

**Sabbatical Proposal**  
**Jeanine M. Vivona**

**This file contains: 1) Sabbatical Application Cover Sheet, 2) Project Proposal with Appendix (reference list), 3) Annotated Professional CV, and 4) past Post-Sabbatical Report (Fall 2008 sabbatical)**

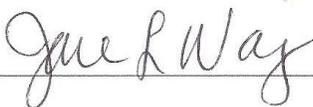
**Sabbatical Application Cover Sheet**

Name: Jeanine Vivona  
Email address: jvivona@tcnj.edu  
Department or Program: Psychology  
Title of Proposal: *Feeling, Action, Thought: Language in Psychoanalysis*  
Date: October 9, 2017  
Month and year of your first appointment at The College of New Jersey:  
August 1997  
Dates of your previous sabbatical leaves:  
Fall 2009  
Current Application is for:  
 Fall  
 Spring 2019  
 Either Fall or Spring  
 Full Academic Year

I have notified my dean and department chair (or program coordinator, as applicable) of my intention to apply for a sabbatical leave

  
Applicant (signature)

(I am dept. chair) Chairperson/Coordinator (signature)

  
Dean (signature)

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

**Description of proposed project:** I propose to complete my book, *Feeling, Action, Thought: Language in Psychoanalysis* with the requested one-semester sabbatical. My book integrates psychoanalytic theory, linguistic theory, and empirical research from a range of fields to present a psychoanalytic theory of language that is informed by current scientific knowledge and useful for clinical practice. Psychoanalysis is the 2<sup>nd</sup> most prevalent theoretical orientation of clinical psychologists in the U.S. Despite being a source of useful clinical theory and insights, psychoanalysis has remained relatively isolated from knowledge developed in other fields. Engagement with current knowledge from other disciplines is a stated priority of the American Psychoanalytic Association. Accordingly, and based on my prior work, I was invited to write this book by the editor of the *Psychoanalysis in a New Key* book series published by Routledge.

**Appropriateness for sabbatical:** I began working on the book in late 2010. To date, I have: conceptualized the content, format, and objectives of the book; developed the theoretical foundations of the argument; conducted much of the required review of primary (research) and secondary sources; drafted approximately one-third of the text; and completed several scholarly projects related to the content of the book: 3 journal articles, 1 edited special section, 5 paper presentations at peer-reviewed conferences, and 8 invited lectures to professional audiences. In Fall 2013 I agreed to serve as chair of the Psychology Department; the chair duties slowed my progress considerably. My term as chair ends in Summer 2018. A sabbatical in Spring 2019 will enable me to immerse myself fully in the writing process so that I can complete the book at last.

**Specific goals and objectives:** The overarching goals of my book are: 1) to update psychoanalytic theories of language and infant development in light of current research; and 2) to present a useful theory of language as a therapeutic modality in psychoanalytic therapies.

Psychoanalysis comprises theories of psychological development and therapeutic change. Regarding the former, psychoanalysis attends to ways in which early life experiences shape one's personality and functioning subsequently. Such theorizing must be grounded in an understanding of typical developmental processes. Yet the predominant psychoanalytic theorizing about infant development (i.e., Stern, 1985) rests on research conducted during and prior to the 1980s. This theorizing asserts that infancy is a period of nonverbal development (cf. Piaget, 1952), and that developments of the sense of self and the capacity for interpersonal relatedness begin in the absence of language.

Research is revolutionizing knowledge of infant capacities, yet most psychoanalysts remain unaware of this work. Regarding language development, research demonstrates that the 10 month old infant understands both the communicative intent inherent in speech (Csibra, 2010) and particular spoken words (Bergelson & Swingley, 2012, 2013). Thus, the capacity for language develops along with the sense of self and capacity for relatedness during the first year of life. This research has profound implications for understanding both infant development and lifelong modes of verbal relatedness, including those that fuel therapeutic action.

