

GSAPP Alumni Newsletter

The GSAPP Alumni Organization—Rutgers University

Spring 2006—Volume VII—No. 1

Communiqué from a GSAPP Alumna in China

By Ping Yao, Psy.D., Clinical '04

Editor's Note: Ping Yao, Clinical 2004, is an Assistant Professor in the Psychology Department of Peking University in Beijing. She writes about her experience working in China following her graduation from GSAPP.

My experience returning to China as a psychologist contrasts in many ways to the situation GSAPP graduates face in the U.S. The way the two cultures view psychology and psychotherapy differs. In general, the development of the whole field of psychology in China lags behind many years, compared with other countries. Just think about the therapy situation as it might have been in America in the 1960s or 1970s, and you'll get a picture of the current situation here.

Psychotherapy is accepted by the Chinese public in theory, but not in practice. That is, they know the concept and accept it cognitively, but they may not really understand how it works and their expectations are not realistic. People can not really understand the differences between the various schools of therapy and they do not care, as long as they are getting better. The clients here are not as sophisticated about therapy as they are in America. In addition, it is somewhat expensive for ordinary people to see a psychologist, especially when it will take some time and they are not sure about the outcome. The cost of psychotherapy has to come out-of-pocket, since mental health services are not covered by medical insurance. People here are not prepared mentally to spend some time on it, or it is not convenient for them. Because of these factors, I do brief therapy in most instances. However, I have two current cases which are relatively long-term. Those patients have a flexible schedule, and also can afford the cost.

In China there are some private practices, mostly of counselors, rather than of clinical psychologists. They are not really regulated, and it is therefore different from private practice in America. However, we are trying to set up training and practice standards. Major hospitals and universities have psychological clinics, so the quality of private practice therapy may not be as good as services found in these institutions, where clinicians at least have systematic training.

In some ways, my experience on the university faculty may

be similar to that of American professors. Like academic psychologists all over, my major duty is to teach and conduct research. I've taught courses titled Personality Psychology, Psychometrics, & Health Psychology; and Mental Health and Counseling, both for undergraduates, as well as training entry-level professionals in psychodynamic therapy. In addition, I supervise graduate students. I participate in a small research project on physical exercise and its impact on mental health, led by the clinical program director. As well as my teaching and research responsibilities, I see some clients at the counseling and psychotherapy center, in the university hospital, and ran a process group with some graduate students in another university in Beijing. Just like my American counterparts, from time to time I give lectures for different groups, such as for high school teachers, college/graduate students, or clinical professionals.

In my experience, there is no problem having a Psy.D. degree here. In the clinical psychology program where I teach, the program director knows the difference between a

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From the Alumni Organization President's Message

To our Alumni:

GSAPP marked its 30th anniversary and the Psychological Clinic its 75th year with a "Realizing the Vision" celebration in October of 2005. The Alumni Organization is publishing a handsome booklet to commemorate this event. It will be a valuable archival document including history, photos, and other memorabilia that everyone in the GSAPP community will be proud to have. Those who attended the anniversary celebration will receive a copy automatically. Others can order this special booklet which will be packaged with a GSAPP Alumni Directory on disk. It is not too late to have your congratulatory message included in the booklet, and become part of GSAPP's history. Information on how you can place an ad and order a booklet can be found on the back cover of this Newsletter.

"Realizing the Vision" continues this year with the 30th anniversary of GSAPP's first graduating class, which was populated by masters level psychologists. After two years in the program, the first PsyDs in NJ were ready to energize their work with enhanced knowledge and skills, and the requirements needed to become licensed doctoral level psychologists. Despite initial fears that the PsyD would be perceived as inferior to the PhD, GSAPP has come to be seen as one of the finest psychology training programs in the country.

As we appreciate the milestones in the history of our graduate school, we can't help but notice the many changes in the conditions of psychological practice and the education and training of practitioners over the last 30 plus years. What are some of the conditions our graduates face today?

- A struggling national economy
- The influence of politics and the US government on health and human services
- The insurance industry's impact on service delivery
- Expanding immigration and an increasingly multicultural society.

