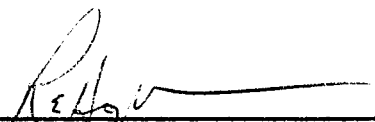


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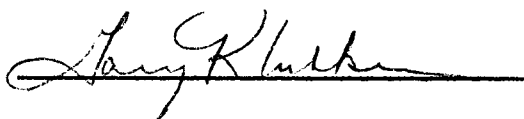
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Ronald E. Hopson, Ph.D., Major Professor

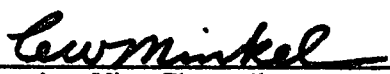
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Accepted for the Council:



Associate Vice Chancellor and
Dean of The Graduate School

THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING PSYCHOLOGICALLY EVALUATED:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INQUIRY

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Rupert Garrison Barber
August, 1996

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful for the vision, guidance, and patience of my chairperson, Ronald Hopson. Both as a researcher and a clinician, he challenged me to take a second look, opening a new world of possibilities. I want to thank my other committee members: Robert Wahler, Gary Klukken, and especially Howard Pollio. Howard introduced me to phenomenology and its potential to make psychology a more humane science. I can't forget my colleagues in both Ron's and Howard's laboratories who provided fertile ground for me to grow. I also want to thank my parents, Rupert and Carol, who have supported me in numerous ways. Most of all I would like to thank Traci Clayton; she showed me the way and showed me patience.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to develop a thematic description of what individuals are aware of during their experience of being psychologically evaluated. A phenomenological-hermeneutic approach was used to analyze transcripts of 10 participants who were interviewed following a comprehensive psychological evaluation. A thematic analysis of the data produced 3 figural themes: 1) Knowing and Being Known, 2) Revealing and Being Revealed, and 3) Judging and Being Judged. These occurred within a context of interpersonal relationship in which the participants described the assessors as having two aspects: 1) Personal, and 2) Professional. This study fills a void in the psychological assessment literature, describing salient elements of an assessment for those being evaluated and highlighting the influence of situational factors. Suggestions for a more collaborative approach to psychological assessment are made to increase the relevance of future assessments. Criticisms of psychology's narrow view of science are reviewed, and alternative methods of inquiry are suggested to broaden the discipline.

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Chapter I: BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

A Brief History of Psychological Assessment

Current Prevalence and Status of Psychological Assessment

Psychological assessment is an integral element of clinical psychology. It has been and remains a cornerstone of the core curriculum in doctoral and masters training programs (Piotrowski & Zalewski, 1993; Marlowe et. al., 1992; Watkins, 1991), and occupies at least 10% of the professional time of well over half of practicing clinicians (Watkins, 1991). The most utilized assessment instruments have remained stable for the past three decades, including versions of the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS), the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC), the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI), and the Rorschach inkblot method (Weiner, 1994). Indications suggest that these instruments will continue to be used for years ahead (Watkins, 1991; Tallent, 1992).

Several academic and professional journals are devoted to the assessment endeavor. One indication of the continuing importance of psychological assessment was the American Psychological Association's decision to begin publishing the journal Psychological Assessment: A Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology in 1989. The focus of this journal is described by its editor Alan Kazdin (1989) in the initial issue: "Papers that fall within the publication domain include investigations related to the development, validation, and evaluation of assessment techniques" (p. 3). Of the many facets of psychological assessment, the APA has chosen to emphasize the technical aspects of assessment and testing in its assessment journal. The Journal of Personality Assessment, another prominent journal, has a long history which can be traced back to the introduction of the Rorschach in the United States (Exner, 1986). Although this journal's interests are more theoretical and clinical, technical aspects, such as the validity and reliability of various psychological instruments, are given prominent consideration.

Given the historical and current importance of psychological assessment, and the

prominence of journals devoted to assessment, one would expect that the assessment endeavor has been thoroughly examined, including the experience of the examinee. However, there has been a relative lack of attention given to the experience of the examinee in the psychological assessment literature. In addition to this notable omission in the literature, a number of writers have commented on a "widespread ambivalence among psychologists about assessment and the assessment process" (Carson, 1990, p. 436). Insight into this ambivalence, as well as the omission of the examinee's experience and an emphasis on the technical aspects of assessment, might be found in the historical roots of psychological inquiry.

A Brief History of Psychological Inquiry

Precursors to modern psychological testing

McReynolds (1986) has argued that the roots of psychological assessment are found in the use of astrology and physiognomy in antiquity. As early as the late 17th century a German philosophy professor, Christian Thomasius, developed a system of rating scales to assess characterological dimensions (McReynolds, 1986). This fact is notable not only because it is considered to be the invention of psychological rating scales, but, by implication, it suggested that personality variables can be quantified (McReynolds, 1986). The origins of modern psychological testing, however, can be found in three more recent developments: civil service examinations, the assessment of academic achievement, and human measurement (DuBois, 1970). Civil service examinations and the assessment of academic achievement had a largely indirect influence on psychological testing, serving to establish the idea that testing is a useful activity. The most direct influence on the development of psychological testing was the tradition of measuring humans extant since the 19th century.

Thomasius' developments were largely ignored, and it was not until the 19th century that quantification of human characteristics captured the imagination of scientists.

Gould (1981) has commented on the growing influence of “numbers” during the second half of the nineteenth century. The “allure of numbers, the faith that rigorous measurements could guarantee irrefutable precision, and might mark the transition between subjective speculation and a true science as worthy as Newtonian physics,” swept through the human sciences at that time (Gould, 1981, p. 74). Researchers such as Galton, Weber, and Fechner were interested in discovering universal laws which dictated human behavior and perception. Prominent physicians, such as Kraepelin and Bleuler, searched for natural order underlying mental “diseases.” Individual people were needed only as representatives of a sample from which data could be generated.

Sir Francis Galton was perhaps the most influential early voice heralding the importance and power of quantification and measurement. He argued that measurement was the foundation of scientific study, and that anything could be measured (Gould, 1981). A notable application of this belief can be seen in his work on the heritability of intelligence. His Anthropometric Laboratory, established in 1884, measured over 9,000 people on 17 variables. He then used these data to develop tables of norms for several physical and behavioral characteristics by which individuals could be judged. A public announcement about the laboratory listed as its first purpose “For the use of those who desire to be accurately measured in many ways, either to obtain timely warning of remediable faults in development, or to learn their powers” (as cited in DuBois, 1970, p. 13). Even at this time accurate measurement was claimed as the way to identify an individual’s problems or strengths.

James Cattell, after receiving training in Wilhelm Wundt’s laboratory, introduced Galton’s tradition of testing to the United States. His tests predominately measured motor and sensory functioning, with some measures of perception, association, and memory. His rationale for psychological testing was based upon the standards of other sciences:

Psychology cannot attain the certainty and exactness of the physical sciences,

unless it rests on a foundation of experiment and measurement. A step in this direction could be made by applying a series of mental tests and measurements to a large number of individuals. The results would be of considerable scientific value in discovering the constancy of mental processes, their interdependence, and their variation under different circumstances. Individuals, besides, would find their tests interesting, and, perhaps, useful in regard to training, mode of life or indication of disease. (Cattell, as cited in DuBois, 1970, p. 16)

Cattell's emphasis here is that comprehensive psychological testing would benefit the science of psychology and the usefulness of the testing to the individual tested was of secondary concern. This ordering of priorities, science first, person second, set the precedent for much of the discipline of psychology to the present day (Koch, 1969).

The search for universal laws via measurement influenced the medical world of the nineteenth century as well. The search for natural order shaped the thinking of Emil Kraepelin who established one of the first psychiatric laboratories and authored several influential psychiatric texts. He attempted to classify, categorize and describe psychiatric disorders as discrete entities based upon observable phenomena. His descriptive efforts laid the foundation for today's approach to identifying mental disorders, and his influence on modern diagnosis has eclipsed Freud's (Kirk, 1992). In addition to his approach to a descriptive psychopathology, Kraepelin proposed a comprehensive system of comparative testing of the sane and insane. He suggested measuring personal characteristics such as mental ability, memory, trainability, distractibility, depth of sleep and others. As with some of Cattell's early attempts to show a relationship between his tests and academic performance, Kraepelin and his students found disappointing results (DuBois, 1970).

Galton, Cattell, and others demonstrated faith in science and measurement to uncover universal laws, and firmly believed this was the appropriate direction in which psychology should develop. The study of individual differences -- perhaps more

appropriately the study of deviations from the norm -- became a hallmark of clinical psychology. Early attempts to develop systematic measures of human intelligence are an important and sometimes embarrassing chapter in the development of clinical psychology. Gould (1981) has detailed the extensive racial bigotry and prejudice in the work of the early psychometricians, and called into question the accuracy and objectivity of psychological measurement in general and, specifically, intelligence testing.

Intelligence testing

Early attempts to measure intelligence proved to be the cornerstone from which clinical psychology was built. Alfred Binet was among the first to offer a definition of intelligence. Instead of focusing testing on reaction times and sensory experience, he refined Cattell's work by attempting to measure the "higher" psychological processes in which he surmised there were greater individual differences. He and Henri proposed a battery of tests which were designed to test complex processes (DuBois, 1970; Anastasi, 1988). Lewis Termen refined the testing of intelligence further with the introduction of the Stanford-Binet intelligence test: an assessment of general mental ability.

Prior to the first World War, Arthur Otis worked with Termen on a group version of the Stanford-Binet. This was the prototype of the Army Alpha, which inaugurated large scale psychological testing. The development of group-administered intelligence tests used by the US Army during WWI established the foundation from which clinical psychology has grown (Fischer, 1994; DuBois, 1970). The reputation established during this time continued following the war as psychologists became permanent members of treatment teams for the mentally disturbed (Fischer, 1992). These successes fueled expectations that all psychological tests would prove as useful and reliable as the Army Alpha. The expertise at test construction, test administration, and research established clinical psychology's claim to scientific legitimacy (Groth-Marnat, 1990). Ironically, the successes of testing in World War I also helped move psychology from an academic discipline toward a more

professional one. "The conspicuous success of the [WWI testing] program engendered confidence in measuring new variables and applying the results not only in schools and child guidance clinics but also in vocational counseling and in the selection of industrial personnel" (p. 67, Dubois, 1970).

WWI also marked a notable development in the assessment of personality, not just in the measurement of cognitive ability. Woodworth's Personal Data Sheet was developed to identify emotionally unstable soldiers (McReynolds, 1986). His empirically based method of item and scale construction laid the cornerstone for most current personality inventories, including the MMPI (Ben-Porath & Butcher, 1991). With greater acceptance and utilization of psychological testing, psychologists began to appropriate other tasks.

The diagnostic task was the cornerstone of the development of clinical psychology as a profession, its means of entry into psychiatric institutions. Thus, from the beginning, assessment was laced with political implications....Once inside the establishment and its institutions by virtue of their functions as testers, psychologists were able to pursue the goal of becoming psychotherapists. (Applebaum, 1990, p. 792)

Projective techniques

Projective methods of testing developed during the early 20th century. Prior to Hermann Rorschach's introduction of his ten inkblots in 1921, inkblots were used to explore people's imagination, memory, and consciousness. Pictures and word association tests were used to assess imagination and associative processes (Rabin, 1981).

Rorschach's original interest was in the perceptual elements and the formal characteristics of the responses, and how these related to psychopathology (Exner, 1986). He was seeking to understand the manner in which psychopathology affected a person's perception of the world. It was not until the acceptance of psychoanalysis as a personality theory that these techniques found a "conceptual home" (Rabin, 1981, p. 4) and personality

assessment became a focus for this method.

The term “projective technique” was not used until 1939 (Frank, 1939). The Rorschach inkblot method was the first major clinical and research instrument classified as a projective technique. In trying to define projective techniques, Frank (1948) wrote: “The essential feature of a projective technique is that it evokes from the subject what is in various ways expressive of his private world and personality process” (p. 47).

These new techniques offered psychologists an original way to conceptualize and present their testing to colleagues. They could now more easily talk about personality “structure” and offer more to the planning of therapy. Despite the utility for clinicians, academicians struggled with projective techniques because of the difficulty in demonstrating their psychometric reliability and validity (Rabin, 1981; Anastasi, 1988). Consequently, most training in projective methods, particularly the Rorschach, occurred outside the university in special workshops and institutions (Exner, 1986).

Just as World War I had provided an opportunity for IQ tests to demonstrate their utility, World War II provided a demand for the use of projective tests. The projectives proved useful in making personnel decisions and in clinical screening. After the war the popularity of projective tests with clinicians, as well as the increased role of the universities in training clinical psychologists, resulted in projectives becoming a part of clinical psychology training (Rabin, 1981). Following World War II there was uniform growth in the demand for all psychological testing and assessment (Tallent, 1992; DuBois, 1970).

In the 1960's and early 1970's personality assessment and other psychological testing significantly decreased in popularity (Tallent, 1992; Fischer, 1994; McReynolds, 1985). The clinical utility of psychological tests began to be questioned by psychologists as early as the latter 1950s (McReynolds, 1985). This was largely due to the impact of Humanistic psychology, which argued that psychological testing was unnecessary and even dehumanizing (Rogers, 1951). There were a number of sobering articles either

heralding or bemoaning the decline of personality assessment, especially the use of projective measures. Tallent (1992) suggests this attitude existed predominantly in academia, where research and its incumbent demands took precedence over more applied concerns. In applied settings assessment remained a common and valued enterprise (Fischer, 1994).

Vocational assessment

The assessment of vocational interests and abilities, currently considered a specialty in counseling psychology, provided early successes in psychological measurement which influenced the development of psychological testing as much as intelligence testing (Lowman, 1991). Early milestones in this area of assessment included works by Parsons (1909) and Strong (1934). "Because of early measurement and classification successes, the assessment of vocational interests is appropriately regarded as an important event in the application of psychological methods to real-world issues," (p. 16, Lowman, 1991). This attention on "real-world issues" has led some authors to note that counseling psychology, and its assessment tools, focus upon the problems of normal people and not on psychopathology *per se* (e.g. Brammer & Shostrom, 1977). In part due to this focus on the person in his or her world, the use of ability tests had been shown to increase the effectiveness of counseling (Tyler, 1969).

Psychological assessment and psychometrics

Perhaps because of its value in applied settings, psychological assessment currently remains an important aspect of clinical psychology. Despite its increasing prominence in the past decade, the shortage of clinicians willing to devote their expertise to the assessment endeavor has been noted (Tallent, 1992; Groth-Marnat, 1990; Fischer, 1994). Tallent (1992) suggests that this shortage is an outgrowth of the general devaluing of assessment in academic programs over the past thirty years. In general, assessment skills, especially use of the Rorschach, are valued in applied settings and less emphasized in academic

training. More will be said about the “scientist-practitioner” model of clinical psychology training, and some implications of this split, later. The influence of research oriented training centers resulted in a focus on the psychometric characteristics of psychological assessment instruments. Literature addressing these aspects of assessment is increasing, as the previously cited editorial in Psychological Assessment attests (Kazdin, 1989).

The increasing concern with psychometric issues such as reliability and validity in psychological assessment is reflected in the American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM). The adoption of the DSM-III in 1980 marked a shift in diagnostic practice away from psychoanalytically informed diagnoses to more “scientific” (i.e. atheoretical and empirically derived) diagnoses (Kirk, 1992). Etiology became less of a concern, whereas identifiable symptoms became the focus in diagnosing psychopathology. Prior to DSM-III the psychometric unreliability of psychiatric diagnoses symbolized self-doubt in the profession and a vulnerability to public criticism. This is partly why reliability became a major issue and the driving force behind the new manual. Through the creation of a new statistic, Kappa coefficient, the problem of reliability was transformed into a statistical, technical problem, and no longer appeared to be the more threatening conceptual problem (Kirk, 1992). This transformation continued to advance psychology’s credentials as a science.

What Traditional Psychological Assessment Claims to Do

Psychological Assessment and Natural Science

Although a more in depth examination of the natural science paradigm and its influence on psychology follows in Chapter II, it is useful to note here how psychology’s conception of itself as a natural science has greatly influenced psychological assessment. As the history discussed earlier indicated, the roots of psychological assessment -- the development of tests to measure individual differences-- were conceived of within a natural

science framework. The reliability and validity of instruments used in areas such as physics were considered the model to emulate. Fischer (1989) reminds us that many current psychological assessment instruments were originated to research “things” and not individual people. For example, intelligence scales were devised to study intelligence, not people. Numbers, representing an individual’s intelligence, are compared based upon an idealized distribution of scores. These instruments are still based in the natural science vision of psychology: sound method, earmarked by attention to psychometric properties such as reliability and validity, will lead one to the Truth. Recall the editorial by Kazdin (1989) which clarified that techniques and issues of reliability and validity would be the emphasis of the journal Psychological Assessment.

Anastasi’s (1988) influential text Psychological Testing emphasized the preeminent status of measurement in psychological assessment. She states that for many areas of research “the precise measurement of individual differences made possible by well-constructed tests is an essential prerequisite” (p. 4). In speaking about the “unusual advances in psychological testing” made in the past decade, she notes that “*Technological progress, theoretical sophistication*, [italics added] and increasing professional responsibility are all evident in the fast-moving events in this field” (p. v). “Technological progress” and “theoretical sophistication” are offered as the basis for judging the status of psychological testing. The determination that psychological assessment has “progressed” would seem to ignore the very people being tested.

Diagnosis, the stated goal of psychological assessment according to such authors as Applebaum (1990) and Gough (1971), is another area influenced by natural science orientation to psychology. In a classic article by Gough (1971), “The meaning of psychodiagnosis,” the author acknowledges that the logic of psychological diagnosis is based on the logic of the medical model. Within this context the function of diagnosis is to identify the patient’s problem in such a way that appropriate and restorative treatment might

be carried out. Psychological problems are assumed to be evidence of underlying "structural" problems. Gough encourages thinking of problems beyond the level of description; indeed he considers more theoretical thinking superior to description. An unfortunate result of this is a tendency to reify abstractions. For example, he writes: "[E]mpirical item analysis such as employed in MMPI scale construction is a reasonably powerful method for discovering whether a diagnostic syndrome at Level 1 (description) does in fact have a psychopathological infrastructure" (Gough, 1971, p. 418). Truth, the perennial quest of natural science methodology (in this case a psychopathological infrastructure), can be revealed with proper method (empirical item analysis). The assumption about the method is that it is objective and can reveal the phenomena while in no way influencing what is being measured.

Even projective techniques, which traditionally have been less concerned with psychometric measures of adequacy, "have also been used to obscure the psychology of the subjective in the many fruitless attempts to find in them average, predictive values" (Davis, 1974, p. 31). In the "bible" of psychodynamic personality assessment, Rapaport, Gill & Schafer (1968) outline an approach to assessment that exemplifies the influence of the natural science model of psychology. During psychological assessments by the authors, "[s]pecial care was taken to avoid conversation which would have involved information about the patient's symptoms. Clinical diagnosis, personality description, and in many cases prognosis and treatment recommendations were made on the basis of the test results so obtained" (Rapaport et. al., 1968, p. 53). Though acknowledging the subjective nature of human interactions, the authors still argue that standardized administration and verbatim recording of responses aid in maintaining an "objective" atmosphere. The data, if obtained properly, are all that is needed to make the relevant decisions.

The final interpretation of all the data is a matter of verbalization by the examiner, and thus inevitably implies subjectivity. Therefore, the standardization nature of the

eliciting test material, the standardized limited field of observation, the total and nonselective recording, and the all-embracing quantitative scoring system, are the real advantage of a projective test and the safeguards of its objectivity.” (p. 227)

Clearly, the data, and the clinician’s ability to obtain and order the data, take priority over human relationship in this understanding of psychological assessment. As in Galton’s time, people are seen as instances of more fundamental classifications. The challenge is in correctly classifying. From this perspective, psychology’s concern for science appears greater than its respect for individual people.

Assessment and Testing

In its broadest sense, clinical assessment is any process by which clinicians gain information about an individual in order to make informed decisions (Korchin, 1976). Although different authors suggest different definitions of psychological assessment, common elements can be discerned. Traditional assessment typically describes ways in which to compare an individual to normative population data. The goal is often “prediction via classification” (Fischer, 1994, p. 25). Applebaum (1990) suggests assessment should emphasize diagnosis: “Traditionally, assessment refers to measurements made before or at the beginning of treatments in order to establish a diagnosis. On the basis of that diagnosis, treatment decisions are made” (p. 792). Shrauger and Osberg (1981) are more explicit about the goal of prediction, an important element of diagnosis. They suggest that psychological assessment involves predictions about behavior and the implicit assumption is that the assessor is in the best position (because of training) to make predictions and evaluations about the individual.

