

Reviewing the Review Committee

By Bob Sheavly

(Ad lib. comments and group responses are indicated by a bar in the margin.)

Introduction

I like to begin by saying how honored I am to have been asked to be part of this panel.

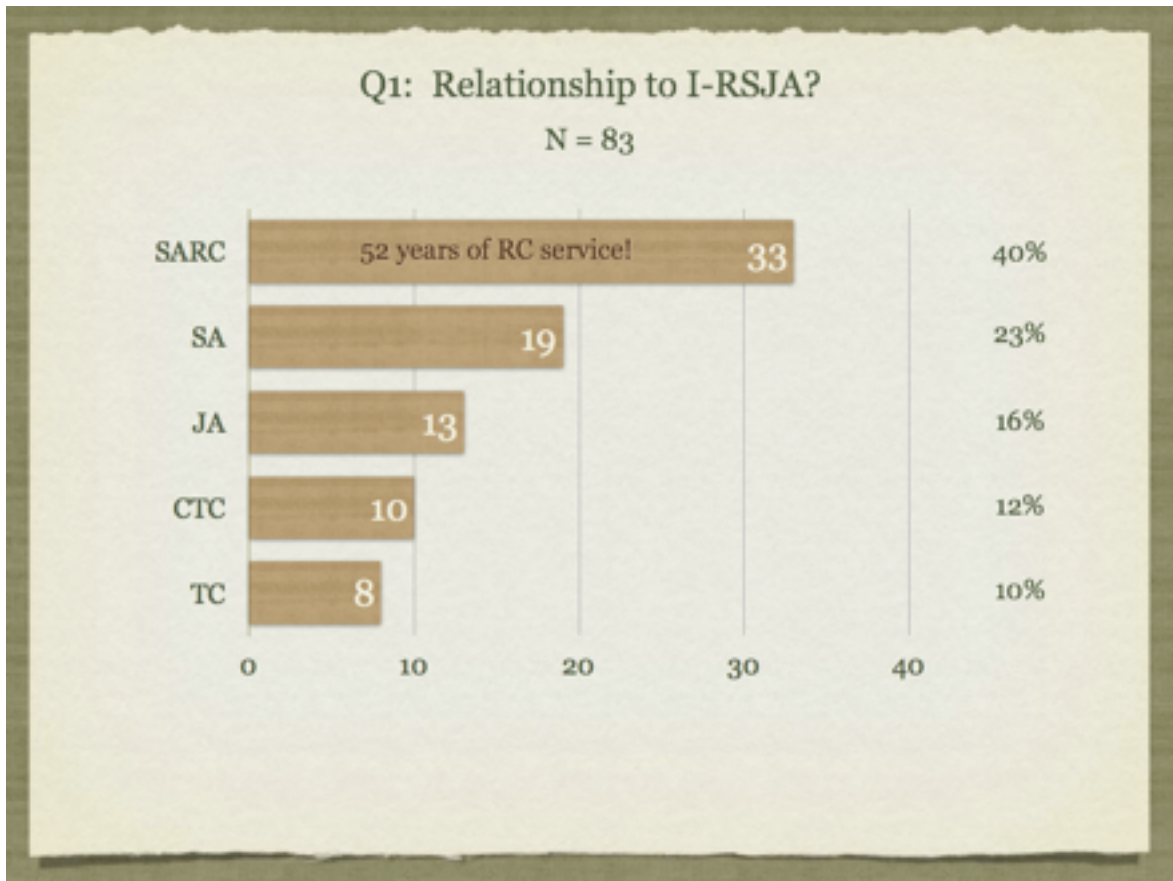
THANKS: To EC, Pat & Nancy for organizing our program. And to Jodi, Ron, Jeff and Jacqueline for SUCH thought provoking presentations yesterday.