Relatedly, psychoanalysis is “the talking cure,” and speaking and listening are its primary therapeutic mechanisms. Yet psychoanalysis lacks a unifying theory of language as used in

therapy. Instead, the discipline comprises incomplete and conflicting theories, characterized by narrow and outdated views of language (Katz, 2013). A prevailing theory is that language as an abstract symbol system is inherently disconnected from lived experiences, such that verbal ways of being and knowing are separate from bodily and experiential ways of being and knowing (e.g., Bucci, 2007; Stern, 2010). Yet research in diverse fields suggests that language activates both abstract linguistic processes and experiential or embodied ones (e.g., Buccino et al., 2016). To give one example, when we hear or read words and sentences describing bodily actions, brain regions involved in *performing* the relevant actions are activated, suggesting that language is a site of both linguistic and embodied modes of knowing (e.g., Marino et al., 2017).

Bringing together a scientifically grounded understanding of infant language development and a contemporary view of language that has a place for multiple modes of meaning within the verbal realm, I present a theory of language that unites the disparate views within psychoanalysis and informs clinical practice. Specifically, I elaborate the potentials of language in three distinct realms: 1) *feeling* - to access feelings, perceptions, and multisensorial ways of being; 2) *action* - to get things done, especially interpersonally; and 3) *thought* - to use the symbols of language to think, reflect, interpret, categorize, etc. Language offers these potentials as well as ways to integrate these different modes of being. Indeed, it is through language that the mind connects to the body and the external world (Peirce, 1931).

My book comprises three sections, 11 chapters, and approximately 300 pages. Section I presents a detailed discussion of current research in infant language development, focusing on the processes by which the infant derives meaning from others' speech and learns words. The research shows that the infant understands words in speech through a combination of perception in the realm of *feeling* (the simultaneous sound of a word and sight of an object to which the word refers) and social cognition in the realms of *action* and *thought* (the understanding that speakers use words to refer to objects and to communicate with others). Thus, understanding words even in infancy mobilizes the three potentials of language. I have worked extensively on Section I, including conducting an exhaustive review of the voluminous current research; its four chapters will be fully drafted by the end of the current semester (Fall 2017).

Section II explores the infant's understanding of the parent's words within the parent-infant relationship. In particular, I examine research into parents' uses of speech: 1) to attune to their infants' ongoing feelings and experiences; 2) to address infants' attachment needs and wishes, using words as interpersonal action; and 3) to convey meanings of relational and emotional words (e.g., *happy*, *love*) as they relate to ongoing interactions. This examination reveals the ways in which the words of parental speech both participate in and come to represent the infant's interpersonal interactions in the modes of feeling, action, and thought.

My review of the research reveals that many useful studies examine parental speech as an ancillary variable, rather than as a primary focus; thus locating relevant studies requires some detective work. Moreover, there are currently no integrative reviews of the relevant research. I have already analyzed 15 research reports relevant to this section, and will complete the literature review by the end of Spring 2018. Because I have already developed many of the ideas for these chapters in prior published and presented works, writing the three chapters of this

section involves integrating the new research into my detailed outline and elaborating the clinical implications. These chapters will be drafted by the end of Fall 2018.

Section III explores research demonstrating the degree to which the language of adolescents and adults, like the language of infants, involves simultaneous activation of the realms of feeling, action, and thought. The behavioral and brain research demonstrates many ways in which language itself (e.g., the content and quality of each person's lexicon) and language processing (e.g., the effects of hearing and using speech on brain and body) involve these realms, as well as the ways these realms are activated during particular interpersonal and verbal tasks.

Previously, I completed a comprehensive review of a major portion of this research, and my prior writing on embodied language provides a starting point for this section. I have also published and presented papers exploring the clinical implications of the nature of language as embodied and connected to personal experience. The research literature in this area is more cohesive than that for Section II, but there are many conflicting findings to synthesize. Moreover, this research has expanded rapidly due to use of new technologies, particularly brain scanning methods; consequently, there is much new research to review. Thus, the primary task of my Fall 2018 student research team is to locate and synthesize the new research in this area.

## WORK PLAN

The main tasks of the sabbatical period are to draft the three chapters of Section III and the concluding chapter, revise all chapters as needed, and deliver the manuscript to the publisher. In addition to library access, the resources I require are time and a quiet place to think and write.