Rapaport, Gill, and Schafer (1968) contrast their approach with more psychometrically oriented approaches to assessment because of their desire to “understand” the patient. They suggest it is important to do more than give the patient a percentile rank or some other representative numerical measure. “The aim [of assessment is] rather to

understand [the patient]: to give him a chance to express himself in a sufficient number and variety of controlled situations, the nature of which has been well enough explored to enable the psychologist to infer, out of the subject's reactions, the gross outlines of his personality make-up" (p. 52). It is noteworthy in this context that Rapaport, Gill, and Schafer (1968) stress the importance of "controlled" situations, reflecting the natural science perspective discussed earlier.

Tallent (1992) also emphasizes understanding individuals, but in a less global way; for this reason, he understands psychological assessment as a *process*. It is a "conceptual, flexible, problem-solving process" designed to reach the goal of "understanding individuals for defined and useful purposes" (Tallent, 1992, p. ix). The assessor must master testing, observing, and interviewing. He or she must also know test and measurement theory, personality theory, classification and systems for ordering data. All of this must be applied to generate and communicate meaningful information.

Groth-Marnat (1990) envisions psychological assessment as wedding the specifics of an assessment question with a relevant description of the person assessed and his or her world. He suggests that psychological assessment is most useful in understanding problems in living and personality. The central role of the clinician is to be "an expert in human behavior who must deal with complex processes and understand test scores within the context of a person's life" (Groth-Marnat, 1990, p. 4). An effective assessment must, therefore, "develop relevant answers to specific questions, aid in problem solving, and facilitate decision making." The end goal, however, is a description of the individual that must "take into account the complexity of his or her social environment, personal history, and behavioral observations" (Groth-Marnat, 1990, p. 5). Groth-Marnat (1990), similar to Tallent (1992), believes that psychological assessment involves skills in test administration and interpretation, knowledge about personality theory and psychopathology, and an understanding of test construction and its limitations.

A composite definition of psychological assessment may be drawn from these approaches. Psychological assessment involves answering a question. To answer this question, the clinician uses various approaches to understand and describe the person and the person's world in ways relevant to the question posed. The end product of such an assessment involves elements of description and explanation which suggest relevant future actions both for the person being assessed and for the person asking the question.

Both Tallent (1992) and Groth-Marnat (1990) discuss the skills a clinician must use to be an effective assessor, one of these being a skillful test administrator with knowledge about test construction and test limitations. This requirement implies that there is a difference between psychological testing and psychological assessment: Whereas assessment involves a more comprehensive exploration of an individual, testing is concerned with the administration of psychological tests designed to measure specific psychological phenomena. According to Tallent (1992), assessment involves judgement and is more dynamic and problem-solving oriented. Testing, on the other hand, is psychometric and follows an actuarial paradigm; it is more descriptive. Acklin (1993) also maintains that an actuarial approach, which relies on statistical procedures, formal rules, and nomothetic data, is substantially different from a clinical approach, which relies on the clinician's intuition, judgement, and clinical experience. Maloney and Ward (1976) characterize psychometricians as using tests to obtain objective data. This approach to testing reflects the historical role of clinical psychologists as testers exclusively. With the psychometrician, there is an emphasis on test administration, clerical skills, and interpretation to generate objective data to describe the patient. This approach is most useful when assessing mechanical skills or performance on traditional intelligence tests.

Marlowe, Wetzler, and Gibbins (1992) suggest that psychological assessment cannot be conducted with a blind eye toward testing: "Psychological assessment can neither be divorced from the psychometric properties of tests, nor from the process of data

interpretation engaged in by skilled professionals. To omit either component is to change the nature of the enterprise to something other than 'psychological assessment,'" (p. 10). Tests are seen as tools chosen according to the purpose of the assessment.

Objective Methods

Traditionally, psychological assessment instruments and methods have been categorized into "objective" and "projective" categories (Groth-Marnat, 1990; McReynolds, 1986). Although there are certainly elements of both objectivity and projection in almost all methods, this distinction serves a useful descriptive purpose. Several assumptions underpin psychological tests: assumptions about what constitutes meaningful behavior, assumptions about the stability of behavior, assumptions about health and illness, and assumptions about normality and abnormality.

A crucial assumption about psychological tests is that they are objective. Some instruments, such as self-report personality inventories or behavioral check-lists, are purported to achieve an objective recording of the person's behavior. The basis of a claim of objectivity for such instruments lies in their standardized administration, interpretation, and psychometric properties (Butcher & Finn, 1983). Standardization reduces variability which is understood as a source of potential error. The ideal is for every testee to receive, and understand, the test directions in the same way. Standardized interpretation is based on actuarial procedures rather than clinical judgement (Butcher & Finn, 1983; Ben-Porath & Butcher, 1991). "Objective assessment, in summary, is a structured, scientific, nonsubjective approach to the description of an individual," with the aim of predicting behavior (Kendal & Norton-Ford, 1982, p. 302).

Two types of objective techniques were developed to assess personality at the turn of the century: rating scales and self-report questionnaires (Ben-Porath & Butcher, 1991; McReynolds, 1986). Prior to Woodworth's Personal Data Sheet, Heyman and Wiersma developed structured rating scales which essentially assessed "character" from a factorial

approach (Ben-Porath & Butcher, 1991). After World War I, numerous tests were published focusing on various personality attributes. These questionnaires were derived rationally: psychologists created questions they believed related to the attribute of interest. Most of these instruments lacked in validity, and spurred psychologists to evaluate the validity of assessment instruments empirically (Butcher & Finn, 1983).

Following conceptual and psychometric refinements, the MMPI (Hathaway & McKinley, 1940) was introduced in 1940, and has remained the standard of objective personality assessment (Groth-Marnat, 1990). The MMPI differed from previous scales in three important ways: 1) The personality scales were developed with the diagnosis of clinical populations as the goal, 2) Normative data were provided to compare scores with both clinical populations and the general population, and 3) Items were constructed empirically; they were included based upon their ability to differentiate clinical populations from normal ones (Butcher & Finn, 1983). The MMPI and its revision in 1989, the MMPI-2, is the most widely used clinical personality inventory (Groth-Marnat, 1990). This popularity and wide applicability would seem to be due to its empirical foundation (Butcher & Finn, 1983).

Burisch (1984) has outlined three basic philosophies about objective personality test construction, and notes that each reflects a theory about personality. An external approach proceeds in test construction by including items which best discriminate between a normal population and the population designated by the researcher. The MMPI is an excellent example of this approach. The assumed theory here is that there is no universal structure to personality; the researcher identifies the personality constructs relevant to the purposes of assessment. The second philosophy Burisch (1984) calls an inductive approach. Personality is assumed to have a universal structure, and the researcher does not start out to measure specific traits. The data collected determines the relevant dimensions of personality, usually through the use of factor analysis. The 16 Personality Factors Test

(16PF; Cattell & Eber, 1964) is an example of an instrument developed with this philosophy. The final philosophy is a deductive approach. The researcher chooses and defines personality constructs to be measured, and then selects items which fit that definition. Currently, this approach is rarely used because of concerns about validity (Burisch, 1984).

Projective Methods

Rapaport, Gill, and Schafer (1968) are definitive representatives of the projective approach to psychological testing. They write about the "projective hypothesis," suggesting that manifestations of a person's behavior in ambiguous situations are revealing of his or her personality. Any procedure examining human behavior can be looked upon from this perspective. Projective procedures

are procedures in which the subject actively and spontaneously structures unstructured material, and in so doing reveals his structuring principles -- which are the principles of his psychological structure....It is assumed that *the psychological structure of the person is a principle governing all his behavior* [italics added], and by vigorously applying this hypothesis one may succeed -- more likely by intuitive than by systematic approach -- in discovering some facets of the structure of a person in any of his life manifestations... (Rapaport et al., 1968, p. 225)

The assumption is that there is a "psychological structure" which governs all behavior; a universal, albeit personal, law which determines behavior.

The concept of projection was originally introduced by Freud and involved only psychopathological connotations (Freud, 1989). It was considered to be the main mechanism underlying paranoia and paranoid disorders, in which a patient externalizes unacceptable inner drives to the outer world. As Freud's theory developed, projection took on a broader meaning. Freud (as cited in Rabin, 1981) described this broader sense of projection:

But projection is not especially created for the purpose of defense, it also comes into being where there are no conflicts. The projection of inner perception to the outside is a primitive mechanism which, for instance, also influences our sense perceptions, so that it normally has the greatest share in shaping our outer world. Under conditions that have not yet been sufficiently determined even inner perceptions of ideational and emotional processes are projected outwardly, like sense perceptions, and are used to shape the outer world... (p. 9)

Projective techniques are based upon this view. Frank (1948) wrote that "The essential feature of a projective technique is that it evokes from the subject what is in various ways expressive of his private world and personality process" (p. 47). These techniques allow the clinician into the "private world" of the examinee. Thus projective techniques provide a "short-cut" to the inner life of the examinee. Rapaport et al. (1968) maintain:

Projective *tests* seek to avoid the necessity of scrutinizing vast amounts of life data, and of relying upon intuition. Successful or not, projective tests have the boldly proclaimed aim to *elicit*, to *render observable*, to *record*, and to *communicate* the psychological structure of the subject, as inherent to him at any given moment, and without study of historical antecedents. (p. 226)

Although projective techniques are frequently referred to as "tests," Weiner (1994) points out that most projective techniques do not test, or measure, anything specific. As an example, Weiner (1994) argues that though the Rorschach is often called a personality test, it does not measure how much personality the assessee has. Rather, the Rorschach is best understood as a *method* which generates data. The data, organized by the clinician's theoretical perspective, can then be used to describe personality.

Projective techniques are "indirect questions, and the responses to them are indirect answers" (Rapaport et. al., 1968, p. 228).

Their use implies a theory of personality which assumes that much of this psychological structure is not consciously experienced by the subject....If taken seriously, these tests therefore refer to unconscious *motivation* of action and behavior, and necessitate a personality theory that assumes the existence of, and accounts for, these motivations. (p. 228)

Psychoanalytic theory, of course, most thoroughly meets these criteria. Indeed, the authors proclaim the tester must "lean heavily" on psychoanalysis to help in making sense of the data generated by projective techniques (Rapaport et. al., 1968).

Rabin's (1981) threefold definition of a projective technique is both concise and comprehensive: 1) the stimulus is ambiguous and allows freedom of responses because it is not easily recognizable as a conventional form; 2) responses offer material from which personality aspects may be inferred, with little awareness by the examinee of the purpose of the test or how it might be interpreted; and 3) analysis by the clinician relies on many dimensions to make sense of the responses (e.g. influence on examinee responses by past experiences, personality structure, and the testing situation itself).

Assessment Research

Given the influence of traditional natural science methods and perspectives in psychology, it is not surprising to find evidence of this influence in the major journals devoted to psychological assessment. An examination of The Journal of Personality Assessment from 1990 through 1994 reveals a heavy emphasis on assessment instruments and techniques. When I categorized the 455 articles during this five year period according to their emphasis, the following six categories emerged: 1) discussions about specific instruments, characteristics of instruments, or assessment methods; 2) discussions about specific populations, demographic groups, or psychological constructs; 3) discussions about specific instruments used with specific populations; 4) discussions about specific instruments used to assess specific psychological constructs; 5) discussions about

psychological assessment in general; and 6) other articles (see Table 1).

Over 75% of the articles during this period emphasized an assessment instrument or technique (categories 1, 3, and 4), focusing either on psychometric issues (e.g. validity, factor analytic structure), or focusing on an instrument's use with a specific population of people (e.g. adolescent inpatient's, WWII combat veterans) or with a psychological construct (e.g. primitive defenses, transitional phenomena). Articles emphasizing an instrument or technique alone (category 1) accounted for over 36% of articles during this five year period. Articles primarily discussing a patient population, demographic group, or psychological construct (category 2) represented 8% of the total, while articles addressing general issues of psychological assessment (category 5) represented 4% of the articles during this period.

A clear preference for measurement is revealed in this cursory analysis of articles in one major journal in the field. As outlined above, 78% of the articles emphasize assessment instruments or techniques to some degree. Only 8% of the articles emphasize the subjects of psychological assessment independent of measurement issues, and most of these articles are concerned with "populations", such as depressed college students, and normative data for these groups. A portion of this 8% do not discuss actual people, rather addressing psychological constructs. Only 4% of the articles addressed general issues of psychological assessment, such as the rationale or implications of psychological assessment. The conclusion to be reached on the basis of this analysis reveals the emphasis upon measurement and lack of emphasis upon the person.

In keeping with attempts to measure phenomena accurately, and to discover answers, psychology's sophisticated research methods often ignore the person being studied. Sophisticated research and statistical methods, like structural equation modeling, lend an air of "hard science" to many studies. In such work, the focus seems to

Table 1

An Examination of Articles in The Journal of Personality Assessment, 1990-1994

Article Category	Number of Articles	Percent of Total
1) Discussions about specific instruments, characteristics of instruments, or assessment methods.	162	36%
2) Discussions about specific populations, demographic groups, or psychological constructs.	37	8%
3) Discussions about specific instruments used with specific populations.	138	30%
4) Discussions about specific instruments used to assess specific psychological constructs.	55	12%
5) Discussions about psychological assessment in general.	16	4%
6) Other articles.	47	10%
Total Number of Articles =	455	100%

shift from *what* is being studied to *how* it is being studied. Questions which do not lend themselves to quantitative methods risk being ignored. Kohler (1947) warned of psychology's status as an "immature" science and the danger of becoming enamored with quantitative methods.

[Q]uantitative methods *per se* are far from establishing the value of given activities. Unfortunately, human interests tend to be so narrow that preoccupation with the only quantitative phase of research immediately leads to further trouble. People who suffer from this ailment will soon fail to recognize problems which do not lend themselves at once to quantitative investigation. And yet, at the time such problems may be much more essential and, in a deeper meaning of the word, scientific than many purely quantitative questions. In the solution of those problems qualitative observation would constitute the first step....Thus we are in danger of missing precisely those opportunities which, in our stage as an immature science, would be the greatest of all. (pp. 47-48)

Some might argue that psychology has outgrown its immaturity in the fifty years since Kohler raised this concern. However, fifty years is not long when considering the development of other sciences (Kuhn, 1970). Regardless of psychology's relative maturity, the discipline settled on a methodological approach before the question of its domain of study was resolved (Fischer, 1994).

Are Traditional Methods of Assessment Appropriate to the Objectives of Clinical Practice?

There is an ambivalence about psychological assessment in the discipline of clinical psychology (Carson, 1990) which reflects a larger tension in clinical psychology. To paraphrase Koch (1969): are clinicians to be adequate to science or to people? Is it possible to be adequate to both given the vision of science adopted by psychology? This vision, one in which objectivity, reduction, and control are guiding ideals, poses a dilemma for the clinical psychologist whose experience as a psychotherapist does not accord with these

ideals. The Boulder Conference in 1949 attempted to resolve this dilemma by establishing guidelines for graduate training in clinical psychology. The result was a scientist-practitioner model for clinical psychologists. This model asserted that clinical psychologists should be trained as psychologists first and clinicians second, and that degree recipients should be able to both generate research and make use of research in their clinical practices (Phares, 1984). This model, despite some modifications, remains the most influential model for training Ph.D. clinical psychologists.

The scientist-practitioner vision of clinical psychology tried to resolve the tension of seemingly unrelated goals between researcher and clinician. Although never intended to suggest an even division of clinical psychologists' time, in practice most clinical psychologists devote the majority of their energies to either being a scientist or to being a practitioner.

Part of the problem of the scientist-practitioner model can be attributed to the model of 'proper scientific methodology and forms of explanation' that psychology developed. This model is based largely on the study of inanimate or insentient objects in the physical sciences, and any exploration of the more personal, subjective, and self-determining capacities of humans has been seen by those who adhere to it as an intellectually problematic endeavor....Thus, we had clinicians whose practices forced them to explore domains of subjective, personal, and idiosyncratic experience where psychological researchers often feared to tread, because doing so was thought to lead invariably to bad science. (Howard, 1993, p. 238)

The tension between the science and practice of clinical psychology can also be seen in the relationship between psychological assessment and psychotherapy. There have been notable calls both for the elimination of assessment prior to psychotherapy (Rogers, 1951) and for the necessity of assessment prior to psychotherapy (Applebaum, 1990), yet there

has been little research on this question (McReynolds, 1985). This state of affairs highlights the separation between researcher and clinician. Applebaum (1990) argues for making assessment and psychotherapy more integral.

Separating the diagnostic and treatment functions creates an artificial schism, to the detriment of tester, treater, and patient. It imposes a custom that came about by way of historical accident and is implemented by political issues having to do with the power of professions rather than the nature of nature. (p. 796)

Though more closely joining the tasks of assessment and therapy appears to be a worthwhile goal, it begs the question of the relevance of psychological assessment to psychotherapy. Kendal and Norton-Ford (1982) have noted that despite the goal of using objective instruments to describe and predict behavior, "there is an unfortunate absence of a direct link to treatment," (p. 320). Similarly, Prout (1986), after reviewing literature addressing the application of psychological assessment to subsequent therapeutic interventions, noted, "It appears that the actual utility of assessment (behavioral or traditional) in planning and conducting treatment programs is unclear and has not been empirically demonstrated at this time," (p. 611).

Given the assumptions of traditional psychological assessment, the question remains: do psychotherapists find much use for the data generated? Can information gained in a setting operating under one set of assumptions be useful in a setting operating on the basis of a different set of assumptions? I would argue that most assessment data is not helpful to clinicians engaged in psychotherapy. The vision of their patient, as seen through the lens of a psychological assessment report, is not the vision shared in the therapy. The assumptions of objectivity, cause and effect, reduction, and control that underlie the data used in writing the report carry little weight, perhaps are even irrelevant, in the psychotherapeutic relationship (Fischer, 1994; Kendal & Norton-Ford, 1982).

What About the Person?

History of Dissenting Voices: Criticism of Traditional Assessment and Measurement

From the start of the psychological testing movement there have been a few voices calling for the assessee's perspective to be heard, and warning about the limitations of measurement. Allport (1967) and Rosenwald (1965) warned about limitations of testing designed to categorize individuals based upon assumptions of the existence of universal laws. George Kelly (1955) emphasized the relativity of knowledge and noted limitations of standardized tests which seek to uncover universal laws concerning personality. His Role Construct Repertory Test is an assessment instrument which capitalizes on each person's unique view of their interpersonal world. J.F.T. Bugental (1964) also criticized psychodiagnostics as a misguided "quest for certainty." He argued that the testing process objectified the patient while giving therapists a false sense of understanding. He called for psychologists to encounter the complete individual, not just traits and instincts that were representative of a classification or theory.

Brown (1970) argued that traditional assessment, based on psychometrics, violates the major tenets of Humanistic psychology. He further claimed that psychometric techniques objectify and depersonalize humans, reduce humans to an assortment of measurable building blocks, and focus on negative experiences. He condemned psychological tests as artificial, harmful, depersonalizing, and rooted in an unequal power arrangement between clinician and assessee. Craddick (1972, 1975), while agreeing that psychological assessment could be troublesome, argued that the endeavor was not antithetical to Humanistic psychology. He reasoned that assessments must allow for more spontaneity and genuineness.

Fischer (1994) suggests a significant reason for the absence of "spontaneity and genuineness" in most assessment situations: psychology's struggling identity as a science. As psychological testing became dominated by the natural science paradigm:

The challenge and exhilaration of demonstrable 'prediction and control,' along with the reward of becoming accepted among other sciences, readily captivated psychology. Concomitant allegiance to 'objectivity' turned the study of personality into a technical gathering of 'responses,' 'productions,' 'reaction times.' The subject's task was to emit recordable, scoreable behaviors and verbalizations.

(Fischer, 1994, p. 319)

Yet despite this energy, and the lure of scientific legitimacy, many authors pointed to problems with an emphasis upon narrowly conceived objectivity. An attempt to increase objectivity in psychological assessment resulted in an increase of "actuarial" methods; scores generated by the assessee which are compared to normative data. The utility of this method is limited when addressing an individual's unique situation.

Purely 'actuarial' methods are more likely to be wrong than right, if for no other reason than they cannot take into account the myriad of relevant 'human factors'....[In this sense psychological tests are] stupid. By design they reify heuristic constructs. They do not keep basic assumptions 'in mind,' and alter interpretations accordingly. Like a computer -- garbage in, garbage out. (Marlowe, et. al., 1992, p. 14)

Not only can objective tests be limited in their applicability, but perhaps more importantly their objectivity, the basis of their utility, can be questioned. Goldman (1993) points out how "objective" tests are actually very subjective.

