

# The Evolution of Personality Assessment in the 21st Century

Understanding the People who Understand People

Edited by Christopher J. Hopwood



“Hopwood has assembled a fascinating array of stories from personality assessment luminaries about their personal and professional shaping influences, their life- and career trajectories. In essence, these are gifts of generativity. This treasure chest of narratives will inspire future generations of personality assessors to find their visions and carve out their unique paths.”

—**Radhika Krishnamurthy, PsyD, ABAP;** *Clinical Psychology Professor, Florida Institute of Technology; Former President, Society for Personality Assessment*

“People who understand people know that scientists are not inert ingredients in their research. Chris Hopwood has curated a master list of the most accomplished and influential living personality assessment scientists and practitioners to share their professional journeys, which have left an indelible mark on the field. The result is a brightly illuminating volume that will be a must read for those who want to understand how we come to understand people.”

—**Aidan Wright, PhD;** *Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of Pittsburgh*



# Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

# The Evolution of Personality Assessment in the 21st Century

This edited volume provides readers with a deeper knowledge of the growth of personality assessment in North America over the past 40 years through the autobiographies of its most notable figures.

Experts provide insights into their professional backgrounds, training experiences, their contributions and approaches to personality assessment, their perceptions of current trends, and their predictions about the future of the field. Each chapter explores topics of deep significance to the writer, fluidly intertwining theory and personal narrative.

Beginning clinicians, scholars, and students will gain a better understanding of the major empirical advances that were made during the last generation regarding key questions about the nature of people, the structure of personality traits, and the connections between personality and mental health.

**Dr. Christopher J. Hopwood** is Professor of Personality Psychology at the University of Zürich. He is a fellow and former board member of the Society for Personality Assessment and Associate Editor of the *Journal of Personality Assessment* and the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.



# Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

# **The Evolution of Personality Assessment in the 21st Century**

Understanding the People who  
Understand People

**Edited by  
Christopher J. Hopwood**

Cover image: © Getty Images

First published 2022

by Routledge

605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

and by Routledge

4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

© 2022 Taylor & Francis

The right of Christopher Hopwood to be identified as the author of the editorial material, and of the authors for their individual chapters, has been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

*Trademark notice:* Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

A catalog record for this title has been requested

ISBN: 9780367477431 (hbk)

ISBN: 9780367477424 (pbk)

ISBN: 9781003036302 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003036302

Typeset in Bembo

by codeMantra

Access the Support Material: [www.routledge.com/9780367477431](http://www.routledge.com/9780367477431)

**I dedicate this book to the *Society for Personality  
Assessment*.**





# Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

# Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	xi
<i>List of Tables</i>	xiii
<i>About the Contributors</i>	xv
<b>1 Understanding People Who Understand People</b>	<b>1</b>
CHRISTOPHER J. HOPWOOD	
<b>2 The Development of Therapeutic Assessment: From Shame and Isolation to Connection and Love</b>	<b>12</b>
STEPHEN E. FINN	
<b>3 Personality: The Heart of the Matter</b>	<b>40</b>
DONNA S. BENDER	
<b>4 My Hobby: Listening for the MMPI's Questions</b>	<b>66</b>
DAVID S. NICHOLS	
<b>5 Personality Assessment Land</b>	<b>96</b>
ETY BERANT	
<b>6 The Sands of Identity Keep Shifting: Late-Life Career Developments</b>	<b>125</b>
IRVING B. WEINER	
<b>7 Reports of My Being an Extravert Are Greatly Exaggerated</b>	<b>133</b>
VIRGINIA M. BRABENDER	
<b>8 Thoughts from a Contrarian Generalist: A Roundabout Journey to Where I Am Now</b>	<b>152</b>
ROBERT F. BORNSTEIN	

<b>9</b>	<b>An Overdetermined Life in Psychoanalysis</b>	170
	NANCY McWILLIAMS	
<b>10</b>	<b>Influences and Inspirations</b>	193
	ROBERT P. ARCHER	
<b>11</b>	<b>It Takes a Village to Raise an MMPI Author</b>	218
	YOSSEF S. BEN-PORATH	
<b>12</b>	<b>A Long Life: Twists and Turns</b>	236
	PHEBE CRAMER	
<b>13</b>	<b>Thomas A. Widiger: Personality Assessment</b>	241
	THOMAS A. WIDIGER	
<b>14</b>	<b>Evolving Convictions through Dogged Pursuit of Answers and Large Dollops of Luck: My Piece in the World of Personality and Psychopathology Assessment</b>	260
	LEE ANNA CLARK	
<b>15</b>	<b>My Journey to Become a Clinical Psychologist</b>	293
	ROGER L. GREENE	
<b>16</b>	<b>From Stable Traits to Spinning Vectors: A Measurement Driven Journey</b>	312
	D.S. MOSKOWITZ	
<b>17</b>	<b>A Brief History of “Me”</b>	340
	LORNA SMITH BENJAMIN	
<b>18</b>	<b>The Numbers and the Story</b>	347
	LESLIE C. MOREY	
<b>19</b>	<b>Circle Songs and Sands of Time</b>	371
	AARON L. PINCUS	
	<i>Index</i>	401

# Figures

2.1	With Harley and Lefty in 2001	26
2.2	With the staff of the ECTA, Milan, 2015	31
2.3	With Jan Kamphuis and the staff of the ACTA, Tokyo, 2019	35
3.1	Donna in a poofy dance dress, circa 1964	43
3.2	Joseph and Donna surrender to the Dark Side	58
3.3	John, Joey, and Donna in the Austrian Alps	58
3.4	Donna still favors poofy dance dresses	62
4.1	Paul Meehl and Dave Nichols	79
4.2	Paul Costa, Jerry Wiggins, Dave Nichols, and Lew Goldberg	92
5.1	The author with John Exner and members of the Israeli Society in Sweden	99
5.2	The author with Irv Weiner, Nancy Kaser-Boyd, and friends	100
5.3	The author with Joni Mihura, Greg Meyer, and Joav Stien	101
7.1	The author teaching personality assessment	142
8.1	Me riding a horse, probably around age two. I cannot explain this picture—there are very few horses in New York City, and why my parents decided to perch me on one is a mystery	153
8.2	A photo from the late 1980s; Joe Masling and I were guests at John Auerbach's wedding in New Haven, CT	154
8.3	Attendees at the <i>Perception without Awareness</i> conference in March 1991. Front row: Anthony Marcel, Robert Bornstein, Joseph Masling, Paula Niedenthal, John Kihlstrom. Second row: Phil Merikle, John Bargh, Joel Weinberger, Larry Jacoby. Third row: Matthew Erdelyi, Thane Pittman, Howard Shevrin	155
8.4	With Ted Millon at the 2005 American Psychological Association conference in Washington, DC. With Ted's support I received the Division 12/American Psychological Foundation Millon Award for Excellence in Personality Research that year	158
8.5	One of many great evenings out with Mary. This photo is also from the 2005 APA conference; we were celebrating the Millon Award	161

8.6	With my students, Fallon Kane and Adam Natoli, at the 2016 Omicron Delta Kappa initiation ceremony at Adelphi University. Fallon and Adam nominated me for admission to ODK, and I was honored to be asked to speak at the event	162
8.7	Being asked to help draft the second edition of the <i>Psychodynamic Diagnostic Manual</i> was one of the highlights of my career. Here I am with several key contributors to PDM-2 at the 2015 International Psychoanalytic Congress in Boston. To my left is John O'Neil; to my right are Vittorio Lingiardi, Bob Gordon, and Bill MacGillavray	163
8.8	Celebrating with friends at a Society for Personality Assessment meeting: Joni Mihura, Bill Kinder, John Kurtz, and Radhika Krishnamurthy	165
8.9	In 2003 Mary and I co-authored <i>Healthy Dependency</i> , which was published by Newmarket Press (Bornstein & Languirand, 2003). The book was eventually translated into Korean, and into Simplified Mandarin Chinese (which is the cover art pictured here)	166
8.10	Letter to SPA members; June 12, 2016	167
9.1	The Author with her daughters	181
10.1	Overview of the MMPI-A-RF scales organized into three hierarchical levels	213
12.1	The author	240
14.1	Bart on the plane to a conference in Hawai'i	266
14.2	Bart and "friends" at a monthly "party"	267
14.3	Lee Anna at work rocking Erica	267
15.1	The author reading to toddlers	309
16.1	Social behavior inventory items	319
16.2	Relation between agency and communion	323
16.3	Patterns of within-person variability	324
16.4	Interpersonal grid	326
16.5	The author	333
18.1	The author's academic lineage	353
18.2	The author with Roger Blashfield and Harvey Skinner	356
18.3	The CLPS PIs: McGlashan, Morey, Skodol, Gunderson, and Shea	364
18.4	Morey with his academic progeny, Society for Personality Assessment; top, 2012; bottom, 2017	366
19.1	TOP—The agency and communion meta-framework; BOTTOM—Interpersonal Circumplex (Traits/Problems)	375
19.2	The interpersonal situation	387
19.3	The author	393

# Tables

10.1	Overview of the MMPI-A scales and subscales	206
10.2	MMPI-A-RF scale and descriptions	210
15.1	Running results	303
15.2	Workshops in 1998 and 2005	305
19.1	Aims and aspects of my approach to personality assessment	388



# Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

# About the Contributors

**Robert P. Archer** was the Frank Harrell Redwood Distinguished Professor and Director of Psychology, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, at the Eastern Virginia Medical School, Norfolk, Virginia and he is currently a member of the Bay Forensic Psychology group in Virginia. Dr. Archer is the author of numerous books, articles, and book chapters related to psychological assessment.

