

Chapter 1

Psychological Testing and Assessment

Brief Chapter Outline

- I. Testing and Assessment
 - A. Psychological Testing and Assessment Defined
 - Varieties of assessments
 - The process of assessment
- II. The Tools of Psychological Assessment
 - A. The Test
 - B. The Interview
 - C. The Portfolio
 - D. Case History Data
 - E. Behavioral Observation
 - F. Role-Play Tests
 - G. Computers as Tools
 - H. Other Tools
- III. Who, What, Why, How, and Where?
 - A. Who Are the Parties?
 - The test developer
 - The test user
 - The testtaker
 - Society at large
 - Other parties
 - B. In What Types of Settings Are Assessments Conducted, and Why?
 - Educational settings
 - Clinical settings
 - Counseling settings
 - Geriatric settings
 - Business and military settings
 - Governmental and organizational credentialing
 - Academic research settings
 - Other settings
 - C. How Are Assessments Conducted?
 - Assessment of people with disabilities
 - D. Where to Go for Authoritative Information: Reference Sources
 - Test catalogues

- Test manuals
- Professional books
- Reference volumes
- Journal articles
- Online databases
- Other sources

Close-up: Behavioral Assessment Using Smartphones

Meet an Assessment Professional: Meet Dr. Alan Ogle

Everyday Psychometrics: Everyday Accommodations

Self-Assessment

References

A Term to Learn

Therapeutic psychological assessment: It is a collaborative approach to assessment in which therapeutic self-discovery and new understandings are encouraged throughout the assessment process.

Some Relevant Reference Citations

Finn, S. E. (2011). Therapeutic assessment “on the front lines”: Comment on articles from WestCoast Children’s Clinic. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 93(1), 23–25.

Ougrin, D., Zundel, T., Kyriakopoulos, M., et al. (2012). Adolescents with Suicidal and Nonsuicidal Self-Harm: Clinical Characteristics and Response to Therapeutic Assessment. *Psychological Assessment*, 24(1), 11–20.

Smith, R. E., Fagan, C., Wilson, N. L., et al. (2011). Internet-Based Approaches to Collaborative Therapeutic Assessment: New Opportunities for Professional Psychologists. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 42(6), 494–504.

For Class Consideration

Dr. Stephen Finn and his colleagues (Finn, 2003, 2009, 2011; Finn & Martin, 1997; Finn & Tonsager, 2002; Fischer & Finn, 2014) have described a collaborative approach to assessment called therapeutic psychological assessment. In this type of assessment, results are not revealed at the end but shared immediately so that both the assessor and the assessee

can codevelop an interpretation of the results and decide what questions require further assessment. But is this approach useful for every assessee? Is every professional who conducts an assessment suited for conducting therapeutic assessment? Under what conditions would therapeutic psychological assessment *not* be indicated?

Class Discussion Questions

Here is a list of questions that may be used to stimulate a class discussion as well as critical and generative thinking with regard to some of the material presented in this chapter of the text.

1. What is the role of measurement in society?
2. How does your answer to question one change when it is applied to the role of psychological measurement in society?
3. What psychological test needs to be developed?
 - a. Why does this test need to be developed?
 - b. What would this new test measure?
 - c. How would this new test measure what it measures?
 - d. For what purpose(s) would this new test be used?
 - e. In what setting(s) would this new test be used?
4. What do you consider to be the characteristics of a “good” test and a “bad” test?
5. What is the difference between psychological testing and psychological assessment?
6. What is meant by an alternate assessment, and why is there a need for it?
7. In your view, what are the purposes of using psychological tests today?
8. As a follow-up to question seven, discuss your view on how psychological tests could ideally be used to the best advantage. Elaborate on this with respect to the use of tests in the following settings:
 - a. Schools
 - b. Clinical and counseling settings
 - c. The business world
 - d. Other settings
9. Have you ever been interviewed?
 - a. Why have you been interviewed?
 - b. How would you characterize the interviewer who interviewed you?
 - c. What are the characteristics of a good interviewer?
 - d. What are the characteristics of a good interview?

10. Discuss your views on psychological assessment with regard to the following tools of assessment.
 - a. Tests
 - b. Portfolio assessment
 - c. Performance-based assessment
 - d. Case history
 - e. Behavioral observation
 - f. Role-play tests
 - g. Computerized assessment
 - h. Assessment using simulations or video
11. Who are the parties to the assessment enterprise, and what are their roles? In your view, what should be the role(s) of these parties?
12. Tests are used in credentialing. In general, what key elements do you think should be included in any test designed to license a psychological test user?
13. Why is it important to have published standards for educational and psychological tests? What are some of the abuses that the standards are intended to prevent?
14. Describe a test experience you personally had that stands out for some reason? Why does it stand out?
15. For more routine test situations, such as academic achievement tests in school, answer the following questions:
 - a. How do you prepare for tests?
 - b. How do you feel during and after the test?
 - c. Analyze the factors that may contribute to the feelings you listed.