Yet much of current psychological research makes such assumptions, for example, that the sum of responses to a personality questionnaire makes up an objective datum. In reality, the only objective element in such a process is the scoring. An item is subjectively written by someone who understands it to represent a given concept or behavior, and then it is read by the responder in a way that may or may not be the same as the item writer intended....The end result is a number that

represents a sum of n unknown thinking processes for just one individual. That number then is combined with those of n respondents into a statistic that represents the means of group of individuals, each of whom may have read each item and each response option differently....How much more we would know about what was going on in the minds of the participants in a study, and what their responses mean to them, if we ask them and then follow up with further questions to be more certain that we understand what they mean... (p. 252)

One danger of relying heavily on objective test data is that of misdiagnosis (Morrison et. al., 1994). Not only can the results of so-called objective tests be questioned; it has been well documented that healthy individuals can purposely appear disturbed on a variety of psychological assessment instruments. On both the MMPI-2 (Rogers et al., 1993) and the Rorschach (Netter & Viglione, 1994), fully one third of experimental subjects were able to mislead clinicians examining the data.

The influence of many factors on responses elicited by projective techniques has also been documented (Masling, 1960; Leventhal et. al., 1962; Schafer, 1954). Responses are not solely due to the test stimulus nor do they reflect only the traits and abilities being measured. Other factors, such as "set, attitudes, transference feelings, and resistances must be taken into account" (Leventhal, et. al., 1962, p. 66). Masling (1960) identified four major variables which can influence projective data: 1) the method of administration, 2) the testing situation, 3) the influence of the examiner, and 4) the influence of the subject on the examiner. According to Masling the "crucial element" in influencing the data appeared to be the extent to which the assessee's attitude toward the testing situation was influenced by the experimental conditions. "There is considerable evidence that [subjects] in an unstructured situation will utilize all available cues to complete their assigned task" (p. 635). Subjects not only will use cues furnished by the inkblots, but also those furnished by their needs, attitudes and fears, and feelings toward examiner. "Thus, the procedure

that many clinicians hoped would serve as an X-ray proves, on close examination, to function also as a mirror, reflecting impartially [the subject], [the experimenter], this situation and their interactions" (Masling, 1960, p. 635).

Non-Traditional Approaches to Psychological Assessment

A common theme of non-traditional approaches to psychological assessment is emphasis upon the importance of context, both in the assessee's life and in the actual assessment endeavor. Part of this context is the relationship between the assessor and the assessee (Berg, 1984). Several authors recognize the importance of this relationship, and the potential collaboration between assessee and assessor, as the most important element of a productive psychological assessment (Fischer, 1994; Clair & Prendergast, 1994; Leventhal et. al., 1962; Craddick, 1975; Shevrin & Scheckman, 1973). Levine (1981) and Berg (1984) insist that assessment must be construed as an interaction between two human beings and cannot be treated as a sterile opportunity to gather data. The patient, the context, and the data generated must be considered collectively if anything useful is to come of the interaction. Acknowledging the importance of this relationship begins to reduce the illusion of objectivity in the assessment situation and to draw attention to aspects of the assessee's experience which can be more relevant to therapeutic success. Indeed, Clair and Prendergast (1994) suggest that psychological assessments can be made more clinically useful by adopting some features of brief psychotherapy, most notably a collaborative relationship with the assessee.

Though Rogers (1951) did not advocate psychological assessment, several others in the humanistic psychology movement have raised the possibility of a humanistic assessment process (e.g. Craddick, 1972). Brown (1972) vigorously challenged traditional psychological assessment. Perhaps facetiously, he offered an alternative approach to assessment involving as much soul-searching by the clinician as assessment of the client. He suggested the relationship between clinician and client should be equal, with

the clinician striving for genuine and authentic interactions with the patient while also examining his or her own motivations and shortcomings.

Several authors have suggested that it is possible to use psychometrically derived assessment instruments while maintaining a humanistic attitude (e.g. Craddick, 1972; Sugarman, 1978). An important part of this attitude is for the clinician to "share oneself" in an attempt to dilute the secretiveness and dishonesty of some traditional assessment procedures (Craddick, 1975). The development of mutual trust is crucial to this type of approach. With this in mind, Craddick (1972, 1975) suggests explaining what each instrument assesses, making sure all of the patient's questions are answered. He also suggests that clinicians solicit feedback from the patient about how they experienced the clinician during the testing. Craddick maintains this solicitation is a way to facilitate greater clinician self-understanding and to increase the collaborative nature of the assessment. Sugarman (1978) also believes that assessment can be consonant with the humanistic perspective. Poor diagnostic practice, and not an inherent weakness of the assessment process, is to blame for many of the problems in the assessment process. The examiner should actively engage the assessee in the assessment process and be aware of the interpersonal context of the assessment and the data generated.

Actively engaging the patient and establishing a collaborative relationship is a key to non-traditional approaches to psychological assessment (e.g. Fischer, 1994; Clair & Prendergast, 1994). The clinician must strive to set up a testing relationship "in which the testee looks upon the psychologist as a 'helper' and then tries to work with the psychologist in the active process of understanding himself better" (Leventhal et. al., 1962, p. 71). To help establish this relationship, the clinician must start "where the patient is" (p. 72). Leventhal et. al. (1962) identified three broad consequences of this kind of approach to the assessment situation:

- 1) it has provided basically more valid and reliable test data, less influenced by

uncontrolled situational factors and transference effects; 2) our understanding of both the relationship formed during testing and the context from which the test data has come have provided more meaningful diagnostic material; and 3) it has frequently made the testing experience psychologically advantageous and therapeutic for the patient. (p. 66)

Attention should be paid to this second advantage: A better understanding of the context from which the test data has come can provide more meaningful material. A large part of the context, in addition to the variables discussed by Masling (1960), is the patient's experience of the assessment process.

Constance Fischer's (1994) approach to assessment represents the most comprehensively articulated alternative to traditional psychological assessment. Her "individualized" approach is firmly rooted in existential-phenomenological psychology. This approach goes beyond normative and classificatory data to address a person's situation as he/she experiences it and contributes to it, offering "ways to explore and describe a person's life in process" (Fischer, 1994, p. 5). The human-science tradition, with which Fischer identifies, calls for psychology to remain a scientific discipline, but to acknowledge that there are some aspects of being human that are not amenable to traditional research methods of natural science. "These characteristics include humans' simultaneously shaping of their environments even as they are shaped by them, behaving in accordance with their experience rather than just responding to external determinants, and being purposive" (p. 5).

Three guiding principles in humanizing the assessment process call for the increased participation of the assessee, the use of relevant descriptions of behavior, and a sensitivity to context. Fischer (1994) envisions the assessment process as a collaborative effort in which the clinician and client work together, each having input during the assessment as well as in the resulting report. "As co-assessor, the client is acknowledged

as partly responsible for his or her past and future and as capable of participating in his or her own redevelopment" (Fischer, 1994, p. 47).

Fischer (1994) relies heavily on description to capture an assessee's "comportment" (p. 37), or the way the assessee carries him or herself from day to day. Instead of traditional interpretation, description using primary data (e.g. life events, test behavior) is emphasized. "The client's comportment is sampled (represented) by re-presenting particular instances relevant to the referral, along with their meaning to the assessor" (p. 46). Test scores augment the representation created by the clinician, both in the traditional use of scores and as indices of behavior during the assessment.

Considering the context of behavior broadens and enriches the clinician's understanding of events. Events within and without the assessment experience are described as behaviors in-the-world.

Contexts include 1) the physical setting or condition -- such as blood levels of various chemicals, 2) the location within a temporal sequence, 3) the assessor's relation to the client, both as influence and as access to the client, and 4) the meanings of the situation for the client (as comprehended by the assessor but presented as much as possible in the client's words and actions). (Fischer, 1994, p. 46)

Thus Fischer identifies the assessee's experience (number 4 in the quote above) as an important element of the context of a psychological assessment.

Fischer maintains that although there is nothing inherently objectifying or reductive about traditional assessment instruments, it is the way in which the generated data is interpreted that can be objectifying or reductive. Fischer's approach offers a different attitude with which the tools can be used. A person's life is the starting and ending point of the assessment. Data from assessment tools is considered secondary data which is used to help make sense of actual events and the process of assessment.

Assessment Literature Addressing the Assessee's Perspective

There have been other assessment methods developed which focus upon the experience of the assessee. Self-assessments have been shown to be at least as predictive of certain criteria as other assessment methods (Shrauger & Osberg, 1981; Wetzler & Marlowe, 1993). This should be self-evident, especially given the well documented "actor-observer" phenomena; people are more attuned to situational factors of their actions than are outside evaluators (Jones & Nisbett, 1971). In other words, an observer, such as an assessor, is more likely to attribute a person's actions to "personality" than to situational factors. Hanson (1992) found an analysis of themes in self-reports of emotionally meaningful daily events to be a useful method of identifying relevant issues in people's lives. Alexander (1988) approaches understanding an individual by analysis of stories, recollections, and other personal data, and suggests that people find it less threatening to produce this type of data than to respond to evaluative data. In organizing and interpreting the data, the "focus is on discovering who the person is in a dynamic sense rather than what the person is in a categorical sense (e.g., neurotic, psychotic, or introverted)" (p. 268).

The methods suggested by Hanson (1992) and Alexander (1988) emphasize the experience of the assessee. Given the importance of context in psychological assessment (e.g. Fischer, 1994; Leventhal et. al., 1962; Craddick, 1975; Acklin, 1993) one would expect that a significant body of research has explored the assessee's experience of the assessment process. The psychological assessment literature, however, has very few references to this type of work.

When the perspective of the assessee has been addressed in the assessment literature, it most often has been based upon assumptions of the clinician. For example, an important chapter by Schafer (1954) explored the interpersonal dynamics of the clinical testing situation. As a part of this work, he included a section examining the assessee's

experience of being tested in which he detailed "the irrational, primitive, usually implicit attitudes and conceptions in the patient being tested...[in other words] what goes on below the surface of the testing relationship and what is implied in its *disruptions*," (italics added, pp. 33-34). Schafer's understanding of patients' experience is based upon clinical observations held together with psychoanalytic glue. It is notable that he referred to aspects of the assessee's experience as a "disruption," implying that it negatively impacts the testing situation. He described five "constants of the patient's position" (p. 43) in a psychological assessment, all of which contribute to an assessee's anxiety arousal: 1) intimate communication (self-exposure) and violation of privacy without a basis in trust, 2) loss of control of the interpersonal relationship, 3) exposure to the dangers of premature self-awareness, 4) regressive temptations, and 5) dangers of freedom. In addition to discussion of these constants, Schafer explores the assessee's behavior in terms of both psychosexual orientation and psychoanalytic defensive styles. The five constants listed above most closely address what assessee's experience during a psychological evaluation and merit further discussion.

The first of Schafer's (1954) constants addresses the patients' responses to perhaps the most salient situational concern of the psychological assessment: the lack of privacy. He notes that, "Testing is a violation of one of our usually highly valued social interests: privacy," (p. 35). Schafer hypothesizes that patients' are highly aware of being exposed and that this experience is more passive than active. He likens the position of the patient, *vis a vis* the assessor, to that of a "voyeur's passive victim" (p. 34). He suggests this experience is heightened by the assessee's not knowing whether to trust the assessor.

The problem to the patient is all the more acute because he knows he is being peeked at, because he feels to some extent that he ought not (though some patients do) pull down his psychological window shade, and because he does not know for sure just what is being seen and is not even certain that he ever will know. Being

left in ignorance thus, he may easily begin to fear the worst," (p. 34).

Schafer (1954) offers several factors which diminish the anxiety accompanying self-exposure. He suggests that the patient feels relief, at least at an unconscious level, at not knowing what exactly he is communicating to the assessor. He also suggests that patients experience relief that their relationship with the assessor is transitory because it is easier to be spontaneous, warm, and honest with someone with whom one will not become closely involved.

Schafer (1954) also posits that the loss of control in the assessment relationship is a salient factor in the assessee's experience. This is based in the unequal balance of power in the relationship: the assessee is unable to control situations he or she is placed in by the assessor. Schafer suggests this situation undermines some of the "external props of [the assessee's] defensive structure," (p. 37) prompting greater use of his or her psychological defenses during the assessment. Related to this, Schafer also offers the danger of self-confrontation as another constant of the assessee's experience. He suggests that most assessees are interpreting the responses that they give and are in danger of realizing something about themselves they are unprepared to acknowledge. Thus the assessee is put in an ambivalent position: "[T]he patient will want to cooperate by responding fully and openly, come what may; on the other hand, because of his neurotic anxieties and his masochistic need to suffer, the patient may fear to stick his neck out and may be reluctant to help himself," (Schafer, 1954, p. 38). He maintains that the assessee wants to hide things from others as well as hide them from himself.

Another constant Schafer offers about the assessee's experience of being psychologically assessed is that the patient is tempted to regress to an entirely passive and helpless position because he or she feels confused and defeated by not being able help him or herself. However, "Asking for and receiving help are difficult and painful to patients," (p.39) and Schafer maintains that they will be hesitant to give up power to someone else,

even if that person offers help. Schafer's (1954) final constant is that assessee's experience the freedom to respond to unstructured tests as demanding and anxiety provoking. He maintains patients prefer a clear, but restricted, set of options from which to choose.

Thus Schafer's understanding of the assessee's experience, no doubt built upon keen observation and empathic interaction with patient's during numerous psychological assessments, is structured by his theoretical allegiance to psychoanalysis. He offers a psychoanalytic explanation, not a description, of the assessee's perspective. He emphasizes anxiety arousal and attributes patient behavior to hypothesized psychological structures (e.g. defenses). An underlying theme through Schafer's explanation is that the patient's experience, albeit important and instructional, alters the testing process in a less than positive way.

Another attempt to address the experience of being psychologically assessed is a book encouragingly titled Psychological Testing: The Examinee Perspective (1986, Nevo & Jager, Eds.). However, the examinee's perspective, as it is explored in this work, appears to be limited by authors' assumptions and restrictive investigatory methods. A point of emphasis in this book is how to improve standardized testing; the conclusion made is to obtain feedback from examinees via standardized questionnaires. One such questionnaire contains 7 pages of forced-choice questions and allows for 10 lines of "Additional Comments" at the end (Nevo & Sfez, 1986). In a representative chapter, Jager (1986) suggests that it is important to measure both the examinee's and the examiner's perspectives on the psychodiagnostic process. He proposes questionnaires based on the reasonable "theory" that every examinee has some prior knowledge and/or disposition toward psychological testing, or develops this during the testing process. He continues by stating that these predispositions have an effect on an individual's test behavior. "The examinee's experience of the psychodiagnostic procedure consists of emotions, attitudes, and cognitions produced and shaped by: a) the diagnostic goals of the psychologist, b) the

external conditions, and c) the internal predispositions brought by the client into the process" (Jager, 1986, p. 130). While attempting to bring the examinee's perspective into view, Jager's approach still rests upon the researcher's assumptions about the testing situation; the researcher, not the examinee, dictates which aspects of the situation are important.

In a discussion concerning "Face Validity" of psychological instruments, Jager (1986) makes some interesting comments which bely the nature and assumptions of much psychological testing. The goal seems to be how to keep the testee from disturbing the test. (Recall Schafer's (1954) use of the word "disruptions.") He suggests that during the examination the testee might formulate some ideas about the purpose and interpretation of the test. "While most of the perceptions will be false, they still may influence the examinee's reactions during the psychodiagnostic process, leading to a biased response. It is the responsibility of the testing psychologist to evaluate these perceptions and estimate the bias accordingly" (Jager, 1986, p. 131). Notably, rather than the examinee's perspective being considered essential to an understanding of the examinee, the examinee is seen as *a source of bias*. The inflexibility of the testing process, the belief that the assessee should not know the purpose of a test, is not considered as a source of bias. Thus, Jager points out an important aspect of the psychodiagnostic process and then offers a decidedly narrow traditional scientific interpretation of the situation.

Bennett-Levy et al. (1994) perhaps come closest to exploring systematically the experience of assessees. They developed a questionnaire, based upon informal interviews with patients and discussion amongst the authors themselves, to assess consumers' experience of neuropsychological assessments. Based upon these discussions, their 48 question instrument focuses on procedural variables covering four areas: outcome, expectations and preparation, testing, discussion and feedback. Respondents are also given an opportunity to make additional comments on the questionnaire. The emphasis of

the questionnaire is to assess the respondent's level of satisfaction with the assessment. Of the 129 respondents, 91% experienced it as either helpful (56%) or neutral (35%). Various influences on this experienced satisfaction included: 1) expectations and preparation for the assessment, 2) perceived relevance of the assessment, 3) length of the assessment, and 4) whether the assessee was given useful feedback. Bennett-Levy et al. (1994) found that questions designed to measure the expectations and preparation of the assessee, as well as those measuring the assessee's experience of the feedback, were highly related to reported satisfaction. However, the relationship between actual testing variables and overall satisfaction was weak. They concluded: "Overall, however, it seems that what happens during testing may be less important in shaping the consumer's experience than what happens before and after," (Bennett-Levy, 1994, p. 232). This conclusion is potentially useful for more traditional psychological assessments, however, the experience of the assessee during an assessment is still somewhat of a mystery. Interviews with patients influenced the development of Bennett-Levy et al.'s (1994) questionnaire, presumably diluting the authors' assumptions as to what was important enough to inquire about. The outcome measure was a global assesment of satisfaction, leaving psychologists guessing about a more detailed description of the experience of being neuropsychologically assessed.

Hagit Benziman (1986) recognizes the importance of asking the examinee about his or her experience of being tested. He calls for a "systematic gathering of information from individuals tested" (Benziman, 1986). Benziman believes that knowledge of the examinee's experience of being psychologically evaluated would enhance the psychodiagnostician's awareness and empathy for the patient, ultimately improving his or her aptitude in administering and analyzing the tests:

It is important to understand the significance of the psychological test for the client, its implications and the processes it may precipitate....Do psychological tests in general, and personality tests in particular, constitute a difficult and disturbing

experience? Or do they perhaps constitute an experience of relief? Are they capable of bringing about the first hints of insight? Is it at all possible to generalize about their implications or lasting effects? There are, as yet, no answers to these questions (Benziman, 1986, p. 154).

It has been ten years since these questions have been asked, and little progress has been made in answering them.

In the examination of intercultural approaches to psychological assessment, Jones & Thorne (1987) most clearly call for an understanding of the assessee's experience. This call comes from their concern that cultural minorities might be misrepresented by traditional assessment methods. They argue that intercultural assessment must access the direct experience of the subject; this is an essential element to understand what the assessments yield.

Few would argue with the proposition that clinical assessment must in some way be oriented toward understanding the understandings of individuals: how they construe their experiences, their predicaments, their lives. All theoretical frameworks concede that one cannot adequately comprehend psychological disturbances through exclusive reliance on procedures that remain outside the disturbance as it is lived and experienced.... Although clinical assessment must somehow be grounded in experience and introspection, subjective experience is often deemphasized in contemporary procedures. And although neglect of personal meanings is pervasive in much standardized assessment, the problem is even more critical in intercultural assessment. (Jones & Thorne, 1987, pp. 491-492)

Researchers of intercultural assessment are acutely aware of potential differences between the assumptions of psychological assessment and the people being evaluated in light of these assumptions. In the intercultural assessment literature, differences are figural; they serve to highlight potentially problematic areas in the assessment of cultural minorities.

These potential problems of which Jones and Thorne (1987) warn clinicians to be mindful are present in all psychological assessments and threaten to obscure an individual with stereotypes and assumptions.

A New Approach I: Research

There have been many psychologists who have challenged researchers and clinicians to be mindful of the context of psychological evaluations (Fischer, 1994; Craddick, 1975; Rapaport, Gill, & Schafer, 1968; Schafer, 1967; Acklin, 1993; Tallent, 1992). The experience of the assessee is a vital part of that context, and warrants attention in the psychological assessment literature. Several writers have made the direct call for psychologists to listen to the assessee (Jones & Thorne, 1987; Benziman, 1986; Fischer, 1992), yet there has been little research addressing this concern. Literature which has addressed this area examines the assessee's experience in ways which seem ill-suited to the question at hand (Nevo & Jager, 1986). There is a clear gap in the literature concerning this important aspect of psychological assessment.

