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# *About the Series*

To conduct a thorough and informative psychological assessment, practitioners need to master a complex set of skills that go beyond the rote procedures laid out in a test manual. The Psychological Assessment Series features brief, practical books by veteran practitioners who synthesize their professional wisdom into expert tips and insights for conducting a wide range of educational and psychological assessments. Each book provides context for using a specific test, including the history of its development and its current uses, followed by recommendations on when to use the test and how to combine it with other assessment tools. Also included are step-by-step instructions for administration, advice for navigating challenging scenarios, and guidance on how to use or adapt the test for a particular population of clients or, for example, when diagnosing a specific disorder, evaluating personality traits, and monitoring treatment or other interventions. All volumes in this series can be used as both educational tools for graduate students in assessment courses and handy references for practitioners. Each book can be paired with a companion video that features the author demonstrating the assessment process in real time, followed by an analysis that highlights significant moments from the demonstration along with key takeaways. The books and videos may be used independently, but together they make an ideal learning tool for students and trainees.

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# Introduction

The Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory—2—Restructured Form (MMPI–2–RF) represents a fundamental change in how we conceptualize and assess personality and psychopathology. The old paradigm, on which the original MMPI was based, consists of a set of discrete categorical diagnoses that a client or patient either has or doesn't have. The new paradigm conceptualizes psychopathology as a hierarchical structure of dimensional constructs ranging from relatively broad to relatively narrow in scope. The Research Domain Criteria project, introduced around 2010 by the National Institute of Mental Health (Insel, 2014), operationalizes this new paradigm, as do the several variants of five-factor models currently guiding research in the field of psychopathology. The MMPI–2–RF both reflects and contributes to this major paradigm shift.

In the context of the new paradigm, the MMPI–2–RF provides accurate measurement of 40 dimensional constructs related to personality and psychopathology (with an additional nine scales measuring protocol validity, or the individual's test-taking approach). These 40 constructs are arranged in three vertical tiers (broad, midlevel, and narrow) spanning five content domains: (a) Somatic/Cognitive, (b) Internalizing, (c) Thought Dysfunction, (d) Externalizing, and (e) Interpersonal Functioning. This book describes a two-pass approach to interpreting the MMPI–2–RF.

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The first pass is a top-down scan of the data, considering the broadest constructs first (Internalizing, Thought Dysfunction, and Externalizing). Next are nine midlevel scales that provide information about key factors within each of the five domains. Finally, the narrowest level includes facets of the midlevel scales. This quick first look provides an overall orientation to the client or patient with regard to key broad areas of difficulty as well as more specific issues that may be critical (e.g., suicidality). The second pass is a left-to-right examination of the results by each domain in turn, beginning, as noted above, with the Somatic/Cognitive Scales and ending with the Interpersonal Functioning Scales. The first pass is a quick overview, taking 4 or 5 minutes usually, and the second pass is the detailed interpretation step, using tools and guidelines presented in this book.

The MMPI was the first psychological test that really worked, and since about 1940 it has been ranked Number 1 in terms of use by clinical psychologists. The MMPI was so successful in the clinical world that both practitioners and scholars resisted updating or revising it for almost 50 years. The transition to the MMPI–2 (Butcher, Dahlstrom, Graham, Tellegen, & Kaemmer, 1989) was successful as, beyond restandardization, the changes really were not that dramatic. However, the paradigm shift that was introduced with the Restructured Clinical (RC) Scales in 2003 and then fully implemented with the publication of the MMPI–2–RF in 2008 was significant, and it was a controversial and disruptive issue in the field of psychological assessment for almost a decade. A full presentation of the early criticisms of the restructured instrument is beyond the scope of this book, and the various criticisms and point-by-point rebuttals by the test developers and supporters are widely available in the assessment journals, particularly in the 2006–2007 time period. An excellent summary of the key criticisms and responses to those criticisms is presented in Ben-Porath's (2012a) article on the use of the MMPI–2–RF in high-stakes forensic settings.

The basic assumption of this book is that the paradigm has now shifted, the hierarchical–dimensional model has replaced the categorical model, and future revisions of the MMPI will essentially fine-tune the current restructured form, such as by expanding the set of constructs covered while retaining the basic structure. Indeed, the similarly restructured adolescent version of the test, the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory—Adolescent—Restructured Form (MMPI–A–RF; Archer, Handel, Ben-Porath, & Tellegen, 2016), has recently been published.

The *MMPI–2–RF Manual for Administration, Scoring, and Interpretation* (Ben-Porath & Tellegen, 2008/2011) and the accompanying *MMPI–2–RF Technical Manual* (Tellegen & Ben-Porath, 2008/2011) are key sources of information for this book. Ben-Porath's (2012b) book *Interpreting the MMPI–2–RF* is a masterpiece of scholarship and is the key MMPI–2–RF resource for both researchers and practitioners. It is more than 500 pages in length, and it augments the test manuals with a thorough presentation of underlying historical and theoretical issues regarding personality, psychopathology, psychometrics, measurement theory, and controversies; it also includes extensive referencing of the empirical literature. The present book follows the intent of the American Psychological Association's Psychological Assessment Series, which is to provide an applied, practical guide to the use and interpretation of the MMPI–2–RF. The concept was that a book was needed for two key groups: (a) graduate students

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in applied psychology training programs and (b) practicing health care psychologists who want to add the MMPI–2–RF to their repertoire of tools.