When Nancy called to ask me if I would consider being on the panel, I initially felt terrified at the thought of presenting. However, I managed to hold my insecurity complex in abeyance and said, “yes” as she explained that the agenda for this meeting was being shaped to allow for in-depth consideration of the training issues raised by Don Kalshed in Boulder, as well as in response to the letter to the EC signed by several analysts, myself

included. As a junior analyst, close to my training experience, she felt my reflections on my own process might be helpful.

In the days after our conversation, it occurred to me, that in addition to my personal experiences of training, it might be helpful to conduct an informal survey of the membership to elicit the breath of experience regarding review committees within the IRSJA as a whole. In retrospect, I recognized that a small part of my motivation was to throw a sop to my insecurity complex. This initially unconscious motivation aside, once I reviewed the information generated by the survey, I found myself beholden to my complex. While I can certainly take credit for executing the survey, in retrospect, it is obvious that it served as a forum for the society to begin to express thoughts and feelings already “in the air.” I’d like to thank Nora, Steve and Mark for being a sounding board for the idea of a survey.

I had no idea that survey would be taken so seriously by the membership and generate what I consider to be an incredibly high response rate. Our meetings have recently been drawing approximately 110 participants. There were 83 respondents to the survey! This represents a response rate of approximately 75% of the recent typical meeting attendance.



Explain abbreviations:

Senior Analyst with RC experience

Senior Analyst

Junior Analyst

Control Candidate

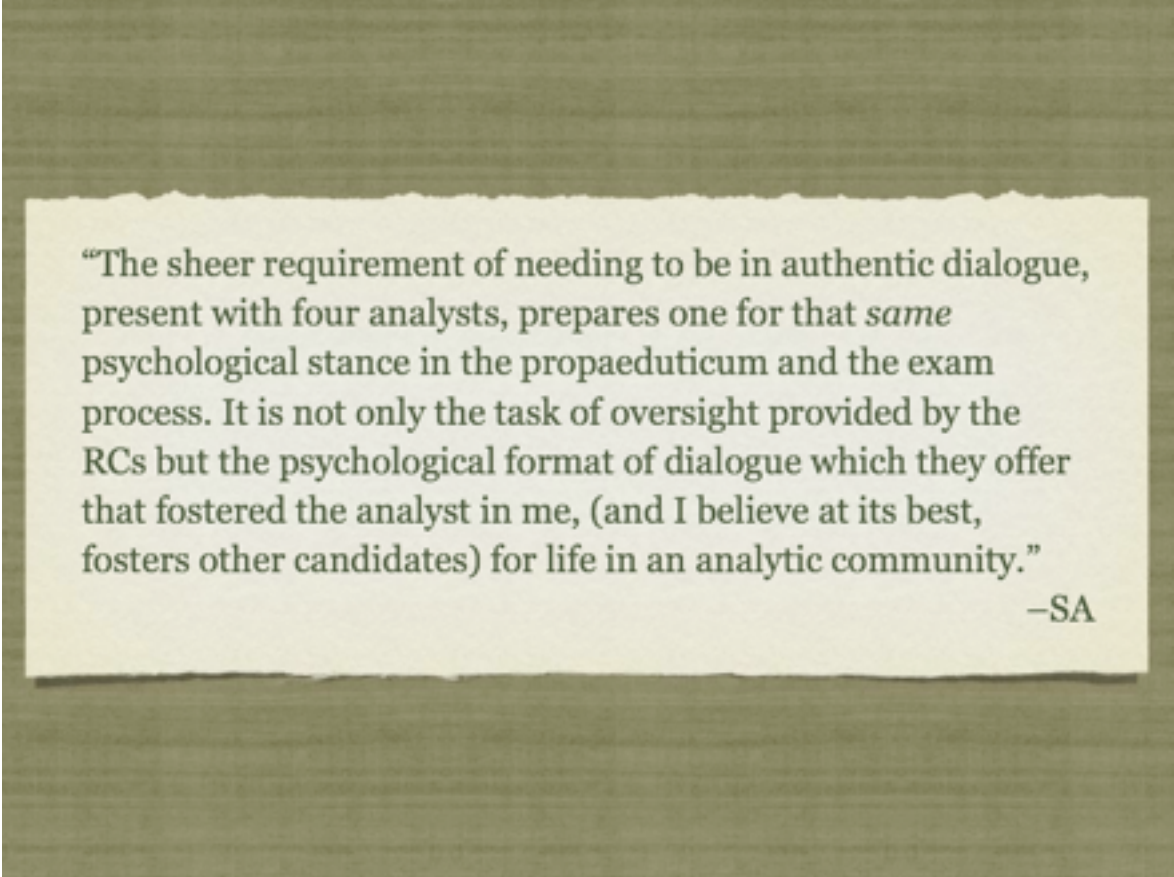
Training Candidate (pre control)