An inquiry about the experience of people participating in psychological assessments from a perspective sensitive to both context and lived experience is clearly called for. Research from an existential-phenomenological perspective has been demonstrated to explicate human experience in a way that is both experience near and context sensitive (e.g. Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1989); thus such an approach seems well suited to the question at hand. A better description and understanding of people's experience of the evaluation process might help clinicians be more relevant in their assessments, accurate in their understanding of the patient, and improve the validity of their recommendations for psychotherapy. It could help bridge the gap between scientist and practitioner so acutely felt in clinical psychology. The following chapter reviews the existential-phenomenological and hermeneutic perspective in psychological research, particularly as it offers opportunities

beyond those available in a natural science paradigm. Following this methodological discussion, the procedures of the present study are described.

Chapter II: METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Existential-Phenomenological and Hermeneutic Research in Psychology

Psychology Conceived of as a Natural Science

An historical examination of the development of psychology suggests that the search for universal laws, and the faith in a particular view of science to reveal these laws, provided the ground from which psychology grew (Gould, 1981). Some of the most influential figures in the development of psychology, including Sir Francis Galton, James Cattell, and Emil Kraepelin, envisioned psychology as another natural science (McReynolds, 1986). The major tenets of traditional natural science can be traced to Descartes' quest for certainty and to Newton's vision of an orderly universe (Wolf, 1989; Capra, 1982; Kuhn, 1970; Watson & Evans, 1991). These tenets of natural science, reviewed below, can be summarized as truth, objectivity, method, reduction, cause and effect, and control.

First and foremost, traditional natural science affirms that there exists universal laws, or "truths", which dictate the workings of the universe and all things that occupy the universe (Capra, 1982). The tenet of objectivity maintains that investigators can make observations without influencing what is observed; there can be a distinct separateness between scientist and subject. Properly pursued, methods of investigation will lead to truth. These methods begin with clear specifications of procedures that are publicly observable and replicable. The discipline of psychology has adopted the "scientific method" as its model for generating such truths because it "*permits* a person to discover the causes of natural phenomenon, including an organism's behavior" (italics added, Carlson, 1984, p. 30). The scientific method, as it is taught to students of psychology, consists of four major steps: 1) Identify the problem and formulate hypothetical cause-and-effect relations among the variables. 2) Design and execute the experiment. 3) Determine the truth of the hypothesis by examining the data from the experiment. 4) Communicate the

results (Carlson, 1984; Watson & Evans, 1991). The tenet of reduction reflects the belief that the best way to understand a complex phenomena is to reduce it into simpler and, often, isolated elements. The tenet of cause and effect maintains that elements in the universe interact in lawful and predictable ways: it describes how any phenomena can be explained and/or understood. The orderliness of the universe allows the discovery of causes which underlie events. Control is the final tenet of natural science; once truth has been discovered, and the relevant principles of cause and effect are understood, elements can be manipulated in ways both to determine and predict their outcome.

Critiques of Psychology as a Natural Science

There have been advances in the natural sciences, especially in physics, which call into question the Newtonian ideas of universal laws and objective methods of inquiry (Capra, 1982, Wolf, 1989). Both the interconnectedness of observer and observed and the non-linear relationship of cause and effect were important elements of the "quantum revolution" in physics during the first half of this century. The social influences on the so-called objective discovery of "facts" has also been well documented (LaTour & Woolgar, 1979). Although psychology has long emulated the discipline of physics, it has been slow to incorporate these changes and still largely clings to ideas that other sciences have recognized to be limited in their applicability (Capra, 1982). Perhaps it is time to reconsider psychology's allegiance to the "hard" sciences.

Critiques of psychology's adoption of a natural science approach can be broken down into four broad statements: 1) Human experience is too variegated to be reduced solely to numbers; 2) Science is a human endeavor; there are limits to objectivity; 3) Truth is perspectival; and 4) Psychology's method is poorly matched to its subject of study. Each of these ideas will be considered below.

The first critique is that human experience is too variegated to be reduced solely to numbers. The encounter of one human with another, even in the context of a professional

setting, consists of emergent properties, many of which cannot be specified (Buber, 1958). Indeed, this encounter involves many "subtle negotiations of meaning" (Davis, 1974, p. 28) for even the most seemingly simple task. While numbers might be more easily manipulated and organized, other aspects of human behavior and experience are ignored for this convenience. "The product of scientific procedure is today suspect, because it restricts the empirical field and categorizes and reduces data to numbers, ignoring many aspects of reality" (Davis, 1974, p. 28). Certainly, using language to capture phenomena, rather than numbers, also has limitations. Yet traditionally, researchers have been more comfortable working with numbers than with language, down-playing the consequences of this choice. "Precisely because of the known pitfalls of language, science has mistrusted verbal meanings and the artifices of logic, choosing mechanical, mathematical, or topographical models as the best notation" (Davis, 1974, p. 28), with little said about the "known pitfalls" of numbers.

In his discussion of attempts to measure intelligence, Gould (1981) addresses two common pitfalls, or fallacies as he calls them, of reducing human phenomena to numbers. The first of these fallacies is reification. People have a tendency to convert abstract concepts into seemingly real entities. Gould (1981) further explains:

We recognize the importance of mentality in our lives and wish to characterize it, in part so that we can make the divisions and distinctions among people that our cultural and political systems dictate. We therefore give the word 'intelligence' to this wondrously complex and multifaceted set of human capabilities. This shorthand symbol is then reified and intelligence achieves its dubious status as a unitary thing (p. 24).

Gould (1981) further notes that the second fallacy is ranking, or our tendency to order complex phenomena in a gradually ascending, linear scale: "....ranking requires a criterion for assigning all individuals to their proper status in the single series. And what better

criterion than an objective number? Thus the common style embodying both fallacies of thought has been *quantification*, or the measurement of intelligence as a single number for each person" (p. 24, italics mine). Reification and ranking are two examples of how human phenomena can be reduced to a deceptively simple and orderly use of numbers.

Another critique of psychology's adoption of the natural science approach is that science is a human endeavor; there are limits to objectivity. A fundamental belief of the traditional natural science model is that the object being studied never knows it is being studied and behaves exactly the same whether observed or not. The scientist observes without entering the system, and the object does not reflect upon being observed. Toulmin (1981) argues that psychology must rethink its allegiance to this type of relationship with the world, and find some other way of reducing bias other than refusing to interact with its objects of study. He notes:

We cannot treat our subjects merely as objects: we have to find new ways of studying human behavior which take it into account that the people we are studying are going to act differently just because we are studying them; and that as human beings 'and even as scientists' we have to see ourselves as reintegrated into the system of nature that we study (Toulmin, 1981, p. 254).

Gergen (1985), influenced by the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966), notes that the process of understanding is the result of an active, cooperative enterprise of persons in relationship; it is a social process. Far from being "objective," descriptions and explanations of the world constitute forms of social action which serve to sustain and support social patterns. Because people must do science, science is socially embedded. "It progresses by hunch, vision, and intuition" (Gould, 1981, p. 22).

LaTour and Woolgar (1979) also observed the many subtle interpersonal negotiations that underpin the process of even the most quantitative laboratory research. Their ethnographic investigation of a group of scientists in a prestigious biochemistry

laboratory highlighted the importance of social influences and rhetoric in the discovery of objective facts. With detailed, minute to minute observation of the events in the laboratory, LaTour and Woolgar (1979) noted how "Argument between scientists transforms some statements [made by individual scientists] into figments of one's subjective imagination, and others into facts of nature....By observing [this process], we showed that reality was the *consequence* of the settlement of a dispute rather than its *cause*," (p. 236). A fact, then, is understood as the result of an interpersonal process in which one person persuades another that a certain statement can be made without qualifying the statement. For example, the fictitious statement "Dr. Soandso claims that an over active hypothalamus produces Factor X," is qualified by the phrase "Dr. Soandso claims," limiting its universality. If the scientific community can be persuaded that Factor X *does* seem to result from an over active hypothalamus, then the qualifying phrase can be discarded: "An over active hypothalamus produces Factor X." LaTour and Woolgar (1979) argue that the strategies used to persuade others to discard qualifying phrases do not involve discovery of facts, but justifications of statements.

Lyons (1960) also explores the limits and assumptions of objectivity and measurement by examining an unlikely source: the neighborhood game of marbles, or immies. One can try to understand the game objectively, by measurements and descriptions of rules, or from the participants' vantage point. Some measurements, such as the size of an immie hole, are reliable but cannot be reduced to decontextualized numbers. Participants know when the size of an immie hole is right. The size is not in metric units; nonetheless, the size is final and absolute. However, when the backyard game is standardized for tournament play, there is a change.

In the tournament, and of course in other adult activity as well, and particularly in science, its epitome, rules as well as measurements form a set of more or less arbitrary conventions. They work; that is the very most that can be said for

them....All the measurements which adults make have this in common, that they require some accepted ruler, and an order issuing therefrom, toward which the person genuflects, at least implicitly, each time that he calculates the distance between two points (p. 284).

Lyons suggests that rules and measurement are "more or less arbitrary conventions." They work, but what sort of work do psychologists accomplish with these conventions? The appropriateness of these conventions to the task of psychology must be questioned.

The third critique of psychology's adoption of the natural science approach, that Truth is perspectival, posits that there are limits to Truth, just as there are limits to objectivity. "Truth" is capitalized here to suggest the idea that there is only one correct answer to every question science asks. Traditional natural science asserts that Truth is universal; it is not influenced by variables such as gender of the investigator or funding sources of the research grant. However, "facts are not pure and unsullied bits of information; culture also influences what we see and how we see it. Theories, moreover, are not inexorable inductions from facts" (Gould, 1981, p. 22). It is time to give up the "twin myths of objectivity and inexorable march toward truth" (Gould, 1981, p. 23) if science is to recognize the cultural constraints upon it. Science must be understood as a social phenomenon (Gergen, 1985; LaTour and Woolgar, 1979). Attention must be paid to how *people* organize and order the world. *People* generate and make sense of data.

The final, and perhaps most important, critique is that psychology's method is poorly matched to its subject. Sherif (1981) suggests that psychology has attempted to gain credential as a science by imitating more established disciplines such as Physics and Chemistry. A number of writers believe that psychology's pursuit of scientific respect has been at the expense of respect for the people and phenomenon it studies. Koch (1969) argued that "At the time of its inception psychology was unique in the extent to which its institutionalization preceded its content and its methods preceded its problems" (p. 64). It

can be said that psychology's commitment to natural science overshadowed its commitment to humanity. Kohler (1947), and more recently Gardner (1985), has noted that an emphasis on sophisticated experimental models in psychology has discouraged examining important and relevant issues not amenable to traditional methods of quantification borrowed from natural science. Gould (1981) also calls for the assumptions behind all research to be examined. Too often faith has been placed in sophisticated research designs without questioning either the purpose of the research or the appropriateness of the research method for the question asked.

The organization of knowledge is not neutral; it reflects the received view of the physical and social universe agreed upon within that discipline (e.g. Gergen, 1985; Kuhn, 1970). The fact that much of psychology is built upon the assumptions of natural science suggests as much about what psychologists find important as it does about the scientific legitimacy of psychology. Romanyshyn and Whalen (1989) argue that the discipline of psychology should be less concerned with its status as a science and more with the way it organizes its subject matter. The demands of the subject matter and not the demands of the discipline must shape the organization of knowledge within that discipline.

Important Alternatives to Natural Science Methodology

During the middle of this century, Kohler (1947) questioned psychology's ready adoption of scientific methods that demanded quantification in the service of discovering universal truths about human behavior. He suggested vital questions might not be asked because they did not easily lend themselves to quantification. Others have also noted the limiting consequences of psychology's acceptance of a narrow view of science (Howard, 1993; Romanyshyn & Whalen, 1989; Gergen, 1985). The demands of "sound" methodology, as conceived of from a natural science perspective, have lead Goldman (1993) to comment: "One must ask, however, how often traditional designs produce ideas that really stimulate new directions of study. We have, for the most part, lost the 'search'

that is the root of the word research" (p. 253).

Alternatives do exist to traditional notions of science, as evidenced by the human-science perspective of psychology adopted by Fischer (1994, 1989) and her colleagues. There is growing influence of existential-phenomenological and hermeneutic approaches to traditional areas of concern in psychology (Valle & Halling, 1989; Giorgi, 1992; Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1989). Existential-phenomenology and hermeneutics offer valuable alternatives to the traditional logical-positivist dominated research methodology of psychology. They directly address human experience and meaning as these are present in the world.

Existential-phenomenology has its roots in the philosophical phenomenology of Husserl. For Husserl, phenomenology was the "rigorous and unbiased study of things as they appear so that one might come to an essential understanding of human consciousness and experience" (Valle, King, & Halle, 1989, p. 6). Heidegger, a student of Husserl, recognized the appropriateness of the methods of phenomenology to examine the existential concerns elucidated by Kierkegaard. Existential-phenomenological psychology "has become that psychological discipline that seeks to explicate the *essence, structure, or form* of both human experience and human behavior as revealed through essentially *descriptive* techniques including disciplined reflection" (Valle, King, & Halle, 1989, p. 6). This descriptive explication acknowledges the importance of the context with-in which human experience and behavior occurs. Existence always implies a being that is a "being-in-the-world" (Heidegger, 1962). Existential-phenomenological psychology seeks to describe human experience as it is lived, and speaks to the unity and interrelationships of the individual and his or her world (Thompson et al, 1989; Valle et. al., 1989; Capra, 1982). Each individual and his or her world *coconstitute* one another: "It is through the world that the very *meaning* of the person's existence emerges both for himself or herself and for others. The converse is equally true. It is each individual's existence that gives his or her

world its meaning" (Valle et. al., 1989, p. 7).

Hermeneutics is concerned with meaning and interpretation. It developed as a discipline from the interpretation of biblical texts (Palmer, 1969). At a basic level it can be defined as "the study of understanding, especially the task of understanding texts" (Palmer, 1969, p. 9) and can be extended to inform attempts to understand human phenomena (Heidegger, 1962; Gadamer, 1975; Habermas, 1984). When applied to psychology, "hermeneutics seeks to elucidate and make explicit our practical understanding of human actions by providing an interpretation of them" (Packer, 1985, p. 1086). People try to make sense of what they encounter, and their interpretations are based in their own situations within the world. Packer (1985) summarizes this view:

As social agents ourselves, we always find meaning in a course of action, not by abstracting from it a logical structure but by understanding what human purposes and interests the action serves. Hermeneutics is concerned with meaning, as a sensibleness that can be found to be present or absent in a course of action or in an account of that action (p. 1086).

Hermeneutic inquiry takes as its starting point that any observer of human conduct, despite the ambiguities of that conduct, has a preliminary understanding of what is being observed. This *preunderstanding* is highlighted in Gadamer's (1975) work. One brings to any text or situation one's own history: assumptions and presuppositions based upon one's own culture and experience. People must always have some sort of perspective, being-in-the-world, and thus one's understanding of any situation is in some way influenced by this history.

When a person approaches a text or a person or a situation, he or she can only see a part of the whole. One's initial understanding of the whole is based upon that part and one's preunderstanding. The whole will necessarily be misunderstood in some way based upon this limited knowledge. As one encounters additional aspects of the whole, the

person's understanding of the whole is modified. Each part, as it is encountered, is understood within the context of the imagined whole. The process of repeatedly moving from the parts to the whole, and from the whole to the parts is called the hermeneutic circle. Hermeneutic inquiry is therefore an openly dialogic process (Pollio, Henley, & Thompson, in press; Valle et al., 1989).

Heidegger (1962) proposed that "hermeneutic phenomenology" was the most appropriate approach to the study of human action. As opposed to the goals of traditional scientific approaches, Packer (1985) suggests that

the hermeneutic approach seeks to elucidate and make explicit our practical understanding of human actions by providing an interpretation of them. It is a historically situated approach, regarding explanation as first and foremost the giving of an account that is sensible in the way it addresses current interests and concerns, not a search for timeless and ahistorical laws and formal structures (p. 1088).

Echoing Heidegger's (1962) assertion that this approach is an appropriate method for investigating human experience and action, Packer also describes the limits of hermeneutic inquiry.

The end product of a hermeneutic inquiry -- an interpretive account -- is more modest in its aims than is a formal set of rules or a causal law, but at the same time it is, I believe, subtle and complex, intellectually satisfying, and more appropriate to human action, embracing the historical openness, the ambiguity and opacity, the deceptions, dangers, and delights that action manifests. (Packer, 1985, p. 1092)

Existential-phenomenological psychologists have set out to understand human experience using descriptive techniques. This understanding is organized in terms of "structures" of human experience found in thorough, first-person descriptions of lived experiences (Pollio et. al., in press; Polkinghorne, 1989; Valle, King, & Halling, 1989). These structures can be understood as common, or global, themes found in the narrative

descriptions people offer of their lived experiences (Kvale, 1983). Unlike the products of traditional experimental psychological research, these structures are not causal hypotheses or models attempting to explain "Why." The common themes are not offered as universal truths, but as "figural aspects emerging from a given set of experiences" (Thompson et.al., 1989, p. 141). The goal of phenomenological research is to produce clear, precise, and systematic descriptions of participants' experienced meanings of a certain phenomenon (Polkinghorne, 1989). In general, this research method is well suited to the needs of clinical psychologists who must recognize the importance of acknowledging both an individual's unique, lived-experience and aspects of that experience which are common to others.

Description or Interpretation?

Despite similarities between existential-phenomenological and hermeneutic methods of inquiry, and perhaps because of these similarities, Giorgi (1992) has debated the relative merits of each approach. From a more Husserlian perspective, Giorgi argues for the primacy of description as an endeavor independent from that of interpretation:

I would like to argue for the necessity of some sense of descriptive science for the human sciences if only to set the limits and boundaries of interpretive science more precisely....A descriptive attitude implies a certain necessity demanded by saying that one describes what presents itself precisely as it presents itself, neither adding nor subtracting from it. The description also implies the adoption of the attitude of the phenomenological reduction, which implies the bracketing of past knowledge about the phenomenon being experienced as well as withholding of existential affirmation (Giorgi, 1992, pp. 121-122).

Giorgi (1992) explicitly states that he is not claiming description will reveal universal truths. He does argue that phenomena presented to consciousness can be described according to how they present themselves, and that this is possible by "bracketing" past

knowledge about the phenomena. Giorgi implies that it is possible to hold in abeyance one's forestructure to achieve a pure description of a phenomena, eliminating the need for interpretation. Giorgi (1992) suggests a possible distinction between description and interpretation is that "description is the clarification of the meaning of the objects of experience precisely as experienced. Interpretation would be the clarification of the meaning of experienced objects in terms of a plausible but contingently adopted theoretical perspective, assumption, hypothesis, and so on" (p. 122).

Much has been written about the impossibility of ahistoric, a-contextual inquiry (e.g. Gergen, 1985; Gadamer, 1975; Lakoff, 1987; Merleau-Ponty, 1962). An important concept in phenomenological thought is that the person and the world co-constitute one another (Valle, King, & Halling, 1989). This, of course, applies to the researcher and his or her data as well as to the subject of an experiment. "Data" are a part of the world and cannot "present themselves" without someone receiving them. Receiving the data is not a passive event; it is an activity in which a researcher engages. There is necessarily some interpretation that occurs in that activity (Habermas, 1984). In phenomenological research the goal is to remain true to the data, as it presents itself (Giorgi, 1992). Even in simply transcribing a phenomenological interview, the researcher goes "beyond" the data and brings some order to it for re-presentation. "Understanding the world as it is for another requires both a perspective and a certain level of critical distance in which the researcher steps back to reflect on the phenomenon" (Pollio et. al., in press). Phenomenology attempts to stay as close to the data as possible, with minimal "meaning bringing" (interpretation) by the researcher. Making any use of the data always involves interpretation, thus "pure" description is impossible. Description is as much an attitude toward the phenomena, data collection, and data use as it is a method.

The nature of interpretation and understanding has been thoroughly explored by Gadamer (1975, 1976). Gadamer's principle contribution to hermeneutics is his emphasis

on the episodic and trans-subjective nature of understanding (Linge, 1976). He has emphasized the limitations of a strict methodology which attempts to remove the hermeneutic situation, or historicity, of the interpreter from the task of interpretation. In other words, Gadamer (1976) has argued that the interpreter, embodying historical, cultural, and personal prejudices, is equally important in the production of meaning as is the text which is interpreted. Understanding is a "fusion of horizons" (Linge, 1976, p. xix).