In-Class Demonstrations

1 Bring Something to the Class.

Bring test-related reference materials such as the following to the class:

- a. A sample copy of *Mental Measurements Yearbook (MMY)*

Bring a copy of the latest edition of *MMY* to the class.

- b. A sample copy of *Tests in Print*

Bring a copy of *Tests in Print* to the class.

- c. A sample test manual

Bring a manual for an intelligence test, a personality test, or some other test to the

class.

- d. A sample assessment-related scholarly journal

Bring a copy of *Psychological Assessment* or another assessment-related journal to the class.

- e. A copy of the *Standards*

Bring the latest edition of the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* to the class.

- f. A copy of the APA's *Ethical Principles*

Bring a copy of the latest edition of the APA's *Ethical Principles of Psychologists* to the class.

- g. A copy of another professional organization's ethical principles

Bring a copy of the published ethical principles of any specialty group within psychology that employs tests (such as school psychologists, neuropsychologists, or forensic psychologists) to the class.

- h. A sample computer-generated psychological report

Bring a sample of computer-generated test reports including scoring (simple and extended), interpretive (descriptive, screening, and consultative), and integrative reports to the class.

2 Bring Someone to the Class.

Invite a guest speaker to the class. The guest speaker could be any of the following options:

- a. A faculty member

Invite a faculty member (from your university or a neighboring one) who has developed a psychological test (published or unpublished) to the class. Ask the faculty member to speak about how they developed the test, what it measures, the settings in which one can take the test, etc.

- b. A test user

Invite a local user of psychological tests from any setting to the class. Ask the test user to discuss their experience of taking tests, their reasons for using the tests, etc.

c. A lawyer

Invite a local attorney who has knowledge or experience concerning test-related litigation or other proceedings involving psychological tests to the class. Ask the attorney to share their knowledge about the test-related litigations and proceedings involving psychological tests.

d. An individual knowledgeable about assistive technology

Invite a representative from an Assistive Technology Center (either at your university, a nearby school district, or a regional education program) to the class to discuss the various accommodations that can be made to a computer to permit an individual with a disability to use the computer for assessment purposes.

e. Several psychology department faculty members

Invite a panel drawn from the faculty of the Psychology Department who represent different specialty areas in psychology to the class. Have each of them speak briefly on how professionals in their specialty areas use psychological tests and other tools of assessment.

In-Class Role-Play and Debate Exercises

1 Role-Play: “Assessors and Assesseees”

Divide all students in the class into two groups: assessors and assesseees. The task of the assessors is to devise a role-play test measuring any set of skills well known to the university students. For example, the role-play test devised could be one to measure study skills. For the more adventurous, the role-play test could be one to measure dating skills. In class, this role-play test is “put to the test” using each of the students in the assesseees group.

2 Debate

All students are given an advance notice to prepare for a debate on a specific topic. Then, they are assigned roles in that debate.

a. Debate: Third-party presence during assessment

Assign students to one of the following groups: (1) a pro group, (2) a con group, and (3) an audience/judges group. The students are to debate in the presence of third parties during an assessment. All students should research the issues on the topic prior to the debate. The members of the pro group should make their arguments in favor of the topic, and the members of the con group should make their arguments against the topic. After both the groups have made their arguments, the members of the audience/judges group should provide informed

feedback to the members of the pro group and the con group and announce the winner of the debate.

- b. Debate: The pros and cons of Computer Assisted Psychological Assessment (CAPA)

Assign students to one of the following groups: (1) a pro group, (2) a con group, and (3) an audience/judges group. All students should research the issues on the topic prior to the debate. The students should debate on the pros and cons of CAPA. The members of the pro group should make their arguments based on the pros of CAPA, whereas the members of the con group should make their arguments based on the cons of CAPA. After both the groups have made their arguments, the members of the audience/judges group should provide informed feedback to the members of the pro group and the con group and announce the winner of the debate.

Out-of-Class Learning Experiences

1 Take a Field Trip.

Take the class on a field trip to the following locations.

- a. The university library

Make arrangements to take the class to the university library to explore test-related reference materials.

- b. A local governmental agency

Make arrangements to take the class to a local governmental agency to hear firsthand about how psychological tests are used as a tool of assessment.

- c. A local business or other organization

Make arrangements to take the class to a local business or organization that uses psychological tests. Students can hear firsthand about the tests they use and how they use them.

Suggested Assignments

1 Critical Thinking Exercises

- a. Critically review test catalogs.

Either individually or in teams, have students review some test catalogs from test publishers and the claims made for various tests. Their task is to critically evaluate the claims made for the tests. They could share their findings by writing a report titled “Evaluation of Claims Made” or by giving a presentation to their fellow class members.

- b. Critically review the talk in a talk show.

