
Seeking a Theoretician: Finding a Friend

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It is hard for me to explain how John Gittinger and the PAS have impacted my life. The very fact that I, along with Robbie Steward, have taken the time and energy to develop Ed Gunberg's wonderful idea of doing an unusual Festschrift for John at the 1992 Personality Assessment System (PAS) Conference into this issue of the journal indicates my interest in both the man and the system.

I was introduced to the system first. After avoiding learning about the PAS for most of my doctoral program--with Chuck Krauskopf as my advisor, my drive to avoid discipleship must have been extreme--I went to a Big 8 Counseling Center Conference and listened to Chuck describe the PAS. I think I became intrigued when someone asked him what my profile would be and he could not answer. Luckily I had had a Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS) done a couple of years earlier and we sat down and came up with my profile.

My reaction to that interpretation was interesting. I suddenly understood why my mother would take off my shoes and sit me in a chair to discipline me (I am a primitive E and was a prissy little girl who would not walk in her socks). I no longer saw myself as being stupid for not being able to memorize and for getting confused about things until I had the whole picture (primitive F). And finally someone (Chuck) understood how socially anxious I was--everyone saw me as very outgoing (Ucc). Perhaps the best way to learn this system is to start with one's own profile. I had never had this kind of reaction to any test given to me--and as a

graduate student in Psychology I had taken many of them.

Despite being very involved with my dissertation, using Jane Loevinger's Ego Development Theory, I managed to learn some about the PAS. Then I was off to a one year appointment at the University of Iowa while I finished my dissertation. I continued to learn about PAS but did not use it clinically. After graduation I took a job at the University of Oklahoma. Chuck sent me a note and told me to give John a call. Being a Ucc this scared me (that ol' social anxiety), but I did not want to let Chuck down. So I called and began a most interesting period in my life.

In his wonderful resonant voice, John invited me to his home. We spent time talking about the PAS and then joined Mary Frances to talk and get to know each other. We met a few times, with John urging me to write about the PAS. After a time, Dorothy Foster decided to invite John to the Counseling Center to consult with us. What a gift! All of us were tested and assessed. We tested our clients, our students, our friends. Comments about each other were often couched in PAS terms. I think some of the normal daily conflict that occurs in any counseling center was ameliorated by our understanding our colleagues' and students' behavior in terms of their profiles. Students and staff alike looked forward to consultation time with John. He helped us understand ourselves and our clients--and often had excellent suggestions about therapeutic interventions.

As a clinician I was again and again amazed at what could be learned about a person from a WAIS profile. And my clients, after being impressed that a test could tell me so much about them, were able to use the framework of the PAS to both be more accepting of who they were and to make meaningful changes in their lives.

While I was unable to do much of the writing that John wished because of circumstances beyond our control, I did manage to edit and combine materials for the version of the Atlas that preceded the one done in 1992. And I managed to get an article on the X, Y, and Z variables into readable form. But two other events gave me greater pleasure. Our counseling center sponsored one of the annual meetings and many admirers and friends of John had the pleasure of seeing John's boyhood town and the hospital where the PAS was initially developed. We spent a wonderful evening eating great food with John and Mary Frances in their beautiful home. Plus we had some fun learning how to do country dancing!

The second event was a dinner given for John by the Counseling Center. He had given us so very much and we wanted to show our gratitude. Dorothy Foster had arranged that John be made an honorary staff member and got him a parking card--a treasured item also known as a hunting license by those who parked on campus. I remember both my tears and John's--his father had taught at the University of Oklahoma and to be a staff member at the same institution had great personal meaning to him.

Thus far I have given you a chronological accounting of my relationship with John and my growing use of the PAS in clinical work. But how do I, in a journal, explain to you that I love John? When we first met he offered to be my honorary grandfather but I protested he was too young (or I was too old!). But perhaps he has played the role of a beloved uncle. I have spent time at his home

sharing meals and drinks. His daughter Janie and I became friends through our work together at the College of Liberal Studies at the University of Oklahoma--I still miss her delightful sense of humor! Yes, John taught me PAS but more important he was and continues to be a friend, a dear friend. And he brings the latest Dick Francis mystery to conferences for me!

When I left Oklahoma I took my interest in the PAS with me. At Pembroke State University I tested some people and tried to interest them in the system. Perhaps the most important thing I was able to do was interpret a Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised (WISC-R) for a friend so that her son was not put on Ritalin as all advised. With an understanding of her son's profile, she was able to coach teachers about how to get the best out of him without drugs (he is a primitive ERU).

Then I moved on to West Georgia College where the zeitgeist seemed to be that testing except in a clinical setting was taboo (actually the then Chair seemed to be the one who hated any kind of standardized testing). It felt to me that one should not speak of intelligence testing let alone about using an intelligence test to assess personality. So for the first time I became a "closet" PAser--because such a system would seem conservative and too traditional here. But, in a sense, the PAS became even more important. It is at the yearly conference that I get the intellectual stimulation that I crave. Somehow John has attracted a wonderfully diverse group of bright challenging people and I love being with them.

I am not sure how my involvement with the PAS will grow in the future. It is my hope to use Chuck Krauskopf and Dave Saunders' book to teach a course on the PAS as soon as I have tenure (I have promised myself that I will not do any new preparations until that task is completed). I currently do a brief introduction to the system in my General Psychology course emphasizing how useful

it is to school counselors. But whether I do research and teach PAS or not, my life, my view of the world is informed by PAS. Although I do not speak the language in my current job, when I described people in general PAS categories, others listen. It also helps me personally--when I am having a difficult time with someone it helps me to have the detachment to cope with the other's behavior. And after twenty-one years of postbachelor's study of psychology I have not yet found another system that is complex enough to honor our humanness in the way that the Personality Assessment System does.