[T]he process of understanding that culminates in the fusion of horizons has more in common with a dialogue between persons or with the buoyancy of a game in which the players are absorbed than it has with the traditional model of a methodologically controlled investigation of an object by a subject. This latter model, derived largely from the experimental sciences and never entirely shaken off by earlier hermeneutical theorists, conceals the intrinsically dialectical nature of understanding that transforms both text and interpreter. (Linge, 1976, pp. xix-xx)

Thus the interpreter must be open to the text and all of its challenges and opportunities. In being open to the text, the interpreter's prejudices are highlighted. It is these prejudices, historical, cultural, and personal, which form the perspective from which a person approaches a text, and thus contributes to the meaning created as the text and interpreter interact (Gadamer, 1976). From this perspective, there is no "true meaning" of a text because successive generations of interpreters bring their unique history to bear in any attempt at understanding.

Validity and Reliability

Existential-phenomenological and hermeneutic inquiry have been criticized as "unscientific" by psychologists trained in positivist research methods. These criticisms have been based predominately on the belief that these methods are unreliable, invalid, and not reproducible. Some researchers sympathetic to these methods of inquiry have

suggested these concerns be ignored because they arise out of an epistemology antithetical to the assumptions and goals of qualitative research (e.g. Valle et. al., 1989; Jones & Thorne, 1987).

Others have accepted the critique as a challenge and have worked to broaden the criteria of traditional scientific methodology to encompass existential-phenomenological psychological inquiry. Thompson et. al. (1989) note:

The use of non-positivist research methods, however, does not preclude existential-phenomenology from addressing and/or sharing some of logical positivism's epistemological concerns....That is, research conclusions should be empirically based; research should strive to be free of personal biases, prejudices, and dogma; other individuals should be able to agree that conclusions are justified by the data; and criteria should be provided for evaluating competing knowledge claims (p. 142).

Considerable evidence has accumulated that phenomenological research methods are reliable, valid, rigorous and reproducible (Polkinghorne, 1989; Kvale, 1983; Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1989; Pollio, Henley, & Thompson, in press). Wertz (1986) and Giorgi (1975) have proposed that reliability in phenomenological research be characterized as understanding the perspective of the researcher and demonstrating the plausibility of conclusions drawn from the data given that perspective. Similarly, Polkinghorne (1989) has argued that validity in phenomenological research involves "a conclusion that inspires confidence because the argument in support of it has been persuasive....The validity of phenomenological research concerns the question, 'Does the general structural description provide an accurate portrait of the common features and structural connections that are manifest in the examples collected?' (p. 57)." Because phenomenological research is based in language, and not in the quantitative statistical demonstrations that characterize natural science, research must demonstrate reliability and validity linguistically. Phenomenological

research reports must make explicit the perspective from which the researcher conducted his or her inquiry, and include "reasoned and convincing responses" to the anticipated questions readers might have about the research (Polkinghorne, 1989).

Existential-phenomenological and hermeneutic inquiries have been offered as viable alternatives to the traditional logical-positivist research methods of psychology. Incorporating both description and interpretation, they are sensitive to the lived experience of participants and to the context and history in which participant and researcher engage in dialogue. Explanations are forgone in favor of descriptions of phenomena. Existential-phenomenological and hermeneutic methods of research offer researchers a unique opportunity to step back and question the assumptions which have shaped psychological science for over 100 years.

Phenomenological Research Methods

The purpose of existential-phenomenological research is to produce clear, precise, systematic descriptions of an individual's experienced meaning of a particular phenomenon (Polkinghorne, 1989; Kvale, 1983). This description of an individual's lived experience is obtained in a dialogue with a researcher. This usually takes the form of a phenomenological interview, but can also be obtained by written passages. The dialogue is summarized into themes which succinctly capture the phenomenon as it is experienced by participants in the interview. The phenomenological interview creates a shared understanding of an experience between participants and investigator.

The phenomenological interview is not a question and answer session; ideally it should be a conversation between a participant who wants to describe his or her experience with an investigator who is open to the many nuances in the retelling of a lived experience. With this in mind, the interview is unstructured except for an opening question. In this question, participants are asked to describe a particular experience in detail and to share what they were aware of during that experience. The question must be carefully worded in

order to elicit this type of response. After the opening question elicits this narration, the investigator's questions and comments serve to clarify and expand what the participant has said. Questions and statements such as "What was that like for you?" or "Tell me more about that experience," are often used. "Why" questions are avoided because they tend to invite more abstract responses which move away from the lived experience. Kvale's (1983) 12-part description of the qualitative research interview serves as a useful summary:

It is 1) centered on the interviewee's life-world; 2) seeks to understand the meaning of a phenomena in his life-world; it is 3) qualitative, 4) descriptive, and 5) specific; it is 6) presuppositionless; it is 7) focused on certain themes; it is open for 8) ambiguities, and 9) changes; it depends upon the 10) sensitivity of the interviewer; it takes place in 11) an interpersonal interaction, and it may be 12) a positive experience (p. 174).

Prior to interviewing individuals, the researcher is interviewed by a colleague. The goal of this "bracketing" (Valle, King, & Halling, 1989) interview is for the researcher to more fully explore his or her preunderstanding of the phenomenon to be investigated. The interview, and its subsequent analysis, helps make explicit the assumptions and presuppositions the researcher has about the research topic. Ideally, it allows the researcher to minimize his or her own biases which might limit the descriptions given by participants during subsequent interviews. Bracketing is not intended to eliminate the researcher's biases about the investigated phenomenon; this is an impossibility (Gadamer, 1975, 1976; Merleau-Ponty, 1962). The goal is to elucidate, not eliminate.

Much phenomenological research makes use of an interpretive group. In the University of Tennessee psychology department there are two such research groups which meet regularly. These groups consist of students and professors familiar with, or open to learning, existential-phenomenological research methods. The primary function of the interpretive group is to analyze transcribed interviews. A part of this process involves

offering interpretations about the meaning of interviews as well as questioning assumptions underpinning these interpretations. The multiple perspectives present in the group are vital ingredients in analysis of interviews. Several transcribed interviews are analyzed in the research group early in the interpretive process. As group members offer interpretations of the meaning of participant's experiences, support must be evident in the text of the interview for them to be accepted as valid. As themes emerge and reconfigure during the group analysis of transcripts, the primary researcher gains a more informed position from which to interpret the remaining interviews. The final thematic structure is also reviewed by the interpretive group. Often the final structure is also reviewed by the participants of the investigation.

Procedures Used in the Present Study

Participants

The ten participants interviewed in the present investigation were recruited from the University of Tennessee Psychological Clinic. The Psychological Clinic is the training facility for doctoral students in clinical psychology at the University. It primarily provides long term, psychodynamically oriented psychotherapy for both university students and members of the broader community. All applicants for services are required to participate in a psychological assessment prior to being accepted as a psychotherapy patient. The assessments are administered by second year doctoral students and typically include a clinical interview, the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory - Second Edition (MMPI-2), the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale - Revised (WAIS-R), the Rorschach Inkblot Method, the Thematic Apperception Test, the Bender-Gestalt, and projective drawings. This battery of tests requires several hours to complete and is generally administered during two or three appointments over a two week period. Upon review of the assessment results, most applicants are accepted for clinic services based on their

suitability as psychotherapy training cases for second, third, and fourth year doctoral students. Applicants not accepted are referred to more appropriate providers in the community.

The ten participants of the present study were all recruited in the following manner: following the final session of psychological testing, but prior to a formal feedback session, the clinician conducting the evaluation briefly described the present study and provided an information sheet to the evaluatee. If the person expressed an interest in participation, he or she then spoke with the principle investigator of the present study to receive more detailed information. If still interested, an interview was arranged and informed consent was obtained. No payment or incentive was offered, and much effort was taken to assure the evaluatee that either participation or non-participation would in no way influence the disposition of their case at the Psychological Clinic. Criteria for inclusion were: 1) willingness to reflect upon their experience of being psychologically assessed and communicate them to the researcher through dialogue, and 2) sufficient interest in participation to volunteer up to 90 minutes for an interview. Six men and four women were interviewed. All of the participants were Caucasian adults whose ages ranged from 23 to 64 years of age. Five of the participants came to the Psychological Clinic with their spouses seeking marital therapy; remaining participants sought individual psychotherapy.

Forms

Two informed consent forms were used. For the participants, the Information and Consent Form was the initial agreement to participate in the study, including permission to be audiotaped. This form explained that minimal risk was involved and that participants were free to discontinue the interview and withdraw from the study at any time. The form also explained that participation or non-participation in no way influenced the Psychological Clinic's disposition of their application for psychotherapy.

A second Information and Consent Form was provided for doctoral students who

introduced the present study to their recent evaluatees. In addition to information about this investigation, the form included assurances that the student's performance as psychological assessor would not be evaluated. It also clarified that any information learned by the investigator during the interviews could not be shared with the students.

Briefing the Participants

People expressing interest in being interviewed were briefly told about the study and encouraged to reflect upon their experience of being psychologically evaluated. They were informed of the interview's opening question at this time.

The Opening Question

The following opening question was used in each interview: "Take a moment to think about the assessment process and then describe your experience of it. What was it like for you?" This question encouraged participants to discuss their experience of being psychologically evaluated in whatever way they found relevant. Asking for a description of the assessment prompted for more experience-near discussion.

Interviews

The interviews were conducted according to the phenomenological research methods discussed above. Each interview lasted between forty minutes and one hour. Following the opening question, each interview progressed according to the individual experiences described. All interviews were audiotaped with permission of the participants, and all were transcribed by the investigator from audiotapes. All identifying information such as names and specific places were deleted in order to insure that participants could not be identified from their transcripts. Following transcription of the interviews, the audio tapes were erased.

Analysis of the Transcripts

Each interview was analyzed in accordance with the phenomenological methods outlined above. The investigator's bracketing interview and four of the ten participant

interviews were analyzed by at least one of two research groups at the University of Tennessee. The remaining interviews were analyzed independently by the investigator to elucidate essential features of the experience of being psychologically evaluated. The themes identified were supported by specific passages in every interview, and were named with language that reflected the participants' experience. The themes also were described as occurring in a specific context which also was described in language reflecting the experience. The resulting thematic structure was reviewed and finalized.

Chapter III: RESULTS OF THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Results

The study of the experience of being psychologically evaluated revealed three prominent themes and a specific context in which this experience was meaningful to all participants. The context was described as the experience of the assessee being with the assessor. This relationship was described in two ways: 1) as personal: empathetic, close, and non-judgmental, *and* 2) as professional: distant, competent, and knowing (the embodiment of traditional psychology). The three themes occur within the context of this relationship and are described as: 1) Knowing and Being Known, 2) Revealing and Being Revealed, and 3) Judging and Being Judged. An awareness of *not* knowing and *not* being known, not revealing and not being revealed, and not judging and not being judged also were described by the participants as a part of the themes. A diagrammatic representation of the three themes is illustrated in Figure 1. A more detailed summary of various aspects of the context and themes is presented in Table 2. From the point of view of the assessee the experience of being psychologically evaluated can be summarized as follows:

The experience of being psychologically evaluated occurs within the context of my relationship with another person. This relationship is experienced as both personal and professional. Within this context I experience knowing and not knowing things about myself and the evaluation, and being known by the assessor. I am aware of revealing information about myself and not revealing myself, as well as being revealed by the tests and the professional. I am also aware of judging myself and the evaluation, as well as not judging, and of being judged by the assessor.

The three themes were present in each participant's interview and often were described using similar words. Although present in each interview, the themes occurred with varying degrees of emphasis. For example, one participant was primarily aware of revealing and being revealed during his psychological assessment. For another participant

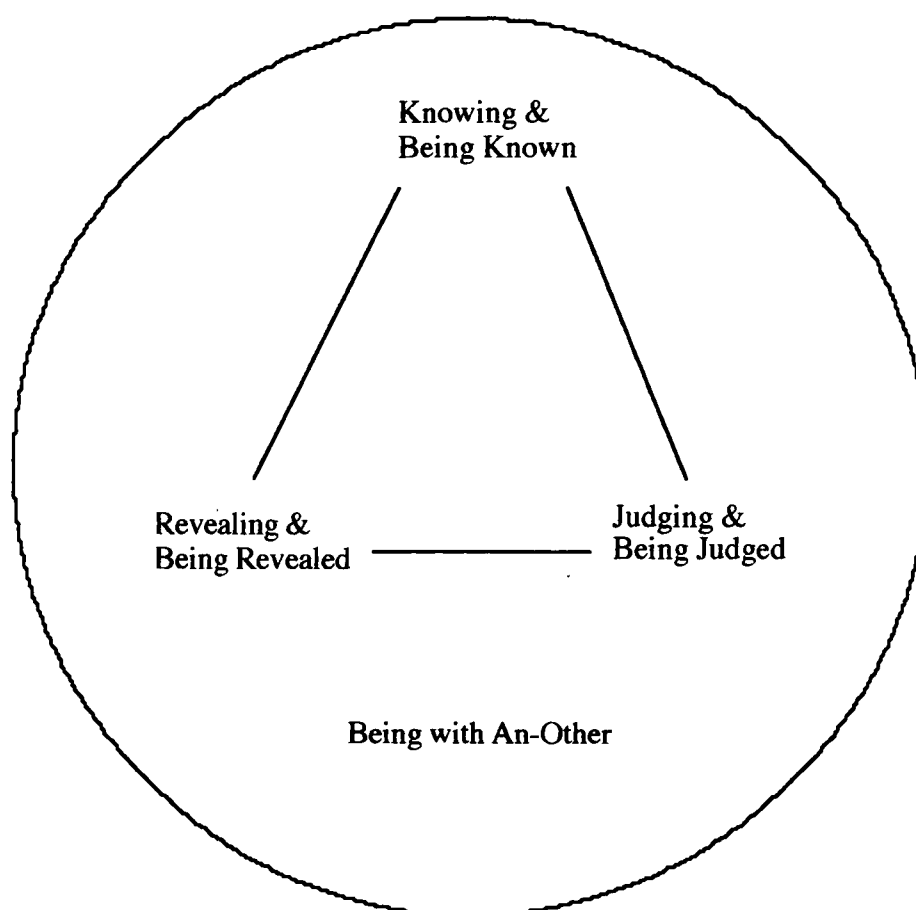


Figure 1. Diagram of the Context and Themes of Being Psychologically Evaluated

Table 2

Aspects of the Experience of Being Psychologically Evaluated

CONTEXT

Being with An-Other

Personal:	Assessee is aware of closeness in relationship with assessor
Professional:	Assessee is aware of distance in relationship with assessor Limitations and Roles in relationship are more salient

THEMES

Knowing and Being Known (Not knowing and Not being known)

Knowing:	Assessee knows... Facts about him or herself "Who I am" "My history" "My problem" Facts about the assessment Rationale for tests Psychology in general
Being Known:	Assessee experiences being understood

Revealing and Being Revealed (Not revealing and Not being revealed)

Revealing:	Assessee shares personal information Experienced as in assessee's control
Being Revealed:	Information about assessee exposed by the assessor Experienced as out of assessee's control

Judging and Being Judged (Not judging and Not being judged)

Judging:	Assessee makes judgements about... Self Assessment
Being Judged:	Assessor (potentially) judges assessee

knowing and being known were more salient aspects of her experience than were revealing and being revealed or judging and being judged. The context and each of the themes in the experience of being psychologically evaluated, with supporting examples, are presented in detail below.

Being with An-Other

An awareness of being with the assessor, and all he or she represents, is present throughout the assessee's experience of being psychologically evaluated. This awareness is the context in which the three themes of 1) Knowing and Being Known, 2) Revealing and Being Revealed, and 3) Judging and Being Judged are present to the participant. The person conducting the psychological evaluation is experienced as having two aspects: personal and professional. When participants experienced the assessor as more personal, they were aware of him or her as being "close", "empathetic", "non-judgmental", and were aware of an "openness" between themselves and the assessor. When participants experienced the assessor as more professional, they were aware of the other person being "distant", "competent", "knowing." They also were aware of limitations on their relationship with the assessor which often were described in terms of roles, or expectations about the behavior expected by both assessee and assessor. When experienced as professional, the assessor embodied the entire profession of psychology for the assessee. Both aspects, personal and professional, were present in the assessee's experience. Although the personal or the professional aspect might have been more or less salient at any one time, both existed simultaneously. The assessor is described as "an-other" because of this dual presence, both personal and professional, which is experienced as more than the presence of one other person. This will be further clarified in the assessee's experience of the professional aspect of the assessor.

The participant's awareness of being with an-other was evident in many ways. At times the presence of the assessor was explicit; at other times implied. For example, the

presence of the assessor was explicit in the following interview excerpts: "The Rorschach did take a while because of all the writing she had to do," and "It's difficult for me, I guess, in that, uh....um I'm not a real open person. To just be in that situation with a clinician or a therapist is kind of unsettling to me," and "And then there were just parts when, you know, we'd just sort of stop and, uh, and [the assessor] would just ask me some questions, personal questions and document what I said." At other times, however, the presence of an-other was implied: "I was having to look at something and tell what I saw...and, that was kind of hard because I didn't know if I was explaining my self well enough."

As mentioned earlier, the person conducting the evaluation was experienced in two ways: personally and professionally. Statements which revealed the participant was experiencing the assessor in a more personal way included those such as: "I felt comfortable after I met [the assessor] once or twice, I felt comfortable sitting and talking with her. She seemed very intuitive and astute, and non-judgmental. So I felt comfortable with her," and "[S]he's really nice. She stresses that I call her if I need her at anytime. I have called and I have talked with her outside of my evaluation process and she has helped some, which is really good," and "We talked quite a bit about my life and my feelings and stuff like that. It sort of opened....opened everything up between us, I guess. It opened me up, a little bit." Another indication that the assessor was experienced as more personal involved the fact that the psychological evaluation itself became less salient in the participant's description of the experience. One passage from a participant's interview is particularly illustrative of this:

Investigator: Can you think of an example when you were with [the assessor] when you felt like you were getting more feedback and you were, maybe, less aware of the evaluation?

Participant: Any time we would just sit and talk about, like my early memories

and my past and why I came. You know, what I'm feeling. 'Cause we would talk back and forth about, you know, explaining it in more detail, and talk back and forth like that. And it seemed just more like two people sitting down and talking.

Alternatively, the more professional aspect of the assessor was also evident in various kinds of statements. Most participants made comments about qualities considered to be professional, such as: "[The assessor] is somebody that's somewhat more objective, get's a more objective view through the testing process." Another participant noted:

And throughout the process she handled herself well, my evaluator did. And so...by her actions, by her demeanor, the way she carried herself, the way she presented her materials, her questions and such, was in a professional manner. So she never did anything to change my opinion, that I felt that she was professional and that there was a reason for everything.

When participants discussed this professional aspect of the assessor, often they were aware of certain limitations in the relationship. For example, limitations often were experienced as the assessor withholding information or demanding more information from the participant. The italicized parts of the following passages reflect this experience of being limited: "You know, sometimes I'd even stop and, you know, ask [the assessor] and he would have to just calmly say, you know, 'I'll be glad to discuss everything with you *after all the testing's been completed.*' And....you know, that would just kind of throw me for a loop, in a way," and "I felt torn between trying to get the answer and just trying to remember the question so I could look it up myself. Because I asked her 'Well, was that right?' and she, you know, said *she couldn't tell. Especially right then,*" and "But *we had to keep going* with the test and I figured I could find the answers somehow another time," and "He seemed really serious about it, you know. 'Cause I would make jokes here and there, and *I'm sure that that's what he's supposed to do,* you know." One woman was acutely aware of the demands placed upon her by the assessor during the Thematic

Apperception Test:

Participant: And then when she gave me the blank piece of paper and she asked me to come up with a story, to visualize something, I just handed it back and said, "I can't do that." I said, "I can tell you a story that's wearing very heavy on my mind that you can draw a very good picture from." And it was something that had happened at work. And I told her. She said, "That's a very sad story. *I need an ending to it.*" And she was kind of like demanding one. Which it wasn't just a story made up; it was a true life.

Investigator: Tell me some more about that feeling kind of like she was demanding something from you.

Participant: *Two or three times saying I need an ending*, it goes past the point of "Can you come up with one," to "*I need it to put on my paper.*" Which I know she's learning, but it's like.... "There's not one. It hasn't happened yet." I reckon I felt a little bit perturbed at her. Because I told her back at the beginning that it's not a story made up; it's true.