These factors create the need and opportunity to think and work outside the box. We all know the merit of our training and the capacities it has helped us develop. Despite that, many of us have been hiding in the shadows, reluctant to toot our own horns and insist on having our work paid at a level truly reflecting its worth.

But the winds are shifting. At the GSAPP Alumni-Student Diversity Dinner on February 10, 2006, there was an open and enlightening discussion of money and marketing. It seemed to me that a long-held and limiting taboo had been broken. Perhaps that discussion is a signal that we have reached the point in our development when we can pursue both our passions and our paychecks. To do this effectively, we need to acknowledge the necessity of advocating for ourselves and psychology in our profession's training institutions, in the political arena, within our professional associations, with the public, and in the work-

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http://gsappweb.rutgers.edu/Alumni/Alumni_Home.htm

From GSAPP Letter from the Dean

Dear Alumni,

At the celebration of GSAPP's 30th anniversary and the Clinic's 75th, I was extremely pleased to announce the creation of the Ruth and Mel Schulman Graduate Fellowship at GSAPP. Almost all of you knew Ruth as our much beloved and admired Associate Dean who always put students' welfare first. Ruth's husband, Mel, who died in March, 2005 of pancreatic cancer, was a staunch GSAPP supporter. When the Fellowship is fully funded in six years it will allow us to support a student with a living stipend and full tuition remission provided by the University. We compete with the best schools and programs around, but to continue to attract the best and the brightest requires that we strive to offer accepted candidates decent financial support. This \$350,000 endowed fellowship is a gift of love by the Schulman sons and daughters-in-law, Dan and Jenny Schulman and Joel and Nancy Schulman and the Schulman grandchildren, Molly, Jake and Logan. It is the single largest gift that GSAPP has ever received from a living donor. Hats off to the Schulman progeny for putting their financial resources to such good use and honoring their parents and grandparents in this outstanding way.

We have had other generous gifts from our alumni and faculty. To name a few of the most significant, Molly Stranahan, at her graduation in 1996, donated \$40,000 in stocks to GSAPP. Some of this was matched by her husband's employer and was subsequently added to by Molly and Tom as well. Cyril and Violet Franks recently donated \$75,000 to foster research at GSAPP that will help us understand better the stigma attached to mental illness. They also endowed the Cyril Franks Dissertation award in perpetuity. Bob Weitz, one of GSAPP's founding fathers, has provided in his will for the Weitz award to be given each year to a graduating student who has shown exceptional professional promise. Webster Trammell has donated \$2,500 in each of the past four years to challenge faculty to donate to our Academic

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Dean's Letter

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Excellence (Dean's) Fund, which supports a variety of opportunities for students, including attendance at our student-alumni events. In addition, I am aware of a few people who have left bequests in their wills to GSAPP, Sandra Harris and I among them, which will be very helpful in the future (distant future, I hope!). Another person whom I cannot name at the moment has left significant funds to GSAPP about which I expect to make an announcement in the not too distant future.

Many of you are faithful and regular donors to GSAPP through the fall telethon. Those of you who donate \$100 or more get a letter of appreciation from me as well as from the Foundation. I notice that more of you are donating \$500 and even \$1,000 a year as your income increases and other expenses decrease. Keep the donations coming and do your best to increase them when you can. We all have many ways to spend our hard-earned money and many competing pulls for contributions, but do keep in mind the value of the education you received at GSAPP. The School's financial needs are great, especially at times like these when we are facing severe cutbacks in state support due to the huge budget shortfall. Those of you who are in a position to do so, please consider contacting me about larger gifts that can be targeted to a variety of important areas such as the alumni scholarship fund, endowed lectureships and even named professorships.

Finally, remember GSAPP in your will with a significant bequest and let me know that you have done so. The Rutgers Foundation can help you with the wording and legal aspects of this act of confidence in GSAPP's future and in Rutgers University. As I have learned through my own experience, this will make you eligible for membership in the Colonel Henry Rutgers Society and you will be invited to receptions, football games and concerts each year. You will have my gratitude and the pleasure of knowing that GSAPP's future is assured.