At this point I would like to quickly interject that I do not consider myself to be a researcher. I've had one graduate-level course on research methodology over 3 decades ago. Formulating testable hypotheses with independent and dependent variables and conducting statistical analysis —

if it ever was a part of my skill set —has been long since forgotten. I hold this as a **SURVEY** which has yielded valuable anecdotal data. I don't think anything therein "proves" anything.

This caveat aside, several themes clearly emerged when reading through the 12 1/2 pages of comments as well as the 2 page-long letters the survey generated. My intention, is to honor the invitation to talk about my personal experience of training while at the same time weaving-in the richness of your collective responses.

I want to say up front that **in toto** I had an invaluable RC experience. The words of one of the respondent reflects this aspect of my experience.



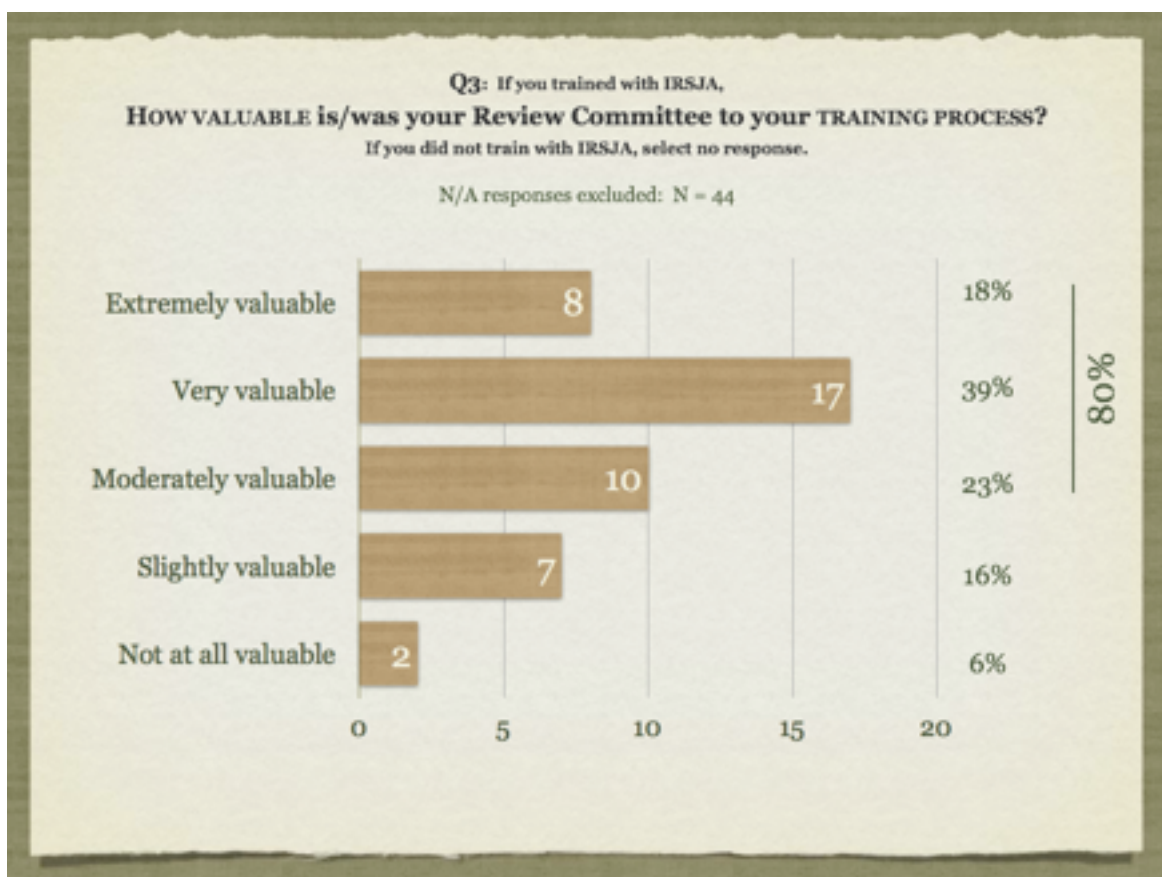
“The sheer requirement of needing to be in authentic dialogue, present with four analysts, prepares one for that *same* psychological stance in the propaedeuticum and the exam process. It is not only the task of oversight provided by the RCs but the psychological format of dialogue which they offer that fostered the analyst in me, (and I believe at its best, fosters other candidates) for life in an analytic community.”