The participants' awareness of the professional aspect of being with an-other was also evident in the assessee's awareness of roles. The participant's experience of the assessor included expectations about how the assessor should behave. Participants' also had expectations about how they themselves should behave while being evaluated. For example: "I think there is a certain level of performance that goes on in the testing, because I'm trying to be a good testee," and "I didn't want to...put her out of place, or try to demand too much," and "So, that's the only reason I can think of why I didn't even say it to her [question the need for a different therapist]. I felt it would make me appear uncooperative, I think." The role of assessee, as described by the participants of this study, involved being cooperative, meeting expectations, and not asking for more than is offered by the assessor. The following passage offers a clear view of one assessee's role

vis a vis the assessor:

I did what was expected of me. I did what I was there for. I was asked to draw a picture and I did. Exactly why I don't know, but I feel confident there was a reason to be asked to do that. And I did it on faith that, whatever I did was for a worthwhile reason.

At times, participants implied their experience of the assessor as a professional by referring to the assessor as "they." This suggests that the assessor can be experienced as more than an individual person, that in fact the assessor represents the entire profession of psychology. One participant stated: "She was writing down the whole time, so kind of in the back of my mind I knew that *they* were going to look at what I said and everything." Another states: "So there were times when I would say, 'Wow. I wonder what *they'll* think about this.'" And yet another said: "My daughter at age 3 could do better than I did (laughs), but I'm sure that, that *they're* looking for things within those pictures that perhaps I don't understand or know about."

The professional *and* personal aspects of the assessor co-exist in the assessee's experience. At times this was clear in the participants' descriptions of being evaluated. The following two passages suggest how both aspects can be present simultaneously:

Just a comment about, about the evaluator herself. I was favorably impressed with her professional attitude. She was able to, to get the point across to me that she cared....about me, as an individual, and about my situation. And yet she maintained that professional attitude that, "I'm here for a reason." She was able to balance all those. And I felt good with that. I think it's important.

Another participant described it this way:

I'm very comfortable with [the assessor]. I've enjoyed her very much. I thought she's been very professional. She's been, um...well, I kind of look at things on continuums. She's been professional without being cold and distant. She's always

been prompt. She's always explained things well without coloring me or swaying me one way or another. She's been objective. Um, and yet she's also been very empathetic. Um, and uh, she's done a wonderful job at establishing rapport in a very natural way, without being...Maybe, you'll understand what I mean when I say sometimes people try to aggressively, or very assertively establish rapport. And that almost always turns me off. She's come through to me as being very genuine, very authentic, and that in turn makes me feel very comfortable.

In summary, the experience of being psychologically evaluated occurs within the context of the assessee's relationship with the person conducting the assessment. This person can be described as "an-other" because they are experienced not only as one other person, but as a presence whose authority is final and who embodies the knowledge and expertise of psychology. The assessor can be experienced in a personal way, which emphasizes the characteristics of a human relationship. Adjectives such as "close," "empathetic," and "non-judgmental" were used by participants in describing this aspect. The assessor can also be experienced as professional, or perhaps as the profession. This aspect is characterized by adjectives such as "knowing" and "objective" and "distant." Participants experienced the assessor as being more than just one person, of embodying the entire profession of psychology, as evidenced by assessee's frequent use of the pronoun "they." The demands of the profession dictated limitations on the behavior of assessor and assessee, as well as highlighted the roles that both should accept. These limitations might also be understood as the demand characteristics of the testing situation which contribute to an experience of distance between assessee and assessor. Both personal and professional aspects were simultaneously present in participants' experience of the assessor.

Knowing and Being Known

Knowing and Being Known is the first of three themes describing participant experiences of being psychologically evaluated. Participants described being aware of

knowing certain things, or “facts”, during the assessment. These facts can be characterized as facts about oneself or about the assessment. Facts about oneself include awareness of personal characteristics (“who I am”), personal history (“my history”), and the reason for seeking psychotherapy (“my problem”). Facts about the assessment include awareness of the general procedures of psychological assessment, including the rationale for giving specific tests, and statements about psychology in general.

Within the theme of Knowing, participants described facts about themselves. Their awareness of personal characteristics, or “who I am,” was evident in many types of statements. Often statements about “who I am” indicated how the participant understands him or herself in the present. For example, one participant stated: “I’m the kind of person ...to tell people what they expect to hear. And, uh, sort of tell people that I agree with certain things when actually, uh, I don’t.” Another participant stated: “I guess that I’m a private person.” A third said about himself: “But I know I’m not good at those things, and that was frustrating ‘cause I’m a very...self, uh....I compete with myself. You know, I want to do my best on everything I do.” Finally, a participant’s primary sense of “who I am” was tied to her profession: “First of all, I’m a nurse.”

Awareness of knowing “who I am” can be closely related to knowledge about one’s personal history. Often the two are intertwined: “I am claustrophobic because I got stuck in a cave once when I was a child. I also got locked in a closet by another kid when I was a child. So I am a bit claustrophobic.” This participant identifies a part of who she is (“I am claustrophobic.”) with events from her history (being stuck in a cave and being locked in a closet). A statement by a different participant also relates her personal history with how she sees herself: “I’ve been in therapy for about 5 years, and so talking about myself is something that’s hard but I’m working on it.”

Awareness of personal history, or “my history,” during the psychological evaluation was evident in many statements: “I know I was sexually abused when I was

growing up, from what my sister had told me,” and “I took a lot of psychology classes at [a local university], in fact I have a minor in psychology,” and “Actually, well, I was familiar with some of the tests. I had taken the Rorschach before for a graduate student doing research. And I’d seen all the examples of tests in the textbook, our abnormal psych textbook, for different evaluation processes that we discussed. So I was kind of familiar with the tests.” This last passage also involves another type of knowing, knowing about the assessment, which will be discussed shortly.

“My history” can also involve the context of life events within which the psychological evaluation occurs. For example, one participant understood her discomfort during the evaluation in terms of events which occurred independent of the evaluation. She noted that: “[I]t wasn’t that the tests made me uncomfortable. I think it was just that I had so many things on my mind at the time; I wasn’t relaxed and calm, I was uptight and crying a lot, sad.” Another attributed his impatience during the evaluation to other events he experienced as stressful: “And I think because of my stress level that, uh, my patience wasn’t very high. I had a low patience level by then.”

Another aspect of the theme of Knowing was the reason participants sought psychotherapy. Being aware of “my problem” took several forms, all of which demonstrated ownership of the problem. One participant spoke of his depression: “And so my depression.....was sort of more on the forefront, more conscious. I mean it was much more of a factor in the way I felt, and the way I feel, at that point.” Another participant was less specific about his problem, but nonetheless demonstrated an awareness of it, stating: “I was being honest [with the assessor]. If I did not feel troubled, and everything was perfect, I wouldn’t have been here. So some of my answers are going to show that I feel troubled and need help. That’s why I’m here.” Some passages illustrate several levels of knowing, such as knowing “who I am” and how that relates to “my problem.” For example, one participant stated:

Well I have very high standards for myself. Which I don't think is necessarily a problem, but when I hold on to a high standard and am inflexible in accepting flaws or problems then that gets in the way. And that's what I see my problem as being. This participant clearly recognizes the relationship between "who I am" (a person with high standards) and "my problem" (being inflexible).

Also within the theme of Knowing was the participants' awareness of knowing facts about the assessment itself. These facts involve an awareness of the general procedures of psychological assessment, including an awareness of the rationale for giving specific tests, and statements about psychology in general. For instance, one participant stated:

Actually, well, I was familiar with some of the tests. I had taken the Rorschach before for a graduate student doing research. And I'd seen all the examples of tests in the textbook, our abnormal psych textbook, for different evaluation processes that we discussed. So I was kind of familiar with the tests.

Another participant discussed balancing her negative reaction to the MMPI with rationale for its use.

When I was taking the MMPI I was thinking, well, I understand, you know, what they're trying to do with the different categories and all that, and I'm just wondering, well, I hate forced choice questions but there is some truth to this, some validity.

The theme of Knowing also describes the participants' experience of *not* knowing some things, such as not knowing about oneself or the assessment. Every participant was aware of "not knowing" in some manner while being evaluated. In fact, some participants expressed concern because the evaluation raised doubts about how well they did know themselves. For example:

It was stressful having to be evaluated..... Something's wrong; I don't know what.

I'm having to go through a few hours of evaluation here spread over a period of time to see what's wrong. But do I really want to know what's wrong? What if it's really really bad, you know?

Another participant expressed it this way:

I was a professional artist for close to 10 years and when it came time for me to draw I was like completely blank and I was like "What....this doesn't make sense." You know, um....I was then very nervous about that also and I just kinda slunk back into drawing like a sixth grader (laughs).

In addition to "not knowing" about themselves, participants were aware of not knowing things related to the assessment, such as not knowing specific information asked for, not knowing what tests were for, not knowing the relevance of the tests, and not knowing what the evaluator was thinking about the participant. One woman spoke about her embarrassment of not knowing information asked for by the evaluator:

The very first test, it's crazy because they were really basic questions, and one of them was about how many [political leaders] are there. I didn't know that; I'd forgotten that. Politics and geography were never my strong points (laughs). And, uh, one was "Where is the [a famous desert]?" and I still haven't found that out!

Many participants expressed concern about not knowing the purpose of certain tests and procedures. One explains: "And perhaps whoever looks at it later on, for what ever reason they're looking at it, I'm still not clear of that, but they'd have looked at it and they would have got an honest answer from me." Another participant states: "I'm sure that everything I did, there's a reason for it. Whether it's to draw a picture or look at an ink blot..." One participant was particularly uneasy not knowing the purpose of the tests:

I still don't know at this point, uh, exactly what each test, uh, you know, is designed to, uh, to reveal about, you know, about a person's mental capacity or whatever. So, uh, that sort of, you know, that limited knowledge sort of....um,

you know, caused a degree of unrest I suppose.

Similar to not knowing the purpose of certain tests was the questioning of the relevance of certain tests to a participant's individual situation. "Some parts I didn't particularly enjoy.... Um, some parts I'm not sure of the relevance, so I'm anxious to see, you know, what this specific test, what it's looking for in terms of personality or, or whatever."

Another participant explains: "'Cause my mind was working overtime, and it did, like I said after I left, 'How does this fit in? How are they, how are they going to put this to helping me and [my husband]?'". Similarly, "I didn't quite understand why, uh...some parts of it because of our situation, the reason we were coming here. But of course I guess that goes along with the whole program, you know." Not knowing what the evaluator thought about the participant was particularly notable for one participant:

Participant: Well, after each session, except for the last one, I sort of felt like...it went to a cliff, and then it just kind of stopped. Everything had been done and it was kind of building momentum with the talking and testing, and then all of a sudden it stopped. And I was kind of left hanging...until the next session.

Investigator: Can you say a little bit more about that, about that hanging? About building momentum and abruptly stopping?

Participant: Mm hmm. Well....I talked to [the assessor] about it once. It was basically due to the real stressful situation, and I'm not quite sure what they think of me. You know, what [the assessor] was thinking, or what the tests up to that point were saying. And, having known, and having someone, you know, evaluate is kind of stressful, you know.

In addition to knowing, the first theme also describes participants' experiences of "being known", or being understood, by the assessor. One participant expressed relief at not being pigeon-holed in a statistically defined category. He stated: "[T]here were certain parts of [the evaluation] that were, very much relieved me when I was reminded, uh....you

know, that this isn't some sort of methodical testing that's putting me in some numerical statistic and keeping me there." Another participant described the gradual process of being known:

But I knew that after each explanation she was a little bit clearer about me and my feelings and, she had a little bit of a better picture of what I'm like. Each time the picture, each session, you know, the picture would become a little clearer and then the use of the tests would sort of find the underlying factors. And then what I've, you know, the things that I've told her and talked about clarifying what the tests say. Or getting insight into new ideas. It just, that'll... the more times we talk the better picture she'll have and be able to help me better.

One woman was also aware of *not* being known by the assessor.

Investigator: You mentioned you weren't sure if [the assessor] really understood....

Participant: She hadn't, she had no background information on me whatsoever. The only background information she had was on [my husband]. So she was kind of hitting in the dark with me, with no information whatsoever. And....maybe I didn't make myself plain when I was trying to explain to her I don't have feelings of my past. Because I don't remember it. I may not have made myself plain in that area.

In summary, Knowing and Being Known was an important theme in the participants' experience of being psychologically evaluated. Participants' awareness of knowing included knowing facts about oneself and facts about the assessment. Facts about oneself included an awareness of knowing "who I am," "my history," and "my problem." Facts about the assessment included an awareness of knowing different kinds of information about the assessment process and psychology in general. Participants' also were aware of not knowing facts about oneself or the assessment. Awareness of being

known, the experience of being understood by the assessor, was also an important aspect of the experience of being psychologically evaluated.

Revealing and Being Revealed

Revealing and Being Revealed is the second theme which describes participants' experience of being psychologically evaluated. Revealing involves sharing information about oneself with the assessor. Participants described a feeling of being in control of what they revealed and that it could be either a positive or negative experience. For example, one participant stated: "I, for myself, I tried, I gave an honest effort to be accurate and honest with my answers." Another explained his concern about revealing information about himself: "Because this is my self that I'm exposing...to strangers. Even if they are professional and appear confident, they're strangers. You know, I'm drawing pictures that I'm embarrassed about. I'm giving answers that put me in a bad light." Yet another spoke about revealing this way: "But, um, I very seldom let somebody behind that little facade..." The following passage illustrates a participant's awareness of her control over what she revealed:

Investigator: During this period of time that you've had with [the assessor], you talked about being aware of what you were disclosing about yourself. And you had mentioned, um, that it feels like you had exposed yourself (Mm-hmm.) in a way to [the assessor].

Participant: Deliberately, consciously doing it. Trying to hold nothing back or hide nothing. Or put a sugar coating on anything.

One participant experienced himself as "opening up" when revealing himself to the assessor. He explained:

And we talked a lot...the first session, and the second session, well all of them really. We talked quite a bit about my life and my feelings and stuff like that. It sort of opened....opened everything up between us, I guess. It opened me up, a

little bit. 'Cause I was having to give, you know, answers that....and describe parts of my life that I really don't care about, you know, very much, and I don't like and I'd much rather forget. But it's still part of me.

In addition to revealing things about themselves, participants were aware of *not* revealing certain information as well. Participants who described experiences of not revealing, or editing, certain information explained that they were protecting themselves. For example: "I started off just sort of saying whatever is going on, and then, I think it got more revealing in some ways, so I said 'Umm....' I started more editing, per se....I just sort of backed off." Another participant stated: "I think I was trying to be, trying to protect myself, or my identity or something." Deliberate decisions not to reveal information during the assessment are evident in passages such as the following: "I didn't want to give stories that were going to be.... Responses that were going to be sort of....bizarre, like when a bunch of artists are sitting around; thinking up the most off-the wall possibilities....So I just sort of edited out that sort of thinking." Similarly: "I was very aware of...the evaluation process and what could be written up. And so the editing was a conscious effort on my part at that point." Another participant described her struggle between revealing and not revealing: "Drop the filters. That was the thing. That was my, that was actually (laughs), that was actually what I was saying to myself, 'Don't filter this. Don't filter this.'" The following passage also explores the interplay between revealing and not revealing. This participant recognizes the benefits of revealing information to the assessor as well as the safety in not revealing about himself.

The easiest way to look at this, I guess, in one sense, is sort of like a split personality because part of me, you know, or....was looking, trying to protect me and saying "Oh, well don't say this, or don't say that" which is absurd because I've come in here in order to reveal as much as I can so I can make life changes, like major personality changes. If I don't reveal, if I don't put out enough of the

patterns and rhythms and what all that I need to look at to evaluate then it's possible the changes won't be as easy for the next person down the line to be cognizant enough to help me to change. So...I'm not sure if it was just some sort of cloak of denial I was going through, or maybe it was a safety valve I had going on. I'm not sure. I don't feel like I was being purposefully dishonest...

In addition to revealing (or not revealing), this second theme also describes the participants' experiences of "being revealed" by the assessor or the tests. Participants described this experience as the assessor discovering information which the assessee was reluctant to share, or perhaps, was unaware of. This discovery is experienced as out of the person's control and usually had a negative valence. For example: "I think I had a fair amount of anxiety beforehand, starting off. I was afraid of being, what's the term, found out in a way, what all these flaws are and all these causes of my problems are." Another likens his experience of being revealed to being seen through: "But I have this sense of being...that she was going to wear these glasses that were going to see through me and she was going to suddenly be able to identify those flaws that are deeper in." Other participants' statements describing being revealed included: "It will be interesting to see what [the evaluation] reveals, and I can accept it or reject it, but at least I can look at what comes out of it," and "It was, it was like I felt real exposed and very vulnerable and, and, it wasn't anything that [the assessor] did," and finally, "Then the pictures that I drew, even though they were poor works of art, um, I'm sure that there are things that the trained person could look for in there. And read something about my character or personality from them, although I have no idea what they are."

In summary, the theme of Revealing and Being Revealed describes the participants' active experiences of sharing, or not sharing, personal information with the assessor as well as the more passive experience of having personal information discovered by the assessor or the assessment instruments. Both revealing and not revealing, or editing, were

experienced as within the participants' control, while being revealed was experienced as out of the participants' control.

Judging and Being Judged

Judging and Being Judged is the third theme which describes the participants' experience of being psychologically evaluated. Judging involves the assessee being aware of making a judgement either about him or herself, or about an aspect of the assessment process. Some examples of self judgements follow: "[I]t seemed like I was supposed to, I had this in the back of, this idea in the back of my mind that I was supposed to be this perfect person coming in here and I would answer all the questions and know all the answers," and "So some of the tests I felt like I just sort of went through faster than I should have; I should have taken a little more time with," and "And my art work is the world's worse."

Participants described being aware of judging different aspects of the assessment process. For example: "I thought, 'Some of these questions are ridiculous.' Five and six times, the same question is ridiculous..." Another participant expressed her dislike for a particularly lengthy test: "I thought it was, uh, a lengthy process, but I guess there are a lot of tests to go through. I mean, some of them, like the MMPI, I just found long and boring." She also explained why she disliked another of the tests: "I think that all the pictures in there are really sad and depressing and upset. And they make you really go on a theme....The whole test feels like a set up to me somehow." In addition to making judgements, participants were aware of specific instances of withholding judgement, or "not judging." One participant stated: "I know when I wasn't doing any judging or anything like that; I was just letting it happen. I wasn't looking at it from Art Deco or Art Neuvo or whatever. I was just letting it happen, so that felt good as truly a measure of what I was seeing."

This third theme of Judging also encompasses participants' descriptions of being

judged. These experiences involved the assessee anticipating the assessor making a judgement about him or her based upon events during the assessment. It often has a negative connotation. For example, one participant stated: "I was aware of, of value and judgement being placed on my statements. I was concerned with that, even though I'm not supposed to be.... [B]ut, you know, it's definitely real that you're being judged on your statements." Another said: "She was writing down the whole time, so kind of in the back of my mind I knew that they were going to look at what I said." Another put it more succinctly: "I felt like I was going to be judged...when I was starting to draw." Other participants were very aware of the potential interpretations an assessor might make about their responses: "Part of it was sort of comical and all that, but other times it was like 'No I shouldn't say this because then they're going to think that,' you know." Similarly: "Each time I tell [a story] about the daughter being sexually abused, or each one I tell about there being a death, then there is going to be a pattern of 'Gee, he always looks at the world from, through red glasses.' Or 'He always looks through purple glasses.'"

In summary, participants described experiences of making judgements about themselves and about different aspects of the assessment process. They also described the experience of being judged by the assessor based upon information revealed during the assessment.

Interrelatedness of Themes

Although presented individually, each theme of the experience of being psychologically evaluated is related to and connected with every other theme. For example, the following passage involves both revealing and being judged: "But, you know, here on one hand is something I didn't like talking about, and I'm not quite sure how she's going to take it. 'Cause I'm not sure if she's ever heard some of the things, you know, heard of people doing some of the things that I've done." This participant is aware of revealing information about himself and that the assessor might judge him negatively based upon the

revelation. Another participant was aware of judging himself and revealing information about himself when responding to the assessor's questions: "I would have been embarrassed at some points that, 'That sounds foolish to say that. I can't say that.' Then again I gave one response that, looking back on it....I feel I put myself in a bad light. But at the time it was an honest answer and I'm glad I gave it."

The next passage is from a participant who was aware of all three themes:

Knowing, Revealing, and Judging.