Stanley Messer, Ph.D.
Dean

From the Alumni Organization Memo from the Editor

This is my third issue as Editor of the GSAPP Alumni Newsletter, and I still feel like the luckiest guy in the world. When I agreed to take on this role, my fear was that after one or two issues the articles would dry up, and I'd have to write the entire newsletter myself. I needn't have worried!!

As this issue demonstrates, the variety, energy and depth of GSAPP's alumni is truly impressive. Ping Yao's reflections on her work in China (page 1) remind us that GSAPP alumni are helping people in every corner of the world. The problem of kids' preoccupation with electronic toys elicits a persuasive opinion in Beth Haesig's piece (page 5). GSAPP graduates' varied work is revealed by the example of Debra LeClair's work as Life Coach (page 6), while Bernard Natelson's experience at a Minuchin conference (page 4) makes an important point about remaining open and flexible in our work. And the second installment of Andrew McCabe's interview with Charlie Maher (page 7) provides some insight into his work with pro athletes.

One of my goals is that the newsletter provides a forum for controversial issues in psychology. Articles in this issue may provoke a reaction in you, and I'd welcome letters or articles responding to, or rebutting, any of the opinions expressed here. Our next issue will contain a response to Aiton Birnbaum's article from the Spring 2005 issue on using EMDR in Tsunami relief. It would be wonderful to add your thoughts about articles that have already appeared in the newsletter, or on any issue in psychology.

We welcome submissions of articles, which do not have to be long (500-600 words is a good length). I'm willing to help you focus your thoughts and think about a topic before you start writing, if you have an idea but are not sure how to begin. Feel free to contact me at axelbank@rci.rutgers.edu if you'd like to discuss a notion for an article. And of course, send me your personal or professional news for the Class Notes section, which keeps us all in touch, even if we are spread around the globe.

Jeffrey Axelbank, Psy.D., '92

President's Message *Continued from page 2*

place. This, in part, was the focus of the GSAPP Alumni Organization's 2nd Career Continuum Program entitled, Focus on Diversity: Finding Funding/Working in the Community, held on April 2, 2006. This program very specifically addressed ways in which professional psychologists can work outside the box and develop projects with diverse populations in innovative ways, and still pay the rent. A top priority of the Alumni Organization is to sponsor programs and projects that enhance your satisfaction and success as psychologists.

Join us. Your dues and donations help pay for the Career Continuum Series, the Alumni Scholarship, the supervision project, this newsletter, and much, much more. Membership links you with your graduate school colleagues and provides

you with many benefits from the Rutgers University Alumni Federation. To learn more and to join call 1-888-999-1766 or go online:

<http://www.alumni.rutgers.edu/join/assocs.shtml#propsych>.

I welcome your ideas and suggestions. We need your contributions at whatever level and in whatever ways you can give. Let me know how you would like to become more involved. Call me at 732-494-5471 or write to drbonniemarkham@hotmail.com.

Best wishes,
Bonnie
Bonnie Markham, Ph.D., Psy.D.
President, GSAPP Alumni Organization

Alumni Speakout

Unexpected Lessons from a Week-End with Minuchin

By Bernard Natelson, Psy.D., Clinical '79

Some years ago I attended a week-end conference that was led by Salvador Minuchin. While I went hoping to see the Family Systems Therapy master who I viewed thirty years ago with great awe and respect, I came away with the unintended result of confirming my belief in the need for therapist flexibility.

Minuchin began by telling us about the history of his Interpersonal Systems approach (as distinct from Interpersonal Therapy), and then we viewed a tape of him working his wizardry with a family. My body wrenched to the emotions displayed as Minuchin enters their system and performs a veritable tightrope dance to push them into the depth of their feelings. As the taped vignette ended, there was a quiet amazement amongst all of us at the brilliance of Minuchin's therapeutic interventions.