—SA

By the time I reached control stage, I had the experience of **being** an analyst as I met with my committee. Our times together reassured me that I had achieved a level of professional maturity and confidence which was gratifying. I looked forward to meeting with them. I was comfortable with my process and I expected our time together would be generative. I felt a deep appreciation for their contribution to my professional development -- both in their openness and in the work required of them to be a review committee member. I was well aware of the sacrifice they were making on my behalf: they arrived a day -- or days -- early at meetings and gave of their

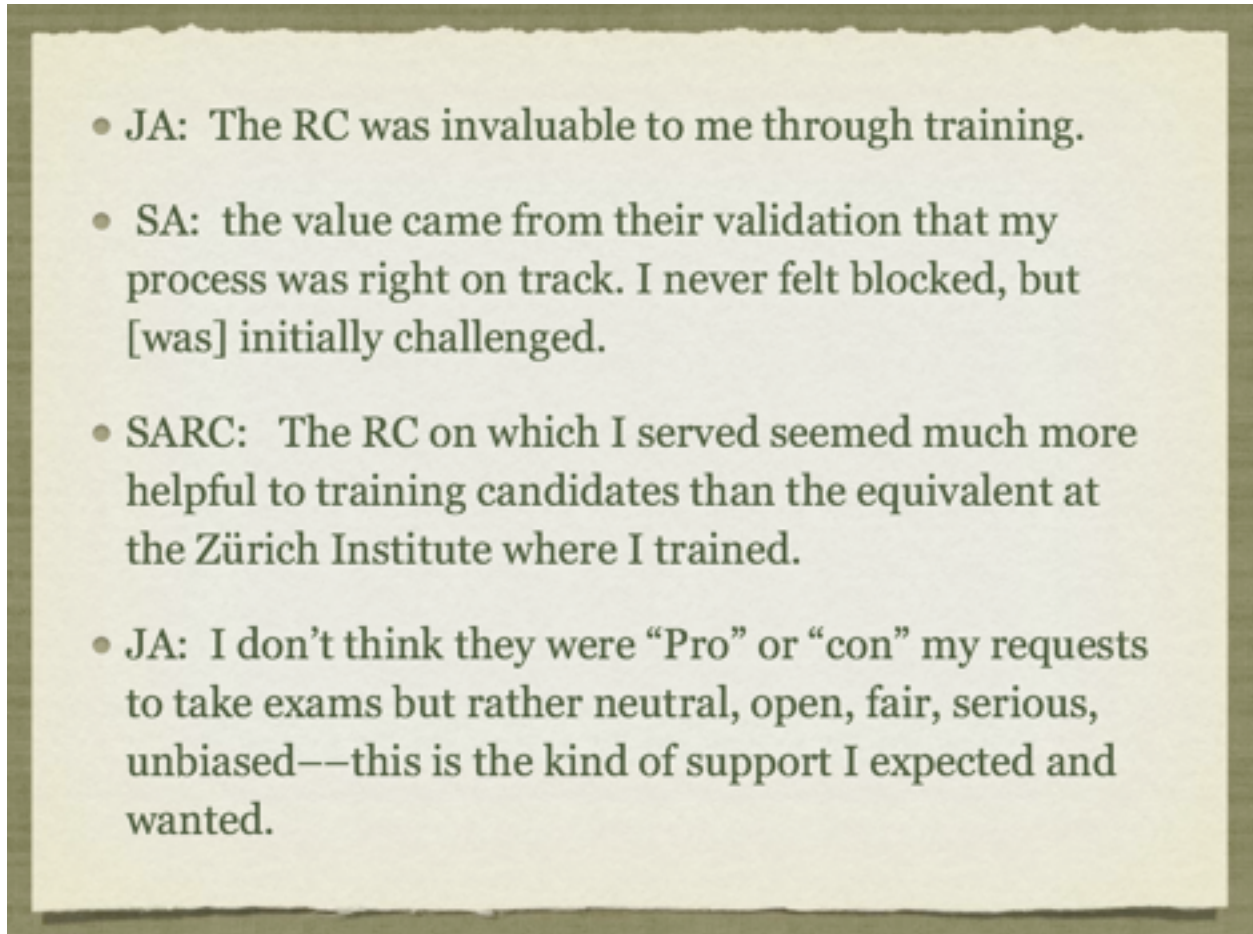
personal time, energy and money to spend spend long days thoughtfully speaking to candidates. Their commitment to my development and training process was unequivocal.