Much of the substantive interpretive material in this book is drawn directly from the *MMPI–2–RF Manual for Administration, Scoring, and Interpretation* and *Interpreting the MMPI–2–RF*. Specifically, the text boxes presented in Chapters 3 and 4 are close copies of the text boxes in both of these primary sources (which are themselves identical in this regard). This mirroring is intentional and done with the permission and strong recommendation of the copyright holder and test authors. The interpretive statements were carefully developed on the basis of item content in some cases (content validity) and empirical correlates in others (criterion validity). The quality and consistency of MMPI–2–RF interpretations across psychologists are beneficial to clients and to the profession, and the use of these formal, "official" interpretive statements obviously supports optimum consistency.

Psychologists conducting the assessment and writing the report should also feel free to use these interpretive statements verbatim, without citing the source. This is not plagiarism but is actually the recommended practice for MMPI–2–RF interpretation. The computer-generated Score Report reproduced in Chapter 6 is included with permission of the copyright holder, as is the Interpretation Worksheet, also in Chapter 6. Finally, the stepwise interpretive framework presented in this book with only minor modifications was developed primarily by Yossef Ben-Porath and his graduate students at Kent State University.

## Looking Ahead: Plan for the Book

The overview presented so far may feel more disorienting than helpful, but the assessment model will become clear as we proceed. Chapter 1 provides a brief overview of the MMPI–2–RF, describing the key issues in the development of the original MMPI and the transitions to the MMPI–2, the RC Scales, and ultimately the MMPI–2–RF itself. The chapter concludes with a quick review of the MMPI–2–RF's psychometric characteristics, highlighting key points to consider during scale interpretation. In Chapter 2, I cover standard practices with regard to administering and scoring the MMPI–2–RF. (Computer-based administration and scoring are strongly recommended.)

Actual scale interpretation begins in Chapter 3, with the Protocol Validity Scales. These scales are always examined first and address the client's approach to the task. The broad issues are responsiveness, consistency, tendency to overreport psychopathology, and tendency to underreport psychopathology. In Chapter 4, I cover all 42 of the Substantive Scales of the MMPI–2–RF, going in order of domain. The Somatic/Cognitive domain is first, with six scales, followed by Internalizing with 15 scales, Thought Dysfunction with four scales, Externalizing with nine scales, and Interpersonal Functioning with six scales; the two Interest Scales are briefly described at the end.

Chapter 5 is a formal presentation of the interpretive framework I will use, including the two-pass approach to the test results. As mentioned above, the first pass consists of a brief consideration of the Protocol Validity Scales and then an overview of the Substantive Scales, beginning with the broadest level, then the midlevel scales,

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and finally the narrow-band scales. This pass provides a general orientation to a set of results. The second pass is slower and more systematic, and I will guide readers through each of the five major domains, extracting interpretive statements from Chapter 4 and adding them to the Interpretation Worksheet. The Substantive Scales and interpretation text boxes in Chapters 3 and 4 are presented in parallel order to the Interpretation Worksheet, which greatly facilitates this step in the process. The information accumulating on the Interpretation Worksheet, which will include, in addition to interpretive statements, notes regarding diagnostic and treatment implications, will ultimately be included in the final psychological report on the case. Finally, in Chapter 6, a case example is presented that provides a demonstration of the interpretive approach described in Chapter 5.

Again, the interpretation procedures advocated in this book are tightly aligned with the recommendations in the test user manual (Ben-Porath & Tellegen, 2008/2011) and in Ben-Porath's (2012b) book. Indeed, the specific interpretive information presented in the text boxes is virtually identical to that given in these basic sources. The interpretive framework presented in Chapter 5 is intended to promote reliability and consistency in MMPI–2–RF interpretation, from case to case and across examiners. The narrative interpretation of a set of MMPI–2–RF scores should be a reflection of the scores themselves, not the particular psychologist doing the interpretation. Close adherence to the procedures described will enhance the quality of MMPI–2–RF interpretation in applied settings as well as the consistency of test interpretation, which then promotes public confidence in the validity of psychological assessment.

## How to Use This Book

This book is intended to be primarily a practical guide or handbook that is used as a key to interpretation each time the MMPI–2–RF is administered. More specifically, it is likely that readers will read the Introduction along with Chapters 1 and 2 just once, referring back to them only rarely. Chapters 3 and 4 provide the "official" interpretive statements for specific ranges of test scores, and thus these chapters are desktop tools that readers can use in every case. The interpretation steps described in Chapter 5, using the case example in Chapter 6, typically become internalized within the first dozen or so cases, and readers may review them only occasionally.

In addition to this book, readers should use the Interpretation Worksheet, an interactive tool available at no cost from the University of Minnesota website (Regents of the University of Minnesota, 2012), in every case. The steps described in Chapter 5 are based on examining the protocol data systematically by domain, drawing appropriate interpretive narratives from Chapters 3 and 4, typing them into the Interpretation Worksheet, and then cutting and pasting them from the worksheet into the final comprehensive psychological report. Readers will also find it useful to download a sample report from the Pearson website and to print it out for easy reference while going through Chapter 5 (Pearson, 2014). These and links to other MMPI–2–RF resources are available on the companion website (http://pubs.apa.org/books/supp/mccord).