**Donna S. Bender** is a psychologist, psychoanalyst, and Director of Strategic Initiatives for the Division of Computer Science and Engineering, University of Michigan.

**Lorna Smith Benjamin** is an American psychologist best known for her innovative treatment of patients with personality disorders who have not responded to traditional therapies or medications.

**Yossef S. Ben-Porath** is a Professor of Psychology at Kent State University and is recognized internationally as a foremost expert on the MMPI instruments.

**Ety Berant** is the director of the clinic of the school of psychology. She received her PhD in psychology from Bar-Ilan University. During the years 2008–2010, she was the vice head of department of psychology in Bar-Ilan University. Ety is a senior clinical psychologist and a licensed supervisor in psychotherapy and personality assessment. She is the founder of the Israeli Rorschach association.

**Robert F. Bornstein** is a Professor at the Gordon F. Derner School of Psychology, Adelphi University.

**Virginia M. Brabender** currently works at the Institute for Graduate Clinical Psychology, Widener University. She is recognized as a Widener University Distinguished Professor (2017–2020). Virginia does research in Abnormal Psychology, Psychoanalysis, Ethics, Group Psychotherapy, and Psychological Assessment.

**Lee Anna Clark** is a Professor and William J. and Dorothy K. O'Neill Professor of Psychology in the Department of Psychology at the University of Notre Dame in Notre Dame, Indiana, USA.



**Phebe Cramer** was a clinical psychologist and Professor of Psychology, Emerita at Williams College. Best known for her research on defense mechanisms, body image, and narcissism, and for her creation of a manual for coding defense mechanisms for purposes of psychological testing and personality assessment.

**Stephen E. Finn** is the President and founder of the Center for Therapeutic Assessment, and is a licensed clinical psychologist in practice in Austin, Texas, USA.

**Roger L. Greene** is a Professor at Palo Alto University. He received the Bruno Klopfer Award in 2010. He worked on self-report measures of personality, particularly the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory.

**Christopher J. Hopwood** is a Professor of Personality Psychology at the University of Zürich.

**Nancy McWilliams** is a Visiting Full Professor at the Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology at Rutgers University. She has written on personality and psychotherapy. McWilliams is a psychoanalytic/dynamic author, teacher, supervisor, and therapist.

**Leslie C. Morey** is a Professor of Psychology at Texas A&M University. He received his PhD in Clinical Psychology from the University of Florida, and has served on the faculty at Vanderbilt University, Harvard Medical School, the Yale University School of Medicine, and the University of Tulsa.

**D. S. Moskowitz** is a Professor Emerita of McGill University. Her research concerns patterns of behavior and affect and the relation between behavior and affect across time and situations.

**David S. Nichols** is retired. Formerly Staff Psychologist, Oregon State Hospital, and Adjunct Professor, Pacific University.

**Aaron L. Pincus** is a Professor of Psychology at Pennsylvania State University.

**Irving B. Weiner** is an American psychologist and Past President of Division 12 of the American Psychological Association and Past President of the Society for Personality Assessment.

**Thomas A. Widiger** is an American clinical psychologist who researches the diagnosis and classification of psychopathology. He is a Fellow of the Association for Psychological Science, Editor of *Personality Disorders: Theory, Research, and Treatment*, and Co-Editor of the *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*.

# 1 Understanding People Who Understand People

*Christopher J. Hopwood*

When I was about ten years old, I spent one of the sleepless nights that have been common throughout my life generating a detailed description of one of my classmate's personalities. I still remember what I found interesting about him, and could more or less reproduce that description in the form of a psychological assessment report today. Until I was eight and my sister was born, I was an only child in a rural community so small that there were no other children my age, so I spent a lot of time alone. During much of that time, I would arrange GI Joe figures in such a way that they would play out 11 on 11 football games, and I would compile detailed statistics in meticulously organized notebooks. One particular fullback was remarkable for having zero variance in rushing attempts – he gained exactly eight yards on every carry. I had an extensive and meticulously organized collection of sports cards, magazines, and books; trivial details like Joe Morris' rushing yards in 1986 (1,516), Pedro Guerrero's home run total in 1987 (27), or Charles Barkley's rebounding average in 1988 (12.5) took up far too much space in my prepubescent memory bank. Only with hindsight is it obvious that these eccentricities foreshadowed my interest in personality assessment. At that time, I had no idea that a person could make a living doing these sorts of things.

If you take a sheep dog who has never seen sheep to a field with sheep in it, they will herd the sheep until they are exhausted, seemingly unable to care about or focus on anything else. I don't know what this is like on the inside, but from the outside they look like they are living the best version of themselves. In my view, the responsibility of the person with a liberal education is to find their sheep so that they can be the best version of themselves. My students sometimes feel ashamed for not having found their sheep yet, but that seems natural to me. It took me until my mid-20s to find mine. A few salient post-pubescent memories picked up the thread from those sports statistics, real and imagined. In high school, I found myself reading up on the content I felt was missing in class. As an undergraduate, I observed with curiosity and confusion the bored responses of other students to a class about Nietzsche, Hobbes, and Rousseau. When I was teaching overseas, I observed myself reading Freud and Sullivan when my roommates would come home late from a night at the bar. In

my master's program, I found myself at a reception enrapt by conversations about research design with the faculty, whereas many of my fellow students perseverated on how hard graduate school was. In each of these experiences, my peers' behaviors seemed really odd. The sheepdog doesn't notice their lather.

It was during that master's program that I read a chapter by Les Morey in which he said, more or less, that he had noticed with curiosity that he was one of the few students in his psychometrics class who found quantifying peoples' behavior with psychological tests exciting – everyone else somehow thought that was tedious. I thought: that's it! Like a good test item, he had captured my inner experience exactly. Personality assessment was my sheep. Now I just needed to find the people who were good at it. This book showcases some of those people, in their own words.

### **Some of the people who taught me how to understand people**

I used three main criteria to select authors. First and most important, the people I asked to contribute to this book have had a major impact on personality assessment science and practice.

Second, each of the authors have been influential within the *Society for Personality Assessment* (SPA), as board members, journal editors, award winners, keynote speakers, and/or presenters. SPA has been a home conference for my entire career. Early on, SPA was an encouraging environment where I could observe the masters in action. As I continued attending SPA and other meetings, I became aware of SPA's uniqueness in providing a forum for clinicians and researchers to interact. For this reason, SPA is singularly important for the integration of research and practice in personality assessment. But SPA also offers a highly personal experience of warmth, intellectual stimulation, compassion, and communion. I wanted this book to give the reader something like the experience of being at the conference because that is the best way I can think of to encourage people to be involved with and support personality assessment. My relatively small share of the proceeds from this book will be donated to SPA, as a modest gesture of gratitude.

Third, it was important for me to invite as many women as men. Women have comprised the majority of my fellow students, supervisors, and teachers, yet they are in the minority in the journals, books, and academic conference programs. This dynamic is multiply determined but the root cause is uncomplicated; several women spoke to their experiences of institutional sexism in this volume. In contrast, people of color and non-binary gender have played essentially no role in my training; I never had the opportunity to be supervised by a non-white, non-cis-gendered person. It is a shameful reality that people of color or non-binary gender

are rare in psychology training, in general. Recent meetings about this issue have made it clear that, within SPA, this is at least partly because of structural issues that make people from underrepresented groups feel alienated and unwelcome. These barriers to diversity contributed to a major limitation of my training and continue to reflect a profound problem for our profession and society. I am hopeful that SPA is beginning to do something about it.