One clear theme in the survey was the value placed on review committee experience.



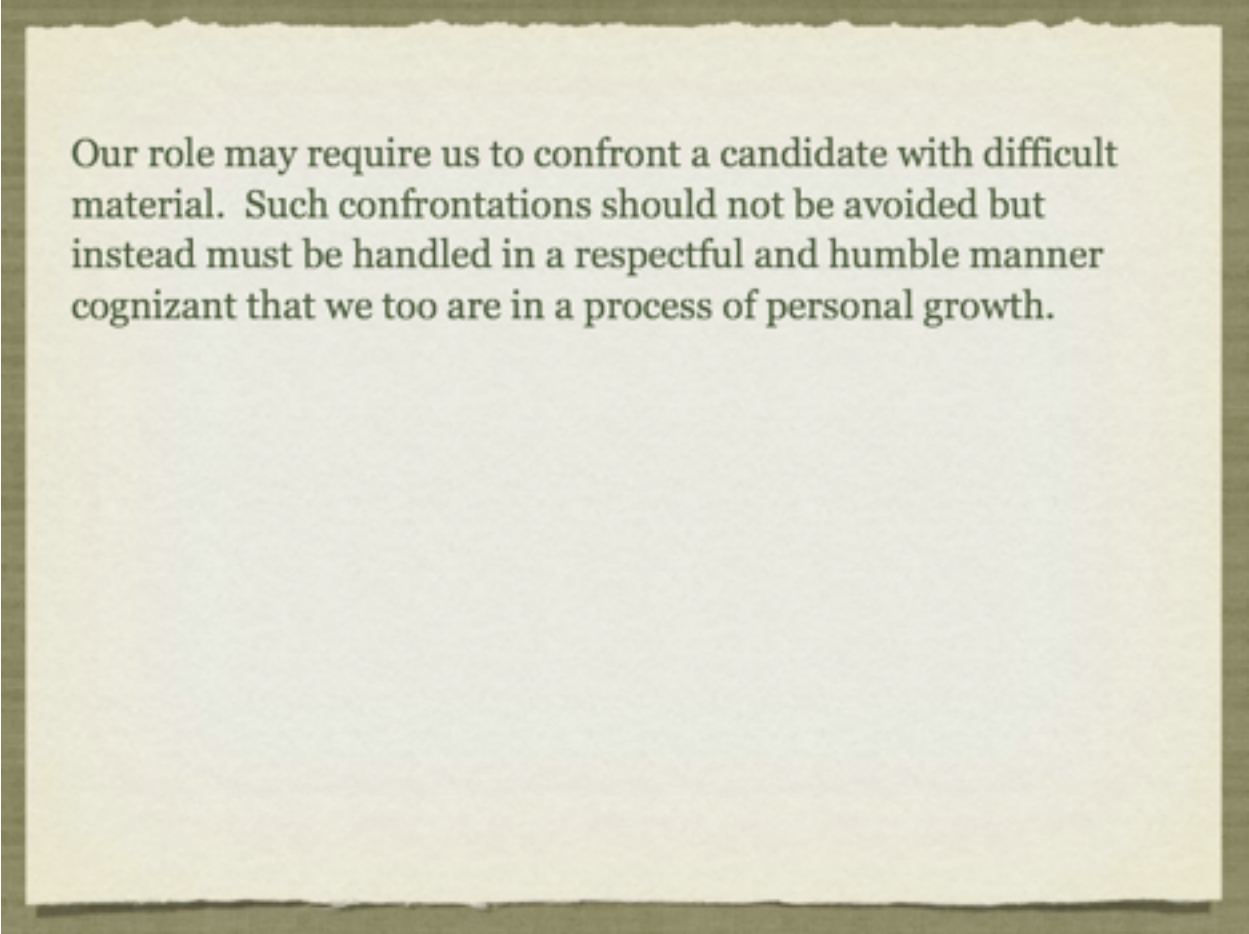
The Likert scale questions on the survey included a “not applicable” response. For these slides, those responses were omitted, so the “N” is different for each slide.

80% of the 44 respondents to this question felt their review committee was moderately to extremely valuable. Positive comments included

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- JA: The RC was invaluable to me through training.
 - SA: the value came from their validation that my process was right on track. I never felt blocked, but [was] initially challenged.
 - SARC: The RC on which I served seemed much more helpful to training candidates than the equivalent at the Zürich Institute where I trained.
 - JA: I don't think they were "Pro" or "con" my requests to take exams but rather neutral, open, fair, serious, unbiased--this is the kind of support I expected and wanted.

I was delighted to read the philosophy articulated by one RC chair who responded to the survey with a copy of her letter of invitation to new members:

The review committee's work is to promote psychological growth in ourselves and for the candidates by establishing a healthy dynamic that nurtures everyone's well being. I believe that a power-over relationship dynamic inhibits growth and development. I would like our work together and with the candidates, the training committee and the training seminars, to be based on mutuality, respect and reciprocity. The candidates are highly intelligent, motivated, adult professionals. Our job is to help them deal with whatever challenges confront them during the training process. We can guide them to become more conscious of the tasks presented to them, to ask what these tasks demand of them, what constellations of complexes come into play, how those complexes might be inhibiting or helping them, what the developmental task facing them is, and how all this relates to their individuation process.