And having a background in Psych I knew what was going on there, so I had sort of a head game going on of, well, what are the rhyth-, the patterns I'm putting out here that can be interpreted in my interpretation. You know, am I going to tell a bunch of stories that are all violent, or am I going to tell a bunch that are all sex-based, or drugs, or And, um, this kept getting in the way instead of just being able to say, well what's the first thing that comes to mind...

This participant was aware of having a background in psychology and knowing what was happening in the assessment. He was aware of revealing "patterns" of himself and the potential of being judged based upon these patterns. He was aware of not revealing, in selecting which stories to tell and not tell; and he was aware of making a judgement that saying "the first thing that comes to mind" was the best response.

Summary of Themes

The experience of being psychologically evaluated occurs within the context of Being with An-Other that has both personal and professional aspects. Within this context the assessee is aware of Knowing and Being Known, Revealing and Being Revealed, and Judging and Being Judged. Knowing involves an awareness of "who I am," "my history," and "my problem." It also involves an awareness of aspects of the evaluation such as what the evaluation entails, including the rationale for giving specific tests, and statements about psychology in general. Being Known is the assessee's awareness of

being understood during the evaluation. Revealing is the experience of sharing information voluntarily. Being Revealed describes the more passive experience of having personal information discovered, or exposed, during the evaluation. Judging involves the assessee making a judgement about him or herself, or about an aspect of the evaluation. Being Judged describes the assessee's experience of anticipating the assessor making a judgement about the assessee based upon information revealed during the evaluation. Not knowing and not being knowing, not revealing and not being revealed, not judging and not being judged are also present in each theme.

Chapter IV: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The assessment literature reveals remarkably little research about the experience of being psychologically evaluated. Works which do address experiential aspect of the assessment endeavor tend to be limited by inappropriate methodology and biases of the researchers themselves (e.g. Jager, 1986). The present study has examined this area using existential-phenomenological and hermeneutic methods to obtain a description of ten participants' experiences of being psychologically evaluated prior to receiving psychotherapy at a graduate training clinic. The participants' descriptions provide a first person perspective from which to view existing research and the practice of psychological assessment itself. The results of the present study are discussed in more detail below, and implications of these results for the practice of assessment are suggested.

Further Examination of the Description of Being Psychologically Evaluated

Knowing and Being Known: Secret Knowledge and Power

The theme of Knowing and Being Known occurred with the greatest frequency of the three themes, and an important part of that theme was the participants' experience of "not knowing." Participants expressed "not knowing" in various ways, such as not knowing specific information asked for, not knowing what tests were for, not knowing the relevance of the tests for their individual situation, and not knowing what the evaluator was thinking about the participant. In each of these cases, the assessor was experienced as knowing information that was unavailable to the participant. Many participants commented on this. Some questioned why the assessor did not share information the participant did not know, although the majority did accept this unequal distribution of knowledge as a necessary component to the assessment process. Recall the statement from one male participant: "I'm sure that everything I did, there's a reason for it. Whether it's to draw a picture or look at an ink blot..." Participants' belief that the assessor possessed "secret

knowledge” was a salient part of their experience of being psychologically assessed.

The imbalance of knowledge is a great source of power the assessor enjoys *vis a vis* the person assessed. Huston (1983) states that power, “specifically social or interpersonal power, refers to the ability to achieve ends through influence....” (p. 170). Theorists increasingly recognize the ability to achieve change through influence (within the context of the psychotherapeutic relationship) as a vital component to successful psychotherapy (e.g. Frank, 1973; Orlinsky & Howard, 1978; Gurman, 1977; Strupp & Binder, 1984). It is instructive to consider the sources of power in the psychotherapeutic relationship because these are also present in the relationship between assessor and assessee.

Heller (1985) argues that there are many sources of power in psychotherapy which establish the therapist’s ability to act powerfully. These sources of power can be broken down into three major categories: cultural, institutional, and interpersonal. First, cultural expectations provide the context in which psychotherapy is engaged and dictate the roles assigned to therapist and patient. Western culture confers a number of roles, with their attendant powers, on the psychotherapist. The roles of Doctor, Scientist/ Expert, Parent, and Guide all are present to one degree or another. Second, the institution of psychotherapy cultivates therapist powers through training and specialized knowledge. The institution filters the various powers from cultural expectations and distills them into more tangible forms. Heller (1985) suggests that institutional sources of power “furnish sufficient power for a therapist to have impact upon a client,” (p. 89). Finally, interpersonal sources of power include both personality and social status characteristics of the therapist and the patient.

Manifestations of power by psychotherapists are evident in two broad areas: structure and communication (both verbal and nonverbal). The structure includes both the psychological and the physical settings, as well as the rules of the encounter. Heller (1985)

refers to the "implicit atmospheric characteristics of the situation and its participants" as the psychological setting. "These are characteristics like warmth or ambiguity (in either the situation or in the person of the therapist) which accompany and give life to the established techniques for change," (p. 109). The physical setting includes the environment in which psychotherapy takes place. Is the meeting in a plush office with several degrees on the wall? Or perhaps in a small, sparsely furnished room in the heart of a community mental health center? The rules governing psychotherapy, as with psychological assessment, are largely determined by theoretical considerations, mandates by third parties (e.g. insurance companies, organization employing the therapist), and therapist preferences. Most commonly, these rules guide the frequency and duration of therapy sessions, fees charged, and the meeting place.

Communication between therapist and patient proves fertile ground for detecting manifestations of power (Heller, 1985). Verbal communication might include direct statements, such as "I can help you overcome your problem." Less direct manifestations include how patients are addressed, the manner in which direct questions from the patient are answered, the therapist's pursuit of or withdrawal from different patient-introduced topics, and "educating" patients. Nonverbal manifestations include styles of proxemics, body posture and movement, and listening style. All of these events communicate the status of the relationship between therapist and patient.

Baritz (1960) describes the relationship between psychology and power in his exploration of industry's use of the social sciences to understand and control labor. He traces the growth and influence of industrial psychology from the end of the 19th century through the first half of the 20th century as industry came to recognize that psychology could provide information about human behavior which would increase production and profits. Psychologists conducted research in areas such as group dynamics, leadership, motivation, communication, and personnel selection which businesses found profitable to

fund because the resulting information gave them greater social and individual control over employees. Most scientists at that time believed that psychology had no say in social goals or in the moral value of their research; thus it is not surprising that they did not recognize the influence of power dynamics in industry (Baritz, 1960). For example, early industrial psychologists postulated that employees joined labor unions because of personality maladjustments, not as an attempt to equalize the power between industry and labor (Baritz, 1960). Psychologists' insistence on the value-free, objectivity of their work allowed them to be used by industry to further the goals of industry:

In other words, social scientists, by providing, without interpretation or advocacy, techniques and concepts useful to men engaged in struggles for power, became by default accessories to the power politics of American government and industry, while insisting that they were innocent of anything of the sort. The insistence on objectivity made an impartial *use* of their research findings virtually impossible. (Baritz, 1960, pp. 203-204)

Heller (1985) and Baritz (1960) demonstrate that power dynamics are present in psychological endeavors as diverse as psychotherapy and industrial psychology. The results of the present study contain ample evidence that power dynamics are a salient part of the assessment process as well. All three themes described in participants' experiences of being psychologically evaluated demonstrate power dynamics inherent in the psychological assessment process. Although not examined specifically in this study, it is reasonable to hypothesize that a participant who experienced the assessor as more powerful than him or herself might describe the experience in terms of not knowing, being revealed, and being judged. In this context the professional aspect of the assessor also would be more salient. For participants feeling more empowered during the assessment, one would expect figural descriptions of knowing, judging, and in particular revealing as opposed to being revealed. Participant experiences of revealing and being revealed would likely be sensitive to any

power imbalances in the assessment relationship. Recall that experiences of revealing were experienced as within participants' control, whereas experiences of being revealed seemed out of their control.

The common foundation of non-traditional approaches to psychological assessment (e.g. Craddick, 1975; Fischer, 1994) is an attempt to empower the assessee during the assessment. This is most commonly done by reducing the knowledge gap between assessor and assessee. For instance, Fischer (1994) and Finn and Tonsager (in press) encourage a collaborative relationship from the start of the assessment by soliciting questions from the assessee to be answered. This role reversal allows the assessee to direct the assessment toward issues he or she finds personally relevant and to increase his or her investment in the process. Others, including Craddick (1975), advocate informing the assessee about the purpose and limitations of various psychological instruments used during the assessment. It is important to note that these approaches do not suggest the assessment relationship can become egalitarian, with equal power shared by both assessee and assessor. In fact, there cannot be an equal distribution of power in the assessment relationship. The numerous sources of power the assessor enjoys cannot be leveled by simply saying that they will no longer be used, no matter how earnestly an assessor desires this. The cultural and institutional sources of power exist regardless of the steps taken by an individual assessor to negate them. An assessor might choose to not act powerfully, but will still be powerful. Thus, any approach to psychological assessment must be sensitive to the inherent one-down position of the assessee and the impact of this differential on the assessee's experience.

Paradox of Revealing: Heal or hide

The theme of Revealing and Being Revealed suggests an interesting paradox in the participants' experience of being psychologically evaluated. Revealing, which involved sharing personal information with the assessor, was experienced as within the assessee's

control and could be experienced as either positive or negative. Participants believed that revealing personal information was an important and necessary part in the process of change. Indeed, some participants recognized a relationship between revealing personal information and the positive experience of being known. Revealing information about one's life and problems appears to be an important step in the process of healing. Yet much of this information was difficult to share, perhaps because participants experienced it as embarrassing, or found it difficult to acknowledge certain things about themselves. Thus they also experienced a desire not to reveal information, or to "protect" themselves. One participant described it as having a "split personality."

The experience of having such a "split personality" when faced with revealing personal information highlights one difficulty in the assessment process: even participants motivated to change through psychotherapy experienced a danger in revealing information about themselves during the assessment. Perhaps some aspect of a sense of self is threatened by this process; the assessee's limited power *vis a vis* the assessor might even exacerbate this vulnerability. The scope of the present study does not allow confirmation of this possibility, although certainly an answer to the question "What is threatened by revealing?" would offer insights into the assessment process and the process of change itself. Regardless of what is threatened, it is clear that the psychological assessment process can be threatening. The salience of participants' urges to "hide" during the assessment suggest a need to make the assessment process less threatening. Given the power dynamics of the assessment situation discussed earlier, this appears to be a fruitful area to consider when addressing ways to make assessments less threatening.

The Context: Dual Aspect of the Assessor

Being with An-Other was the context in which participants experienced the themes of Knowing and Being Known, Revealing and Being Revealed, and Judging and Being Judged. As explained earlier, "an-other" was used to describe the participants' experience

of the assessor because the assessor's presence represents more than just one other person. The assessor was described as having two aspects, personal and professional, which can be present simultaneously.

Pollio, Henley, and Thompson (in press) have noted the importance of our experience of other people. Based on phenomenological research, these authors demonstrated that experiences of body, time, world, and others are the ground from which different human experiences become figural. Similarly, in the present inquiry the participants' experiences of being with the assessor provided the context for their experience of the assessment. Their experience of others was far more salient than that of body, time, or world, warranting special emphasis as the identified context from which the descriptions of being psychologically assessed emerged. Pollio et al. (in press) have found that the experience of others can be described along three dimensions: Relationship, Comparison, and Benefit. Relationship refers to our awareness of being related to others, including both the more positive experience of synchrony and the more negative experience of alienation. Comparison refers to the tendency to be aware of others in terms of similarities and differences from ourselves. Benefit refers to our experience of others as either good or bad vis a vis our needs and desires.

The three themes of "the experience of others" elucidates participants' descriptions of the assessor in the present study. Relationship, Comparison, and Benefit were figural for assesseees at different times during the assessment. When the assessor was experienced as a personal (non-professional) presence, the themes of Relationship and Benefit were figural in the assesseees' descriptions. For example, comments by participants such as, "I felt comfortable sitting and talking with her," and "We talked quite a bit about my life...It sort of opened everything up between us, I guess," demonstrated feelings of being connected with the assessor. The benefit of the assessor was evident in participants' belief that the assessor would help them solve their personal problems because the assessor cared

enough to know them in a close, personal way. When the assessor was experienced as a professional presence, the theme of Relationship was again figural (but with different emphasis), as was the theme of Comparison. When the professional aspect of the assessor was more salient, participants described their experience of the assessor in terms suggesting interpersonal distance. The professional was described as someone who "gets a more objective view," who "will be glad to discuss everything...after all the testing's been completed," and who demands answers because they "need to put it on...paper." When participants experienced the assessor as professional, they also described the assessor in the third person, articulating a distance between themselves and the assessor. The theme of Comparison was most evident at times participants described being aware of not knowing (e.g. not knowing an answer, not knowing the reason for a test) and experiencing the assessor as knowledgeable and/or judging them. Although the theme of Benefit was also present (e.g. participants' belief that the assessor's specialized knowledge will cure them), it was less figural than in the personal dimension. Clearly, this study provides more evidence for the assertion that experience of the other is one of the major grounds from which different aspects of human experience become figural.

The assessee's experience of the dual aspects (personal and professional) of the assessor can also be understood as a reflection of the two roles clinical psychologists are expected to play. As discussed earlier, the roles of both scientist and practitioner reflect different demands clinicians must resolve. It has been questioned whether psychology's allegiance to science has come at the expense of its commitment to humanity (Koch, 1969), and this tension has been especially evident in the area of psychological assessment. Descriptions given by participants in this study reflect this tension, at times portraying the assessor in two distinct ways: one way reflecting the traditional values of an assessment based firmly in objective science, even speaking of the assessor in the third person as if they represented the whole of psychology; and the other way reflecting the importance of

the interpersonal dimension of an assessment situation.

The distinction of professional and personal in participants' experiences of the assessor suggests similarities to Buber's (1958) description of I-It and I-Thou relationships. An I-It relationship is characterized by the "other" being treated as an object by the I, something to be questioned, manipulated, categorized, and controlled. (Notice the similarity of this to the scientific method discussed earlier.) An I-Thou relationship is characterized by the "I" openly meeting the "other" as unique. Every I, or person, is partly defined by the relationship he or she has with others. It is reasonable to suggest that the participant's experience of the professional aspect of the assessor reflects an I-It relationship, one in which the demands of a science of inanimate objects dictates the terms of relatedness. In contrast, the personal aspect of the assessor reflects a relationship closer to the I-Thou experience. Buber (1958) maintains that a person is determined by the type of relationship he or she enters:

For the *I* of the primary word *I-Thou* is a different *I* from that of the primary word *I-It*....There is no *I* taken in itself, but only the *I* of the primary word *I-Thou* and the *I* of the primary word *I-It*. When a man says *I* he refers to one or other of these. The *I* to which he refers is present when he says *I*. Further, when he says *Thou* or *It*, the *I* of one of the two primary words is present. The existence of *I* and the speaking of *I* are one and the same thing. When a primary word is spoken the speaker enters the word and takes his stand in it. (Buber, 1958, p. 3-4)

Thus Buber describes an aspect of human relationships which informs psychological assessment. The assessor who approaches the assessment situation solely as an objective endeavor might create a context in which the assessee appears in a more objectified manner than is warranted. Assesseees will reflect the nature of the relationship initiated by the assessor. This possibility certainly merits further exploration because of its potential impact in better understanding the assessment relationship.

Comparisons and Implications

Comparison of Current Findings to Relevant Literature

Much of the prior literature addressing the assessee's experience of the assessment process is based upon the observations and assumptions of clinicians, and not upon systematic, empirical research. It will be informative to compare the assumptions of Schafer (1954), Jager (1986), and Bennett-Levy et al. (1987) with the results of the current inquiry of the experience of being psychologically assessed.

Schafer (1954) offered one of the first psychoanalytic examinations of the assessee's experience in his exploration of the many factors which influence responses to projective techniques. He offered five "constants of the patient's position" (p. 43) in a psychological assessment which are essentially based on his assumptions about the patient's experience: 1) intimate communication (self-exposure) and violation of privacy without a basis in trust, 2) loss of control of the interpersonal relationship, 3) exposure to the dangers of premature self-awareness, 4) regressive temptations, and 5) dangers of freedom. Each of these assumptions will be examined in light of the themes uncovered in this study.

Schafer's (1954) first constant is that assessees experience a violation of privacy similar to that of a "voyeur's passive victim" (p. 34). The assessee knows he or she is being watched, must resist hiding, and "does not know for sure just what is being seen and....may fear the worst," (p. 34). However, he suggests that this experience is diminished somewhat because the relationship with the assessor is transitory. In the present study, the themes of Being Revealed and Not Knowing correspond with Schafer's first constant. Participants described Being Revealed in language indicating they were not in control of the experience, though not in terms as evocative as a "voyeur's passive victim." Participants also described an urge to protect themselves by not revealing information. Clearly the theme of Not Knowing, in relation to the purpose of tests, also

was present. Schafer's suggestion, however, that assesseees prefer the transitory nature of their relationship with the assessor, was not evident. In fact, several participants expressed their disappointment at having to begin therapy with someone different after revealing so much to their assessor. This suggests that the personal nature of an assessee's relationship with an assessor is an important aspect of the assessment situation, an aspect that Schafer underestimated. If the professional nature of the relationship was more important, and assessments were strictly an objective endeavor, than any professional could be substituted into the relationship with little consequence for the assessee (much like passengers on a bus do not notice who is driving a bus, just that it is being driven).

Schafer's second constant is that the assessee experiences a loss of control in the relationship because he or she is unable to influence the direction of the assessment. The balance of power in the assessment relationship lies squarely with the assessor. In the present study, participants did not speak about feeling a loss of control, per se, but were certainly aware of the unequal distribution of power as evidenced by the language they used to describe their experiences. As discussed earlier, experiences of Not Knowing, Being Revealed, and Being Judged all suggest an experience of lesser power and of an inability to control the direction of the assessment.

The third constant is that assesseees are in danger of realizing something about themselves they are unprepared to acknowledge. Schafer maintains that they want to hide things from themselves as well as from others. The themes of Revealing / Not Revealing and Knowing / Not Knowing correspond to this point. Participants seemed to experience a pull both to share information about themselves with the assessor and to hide information that was experienced as threatening in some way. The overall tone for most participants, however, was of willingness to reveal information which would help the assessor understand them. The source of this willingness is unclear, but likely can be found in the nature of the assessee's relationship with the assessor. Perhaps assesseees were willing to

reveal information because the expert told them to do so (reflecting an I-It relationship), or perhaps the assessor was experienced as open, concerned, and willing to help (an I-Thou relationship).

The fourth constant Schafer offers about the assessee's experience of being psychologically assessed is that the assessee is tempted to regress to an entirely passive and helpless position because he or she feels confused and defeated by not being able to help him or herself. Schafer (1954) says that "Asking for and receiving help are difficult and painful to patients," (p. 39). Perhaps the theme from the present study most similar to this point is that of Not Revealing. Although there is no clear match between Schafer's point and a particular theme, Not Revealing captures some of the assessee's experience of wanting to appear normal and untroubled despite coming to a psychological clinic for help. This ambivalence is also reflective of the struggle between seeking help or hiding discussed above. An element of Not Knowing is also present in assessee's frustration and confusion at not being able to help themselves.

In the present study there was no evidence for Schafer's suggestion that assessee might be tempted to regress to an entirely passive and helpless position. The discrepancy might be because Schafer's idea is more of an explanation from the assessor's perspective than it is an element of the assessee's experience. Participants in this study did not describe themselves as helpless and passive because they could not help themselves. Their experiences of passivity were described in relation to certain elements of the assessment situation, not due to personal characteristics. For instance, assessee described the theme Being Revealed in language indicating an awareness of lacking control over the testing process. They also described trying to meet the demands and expectations of their role as assessee; i.e. cooperative and accepting of whatever the assessor might ask of them. Thus their experience of helplessness and passivity appears to be a consequence of the psychological assessment itself.

The fifth and final theme Schafer offers as a constant in assessee's experiences of being assessed is that the freedom to respond to unstructured tests is demanding and anxiety provoking. Some participants of the present study did describe being uncomfortable not knowing how to respond to unstructured tasks, although they did not describe it in terms of "freedom." This experience seems largely to be incorporated in the theme of Not Knowing, and to some extent in the theme of Being Revealed. Not knowing what a test was for, nor how to respond to it, raised the uncertainty of what might be revealed by the test. Schafer's point implies that assessee's are uncomfortable with the freedom to make decisions: a quality located within the individual. The themes of Not Knowing and Being Revealed shift the focus away from the individual and squarely on the context and on the interpersonal relationship inherent in the assessment. This suggests that the anxiety of facing an unstructured task is partly determined by the relationship in which the person confronts such a task. If the assessee's experience reflects merely being tested (being judged), he or she will likely feel more threatened and isolated, and hence more likely to hide (not reveal) in response. If the experience is one of cooperation and mutual exploration (being known), the assessee will likely be aware of more closeness, safety, and perhaps curiosity, and will feel safer to share (reveal) with the assessor.