Many people are not in this book but could have been, based on their impact on personality assessment and on my own development and career. This includes my internship supervisor Mark Blais, my personality assessment instructors Jim Roff and Doug Snyder, many excellent colleagues with whom I served in my role as an SPA board member, including Paul Arbisi, Ginger Calloway, Barton Evans, Ron Ganellan, Giselle Hass, Steve Huprich, Jan Kamphuis, Nancy Kaser-Boyd, Radhika Krishnamurthy, John McNulty, Greg Meyer, Joni Mihura, Carol Overton, Piero Porcelli, John Porcerelli, David Streiner, and Jed Yalof, and many, many others. I must also mention Bob Erard and Bruce Smith, both of whom we lost too soon.

That said, this a fairly representative and extraordinarily impressive sample of people who have spent the last few decades trying to understand people. By way of introduction, I presently share some brief anecdotes that I hope communicate the essence of their impact on me and on the field.

### ***Stephen Finn***

I cry often and often enjoy it. I am usually more likely to remember the things that happen to me when I cry because they meant something important to me at the time. A few people can reliably make me cry: Aretha Franklin, Carl Rogers, Lauryn Hill, and Fred (Mr.) Rogers. The only person I know personally who reliably makes me cry is Steve Finn. I think that has to do with the same inner essence – a kind of authenticity that resonates deeply with people – that has made Steve’s work so impactful. People who know him or read his enclosed chapter will know what I mean, even if they don’t cry as easily as I do.

### ***Donna Bender***

Donna Bender is the foremother of the Levels of Personality Functioning Scale (LPFS), which serves as Criterion A of the Alternative Model of Personality Disorders. The LPFS not only accounts for the covariation among different PDs but also provides clinicians a vehicle with which to be curious about their patients, including their strengths, capacities, and inner experiences as social beings. Donna has emphasized this latter point in a number of places, including the enclosed chapter. But I want to set the

record straight; I didn't invite her to contribute only because of influential work on the LPFS. I have come away from my handful of encounters with Donna with the sense that she is one of those people whose path I wished to have crossed more often. She enlivens her environment, wherever she goes, by being herself. This quality enabled her to breathe life into the *DSM-5*, and inspires courage to follow one's heart.

### ***David Nichols***

During my first SPA board meeting, as a graduate student representative, the board learned that a new contract with the publisher of the *Journal of Personality Assessment* (JPA) had left the society poised for a fairly dramatic revenue increase. The suggestion was raised, at first as a kind of jest that became, briefly, a serious consideration, that we might want to increase our reimbursement for the previous night's dinner in light of this revelation. Dave Nichols said plainly and sternly that he wouldn't go along – we had ordered the previous night with a particular arrangement in mind and the right thing to do was to stick to that. Everyone immediately knew that he was right. Even a brief brush with Dave's work shows that he is kind and sharp and has a way with words, but his serious and abiding concern for the difference between right and wrong as he sees it is the quality that stands out for people who know him.

### ***Ety Berant***

Reading Ety Berant's chapter, an idea crystalized that had been in the back of my mind the last few times I have met with one of the students I described above, who feel ashamed about not having yet found their sheep. These students often have the narrow focus of racehorses with cheekpieces that concerns me – they want to be psychotherapists of a particular kind, in a particular setting, and with a particular degree, and don't want to think about other possibilities. I get the impression that they want to narrow down the type of program to apply to so as to reduce information overload, and they want me to justify this kind of narrowing, help them do it, and give them the formula for how to succeed therein. A wish surges within me to slow the conversation down, and a fear emerges that anything I might say will be taken too seriously. Contrast this constricted feeling with how I felt after reading Ety's chapter: a kind of calm, warm admiration. Ety strikes me as wise in a way that I would like to be with these students. She has had diverse and multilayered career and life, with a mix of responsibilities related to practice, clinic administration, research, and training. These roles have been synergistically woven together into a coherent gestalt, balanced against her personal priorities. Ety sets an example of how to live a life so as to achieve what many of my students hope for.

### ***Irving Weiner***

Irv Weiner is the only person in this book who has already written an autobiography. But how could I not ask him? At SPA, he is like the patron saint and guardian angel, the keeper of the history and peak of the pile. He has been the person that the people I look up to look up to since I began coming to SPA. When Irv speaks people listen, and that gives him space to speak softly and slowly. As one develops, these pedestaled people tend to come down to earth. But in Irv's case, the aura persists for me, and in my observation of the social dynamics of SPA, it seems to persist for everyone else, too. Irv documents in this chapter, in his understated way, the impact he has had on mental health research, training, and practice, which has reached well beyond personality assessment and SPA. The winding path of Irv's illustrious career would be nearly impossible to replicate. But this presence seems tied to something more universal, the essence of a revered person, whose legacy has been to leave the many things they have touched better off than before.

### ***Virginia Brabender***

Virginia Brabender uses English real good. You might think, if you read her work but had not heard her speak, that she writes in her decorative way for effect, thesaurus by her side. But in fact, she makes English sound good all the time. Indeed, I have never personally known a North American who can flourish as well as she can. I get a similar experience when Virginia writes or talks as I do from people like Toni Morrison or Christopher Hitchens. There were times when Virginia and I served on the SPA board together, that I thought she could charm us all (well me, at least) into nearly anything with one of her stirring soliloquys. The incredible thing to me was that these were contemporaneous. They seemed written in advance, but in point of fact her linguistic swirls and ribbons are just cuts from the fabric of her lovely personality.

### ***Robert Bornstein***

Bob Bornstein is one of the most distinctive and interesting people I know. His application of process dissociation to personality assessment is among the most important ideas in the last few decades in the field of personality assessment. It provides a principled, empirical, and profound vision for how to get us out of the horse-race model of test comparison to a more nuanced and sophisticated way of thinking about psychological assessment. It is embedded not only in his thorough knowledge of psychometrics, certain tests, and constructs like dependency, but also a much deeper theoretical foundation that can be linked, in his capable hands, with the work of Heisenberg, Kandinsky, and Rorschach. He is extraordinarily interesting

to talk to, and I have been lucky to have the opportunity to do so fairly regularly over Manhattans at SPA, and more recently over the phone. It is sort of unusual to find an intellectual giant who is also a modest and charming person, with good taste in life partners, music, and cocktails. What more could a person want in a friend and colleague?

### ***Nancy McWilliams***

Nancy McWilliams is the only author of this book with whom I have not interacted personally, and thus her influence on me has been entirely indirect. But I'm not the only one: she is perhaps the most impactful personality assessment teacher – from the perspective of metrics like book sales – of her generation. I knew from reading her books that Nancy is a good writer, and holy moly, please see below. Her capacity to write elegantly about deeply painful experiences, to express strong feelings or controversial positions with warmth and sensitivity, and to build momentum to highly memorable lines, is breathtaking. Nancy's chapter exemplifies how to reflect on how one's own psychology impacts the way one thinks about the psychology of others. I was left wishing I could have gotten to know her better.

### ***Robert Archer***

Bob Archer was one of the SPA presidents during the time I was on the board. For reasons of confidentiality and tact, I cannot give all of the specific reasons that I admire him. But suffice to say that there was a lot going on while he was president. The thing I admired about Bob was that he kept the ship steadily steered in the right direction – a skill he has presumably mastered while sailing on the actual sea. There were several times I saw him gracefully take lumps that rightfully belonged to others, for the sake of the society. He was always good humored and serious, measured and thoughtful. I thought to myself, if by some great mistake some poorly informed group of people ever entrust me with the responsibility for something as important as SPA, Bob would be my role model for how to conduct myself.

### ***Yossef Ben-Porath***

Yossi Ben-Porath was the first person featured in this book whom I met in person. It was in Hawaii, at the *American Psychological Association* session in which I presented my first poster (on my master's thesis, having to do with the reliability of scoring the WAIS-IV). He encouraged me to submit the paper to *Assessment*, where he was an editor, and where the paper was ultimately published. I was naturally awestruck, and shocked that he would find this level of value in my work. I was struck in reading his chapter that

he had had an experience similar to mine as a child informally assessing his classmates' personalities. I suppose our futures seem to have a funny way of revealing themselves, if we listen closely enough. Yossi has been one of the most programmatic and influential scholars in applied personality assessment as researcher, mentor of an impressive number of influential scholars, editor, and workshopper during the last few decades. His career exemplifies the payoff of sticking to a good plan.