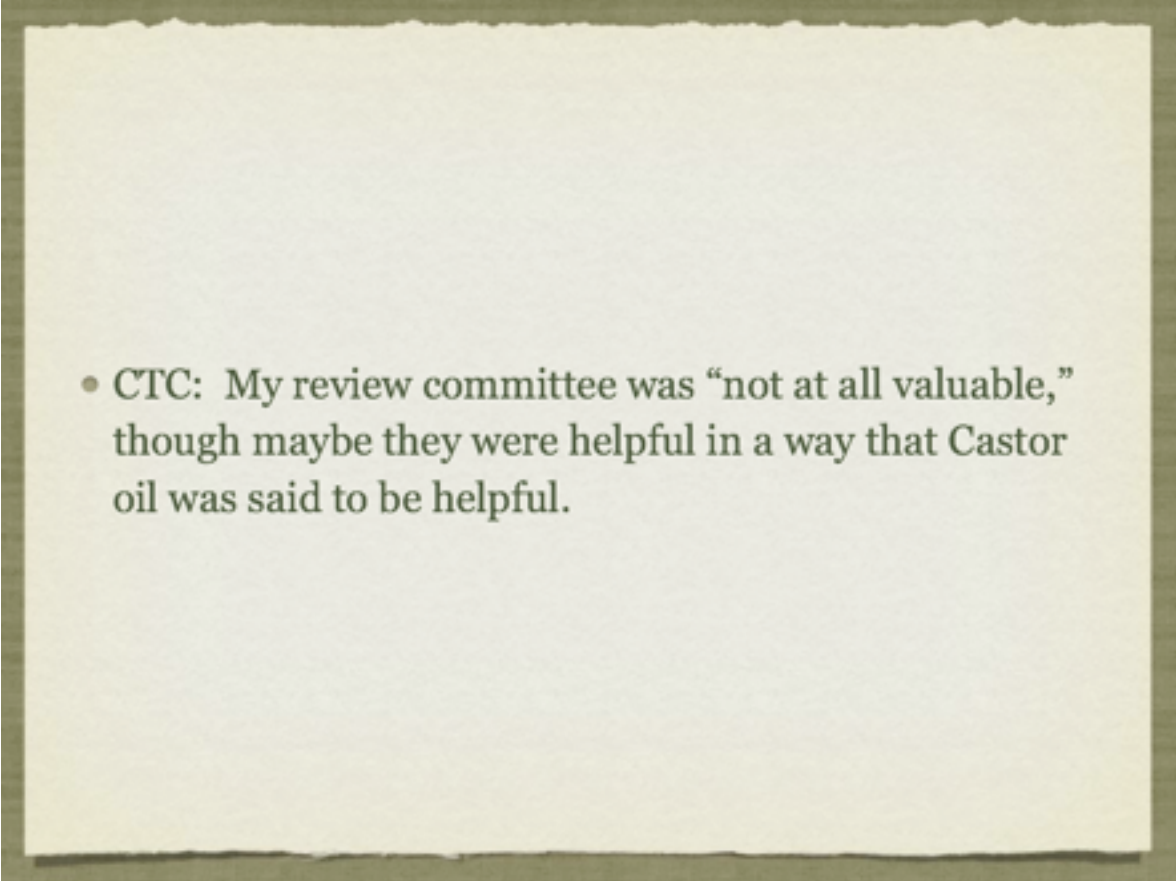


Our role may require us to confront a candidate with difficult material. Such confrontations should not be avoided but instead must be handled in a respectful and humble manner cognizant that we too are in a process of personal growth.

Of course, not all comments were praise, which is one reason we have entered into this dialogue as a community.

- JA: 90 minutes over the course of one year is not adequate for a committee of 3 or 4 to evaluate your status for moving forward in the training process. Nor is it acceptable for these individuals to be the standard-bearer for your psychological readiness. Review committees should be eliminated.
- SARC: Use a mentorship model!
- SA: Help candidate steer his/her own ship, but reflect back what you're seeing. Once you've admitted them, support them!

And, one of my favorites (laughter from group as they read slide)...

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- CTC: My review committee was “not at all valuable,” though maybe they were helpful in a way that Castor oil was said to be helpful.

I'd like Describe the one “castor oil” experience from my own training which provides a personal face to the themes we have been discussing:

- mentoring and initiation,
- power shadow,
- regression in service of the ego,
- withdrawal of parental projections and

- The function of the RC as **granting permission to proceed** in training versus the function as holding a reflective space and exploration for a candidate's own process.