But the fireworks begins when Minuchin asks for questions or comments about the tape. Someone asks a question that is barely audible and Minuchin, characteristically, tells her to raise her voice. The name of the tape just seen was: "Hearing voices." The identified patient also spoke in an almost inaudible tone, and so Minuchin is doing unto us as he has done to his clients. He is either pushing us or simply ignoring issues he wishes not to touch and the awe we have attached to him suddenly becomes a quiet fright. People don't want to ask a question if they are going to be verbally shunned or ridiculed. Yet, though Minuchin is direct and confrontational to the audience, he also appears to be on target.

Then I ask how the systems approach can be applied to an individual when his or her family is not available to enter into the therapy process. Minuchin's response to me is flippant: "You are saying something completely different than what I said. Did you understand what I just said?" My reply, "I thought so" gets a few chuckles. "Think about it," he continues, "maybe it will come to you later. Let the Zen take over your thinking." And I, like many of the others in the audience feel a sense of both frustration and public humiliation.

When I approached Minuchin later, he again avoided my question about using his approach with an individual. His response, "All family members are necessary in order for family therapy to work," indicated to me that Minuchin had become rigidified over time. He had locked himself into his own system of conceptualizing the therapeutic process. To him, treating the individual was atavistic and out of context insofar as therapeutic progress could be only made through the concept of relationships and enactment. Now I understood: Minuchin only responds to questions that involve the family unit.

I left the workshop saddened at my personal frustration with Dr. Minuchin. Certainly, I saw him differently than I once did: he seemed both more human and fallible, and less godlike. Perhaps this more realistic view of Minuchin reflected my own changes and growth as a therapist. The weekend reminded me how important it is for therapists to remain as flexible and open-minded as we can when treating our clients whether they come in alone or with their significant others. ♦

http://gsappweb.rutgers.edu/Alumni/Alumni_Home.htm

Class Notes *by year of entrance*

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Alumni Speakout

Taking the Batteries out of our Kids' Electronic Lives

By Beth L. Haessig, Psy.D., School '99

I observe Max, a thirteen year old boy who is playing with a Gameboy in the waiting room. Lucky him - he doesn't have to feel uncomfortable with the fifteen-year-old girl sitting next to him. He doesn't feel the need to connect with anything in the room, other than the buttons on his Gameboy. Without the Gameboy, his isolation would draw him out, and make him look outside himself to pass the time. Right now, he is not experiencing the pleasure, or anxiety, of connecting with a peer.

Wait. He stops, and says to the girl "Yes! I just blew this guy up." They begin to converse about the game, the boy's eyes glued to the little box, the girl looking over his shoulder. With a long bored exhale, the girl, unnoticed, goes to talk with another child. The moment is gone. In two years when Max's testosterone levels make him very interested in the girl sitting next to him, he won't have the social and verbal skills he needs to connect with her. How will he handle his anxiety if he has never had to before?

Entertainment technologies provide stimulating experiences, pure fun and pleasure, and allow one to be alone. There is no need to compromise, to converse, to have eye contact, to smile, to feel embarrassed, or sad, or even to feel the very isolation that the technology engenders. They may be with an-

Class Notes *Continued from page 4*

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other child, interacting through the machine and talking about what is in front of them, but this simulates the "parallel play" of two-year olds. After age two, children are ready to develop the skills that help them to initiate, develop, and maintain vital relationships with others. Instead, children are learning through experience that happiness is derived from outside themselves through electronic toys, tv and video.

Experiences such as cooperating with someone at kickball, sticking up for someone who is being picked on, helping two kids work it out rather than to fight, deciding who is on which team, and figuring out how to handle someone who cheats all contribute to social skill development. These skills of emotional intelligence are necessary for successful relationships, fulfilling careers, personal fulfillment, resiliency, and for mental health.

Look at the way today's boys and girls socialize. Boys are inside, alone or in front of a screen with another, against the walls on the playground during recess hooked up to their little boxes (in schools that allow them). Look at the girls, laughing, chatting, teasing, being nice, being mean, playing. Boys, whose social and verbal skills already trail girls, are getting even less practice when they engage so singularly with technology. The social skills gap between girls and boys will widen as we enable our boys to spend their leisure time in nonsocial ways. Entertainment technology is especially seductive to children who do not know how to play with others, and thereby exacerbating their deficits because they socialize less.