### ***Phebe Cramer***

Nothing to see here, no big deal, just a world war and rationed shoes, a childhood cross-country trek, a world record in swimming, some trail-blazing within some of the pillars of male-only academia. Just the most influential scholar of her generation on defense mechanisms and narrative assessment – in her *second* career. Phebe's understated approach to her autobiography belies a career and a life that is so extraordinary that I cannot imagine it being replicated. I admit to feeling some level of intimidation when having interacted with Phebe at SPA but insist that it is because of my great admiration for her work and her life. I am very sorry that, because Phebe passed away shortly after contributing this chapter, that I will miss out on future such interactions.

### ***Thomas Widiger***

Tom Widiger's highly influential program of research has arguably done more to promote personality assessment in clinical practice than that of any other person of his generation. He has developed a variety of tests, edited a number of influential books and journals, published an astonishing number of empirical articles, and trained a broad network of highly influential personality assessors. But what I admire most about Tom is that he is both a dogged and tenacious promoter of his beloved five-factor model of personality traits and disorders, and also an open-minded, self-critical, and highly genial editor, mentor, and colleague. In a world in which many people believe in dialectics until it is their turn, Tom's ability to keep different agendas in his head at the same time is, like his career, extraordinary and distinguished.

### ***Lee Anna Clark***

If I could have chosen the president in last year's US election, my choice would have been Lee Anna Clark. There seem to be no limits to her wisdom, generativity, attention to detail, and, apparently, time. Along with Tom, Lee Anna has been one of the most productive and impactful scholars of her generation, including being the only person to serve on both the DSM and ICD personality disorder committees, which have



revolutionized personality disorder diagnosis. But she also somehow finds time to promote the careers of people like me in ways that are unusually time consuming. Lee Anna, one of the most principled people I have ever met, taught me and many others how to conduct oneself in a professional setting. She has also given me some of the most helpful and specific advice I have received, about how to frame one's work, how to prioritize tasks, how to draft a recommendation letter, and how to be sure to drink one glass of water for every glass of alcohol at conferences. Personality assessors should feel lucky she didn't go into politics (yet).

### ***Roger Greene***

At one of my first SPA meetings, Roger Greene gave a presentation that caused a bit of a stir. He said something like, the next generation of personality assessors are not going to be asking their clients to answer long lists of true-false or multiple-choice questions. I guess the hubbub was about the fact that this was coming from an MMPI guru, and it sort of signaled a revolution from the inside, which could have perhaps been interpreted as a kind of treason. At that time, I was cutting my teeth on the ins and outs of the PAI, which is also, from the perspective of the respondent, a long list of questions. But what Roger had said seemed perfectly natural, albeit prescient, to me. Even then, I had the sense that we could do better, and that using different kinds of methods, and in particular passively assessing people repeatedly in their actual lives, was the future of personality assessment. I have never forgotten that moment, in the first instance because it gave a narrative to the direction in which I felt we ought to be pushing ourselves, and because the reaction among the people I spoke to afterwards surprised me. As you can read below, Roger is full of surprises – and on that particular point, I am completely confident that time will prove him right, even if it might take a little longer than he or I had hoped back then.

### ***D.S. Moskowitz***

Why do I say that time will prove Roger right? Because the most exciting thing happening in personality assessment research is the study of personality dynamics. How do people change from one situation to the next, and what kinds of things affect those changes? How can you distinguish people based on their patterns of changes across situations? It is difficult to find an issue of a leading assessment, personality, or psychopathology journal that doesn't include some form of dynamic personality assessment (one hopes that we will soon say the same about clinical assessment batteries). Debbie Moskowitz was the pioneer of these techniques. Her chapter illustrates the incisive thinking style that has powered the revolution. It also highlights vividly the context of sexism in which these ideas were colored, but thankfully not fully constrained. It is astonishing and absurd that a person

like D.S. Moskowitz would go six years without a proper position, or a career without a gendered name. It is a testament to Debbie's sustained attention and methodical approach that her work has been, nevertheless, transformative and groundbreaking.

### ***Lorna Smith Benjamin***

Lorna Smith Benjamin lives her life a few steps ahead of everyone else. Or, at least, you feel behind when you are with her, or when you read the things she has written. I experience her as a kind of archetype of the kind of woman one had to be to survive 20th-century academia. Imagine: a woman working in Harlow's lab with expertise in mathematics and computer science, shut out of the standard opportunities by sexism, births one of the most elegant and sophisticated evidence-based models of human behavior on the market, translates it to a fully integrated mental health care system that focuses in particular on the most difficult patients, and applies it directly to treat these most difficult patients and to train students. Her blend of tough, sensitive, and smart generates one of the most disquieting interpersonal experiences one can have, and I am enormously lucky to have had it. One can learn from Lorna to pay attention to everything with a critical eye because the patterns are there if you look hard enough.

### ***Leslie Morey***

I am not sure if I knew I should be Les' doctoral student when I read his work in my master's program and had the uncanny impression that we were cut from the same cloth, or whether it was when I first saw him on stage playing bass to ACDC's "You shook me all night long," or whether it was during my interview with him when we spent a half an hour talking about the limitations of coefficient alpha that felt like half a minute. What I know for sure is that he was the perfect mentor for me, and he will always be the person in psychology I look up to the most; it is deeply ironic that what I learned from Les, the master of measurement, seems to me immeasurable.

### ***Aaron Pincus***

In graduate school, I struggled to integrate what I was learning in classes, my own research, and my clinical work. I was looking for a way to integrate assessment data, theories of psychopathology and intervention, and my experience of interacting with patients. I wanted a system that gave me reliable heuristics for what to do, and when, and also what not to do, during my actual interactions in the consulting room. Then I read the single most formative paper I have ever read: a chapter by Aaron Pincus on Contemporary Integrative Interpersonal Theory. It offered just the kind

of model I was looking for – it was evidence-based, theoretically rich, experience near, and specific. I set out to meet him soon after reading it, and that turned out to be one of the turning points of my career, one of the great privileges of which has been to have Aaron as informal mentee, collaborator, and friend.

### **My hope for this book**

That meeting with Aaron occurred at the *Society for Interpersonal Theory and Research*. At the same meeting, Steve Strack presented a newly published book of autobiographies by eminent personality assessors, which collated papers that had been previously published in JPA. That book had an intense influence on me. I read it front to back on the flight home and have read several of the chapters several times since. At that point, I was familiar with the work of all of the authors, but that book revealed a more personal perspective, and helped me see that the theories and research that I had been vigorously digesting came from *people*. Actual people who, on some level, were like me. They had their own motives and backgrounds, strengths and weaknesses, penetrating insights, and blind spots. I found particular interest in the way these authors approached the task. Some of the chapters were agentic, focused on their scientific impact in a way that was even, in some cases, self-congratulatory, bitter, or diminishing of others. Others were communal, with little mention of accomplishment but significant attention to the relationships the author had developed over their careers, and their gratitude for having been a part of the profession, sometimes in a way that was a little diminishing of their own contributions. Some were somewhere in between.

The opportunity to understand these people, who had themselves been pioneers in the science and practice of understanding people, was fascinating to me. I understood why everyone loved Paul Lerner and Len Handler so much. Jane Loevinger offered me a glimpse of what it must have been like to be a woman academic in the middle of the 20th century. I appreciated why an expression of interest in your work from Jack Block provoked fear rather than pride. I realized how fun it would have been to hang out socially with Marv Zuckerman, or to sit in on a lecture by Ted Millon. That book shaped the way I thought about the profession and my goals within it. I was moved and inspired.

As I say in the abstract, my motives for the current book were largely selfish. I wanted to read the personal stories of the people who had influenced me, both personally and professionally. I wanted to see what they would focus on and how they would approach the task because I wanted to think about how their approach and their lives provide texture to their influential scholarly work. I wanted, in some sense, to replicate my experience of having read that earlier book of autobiographies, but this time with people by whom I had been more directly influenced. As before,

I was moved and inspired, and I am very grateful to the authors of this volume for having taken me up on my invitation.

But I also hoped that this book would stimulate young scholars who are in a position similar to my own, a decade and half ago, and that it would provide a historical document of value to future scholars interested in interpreting the work of these authors in a fuller context. With this goal in mind, I asked each of the authors to discuss three things: (a) personal and professional aspects of their life and career, (b) their approach to personality assessment, and (c) how their own personality and experiences have contributed to that approach. I invited them to address these topics in any order and proportion they see fit, and to include other topics as well if they wished. The idea, not unfamiliar to personality assessors, was to provide a standardized task within which the authors could show who they really are and how they are different from others, using both the content and the process of their response.

