21st-Century Personality Assessment,” which was written by Bob as the sole author and appeared in the January Issue (volume 94, #1) of the Journal of Personality Assessment. Bob has won the award twice previously, and is the only person in the history of SPA to have done so. In 2002, he received the award for his paper, “A process dissociation approach to objective-projective test score interrelationships.”

**Dr. Jonathan Jackson** was awarded an APA Stimulus Grant in November 2012, on behalf of the Derner Institute, to provide seed funding to pursue APA-accreditation for the Derner Internship Consortium. Thanks to his efforts, four Derner students will be employed as interns at the Consortium’s affiliated sites in the upcoming 2013-2014 year.

### Publications


Faculty Highlights [continued]


Presentations


Jones, M., Craver-Lemley, C., Szymanski, K., & McCue, A. (May 2013). *Enhanced object imagery in ADD/ADHD Disorder*. Poster presented at the meeting for Association for Psychological Science, Washington D.C.


Upcoming Conferences

- **Association of Black Psychologists 45th Annual International Convention**: July 23-27, New Orleans, LA
  “The Universality of African-Centered Psychology: Merging Domestic and Global Perspectives”

- **121st Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association**: July 31-Aug 4, 2013, Honolulu, HI

- **APA Clinician’s Corner: A Psychodynamic Approach to Treatment-Resistant Mood Disorders**: Sep 20, 2013, Washington DC

- **APA Clinician’s Corner: Identifying and Treating Your Patients’ Addictions**: Sep 27, 2013, Washington DC

- **Psychology and the Other 2013 Conference**: Oct 4-6, 2013, Cambridge, MA
  “The Interhuman and Intersubjective: An Intersection of Discourses”

- **International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies 29th Annual Meeting**: Nov 7-9, 2013, Philadelphia, PA
  “Resilience After Trauma: From Surviving to Thriving”

- **Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality 2013 Annual Meeting**: Nov 14-17, 2013, San Diego, CA
  “Connections: Interdisciplinary Perspectives in Sexuality”

- **30th Annual Conference of the International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation**: Nov 16-18, 2013, Baltimore, MD
  “Navigating Development of the Therapist: Integration of Knowledge, Experience and Research in Complex Trauma and Dissociation”

Keep in Touch!

**Alumni**: We very much want to hear from you! Please stay tuned for the upcoming semester, when we plan to reach out to many of you to learn about your post-Derner careers, projects, and accomplishments. If you would like to submit an article, essay, or other piece of literature for the next issue of *Day Residue*, please do not hesitate to contact any of us on the newsletter team. We look forward to hearing from you!

**Contact Us!**

Your feedback is extremely valuable to us and will help enhance future issues. Did you find the newsletter interesting? What would you like to see in future issues? Please let us know your opinions and comments:

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**Spread the Word!**

Know of any alumni who have not received this newsletter but would like to? Let us know the updated e-mail addresses of anyone whose current information may not be in the Derner administration’s records.

Stay Tuned for the Next Issue: Fall 2013