Either individually or in teams, assign students the “task” of watching (or videorecording) any popular talk show such as *The Ellen DeGeneres Show* or *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* (or any other talk show) at a specified date and time. The objective is to take notes regarding the first interviewed guest on the show, particularly with regard to the skills of the interviewer. Then, students should present their findings by either writing a report on it or giving a presentation to their fellow class members.

2 **Generative Thinking Exercise: Brainstorming Units of Measurement**

As a class, brainstorm as many measuring units as possible that may have application in psychological measurement. Focusing on the more novel suggestions, how might a test using these units of measurement be developed?

3 **Read-Then-Discuss Exercise: Gaining Firsthand Familiarity of Reference Sources**

This task begins with a visit to the university library where students must locate the following reference books: *Mental Measurements Yearbook*, *Tests in Print*, and *Test Critiques*. Then, they must read a sample entry from each of these books. Finally, they have to come to class prepared to discuss each of the entries they read from the books and share their impression of the general differences that exist between these reference works.

4 **Research-Then-Report Exercises**

- a. Report on human resources practices in local businesses

Have students contact local business firms that have established human resources departments to inquire about the tools of psychological measurement, if any, used for employee selection, retention, promotion, and so on. Students should prepare a written report based on their findings.

- b. How psychological tests are used in a specific field

The students’ task is to write a report on the applications of psychological testing and assessment in a particular field. For example, how are psychological tests used by the military? What type of approach to psychological assessment do

students envision being used in the military to make personnel more efficient at what they do? How have the tools of psychological assessment influenced the production of military weapons?

As background to a sample assignment on psychological assessment in the military, you may wish to cite a behavioral research study that resulted in the military's switch from the M1 rifle to the M15 rifle as the weapon of choice. This switch came about in large part due to a behavioral observation study conducted by the army. Early in the Korean War, troops found the long-range M1 rifle to be relatively ineffective against the masses of charging enemies. A behavioral observation study conducted in the early 1950s showed that most soldiers fired their weapons when the target was only 150 feet away, despite the fact that their weapon had a longer-range capability. This observation, in part, led to the development of a change in the weapon of choice. The M15 rifle was developed, and it is still the military's weapon of choice today.

Media Resources

On the Web

The following is a sampling of some of the material available on the Internet.

1. <http://www.iapsych.com/>
This website is sponsored by the Institute for Applied Psychometrics. It includes many links to relevant publications related to psychological measurement and assessment.
2. <http://www.job-interview.net/>
This website provides extensive information on job interviews including examples of the types of interview questions.
3. <http://www.assessmentpsychologyboard.org/>
This is the official website for the American Board of Assessment Psychology. The website contains information such as a listing of assessment specialists who hold the Diplomate in Assessment Psychology. This site also has links to other assessment-related sites.
4. <http://www.ets.org>
This is the official website of Educational Testing Service, the people who bring you the SATs and the GRE, among many other globally known tests. This organization, which is more than 60 years old, is the world's leading educational and measurement and research organization. Information and news about many of its tests may be found on the site.

On DVD, VHS, CD, and Other Media

1. *Clinical Interviewing Skills* (2012, DVD, no running time listed, WILEY)
In this video, John Sommers-Flanagan and Rita Sommers-Flanagan introduce students to various aspects of clinical interviewing. They also explore an intake interview, a mental status examination, and a suicidal interviewee.
2. *Pioneers of Collaborative/Therapeutic Assessment* (2009, four-DVD set, 120 minutes, SPA)
This video series is a set of four DVDs containing lectures by Stephen Finn, Constance Fischer, and Leonard Handler as well as a roundtable discussion in which these clinicians discuss the commonalities and differences of their respective approaches.
3. *Basic Attending Skills* (2006, two-DVD set, 84 minutes, 53 minutes, INS)
This video might be useful to elaborate the role of the interview in assessment. This DVD presents tips on attending an interview as well as the use of open and closed questions in interviewing.
4. *ABC's of School Testing* (1993, VHS, 30 minutes, NCME)
This video explains the basics of testing in the school setting. Developed for use with parents, this video presentation provides a good introduction to basic issues in testing and assessment.
5. *Accommodating Students with Learning Disabilities in Colleges and Universities* (1996, VHS, 20 minutes, MOU)
This video reviews the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act, including the need for accommodations such as alternative test formats.
6. *Performance Assessment* (1993, VHS, 28 minutes, AIT)
This video lists the limitations of standardized tests and argues for alternative assessment strategies that are based on performance.
7. *Transdisciplinary Play-Based Assessment* (1990, VHS, 90 minutes, PSU)

This video offers an alternative, play-based perspective of assessment.

References

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Eyde, L.D., Robertson, G.J., Krug, S.E., Moreland, K.L., Robertson, A.G., Shewan, C.M., Harrison, P.L., Porch, B.E., Hammer, A.L., & Primoff, E.S. (1993). *Responsible Test Use: Case Studies for Assessing Human Behavior*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

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