As I read through the chapters, I was struck by the subtle differences in content, such as the emphasis on agentic vs. communal themes, professional vs. personal focus, and the nature and contents of the reference section. But differences in process were even more striking: the degree to which people hewed closely vs. deviated from my request the arrangement of headings, the use of various kinds of humor, or the degree to which the prose was colorful or straightforward. Each chapter spurred a slightly different feeling for me, which was, of course, highly textured by my own experiences, personal and professional, of each of the contributors. Even if this project had not been completed during a pandemic that saw the cancellation of one SPA meeting and an online version of another, reading these chapters would have been a highly sentimental experience for me. I hope you enjoy reading them as much as I did.

## 2 The Development of Therapeutic Assessment

### From Shame and Isolation to Connection and Love<sup>1</sup>

*Stephen E. Finn*

#### **Early years and challenges**

I was born on January 8, 1956 to Edward Finn (age 33) and Dawne (age 24) Merrill Finn, who lived in Canastota, New York—a largely Italian Catholic village 25 miles east of Syracuse. From what I have pieced together, my parents had been in love when they married three years earlier, but by the time I arrived their relationship was already on a downslide. My father had Bipolar Disorder—undiagnosed at the time and rampant in his Irish-Catholic family—and I believe my mother married him while he was in a hypomanic period: charming, romantic, energetic, and promising her the moon. My mother was a quieter, insecure, anxious woman, and although it soon became apparent that my father had promised more than he could deliver, she did not have the self-confidence to leave and became depressed and withdrawn.

Fortunately, before I started school, often my father would take me to my maternal grandmother's house on his way to work in Syracuse, giving my mother a break and me a safe haven. Grandma Jessie was a nurturing presence, and she and I had a special relationship. I was a sensitive boy who loved animals. We couldn't afford to have pets; thus, I befriended all the dogs in the neighborhood and spent hours playing with them. Apparently, when I was four, my father took my sister and me to visit a friend who lived on a farm, and I got to ride my first horse. I'm told they had a hard time getting me to leave, and that afterwards I resolved to save every piece of money that came my way to purchase my own horse. Eventually, my mother explained that even if I could buy a horse, we couldn't afford to keep one. I'm told that I cried for days.

My parents, and especially my father, didn't know how to handle my sensitivity, and I was called a "cry baby" because I didn't like rough-and-tumble play or loud noises and would often break into tears. I also remember happy times as a small child. My father loved nature and novelty and one time he took my sister and me on an excursion to the Catskill Game Farm, an outdoor zoo four hours from us where we fed baby deer and giraffes. My mother loved to sing and taught my sister and me a series of rounds, including one in French (*Frère Jacques*) that I can sing to this

day. My mother had studied French in high school and she would teach me what she could remember. Also, her father, my grandfather George, learned a number of different languages, including French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Russian, and Chinese. I was fascinated and would ask him to teach me words in the different languages. Unfortunately, he died when I was 12 years old. I would like to have known him better.

### **Elementary school**

I was delighted when I was enrolled in half-day kindergarten at age 5, and I would come home and regale my mother with all that had happened during the morning. Sometimes I would embellish the stories to try to get her to smile; at other times I would come home and find her still in bed, depressed. I think it was around first grade that school became a refuge for me. I was an excellent student, and teachers generally liked me and would give me special projects to do. Some teachers would invite me to their homes on the weekends, perhaps sensing that I needed extra support. I loved to read and would take home seven to eight books each week from the public library and devour them. Also, starting in kindergarten, I began writing and illustrating my own small books. I have several in my possession still.

I also became more involved with music in elementary school, singing in the school choir and performing in the concert band, where I soon became the first-chair clarinet. I still love listening to all kinds of music and believe my experiences playing music with others taught me about collaboration and having a strong individual “voice” while also blending with others. Music also developed my nonverbal skills and helped me become more emotionally attuned and balanced.

### **Spiritual leanings**

My other solace as a young boy was the Catholic Church. I became an altar boy in second grade, and for many years, I would get up at dawn and ride my bicycle the mile to church to assist with the early mass. I think I might even have gone on to be a priest, except for an incident when I was 13. With a lot of anxiety and confusion, I told the head priest in our parish that I thought I might be “homosexual.” He asked me a few questions, then told me that I had to stop being an altar boy. In retrospect, I believe he was afraid—perhaps of himself—but of course, I took his reaction as a sign that something was terribly wrong with me. I hid in my room for several days, and then stubbornly refused to go to Sunday mass after that. I remember being quite depressed at the time and feeling there was something terribly wrong with me. Soon after I went to Quaker Meeting with my grandmother Jessie when I was visiting her, and I liked it. I would go whenever I could.

## **Growing up gay**

In retrospect, apart from family struggles, one of the hardest parts of my childhood was that by the standards of the Italian immigrant community, I was a “sissy.” I was not athletic and didn’t like sports. The older boys in the neighborhood taunted me mercilessly, boys at school bullied me, and I dreaded gym class, where other children and certain teachers would ridicule me. My father was ashamed of me, and my mother would try to protect me from him, which then led him to accuse her of coddling me.

Of course, even though I was called a “sissy,” I really had no idea what it meant to be gay. Then when I began to have sexual feelings around age 12–13, I realized they involved other boys, did some furtive reading, and concluded to my horror that what I had been accused of for years was actually true. I hid my sexuality from all but one close friend throughout high school. Fortunately, he did not reject me. Still, the enormous shame I felt was crushing, and I struggled with depression. Looking back, this was one of the most painful times in my life, and it is no coincidence that one of my professional interests in recent years has been to help people heal from shame.

## **Academic achievement and staying busy**

I realize now that I coped with the pain of my early years by staying busy and devoting myself to achievement. In high school, I was in Boy Scouts, concert band, marching band, jazz band, model UN club, Spanish club, National Honor Society, and co-editor of the high school newspaper. I wrote and published poetry and short stories, worked most days at a local Italian restaurant, read avidly, took piano lessons, composed music, and occasionally did volunteer work. I did have several close friends, especially through band and the restaurant, and I began to mature socially. I was away from home a lot but was still close to my mother, who basked in my achievements and lived through me vicariously. I was particularly successful in music, math, and languages (like my maternal grandfather) and starting in seventh grade I won prizes each year in the National Spanish Examinations. I also studied French in high school and began to think about being a Romance language teacher. I was a finalist in the National Merit Scholarship competition and graduated Valedictorian of my high school class in 1974. These accomplishments were a way to feel better about myself and address my deep shame, and they worked to some extent. Other ways of healing had to wait.

## **College years**

I feel fortunate now because it was almost by accident that I enrolled in Haverford College in the fall of 1974. As a National Merit finalist, many

colleges recruited me, but I didn't know one from the other, there was no one in my high school to advise me, and both my parents were mystified by college, having never been themselves. Because I had attended Quaker meetings with my maternal grandmother I became interested in Haverford, which was founded by the Society of Friends, and at one point, I flew on my own to Philadelphia to interview there. I was awestruck by the stunning beauty of the campus and impressed by the college's honor code, which granted so much respect and responsibility to students. I was excited also that I could be close to the Philadelphia Orchestra and attend their weekly concerts. Haverford offered me a full scholarship, and after some thought, I chose to go there.

There are many ways that my years at Haverford affected me deeply. For the first time, I was in an academically challenging environment with top-notch professors and other accomplished students. This caused me anxiety at first, but I worked hard and found I could hold my own academically, and this helped my confidence enormously. Originally, I aspired to become a professor of Romance languages, and I spent part of my first two years studying abroad in both Spain and France. These experiences broadened my views and helped me learn about and appreciate other cultures. But, after taking a psycholinguistics course my sophomore year, I became interested in psychology, took a number of basic courses, and decided to major in that field. One psychology professor, Douglas A. Davis, took a special interest in me, and I began to do research with him on personality. Davis was an expert on Harry Stack Sullivan and on psychodiagnosis, and he and I spent hours in his office discussing both topics. I also began to study statistics and found it easy and interesting. A friend, Mona Cardell, and I did our senior psychology projects together, studying sex roles in heterosexual, lesbian, and gay male couples. We were supervised by Jeanne Marecek of Swarthmore College, an internationally recognized feminist social-clinical psychologist.

My sophomore year, I also came out publicly as gay. This was easier than it might have been because the Dean of Students at Haverford had recruited a social work graduate student from neighboring Bryn Mawr College to start a gay and lesbian student organization, called Gay People's Alliance (GPA). I remember attending my first meeting with a great deal of fear, but almost immediately I felt at home in a way I never had before. Over the next few years, I had several boyfriends and began to learn about romantic love and intimacy. I still remember the thrill of going to New York City in June 1976 to participate in the gay pride parade. After having felt so alone and ashamed for years, it was a thrill to walk up Fifth Avenue in the company of hundreds of thousands of gay, lesbian, and transgender people and our supporters.