Let's take the batteries out of our children's electronic lives. Let's allow them to experience their feelings, their thoughts, others' feelings and body language, maybe even some boredom. They certainly will not pick up social skills as long as they have a Gameboy in their hands. ♦

Student Speakout

LIVING IN EXILE

After a while
 You forgo the wish for understanding
 in the old way
 the allusive feeling that what you said is just right.
 one starts to ask – when did this feeling lie?
 Like everyone around me
 And what type of a liar was I back home?
 Maybe exile is too strong of a word.
 Now you better smile.

Oren Blass, Psychology Intern

Alumni Speakout

Life Coaching: Another Modality for Psychologists

By Debra LeClair Psy.D., School '98

There is a new type of service that some psychologists are using to help clients reach their goals: life coaching. It is a process that focuses towards improved performance and/or life enhancement. Through inquiry designed to be catalytic, a life coach helps a client to identify core values, goals, strengths and resources. To promote momentum, action steps are determined collaboratively. Depending on the client's needs, sometimes they are just "baby steps" while at other times they are designed to really stretch the client's capabilities.

Life coaching has strong roots in the theories of Jung, Adler and Maslow. It also stems from organizational as well as positive psychology, solution-focused psychotherapy, integrative spirituality, business coaching and good old-fashioned mentoring.

Common reasons for hiring a life coach may include goals such as starting a business, filling a private practice, creating a lifestyle of prosperity, finding life purpose and fulfillment, meeting health/fitness goals and balancing life's priorities. According to a survey performed by the International Coaches Federation, professionals and executives are the most likely population to hire a coach. However, as the general public becomes more aware of the benefits and availability of life coaching services, there is an increase in overall utilization.

Like psychotherapy, coaching provides a supportive space to look into the deeper meanings of one's life. However, life coaching by its process is for the higher functioning—not necessarily those who are of the YAVIS sect, but those who are ready to make change and desire accountability for achieving their life's goals.

A way to help differentiate life coaching from psychotherapy is to consider the analogy of driving a car. In many psychotherapies, the client and therapist spend a good deal of time looking at the rearview mirror in order to maintain movement whereas in coaching, the coach and client are firmly looking out the front windshield. Another metaphor is that when riding a bike, the therapist will want to know where you have been and what it was like for you. The therapist will deepen the therapeutic bond by standing on the side and cheering you on as you make progress. A coach will also cheer you on but will first climb onto the bike and ask, "Where do you want to go?"

Life coaching can work well for the many clients engaged in psychotherapy that are dealing more with life's difficulties as opposed to characterological or Axis I disorders. For instance, a woman may be seeking psychotherapy to help her address a bereavement issue. Over the course of the therapy she may also talk about her dissatisfaction with her current job. Life coaching could help gain clarity on how to find and follow a more satisfying career path while she continues her grief work with her therapist.

On the flipside, the services of a coach may be sought out

by someone who is depressed, wants a change but feels a stigma around seeking out mental health services. A properly trained coach will determine that this person cannot really move forward until the depression is addressed by the appropriate professional. Many life coaches look to build referral relationships with mental health professionals since there is such a clear need to work together. ♦

China

Continued from Page 1

Ph.D. and Psy.D., and she worries because I didn't do much research last year. This is because aside from the research program I joined, I do not have any funding at the moment. I will have to apply for funding, which is difficult for me as I prefer teaching and clinical work over research. I am not motivated enough, even with the pressure, and I am often distracted by the work I prefer!

While psychologists elsewhere rely on colleagues and an extensive professional community for support, I am mostly flying solo. I do not have any official mentor or clinical supervisor. I ask my colleagues for informal advice, or sometimes consult psychologists from other countries if I have questions regarding my clinical work. I take Nancy McWilliams as unofficial mentor, but I try to reserve for her my most difficult questions.