I struggled with including this example. As it concerns not only myself but another analyst. I have no wish to be exposing of another. Asked group to hold material in same manner as would if it occurred in the analytic container. I emphasized that I was aware I was narrating MY REALITY of the experience, not THE reality: A tape recording of the occurrence might very well provide a very different version. Having said that, I do not recall having seen the analyst at any meeting since.

I asked to take the proppy at my 2nd review committee meeting. While this was the earliest date allowed by the training manual, I had been in the seminar 5 years before being accepted as a TC. I believe my request was turned down largely as a result of the interaction between myself and one of the new members on my committee.

The manner in which I had asked permission was interpreted by this analyst as meaning that I lacked "phallic thrust." This observation **did** have

merit—I had not been assertive in making the request. I was operating under the assumption that I had to “ask permission” which undoubtedly constellated my parental complexes. This was the first “request” to my committee and I was in doubt as to proper procedure: E.g. Should it be made by written correspondence to my committee chair or at the meeting itself.

As you might imagine, I found the analyst’s observations about my personality to be wounding and intrusive. I bit my tongue to keep from saying something along the lines of, “I’m very comfortable with my phallic thrust, thank you. But, as a new member of this committee, how comfortable are you with yours?”

Ad lib.: “Gosh it feels good to finally say that!” (Laughter from the group)

Given the power the committee had over my progress through training I did not take that risk. Over time, I did make meaning on the experience. The wounding invited revisiting territory familiar to me. As a gay man growing into adulthood in the largely homophobic society of the 60s and 70s, I had done my fair share of wrestling with the meaning of masculinity. I was quite

comfortable with my “thrust”. And — for that matter — my ability to hold the feminine principle as well.

I find the concept, that the object of training is the formation of the **professional** person, to be helpful in reflecting on this experience. Had the analyst’s interpretation been focused in this fashion, while hard to hear, I do not believe it would have been so wounding. Even during the meeting, I **was** able to acknowledge my request could have been more focused. I had assumed it might be a topic for dialogue rather than being presented as a request. But, I grew from experience. Three year later, when I asked my RC to move into control, my profession persona had strengthened so I was able to **gracefully** handle probing of my personal psychology in a manner I considered to be inappropriate (again by a new committee member).

| Some additional comments from the survey:

- SARC: Oversight that they are all operating with the same procedures and goals. My experience (from both being on one, and observing over the years how others operate) is that there is tremendous variation in what they think they're supposed to be doing, and how they handle their roles.
- JA: They did not know me but began to act like they did. As a result, they became part of an unconscious enactment; as a candidate I was not going to point that out to them I was concerned that they had the power to hold me back so I consciously chose to hold my tongue and not speak my own mind.

- JA: In my opinion, the review committee should NOT be getting in the way of candidates taking exams. They are not the initiators of the process. If they don't think the person is ready, they can say this, but allow the individual to make their own decisions.

CTC: My Review Committee was a revolving door. I spent A LOT of energy getting to know them and vice versa. I really did not feel like there was ever a stable relationship, much less a basis for making key evaluations. I don't think this process works well.

I'll end with a plea of support for the idea Ben mentioned yesterday.

I only passed 4 of my proppy examinations. The exam I did not pass was in the content area where I was most secure. In the 4 years prior to the exam, I had presented three, 10 hour-long courses in that subject for the local Jung society. I failed the exam not for lack of understanding but because complexes were constellated — both mine as well as in the examining analysts'. Consequently I had to wait a year to re-take the exam. I am absolutely clear that in this instance no "greater purpose" was served--psyche was not served--by adding another year to my training. A year in training costs \$15,000 to \$18,000. For the past 5 years, I have been emphatically saying I believe we MUST find a way to allow for proppy retake exams in the fall where only 1 or 2 exams were failed. This single change could have a hugh impact on strengthening our training.

Well, I wish I had a snappy conclusion. But, the truth is I simply ran out of energy so I'll just stop. Thank you again.

| Laughter