Around this time, I also sought out psychotherapy, first at the Haverford student counseling center, and then at several community clinics in Philadelphia. I was terribly insecure and wanted to feel better about myself.



Haverford College paid for my sessions and my transportation. The therapists I saw were generally psychiatry residents or psychology interns and probably were not the most skilled. But they listened and asked questions and helped me learn about myself. One more seasoned therapist I saw was trained in Gestalt Therapy, and I had some eye-opening sessions involving more experiential techniques. Years later, when I was developing Therapeutic Assessment, I incorporated some of these powerful Gestalt techniques and experiences.

Finally, it is clear to me that the Quaker values of acceptance, respect, service to others, and openness “seeped” into me at Haverford, and these are embedded in Therapeutic Assessment. I remember one incident that affected me profoundly. My senior year, my boyfriend from Philadelphia stayed over one night in my dorm room. I had a white board on the outside of my door where friends could leave messages. When I came out the next morning, I saw that someone had written “Filthy Faggots!” in large letters on the white board. But there were numerous other messages also—from people in the dorm—supporting me and confronting the original writer. All that day, people stopped by in person to express support for me and my boyfriend. I felt so touched and held by the community, and the event helped me heal from the bullying I had experienced earlier in my life. Also, I learned first-hand that traumatic events can be transformed if we get enough support at the time from people who care about us.

I graduated from Haverford with a B.A. in psychology in May 1978 and spent almost a year after that in Göttingen, West Germany, where I had a friend from when I studied in France. I traveled a great deal around Europe and perfected my German. I had the fortune to land a job helping to teach beginning statistics to psychology students at the University of Göttingen. This was my first teaching experience, and I enjoyed inventing ways to make statistics alive and relevant for others. I decided I wanted to be a psychology professor and applied to graduate school in clinical psychology in the USA. I was accepted and decided to study at the University of Minnesota. I was awarded a full scholarship, and I began in the fall of 1979.

### **Graduate training at the University of Minnesota**

A “dream team” of brilliant faculty taught clinical psychology at the University of Minnesota in the early 1980s, including Auke Tellegen, Paul Meehl, James Butcher, Steven Hollon, Philip Kendall, Irving Gottesman, David Lykken, and Norman Garmezy. Clinical students also took courses with other “giants” in the psychology department, including Kenneth MacCorquodale and Thomas Bouchard. Generally, applied clinical courses were taught by highly skilled adjunct faculty, most of whom were University of MN graduates and practicing clinicians. The combination of research and clinical training was stimulating and well-coordinated. I fell in love with personality assessment, which combined my interest in statistics

with my growing fascination with people. Of course, James Butcher and Auke Tellegen taught us the MMPI, and an adjunct faculty member, Nancy Rains, taught us the Rorschach, using Exner's Comprehensive System. We were given the opportunity to take both tests before we learned them, and I was impressed by how accurately they captured me. The summer after my first year, I had my first practicum placement at the adult inpatient psychiatry ward of Hennepin County Medical Center (HCMC). This was an important and moving experience that influenced me in many ways.

First, as a student, I was allowed to participate in team meetings and case conferences for the psychiatric inpatients I worked with. Since my undergraduate studies with Douglas Davis, I had been fascinated with psychodiagnosis, and I got to see diagnosis in action in these meetings. I began work on a paper that was published in the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* my third year of graduate school, "Base Rates, Utilities, and DSM-III: Shortcomings of Fixed-Rule Systems of Psychodiagnosis" (Finn, 1982). This article grew out of my observations at HCMC, and it was my first time navigating the review process at a major psychology journal on my own. By that point I had asked Auke Tellegen to be my doctoral advisor, and he supported me a great deal. The published article received a fair amount of notice, and Thomas Widiger (who has a chapter in this volume) wrote a challenging comment to which I was invited to respond. Again, Auke Tellegen helped me write a clear and balanced reply. This entire experience with writing and publishing taught me a lot about academic clinical psychology and supported my burgeoning goal to seek an academic position after I got my Ph.D.

Second, in my practica at HCMC and in others during graduate school, I began to have striking experiences of the utility and power of psychological assessment. I wrote about one of these events in my book, *In Our Clients' Shoes* (Finn, 2007, pp. 17–20), where my giving Rorschach feedback to a man with chronic schizophrenia transformed both him and me. This experience impressed me so much that I returned to the University of MN and asked Butcher, Tellegen, Meehl, and others if anyone had ever written about the therapeutic aspects of psychological assessment. At that time, assessment was taught exclusively as a way to diagnose and label clients, so as to plan interventions or track the efficacy of an intervention. My academic mentors were intrigued but did not know where to point me in the literature. I had more success talking to the senior psychologists at HCMC during two practicum placements, my internship, and two-year fellowship there.

### ***Psychology internship and fellowship at Hennepin County Medical Center***

Ada Hegion and Kenneth Hampton were my main supervisors at HCMC, and both were wise, highly skilled clinicians with a broad view of the value of psychological assessment. I remember one early assessment where

I administered the WAIS to a young man who was seeing Dr. Hegion for therapy; he was having trouble at work because his boss saw him as “lazy and not trying hard.” I remember carefully scoring the WAIS and telling Dr. Hegion that the man had a Verbal IQ of 105 but a Performance IQ of 85, “which is highly statistically significant.” She praised my newfound competence and then asked, “What do you think it’s like to be a person with scores like those?” I was completely dumbfounded, as none of my assessment professors had ever asked a question like that. Dr. Hegion then led me through an interesting thought process—inquiring whether I thought that Verbal IQ or Performance IQ was more relevant when we informally estimate how intelligent someone is. I guessed it might be Verbal IQ, and she agreed. “Then what would happen,” she queried, “if we believed someone was of average intelligence, but then asked him to do a task that required non-verbal skills—not knowing his Performance IQ was low average?” I exclaimed with excitement, “We might see him as unmotivated or as not trying,” suddenly understanding something important about our mutual client. This was the first time I grasped how psychological assessment could help us “get in someone’s shoes” in a new way, and it transformed my view of assessment as a potential “empathy magnifier.” That view is fundamental to Therapeutic Assessment.

Kenneth Hampton, my second major supervisor, was a brilliant Rorschacher and clinical interviewer. He taught me how to listen “with my third ear” to clients, and he sensitively helped me sort through the myriad of personal reactions I had to the clients on the inpatient ward. Years later, I wrote about one of these experiences—and Dr. Hampton’s wise supervision—in a paper called: “How Psychological Assessment Taught Me Compassion and Firmness” (Finn, 2005). In fact, it was through my work at HCMC that I began to understand that if I were committed to doing meaningful psychological assessments, I would need to face and learn about aspects of myself that I had never explored.

Besides training us in psychological assessment, Ken Hampton, Ada Hegion, and the Chief of Psychology, Zigfrieds Stelmachers, also supervised our psychotherapy cases, listening to audiotapes we made of our sessions. This was incredibly helpful, and they also gave our intern class a gift by frequently letting us observe sessions they did with clients. It was only much later in life that I realized how rare this opportunity was, and how generous and brave these three supervisors (and their clients) were. Years later, when I developed TA, I was convinced that showing videos of my work with actual clients was essential for training others, and I also developed the practice of conducting live Therapeutic Assessments while others observed.

### ***More psychotherapy***

Thankfully, in my second year of graduate school, I had the courage to ask Ada Hegion to help me find a psychotherapist, and for the next 3.5

years I worked with a highly skilled psychologist, Dr. Millie Huttenmaier. Although as mentioned, I had seen several therapists during my college years, this was my first time connecting with someone who could lead me into deep emotional work. In our sessions, I began to name and unpack the enormous shame I carried from my childhood and from being part of a despised group (gay men). And with Dr. Huttenmaier's support, I began to grieve—in a way I had never done, and this was essential to my healing. The whole experience was mysterious and transformative, and I began to reap the benefits.

For instance, I began to date more compatible men. (My early relationships had been pretty disastrous.) In 1982, I met Jim Durkel in a gay men's support group, and over time we became partners. Jim was a speech-language pathologist and audiologist working in the St. Paul public schools. He loved animals, weird theatre, and food—just as I did. We moved in together in early 1984, and Jim was a huge emotional and practical support as I wrote my dissertation and applied for academic jobs. I also began to reconnect with my parents and siblings, from whom I had been distant for years. They all loved and accepted Jim, and this helped me feel closer to them and more “whole” myself.