Writing is a slow process for me under any circumstances. The writing for this book has been particularly so. The research literatures are complex, vast, and expanding rapidly. Each section of the book considers findings of numerous fields, including cognitive science, linguistics, developmental psychology, and cognitive psychology; these fields have diverse methods and terminologies that I must understand and analyze. Yet in-depth analysis of primary research is a strength of this project, and of my work generally; more typically, psychoanalysts have drawn conclusions about research based on literature reviews and books written for a general audience.

Before I became department chair, I was completing the research and writing for approximately one chapter per semester. During my previous sabbatical (Fall 2008) I completed four manuscripts, which were in various states at the start of the sabbatical. Given the amount of work I will have completed prior to the sabbatical, I believe I can complete the remainder of the writing according to the schedule below.

## SCHEDULE with Sabbatical during Spring 2019

<b>January 2019</b>	draft Section III, 1 <sup>st</sup> chapter –the realm of <i>feeling</i>
<b>February</b>	draft Section III, 2 <sup>nd</sup> chapter – the realm of <i>action</i>
<b>March</b>	draft Section III, 3 <sup>rd</sup> chapter – the realm of <i>thought</i>
<b>April</b>	draft Conclusion – integration and clinical implications
<b>May</b>	revise Introduction in light of completed book
<b>June</b>	revise Section I (update research literature if necessary)

**July** revise Section II (update research literature if necessary)  
**August** finalize entire manuscript and deliver to publisher

## OUTCOMES AND VALUE

**Outcomes:** My book is under contract with Routledge, the world’s leading publisher of academic books and journals in the social sciences and humanities. The *Psychoanalysis in a New Key* series, of which the book will be a part, “creates a deliberate focus on innovative and unsettling clinical thinking” and “particularly encourages interdisciplinary studies.” Thus, it is an ideal outlet for my work. There are over 40 books in the series currently.

**Value:** If there are two types of scholars, I am the hedgehog type. With this book, I am burrowing ever deeper into the big thing I know about the importance of language in psychological development and in therapy. In this ambitious undertaking, I bring together, elaborate, and deepen ideas I have presented previously through my journal publications and professional presentations. The book provides me the space to present a more sophisticated and cogent argument than I have been able to do in the more restricted venues of journal publications. Moreover, a book allows me to reach psychoanalytic practitioners who do not regularly read professional journals; books remain a valued resource in psychoanalysis.

This book contributes to my field by addressing an identified disciplinary priority to engage with other disciplines in ways that both ground psychoanalysis in scientific knowledge and reduce its isolation from related fields (Levy, Ablon, & Kächele, 2012). In this book, as in my prior work, I attempt a sophisticated synthesis that is based in an extensive analysis of primary research and that respects both the value and the limits of the methods of different disciplines. Indeed, this work manifests a hallmark of my scholarly approach – deep engagement with the research literature with the aim of theory development. I am one of a small group of scholars conducting such work in psychoanalysis. In addition, this book points toward resolution of a disruptive controversy within psychoanalysis regarding the role of language in the therapeutic action of psychoanalytic therapies, thus offering resolution of conflicts that have dogged psychoanalysis since its inception (Katz, 2013; Stern, 2017).

Finally, this project enhances my teaching. In particular, the knowledge I gain through the process of writing this book enhances my teaching of the Psychology Senior Capstone course on the topic of Language, as well as the mentored research experiences I offer to students.

## APPLICANT QUALIFICATIONS

I have spent my career writing and speaking about language as a method of therapeutic action in psychotherapy. I have published many papers in the most respected journals in my field. My papers have appeared as lead articles, been the focus of special sections, won two best paper prizes, and are frequently cited by other scholars. I am often selected and invited to present my ideas to professional audiences. Even during my period of service as department chair (2013-2018) when my productivity was lowered by chair duties, I completed several scholarly works while also making progress on the book. Thus, my record of consistent, highly regarded scholarship combined with my specific expertise attests to my ability to complete this project.

## APPENDIX

### References

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