In summary, the themes which describe the experience of being psychologically evaluated discovered in the present study are roughly equivalent to those hypothesized by Schafer (1954) forty years ago. An additional aspect illuminated in this study is the theme of Judging and Being Judged which is not represented in Schafer's discussion of this issue. As will be discussed below, this theme is absent from most assessment literature. Despite some similarities between the themes of the present study and Schafer's constants, the present study affords the unique and critical perspective of the assessee as described by the assessee. Schafer presents his constants based in the language of psychoanalytic theory. He refers to "defensive structures," (p. 37) and "neurotic anxieties and [a]

masochistic need to suffer," (p. 38) as motivating the assessee's experience. Such jargon, however, does little to inform us about the subjective experience of the assessee. The results of the present study are based on the language used by the participants: the themes are described in experience-near language free of jargon and are less value-laden. Perhaps most importantly, the experience-near language of participants allows for the influence of situational aspects of the assessment itself (including characteristics of the assessor) and does not ascribe all participant behavior to personality characteristics "within" the patient.

Jager (1986) also has made assumptions about the experience of an assessee during a psychological assessment. He suggested that, "the examinee's experience of the psychodiagnostic procedure consists of emotions, attitudes, and cognitions produced and shaped by: a) the diagnostic goals of the psychologist, b) the external conditions, and c) the internal predispositions brought by the client into the process" (p. 130). The findings of the present study appear to support these broad assumptions. Certainly participants of the present study, in their descriptions of their experiences, indicated they were aware of "emotions, attitudes, and cognitions" related to the psychological assessment. It also seems likely that these elements are related to the three conditions suggested by Jager (diagnostic goals, external conditions, and internal predispositions). A cornerstone of phenomenological research is acknowledging that a person's experience and his or her world co-create one another; both influence each other. Clearly elements of the testing situation, including the goals of the assessor, influence the assessee just as "internal predispositions" of the assessee influence the assessment process. Clearer confirmation of this process might be revealed in a study which examined the experience of both the assessee and assessor.

To this author's knowledge, Bennett-Levy et al.'s (1994) examination of neuropsychological assessment is the only empirical study which directly addressed the assessee's experience of the assessment. These researchers focused specifically on

assessee's level of satisfaction with the assessment and found that two of the four major influences on satisfaction were: 1) expectations and preparation for the assessment, and 2) perceived relevance of the assessment. Both of these influences seem to relate to experiences of knowing and not knowing which emerged in the present study. Bennett-Levy et al.'s subjects were aware of knowing and/ or not knowing information relevant to the assessment, and this knowledge greatly influenced their overall satisfaction with the neuropsychological assessment. Another influence on satisfaction identified by Bennett-Levy et al. was the length of the assessment. Although this was not a major theme in the present study, several participants reported being clearly aware of the time involved in the assessment. Bennett-Levy et al.'s (1994) fourth identified influence on assessee satisfaction was the usefulness of the feedback. In the present study, participants were unable to comment on the use of feedback because they were interviewed prior to receiving it. Given that Bennett-Levy et al.'s subjects reported salient experiences regarding feedback and its influence on the overall experience of the assessment, incorporating feedback into a future study of psychological assessments is a potentially fruitful direction to explore.

Current literature addressing the assessee's experience of being psychologically evaluated (e.g. Jager, 1986; Bennett-Levy et al., 1994) explores aspects of that experience which roughly correspond to two of the themes identified in the present study: 1) Knowing and Being Known, and 2) Revealing and Being Revealed. The theme of Judging and Being Judged, an important aspect of participants' descriptions in the present study, has not previously been described in the assessment literature. Perhaps clinicians have overlooked this aspect of the assessee's experience because they do not consider that they make "judgements" about the assessee based upon their own values (or the values espoused by the discipline of Psychology). Given the emphasis upon objectivity clinicians might think of themselves as making only "factual" comments about the assessee, based on

“scientific” findings, a stance that precludes them from making value-laden personal judgements about the assessee. However, participants in this study *did* experience being judged, and described this experience in generally negative terms. Traditional views of psychological assessment do not allow for judgements, only diagnoses based on facts generated by objective methods. The subjective elements of the assessment relationship are traditionally ignored when examining data generated during an evaluation, thus it is not surprising that this aspect of the assessee’s experience has been overlooked. That the theme of Judging and Being Judged was a salient element in assessee’s experience attests to the fundamentally interpersonal nature of psychological assessment. It specifically highlights the impossibility of an entirely objective and value-free assessment process, and implies the futility at attempting to create a science of psychology built upon objectivity. To ignore the interpersonal element of an assessment is to ignore one of its basic elements, and to skew the meaning of the data generated by denying the influence of both assessor and tests on the assessee.

A New Approach II: Assessment

In the psychological assessment literature, the examinee is often identified as a potential source of bias whose influence distorts the appearance of underlying psychopathology. Jager (1986) makes this point when discussing threats to psychological testing instruments’ validity, stating assessors should account for such bias when interpreting testing data. Schafer (1954), among others, discusses potential characteristics of patients which disrupt test administration and interpretation. The implication is not that the tests and techniques are limited in their usefulness, but that assessee’s introduce an element of error into the assessment process. Results of the present study suggest a shift in focus away from assessment instruments toward the experience of the assessee. Focusing on the assessee’s experience facilitates establishing a more relevant starting point from which an assessment can proceed: the assessee’s life. When the assessee’s experience of

his or her own life becomes the basis from which the assessor begins the assessment, the importance of specific test data become secondary. As Fischer (1994) has argued, testing instruments should assist the assessor in understanding the assessee, not dictate his or her understanding.

The work of Fischer (1994) and Finn and Tonsager (in press) represent the most comprehensively articulated alternative to traditional psychological assessment. The current findings suggest the validity of their observations. Fischer's (1994) three guiding principles provide the basis for a psychological assessment which is more attuned to the interpersonal nature of the assessment relationship: increased participation of the assessee in all aspects of the assessment (which is related to the current theme of Knowing), use of relevant descriptions of behavior (as opposed to explanations -- which is related to the theme of Being Judged), and sensitivity to context both during the assessment itself and in understanding the assessee's own life. She offers a different attitude with which traditional assessment instruments can be used, one in which the instruments are used to generate collateral data to enhance the primary, descriptive data offered by the assessee.

Stephen Finn regularly offers clinicians training in assessment methods which incorporate an approach based on Fischer's perspective. He calls this approach "Therapeutic Assessment" (Finn & Tonsager, in press) because it weds elements of change and growth often found in therapy with the assessment process. To that end, perhaps the cornerstone of this approach is its collaborative nature: assessees actively participate throughout the process, from generating questions they want answered by the assessment to contributing to the final report. Assessors are recognized as participant-observers in the process, not as objective scientists removed from the assessee's life. Consequently, the assessee's personhood is primary, rather than their supposed diagnostic category. The goal is not to generate a traditional diagnosis but to help assessees and assessors gain a new understanding of the assessee that will stimulate positive and lasting changes. There

appears to be growing evidence that this approach does indeed achieve this goal (Finn & Tonsager, in press).

Findings of the present study provide an experiential basis for Finn's approach. Results of this study indicate that Finn's method is highly appropriate for addressing the assessee's concerns. In particular, Therapeutic Assessment is particularly sensitive to an assessee's experience of Knowing and Being Known. It emphasizes the collaborative nature of the assessment, with the assessor being the expert about the tests and the assessee being the expert about him or herself. The goal of the assessment is to use both the assessor's and the assessee's expertise to answer the questions which necessitated the assessment. Informed collaboration is encouraged from the start: assessees are given written information about the assessment process and what they might expect throughout the process. Assessee ask questions about themselves that they would like answered by the assessment. They are informed about the purpose of different instruments and their relevance to the questions asked. Both oral and written feedback is provided that specifically addresses the questions which prompted the assessment. Finally, all assessees are encouraged to provide feedback about the process to the assessor. The end result appears to be assessment participants who have fewer concerns about not knowing information about the assessment and who generally feel that they are understood, or known, by the assessor.

Therapeutic Assessment also addresses assessee's concerns relevant to the themes of Revealing and Being Revealed and Judging and Being Judged. The collaborative nature of the assessment process likely increases assessee's experiences of control over the process, perhaps reducing their experiences of passively being revealed by the assessor and his or her tests. The possibility of being negatively judged also may be diminished by the collaborative spirit of therapeutic assessment. It is important to note that the themes identified in the present study should remain the same if assessee participating in a

therapeutic assessment were asked to describe their experience. However, the figural aspects of these themes would likely change to reflect the more collaborative nature of the assessment. For example, participants might be more aware of Knowing, Being Known, and Revealing when describing their experience, but less aware of Being Judged, Not Knowing, and Being Revealed. Certainly this hypothesis provides an interesting research opportunity.

Conclusion

In summary, results of the present study illuminate three salient aspects of participants' experiences of being psychologically evaluated: 1) Knowing and Being Known, 2) Revealing and Being Revealed, and 3) Judging and Being Judged. These themes emerged from a ground of interpersonal relationship, or Being with An-Other. Based upon these results, several comments can be made about how psychological assessments can be made more effective. First and foremost, researchers and clinicians must remember that psychological assessments occur in an interpersonal setting. Despite the original aspirations of psychology to be a natural science capable of generating objective data, assessors who ignore the fact that psychological assessments are influenced by their interpersonal setting are overlooking a major aspect of the process. Participants in this study clearly experienced themselves in an interpersonal relationship with the assessor in which both professional and personal aspects of the assessor were salient. Because the experience of being in a relationship is an important aspect of the process for assesseees, the assessor can increase the effectiveness of an assessment by being sensitive to the dual aspect of this relationship. In all likelihood both the personal and professional aspects of the assessee's experience of the assessor will be present despite the intentions of the assessor. In our culture the role of psychological assessor conveys a certain professional identity which enlarges the presence of the assessor. As the assessor makes an effort to interact with the assessee in a manner which highlights the more personal aspects of their

relationship, the professional aspects will remain, albeit less saliently.

Second, given the prevalence of participants' descriptions of Knowing and Being Known, special attention should be paid to making psychological assessments more collaborative. Measures which might be taken to increase the collaborative nature of assessments include most of those discussed by Finn and Tonsager: e.g., inviting assesseees to generate questions to be answered by the assessment, informing them about procedures to be used and their rationale, allowing them to comment on and amend the final report. Since it has been established that assessments occur in an interpersonal context, and not in a sanitized laboratory, the practice of keeping assesseees ignorant about many aspects of the assessment becomes irrelevant. Making assesseees active and informed participants in assessments, not objects to be studied, promises to open new avenues of data collection which are more relevant to the concerns of the person assessed. Placing the concerns of assesseees on par with those of assessors is a value judgement, but one based upon the growing recognition that psychological assessment for too long has placed the demands of objective science over the needs of the assessee (with questionable findings resulting).

The theme of Revealing and Being Revealed calls our attention to the vulnerability experienced by persons being psychologically evaluated, as well as to the dilemma of wanting to share information to become healthier while also feeling threatened by revealing this information. Assessors must be sensitive to this vulnerable, perhaps confusing, experience and take steps to foster an environment in which assesseees feel safe enough to bolster their desire to change. Maintaining a collaborative process and allowing assesseees more control during the assessment would likely reduce the negative experience of being revealed. The theme of Judging and Being Judged is also relevant to this aspect of psychological assessment. Although not clearly delineated in this inquiry, it is reasonable to suggest that a situation in which one is revealing oneself, or being revealed, coupled

with an environment perceived as unsafe, exacerbates the experience of being judged. As mentioned earlier, the inherent one-down position of the assessee vis a vis the assessor must be taken into consideration and attempts made to alleviate this situation as much as is feasible.

Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

Kohler (1947) set the task for psychological research to explore and describe human experience using qualitative methods. From these explorations would come a map of psychology's terrain which would then suggest fruitful new directions for further research. The present study of the experience of being psychologically assessed has pointed toward additional directions for future research, several of which were noted earlier and will be reviewed again below.

The present phenomenological inquiry into the experience of being psychologically evaluated demonstrates that assessment is experienced in an interpersonal context in which the assessor is experienced as having personal and professional aspects. Future research exploring any aspect of the assessment process must take this information into account. Further exploration into the factors which influence this fluid identity of the assessor would prove useful in alerting assessors to the impact of their actions upon assessees. As mentioned earlier, an examination of the simultaneous experience of assessee and assessor might further illuminate the mutual influence each member of the dyad exerts. Issues of power seem to be more salient when the assessor is experienced in a professional role. Future research might more clearly delineate the power dynamics of assessment and explore the implications of these dynamics on the validity of the findings.

The present study involved participants being psychologically evaluated prior to receiving psychotherapy. It is conceivable that the timing of an assessment might influence assessees' experiences. For example, how might someone experience an assessment following a successful termination of their psychotherapy, as opposed to participating in an

assessment before the start of psychotherapy? How might someone court-ordered for an assessment experience it differently than a parent being evaluated as a part of a child custody hearing? How might the themes uncovered in this study manifest themselves in these settings?

The assessors in this study were all graduate students relatively early in their training. Given the importance of the interpersonal context, it is likely that their level of expertise, coupled with the fact that the assessment occurred in a training clinic, influenced the experience of the assessee. Might the pronounced split between personal and professional aspects of the assessor have been less salient with more experienced clinicians? Which aspect, if any, would become more salient to an assessee working with a more experienced assessor?

The Therapeutic Assessment method of Finn and Tonsager (in press) appears to address many of the issues participants described in this study. They have noted that people who have participated in this type of assessment report personally relevant and long lasting changes as a result of the assessment. It is likely that descriptions of their assessment experience would differ from those receiving a more traditional assessment. Specifically, it is hypothesized that their descriptions of participants in an assessment which emphasized collaboration would identify figural themes of Knowing, Being Known, and Revealing, as opposed to Not Knowing, Being Revealed, and Being Judged. The personal aspect of the assessor would be expected to be more salient than the professional aspect for assesseees participating in assessment methods emphasizing collaboration.

Additional questions for research raised by the present study include: 1) Do the themes differ in their salience for people with different presenting complaints or psychiatric diagnoses? For example, would someone who has paranoid delusions describe the assessment predominately in terms of "being revealed"? Would this differ notably from the described assessment experience of someone diagnosed with Major Depressive Disorder?

2) Recall Bennett-Levy et al.'s (1994) finding that what happens during a neuropsychological assessment has less influence on an assessee's satisfaction than the preparation for and feedback about the assessment. How might feedback about a psychological assessment influence one's experience of the assessment? Would the themes change if interviews were done after the feedback session as opposed to before? 3) Can the experience of the assessee inform us of the culturally based assumptions of the context in which the tests are being conducted? Are the implicit values of the larger culture evident in the assessee's experience? How might this be manifest in situations in which assesseees and assessors are of different ethnic or racial groups?

A Final Thought

These questions offer a direction for further exploration of issues relevant to psychological assessment. If psychology is to remain a vital and humane discipline, researchers and clinicians must question their actions and assumptions, especially those which are largely unexamined. A defining metaphor in Chaos theory, and one that is relevant to psychology as well, is that a butterfly flapping its wings in Tokyo can affect the weather in New York six months later (Gleick, 1987). We must be cognizant that we impact the lives of others in unexpected ways, and that the effects of our actions may be far reaching. As psychologists, we must be willing to question our assumptions in an effort to enhance the human condition, never forgetting our common humanity.

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Appendices

Appendix A

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

TITLE OF PROJECT: The Experience of Being Psychologically Evaluated

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS:

Garry Barber, BA Phone: 974-6060 Office: 401F Austin Peay
Ronald Hopson, PhD Phone: 974-2165

The purpose of this study is to better understand the experience of people being psychologically evaluated prior to receiving psychological services. A better understanding of people's experience of the evaluation process will help clinicians be more informed in their assessments and recommendations for psychotherapy.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be interviewed about your experience of this psychological evaluation. Most interviews last about an hour; this is the only time commitment you will be asked to make. The interviews will be audiotaped and then transcribed. All identifying information will be omitted in the transcriptions to ensure your confidentiality. All audiotapes and transcriptions will remain in a locked file in 401F Austin Peay. Audiotapes will be erased after they are transcribed. If after the interview you have any questions or feelings you would like to discuss about the interview, we will arrange as much time as you would like to talk with the interviewer. Additionally, the final results of the study will be made available if you are interested in reading them.

Your participation will in no way influence whether you receive services at the University of Tennessee Psychological Clinic. Participation is voluntary, and will not delay the treatment you might receive at the Clinic. If you should feel uneasy or uncomfortable at any time, for any reason, you can simply ask to stop. No questions will be asked if you decide not to continue the interview once you have begun. There is no penalty for stopping. **All information discussed during the interview will remain confidential and will not be available to the clinician who conducted your psychological evaluation prior to the disposition of your application.** There is a small possibility that after a decision has been made concerning whether you will receive services here, your anonymous transcript might be seen by the clinician, or by the therapist who will eventually work with you. This will in no way affect your standing at the clinic.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact:

Garry Barber, 974-6060 or Dr. Ronald Hopson, 974-2165

I CERTIFY THAT I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE ABOVE, AND THAT I MAY END MY AGREEMENT AT ANY TIME.

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Appendix B

CLINICIAN CONSENT FORM

TITLE OF PROJECT: The Experience of Being Psychologically Evaluated

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS:

Garry Barber Phone: 974-6060 Office: 401F Austin Peay
Ronald Hopson, PhD Phone: 974-2165

The purpose of this study is to better understand the experience of people being psychologically evaluated prior to receiving psychological services. A better understanding of people's experience of the evaluation process will help clinicians be more relevant in their assessments and recommendations for psychotherapy.

Your participation is of course voluntary, and the time commitment is minimal, but crucial, to the success of this study. I would like to interview several of the people whom you have psychologically evaluated for services here at the University of Tennessee Psychological Clinic. Your participation would involve two brief aspects: 1) When you know the last day you will be testing a patient, please let me know the day and approximate time you hope to finish, and 2) ask your patient, immediately after completing the testing, if they would be willing to speak to me for 5 minutes about the possibility of participation in the study. I would like to speak with them as soon as you have finished, and will be available in the clinic at the time you anticipate completing the evaluation.

Patient participants will be assured that their confidentiality will be maintained, that their participation or non-participation will not influence whether they are accepted for services or not, and that the interviews will not be available to the evaluator. Just as importantly, it should be clear that if you decide to participate in this study, the patient interviews in no way will be used to evaluate your work as a clinician. Additionally, any identifying information in the interview will be deleted from the transcriptions of the audiotaped interviews. Assessment supervisees of Ron Hopson should be aware of the slight possibility of his recognizing your work based on the transcriptions. All audiotapes and transcriptions will be kept in a locked file in 401F Austin Peay.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact Garry Barber at 974-6060, or Dr. Ronald Hopson at 974-2165. Thanks.

I CERTIFY THAT I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE ABOVE, AND THAT I MAY END MY AGREEMENT AT ANY TIME.

Name of Clinician

Signature of Clinician

Date

Appendix C

CONFIDENTIALITY VOUCHER

TITLE OF PROJECT: The Experience of Being Psychologically Evaluated

As a member of this laboratory, I understand the potentially sensitive information that might be a part of the anonymous interview transcriptions that I will participate in analyzing. I also understand the importance of maintaining the confidentiality of the information given in the interviews.

With this in mind, I agree not to discuss these interviews outside of the laboratory or to discuss these interviews with people who are not members of this laboratory. I also agree to excuse myself from laboratory participation if I believe that I can identify the research participant whose interview is being discussed.

Name

Signature

Date

VITA

Garry Barber was born in North Carolina on October 18, 1965. He spent the first 18 years of his life in the small college town of Davidson, North Carolina and graduated from North Mecklenburg High School in 1984. He left Davidson for an even smaller college town, Gambier, Ohio, to attend Kenyon College. He graduated from Kenyon in May, 1988 summa cum laude with honors in Psychology and a Bachelor of Arts degree. After 3 years of finding himself, he found himself at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville entering the Doctorate program in Clinical Psychology. He completed his internship in Clinical Psychology at The University of Texas Health Science Center, San Antonio and received his Doctor of Philosophy degree from the University of Tennessee in August, 1996.