### ***Working at Lesbian/Gay Community Services***

Another important experience during graduate school was working part-time at a newly formed gay and lesbian community mental health center in Minneapolis called Lesbian/Gay Community Services (LGCS). Although I was a novice therapist, I was paid to see individual clients under supervision. (Ken Hampton at HCMC was also willing to help with me these clients.) I met a young social work therapist in the LGCS supervision group, John Driggs, and we became friends. I was surprised when I found out that John was heterosexual, as he had a lot of understanding of the lives of gay men and lesbians. Besides seeing individual clients, for several years, John and I ran a series of short-term (eight to ten week) gay men's support/therapy groups. Most of the men were dealing with issues of shame and its effect on their relationships, and in classic fashion, as John and I worked to help our clients with these issues, I also reaped huge benefits. My long friendship with John has sustained me through some difficult times.

Before I left the Twin Cities in 1984, John and I decided to write a book for gay men about all we had learned doing our groups, and we eventually published *Intimacy Between Men: How to Find and Keep Gay Love Relationships* (1990, Dutton). Working on this book was very important in multiple ways. First, our editor took John and me in hand and taught us how to write in a way that was more accessible and impactful. This “writing school” has served me well ever since. Second, the book hit a chord among gay men and was quite popular. With the publisher's support, John and I traveled the country giving talks and workshops, and this helped me

grow more comfortable as a public speaker and teacher. Third, the book was financially successful, which gave me the funds I needed later to start an important venture.

As I neared the end of my doctorate, I was faced with the decision of what kind of position I wanted after graduate school. I had come to love clinical work and the feeling of helping people; thus, I seriously considered applying for work in a hospital or clinic. But I also loved research and writing and decided in the end to look for an academic position teaching clinical psychology. Luckily, I had several offers from excellent programs.

### **Being a faculty member at the University of Texas**

In August 1984, my partner Jim and I moved to Texas, and in September, I began as an Assistant Professor at the University of Texas at Austin. Like many clinical psychology programs at the time, UT saw itself as training mainly academics and researchers, and many of the clinical faculty had not worked with clients in years. Nevertheless, most of the clinical program's graduates took clinical jobs, so the faculty also wanted to ensure they were trained adequately. I was hired as a young psychologist who loved research, was a good statistician, and thought rigorously about clinical matters—and hence was respected—but who also loved clinical work and could teach applied clinical courses. The role served me well at the time, and before long I was promoted to being the Associate Director of Clinical Psychology. One of my tasks was to develop and coordinate student practicum placements in Austin, and in this way, I came to know many fine clinicians in Austin.

In retrospect, teaching core psychological assessment courses for UT clinical students was an absolute gift, as I was forced to clarify and advance my ideas about psychotherapy and psychological assessment as a potential intervention. I began to lecture to first-year students on what I called an “interpersonal model of psychological assessment” (tipping my hat to Harry Stack Sullivan), and remembering my supervisors at Hennepin County Medical Center, each year I would assess clients live as students watched from behind a one-way mirror. I also saw the assessment classes as opportunities for graduate students to learn and grow, and I intentionally structured the assessment sequence so it paralleled a psychological assessment of the students themselves. After some years, I wrote a chapter about this way of teaching a core assessment class (Finn, 1998).

The years at UT were also an opportunity to experiment with new ways of practicing psychological assessment and to do research in this area. I was lucky to work with several talented graduate students, and in particular with Mary Tonsager and Hale Martin, both of whom served as my teaching assistants for the clinical assessment courses. Mary did her Master's thesis on the therapeutic effects of collaboratively giving clients feedback on the MMPI-2, and this was one of the first studies to document the

direct interventional power of psychological assessment (Finn & Tonsager, 1992). Mary and I also wrote an article laying out fundamental features of the Therapeutic Assessment paradigm (Finn & Tonsager, 1997). Hale and I have collaborated many times in writing (e.g., Finn & Martin, 1997), and he is now a Professor of Psychology at the University of Denver, where he teaches and writes about Therapeutic Assessment (see Martin, 2018). Jan Kamphuis, now Professor of Psychology at the University of Amsterdam, came to UT a bit later but proved to be another able writing partner. Like me, Jan is “good with numbers” and we wrote a chapter explaining base rates to practicing clinicians (Finn & Kamphuis, 1995). Also, much later, Jan and his doctoral student, Hilde de Sager, conducted an important study on Therapeutic Assessment with clients with severe personality pathology (De Saeger et al., 2014).

I also met several colleagues during this time who greatly influenced my thoughts about assessment. William Swann, a social psychologist at UT, was doing groundbreaking work on *self-verification theory*, which helps to explain the human tendency to take in information that confirms our self-views and reject information that does not (Cf. Swann, 1997). Swann and I discussed the implications of self-verification theory for providing assessment feedback to clients, and we did research together that led to my concepts of “Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3 information” (Cf. Finn, 1996, 2007).

While I was at UT, I began a small private practice with another faculty member from the School Psychology Program, Deborah Tharinger, and this was instrumental in my continuing to formulate a model of assessment as a brief therapeutic intervention. I coined the phrase Therapeutic Assessment for this new approach, which was still taking form. I began watching videotapes of all my assessment sessions with clients and experimenting with different ways of using tests as therapeutic tools. One practice seemed extremely useful, of asking clients at the beginning of an assessment to pose questions about what they wanted to learn about themselves, and this was incorporated into the Finn and Tonsager (1992) study I referred to earlier.

During these years I also expanded my clinical skills by reading and getting advanced training in multiple interventions, for example Self Psychology (with Ernest Wolf), Systems Centered Therapy (with Yvonne Agazarian), and Control Mastery Theory (with Elayne Lansford). I also had the great fortune to study Family Therapy with Carol Middelberg, a former faculty member of the Chicago Family Therapy Institute who had moved to Austin. Carol was instrumental in my developing Therapeutic Assessment with children, Therapeutic Assessment with adolescents, and Therapeutic Assessment with couples, and in my understanding how assessment could be used as a systemic intervention. I “appropriated” useful concepts and techniques from all these and other psychotherapy schools and incorporated them into Therapeutic Assessment, and this helped TA become more flexible and powerful.

## **Attending the Society for Personality Assessment for the first time**

In 1992, James Butcher asked me to submit a workshop for the annual meeting of the Society for Personality Assessment (SPA). (He was CE chair.) Somehow, I had never heard of SPA before, but I was honored, and in 1993 in San Francisco I presented a one-day training entitled “Using Psychological Assessment as a Therapeutic Intervention.” Little did I know that this event would be a turning point in my life. The conference program was full of famous assessment psychologists such as John Exner, Philip Erdberg, Irving Weiner, and Paul Lerner. And there was one person I longed to meet: Constance Fischer. Some years earlier, a friend had given me a copy of Fischer’s (1985) book, *Individualizing Psychological Assessment*, and I had stayed awake all night reading it with awe and excitement. Fischer went far beyond my fledgling ideas about assessor-client collaboration, articulating a coherent philosophy of science based in phenomenological psychology that grounded many of the assessment practices I had been developing on my own. The next morning, I told my partner, Jim, “This book is 30 years ahead of its time!” (I think history has borne me out.) When I arrived in San Francisco I left a message for Dr. Fischer at the conference hotel asking if I might invite her to lunch. She was kind enough to come and greet me the morning of my workshop and apologized for not being able to attend. I gave her a copy of my handouts, and we agreed to have lunch the next day. When we met, I found out that that Fischer had read all my handouts that night and had been excited and moved by the way I was integrating her work. That lunch was the beginning of a lasting friendship and a thrilling collaboration. Until she retired, Connie and I would have dinner together each year at the SPA annual meeting and plot “how to take over the world for Collaborative Assessment.” Over the years, Connie and I did many presentations together at SPA, APA, and all over the world at the congresses of the International Society for Rorschach and Projective methods. I also had the honor of helping compile a volume of her collected papers, *On The Way to Collaborative Psychological Assessment* (Fischer, 2017). Connie inspired me and many of us in the psychological assessment community with her clear thinking, elegant writing, and palpable humanity. Although she is retired now, we still speak frequently, and I am still grateful for her friendship and mentorship.