When psychologists visit China, I try to arrange for them to give lectures in order to introduce new ideas to our students (I translate, if necessary). For instance, recently an American clinical psychologist, who reached me through a psychologist in California, came to Beijing in a tour group and gave an informal lecture on how to understand anger and its implication for treatment. GSAPP faculty members are also planning visits, with Stanley Messer coming this July to do a workshop on short-term psychodynamic therapy and Nancy McWilliams coming in 2007 to speak to our students.

My education and training at GSAPP is highly valuable to me. I learned what I need. The most important component of my training was supervision, as it really prepared me to do clinical work in reality. The concept of psychotherapy is based on individualistic culture. The assumptions about people and interpersonal relationships are different in many aspects. I have to figure out how to adjust it to Chinese culture which is more group-oriented. That psychotherapy is to some degree more accepted now than before, is the result of cultural change in China toward more individualistic culture, in the past 20 years.

If any GSAPP graduates are planning to travel to China, or would like to, I would be glad to help arrange for you to provide some training or lectures in whatever topic you are interested in. We can really use your expertise in developing the psychology profession in China! ♦

From GSAPP

The Value of Sport Psychology:

An Interview with Dr. Charles Maher

By Andrew McCabe, Psy.D., '99

Editor's Note: This is the second installment of a three part series. The first part appeared in the Fall 2005 issue, and the conclusion will be in the Fall 2006 issue.

Dr. Charlie Maher is a prominent sports psychologist, founder of the Sport Psychology concentration at GSAPP.

Andy: Charlie, professional team owners demand results and I suspect the yardstick they use is the win-loss column and/or the measured improvement of specific players. What else do they value that falls under the domain of a sport psychologist?

Charlie: Owners of professional teams want a sport psychologist to contribute to their organization in terms of player, coach, and team development and the design and implementation of programs, services and systems. In particular, they expect the

Class Notes *continued from page 5*

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sport psychologist to provide quality information - that is, information that guides and directs players and staff, to help in making decisions which contribute to performance. They expect from a sport psychologist what I will refer to here as the "4 E's" --Effort, Enthusiasm, Execution and Evaluation.

Andy: How does a sport psychologist prove his/her value to players, coaches, and owners?

Charlie: By seeking to understand the sport, the players as people and performers, and the staff as people and leaders. By carefully and systematically determining the sport psychological strengths, needs and concerns of these individuals and teams. By recognizing and considering context. By being authentic, humble and respectful of the sport. By making adjustments in their work with players and staff, based on client reports and on documented performance. By shedding themselves of academic pomposity and related self serving demeanors.

Andy: If you were just starting in the sport psychology field, how would you interest potential coaches or owners?

Charlie: Based on the presumption that the novice has received the appropriate pre- and post-doctorate education, training and supervision, I would formulate an introductory sport psychology program template and discuss it with athletic directors and coaches at recreational, high school and college levels. I would seek to be humble, and I would link up with more experienced sport psychologists. I would formulate a business plan, including a continuum of services as is explicated and taught in GSAPP's Program Planning and Evaluation Course. Have professional fun; don't take yourself too seriously; let go of the conceptualized self.

Andy: What are some common mistakes novice sport psychologists make when trying to prove their value?

Charlie: Not paying their dues; expecting returns of service too quickly and in too high volume; not understanding sport-specific contexts; not planning and evaluating their programs and services; being pompous and other academic related orientations.

Andy: What specific talents, skills or abilities are coaches and players looking for in a sport psychologist?

Charlie: Honesty; practicality; understanding and respecting the sport; willing to be around; being an authentic individual; possessing knowledge and skill in relating to athletes; being confident in working with them and their players.

Andy: Charlie, what do you see as being the future value of having a sport psychologist involved with grade school and high school teams and athletes?

Charlie: If the professional focus is on developmental and educational needs of these kinds of athletic target populations and on relevant linguistic and cultural contexts, and on being willing to deliver customized programs and services based on documented needs and embedded in relevant contexts, then the response of clients to sport psychology services at these levels will be positive and worthwhile. If the focus is on pomposity and the pushing of product and persona, the response will be minimal, if at all.

Andy: Charlie, thanks for your thoughts, advice and honesty. ♦

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