

+MMPI-2 Long Term Stability and Reliability of Psychological Assessments

To: Rorschach\_List@yahoogroups.com

From: "Livingston, James" <j.livingston@pgsp.edu>

Date: Thu, 3 Jan 2008 09:58:41 -0800

Subject: FW: FW: [Rorschach\_List] query re long term reliability of psychological assessments. And from Roger Greene:

Jay

James Livingston, Ph.D. Associate Professor Pacific Graduate School of Psychology Palo Alto, CA

From: Rogermmpi2@aol.com [mailto:Rogermmpi2@aol.com]

Sent: Thu 1/3/2008 6:23 AM

To: Livingston, James

Subject: Re: FW: [Rorschach\_List] query re: long term reliability of psychological assessments.

Dear Jay:

There clearly is no stability of the MMPI-2 if the setting changes. In the same setting, there is remarkable little stability over 6-12 months. I cover this topic in my chapter in A. Goldstein (Ed.), Forensic psychology: Advanced topics. I have appended that section below. In the same setting as posed, I would think that annual evaluations would be needed. They also could quickly determine how much change occurs in their setting with as few as about 50 cases.

Roger

#### STABILITY OF PROFILES

There is limited empirical data that indicate how consistently examinees will obtain the same code type on two successive administrations of the MMPI-2. The research on the stability of the MMPI historically focused either upon the individual validity and clinical scales (cf. Graham, 2005; Greene, 2000) or group mean profiles (cf. Lichenstein & Bryan, 1966; Pauker, 1966; Warman & Hannum, 1965), which leaves unanswered whether code types have remained unchanged. Graham, Smith, and Schwartz (1986) have provided the only empirical data on the stability of MMPI code types for a large sample of psychiatric inpatients. They

reported 42.7 percent, 44.0 percent, and 27.7 percent agreement across an average interval of approximately three months for high-point, low-point, and two-point code types, respectively. Greene, Davis, and Morris (1993) examined MMPI code type stability for inpatient alcoholics. Approximately 40 percent of the men and 32 percent of the women obtained the same high-point scale on two successive administrations of the MMPI. However, these patients had the same code type only 12 and 13 percent of the time, respectively. It is even more interesting that almost 30 percent of these men and women had two different high-point scales when they took the MMPI on their second admission. For example, an examinee with a 4-9 code type on the first admission might have a 2-7 or 1-3 code type on the second admission. Thus, **it seems imperative that forensic psychologists restrict their MMPI-2 interpretations to a description of the examinee's current situation rather than trying to make long-term predictions based on a specific code type.**

Greene, Greenberg, Ackerman, Davis, and Frederick (2001) provided data on two successive administrations of the MMPI-2 in 63 examinees undergoing child-custody examinations and two samples of examinees (N = 1187 and 58) undergoing criminal examinations. There was slightly over an average of one year between the two administrations of the MMPI-2 in all of the samples. The specific MMPI-2 code types that were found within both the child-custody and criminal examinations varied broadly. A total of 17 different code types were found in the child-custody examinations and 49 in the criminal examinations out of a total of 55 potential two-point and spike code types. Thus, **there is no specific MMPI-2 code type that was limited to a single forensic setting. Rather, there appeared to be considerable diversity among these examinees that were undergoing forensic examinations.**

The same examinee was unlikely to produce the same MMPI-2 code type across two successive administrations in any of these forensic settings. The highest frequency of the same code type being found in the same examinee occurred in WNL profiles (47.6%) in both the child-custody examinations and the criminal examinations (7.6%). When the analysis is restricted to well-defined profiles, slightly less than one-half of the examinees had the same MMPI-2 code type on two successive administrations even though nearly 60% of the cases had been excluded. Frequently, these examinees produced very discrepant code types even within the same forensic setting. For example, one examinee who was being evaluated for allegations of sexual abuse in a family court case produced a Spike 4, Spike 5 (with Scale 4 at 52), and a WNL profile within a time span of slightly less than one year.

It appears that forensic psychologists need to be very cautious about making long-term or characterological interpretations from the single interpretation of the MMPI-2 in any forensic setting. *Instead the forensic psychologist should describe how this given MMPI-2 profile reflects the examinee's current circumstances.*