Another person I met at SPA who influenced me and my work was Leonard Handler, a brilliant and innovative clinician, teacher, and writer. I heard Len speak at SPA in the mid-1990s about his “Fantasy Animal Drawing and Storytelling Technique” and was completely captivated. Len invited me several times to lecture on TA to his students at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, and it was through Len that I met J. D. Smith, Len’s last graduate student, who is now an expert in TA and has



done a great deal of important research on TA. Besides bringing us J.D., Len influenced many of our practices in Therapeutic Assessment, especially regarding TA with children. He also co-edited the Collaborative/Therapeutic Assessment casebook (Finn, Fischer, & Handler, 2012) with Connie and me. I remember Len as someone who deeply respected the wisdom of his clients, believed in the power of psychological assessment to change people's lives, and brought creativity and playfulness to psychological assessment. He also had a willingness to judiciously "bend the rules" of traditional assessment in order to help his clients. For example, Len used playful techniques to understand clients' test responses, such as asking them (after the standardized administration of the Rorschach), "If this monster on Card IV could talk, what would he say?" Len coined the word "Extended Inquiry" for this technique, and we have incorporated both the term and the practice in TA.

Back to SPA, my association with this organization was crucial to my developing TA and spreading it to others. First, having an opportunity to interact with world-class assessment psychologists and researchers helped me develop my ideas and grow personally. Over the years, I consulted with people such as Irving Weiner, Philip Erdberg, Paul Lerner, Carol George, Julie Cradock O'Leary, and Yossi Ben-Porath when I needed help with clients, and I always learned a great deal. Second, it was incredibly exciting to present on Therapeutic Assessment and other topics in symposia, workshops, and round tables at SPA annual meetings and to have people be interested in my work. In fact, many of the chapters in my book *In Our Clients' Shoes* (Finn, 2007) were adapted from presentations I gave at SPA meetings or first published in the society's journal, *The Journal of Personality Assessment* (*JPA*). And people who heard about TA for the first time at SPA meetings or by reading *JPA* went on to attend TA trainings in Austin, or invited me and my colleagues to present workshops in their local areas. SPA also published a DVD in 2009 called *Pioneers of Collaborative Assessment*, which helped spread the word about TA. It contains lectures by me, Connie Fischer, and Len Handler and a discussion facilitated by Dr. Radhika Krishnamurthy, who has long been a supporter of TA. Third, I had the opportunity to serve on the SPA Board from 1996 to 2005, first as Representative-at-Large and then as President-elect, President, and Past President. I learned a great deal from this experience about managing organizations, and this helped me when I founded the Therapeutic Assessment Institute in 2009. Fourth, SPA gave me two Martin Mayman Awards for publications in *JPA* (Finn, 2003, 2011) and greatly honored me in 2011 with the Bruno Klopfer Award for Distinguished Lifetime Contributions to Personality Assessment. Of course, it always feels good to receive awards, but the Klopfer Award had special meaning to me; it affirmed that TA was a valuable paradigm shift and helped quiet my inner doubts, which stemmed in part from criticisms that had been levied against me and TA over the years.



**More psychotherapy: A deep dive into restructuring my character**

On the personal front, the late 1980s and 1990s were a time of rapid personal growth and transformation, spurred by several things. First, in 1984, just after we arrived in Austin, my partner Jim tested positive for HIV, while I tested negative. Jim's having HIV was a huge blow for both of us, and it greatly stressed our fledgling relationship. We literally expected that Jim might die at any time (although his health was generally good), and this terrified us both and affected our relationship. I realized later that I reacted as I had to my difficult family situation growing up—by withdrawing into myself, striving for achievement, and keeping busy. Understandably, Jim felt alone and got depressed; this reminded me of my depressed mother, and I pulled back further. The good news is that these events spurred us to seek couples therapy, which we did for almost eight years, and I also went into individual and group psychotherapy. Gradually I went deeper into a process of self-exploration than I had in any of my previous psychotherapies. For three to four years, I did individual therapy two to three times a week, group therapy one time a week, couples therapy with Jim once a week, and I was in various consultation/training groups that also stretched and supported me. With such a broad emotional “safety net” in place, my character defenses—which had helped me survive a difficult early life—loosened, and I let myself “fall apart” to some extent. I was still able to work and help others, but I became aware of shame, depression, and grief that I had successfully held at bay for years. For several months I was plagued with daily thoughts of suicide. I got through this period thanks to my support network, learned a great deal about myself (and the process of long-term psychotherapy), and gradually transformed into a humbler, less serious, more playful and relational person; all this greatly influenced my work with clients and the development of Therapeutic Assessment.

Another event deepened my work in psychotherapy and led to an important breakthrough. In 1995 I discovered that my office manager had embezzled a large amount of money from me over the course of a year. There had been many small signs that something was amiss that I had completely ignored, and in fact, I had a long history at that point in my life of being taken advantage of in various relationships. I remember walking into my therapist's office and saying, “I want this to be the last time I let something like this happen to me,” and him saying, “I've been waiting.” In our subsequent work, I discovered how I had dealt with my early traumas through denial and being overly “positive” about people; I also had largely dissociated my assertiveness and anger, which set me up to be repeatedly victimized. I slowly reclaimed my anger and assertiveness, became less naïve, and I haven't been taken advantage of in a major way since. I also learned about dissociation of affect states, and this has informed a great deal of my work in Therapeutic Assessment (e.g., see Finn, 1996b, 2011).

A similar transformation was that I became less of a “rescuer,” both in my life and with clients. I think like many clinicians, I so enjoyed “helping” that I didn’t always confront or “contain” clients enough. I came to see that being overly compassionate was not respectful and did not help my clients (Finn, 2005).

This round of psychotherapy also improved my ability to be in an intimate relationship, and Jim and I grew closer and we stopped waiting for him to die. We realized the best way to live was to hold mortality in mind and build the kind of loving relationship we wanted. We affirmed our hope for our relationship by applying to the Austin Quaker Meeting to be married. (At that point, Quakers had been performing marriages for same-sex couples for many years.) On November 2, 1991, almost 200 friends and family gathered in a Meeting for Worship at Austin Friends Meeting to watch Jim and me take our vows. That day stands out to me still as one where I felt accepted and loved. Jim and I also reaped the benefits from all our work in therapy. I learned what it means to hold someone in mind and to love them, and what it feels like to have this in return. Our relationship changed me profoundly and made me a better person and clinician. Also, Jim helped me in so many ways that I am certain I could not have developed Therapeutic Assessment without his support.

One other experience with Jim also affected me and my work. Both Jim and I loved children, and we had initially planned to be parents; but we abandoned this idea when he was diagnosed with AIDS. This was a big loss, and we were excited and honored when our friends, Ray Condon and Dale Rudin, asked us to be “godfathers” when their daughter, Tessa, was born in August 1995. Although being a godfather is much easier than being a parent, my relationship with Tessa over the years has given me some of the same experiences I would have had with my own children—such as “losing it” occasionally out of frustration and needing to repair. As a result, I have more empathy for parents and less anger at my own parents, and this helped me especially as I developed Therapeutic Assessment with children and families.

I am very aware that I was incredibly privileged to have had the opportunity to do extensive psychotherapy with excellent therapists, and it has left me a firm believer in the power of psychotherapy to transform lives. Of course, when anxious, I can still become dismissing or start working compulsively. But these things happen much less frequently now, and most days I feel present, happy, and full of energy and gratitude.

### **My life with horses**

Not infrequently when I show videos of myself doing TA with challenging clients, someone asks how I became so good at balancing kindness and firmness. Often, I reply “from horses!” In 1996, when I was 40 years old,

in part because of the therapy work I just described, I began to cut my work hours and get in touch with other needs and interests. As I wrote about earlier, my whole life I have felt drawn to animals and to horses in particular, and I thought, “Well, I’m not getting any younger! I would like to ride horses.” It was not hard to find a riding teacher in Austin, and after a few tries, I discovered a woman who used a method called Parelli Natural Horsemanship (PNH). This way of working with horses is based on ethology and teaches humans how to read and respond to horses, so they perceive you as a strong, benevolent “herd leader.” I began studying PNH and loved the experience, and in 1998, I bought my first horse, Harley. One year later, I bought a second horse, Lefty, and Jim and I purchased land and moved to Elgin, a small town 25 miles outside of Austin (Figure 2.1).

Learning to be a competent rider helped me tune into and “make friends” with my body, quite a task after the awful experiences of sports bullying I had as a child. And training my horses taught me patience and empathy, and helped me integrate my assertiveness and aggression in a way I never had before. As just mentioned, these were issues I was working on in psychotherapy also, but they came to the fore with horses, who are incredibly sensitive “biofeedback machines” for the people around them. I not only became a skilled horseman, but the lessons I learned via horses helped me personally and in my work with traumatized clients. I truly believe that Therapeutic Assessment would not be what it is today without



*Figure 2.1* With Harley and Lefty in 2001.