

Psychological assessment model



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The process of assessing an individual psychologically should be accurate, thorough, and impartial, resting on the assumption that the clinicians performing the assessment are competent and using reliable procedures. According to Ridley, Li, and Hill (1998, p. 1), “ Identifiable characteristics and inferential dimensions of a clients psychological status (e. g., symptom patterns, overt behaviors, and covert personality dynamics) as well as environmental influences should largely determine how the client is assessed. Therefore, if skilled clinicians could actually assess the same client, they should formulate similar conceptions of the clients psychological functioning. Moreover, if skilled clinicians could each independently assess several of the same clients, they should arrive at differential assessment conclusions appropriate to each client. In any case, clinicians should make accurate, comprehensive assessment decisions regardless of (a) their cultural backgrounds, (b) the clients cultural background, and (c) the complexity and nature of the presenting problem(s).”

One social and psychological variable, among many others that must be taken into consideration, is culture. Unfortunately, this variable is usually mishandled or overlooked in the process. According to Ridley, Li, and Hill (1998, p. 1), “ Culture is one such variable that permeates human experience. It affects the way people label illness, identify symptoms, seek help, decide whether someone is normal or abnormal, set expectations for therapists and clients, give themselves personal meaning, and understand morality and altered states of consciousness. Sometimes clinicians give culture too much credence in assessment, resulting in their overlooking or underdiagnosing of psychopathology, or they may not give culture due consideration, resulting in their overdiagnosing of psychopathology.”

One of the most challenging aspects of dealing with culture when it comes to mental health professionals is deciding whether a person of a particular culture is abnormal in general or if they are considered abnormal within their culture. As a result, culture must be incorporated into psychological assessment. Most clinicians are not properly trained to assess multicultural clients in the current situation at mental health facilities. This is particularly a problem because accurate assessment is crucial in helping an individual in need. Mainstream assessment methods have even been found to be dangerous to multicultural individuals and groups (Spengler, 1998).

Most importantly, it is essential that EMIC criteria are used in the assessment process with multicultural clients. This is because it categorizes and classifies psychological phenomena by attitudes, behaviors, and values. These items make their appearance in specific cultures (Spengler, 1998).

If using standardized instruments of assessment, it is important to use them in culturally important ways. Two of the most used assessment instruments for this purpose are the Minnesotal Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI or its revision MMPI-2) and the California Psychological Inventory (CPI). These two methods have had serious problems noted when used with multicultural clients (Spengler, 1998).

The overall consensus is that nontraditional assessment methods must be used when evaluating multicultural clients. These are not developed from nor have their norms based on well-defined populations, so they are more culture-friendly. Some of these include postassessment narratives, constructivist strategies, idiographic assessment, ethnographies, life histories, case studies, accounts methods, methods for studying life events, and picture-story techniques. Of course, for these alternative methods to be

effective, it is essential that the assessor be well-versed in the culture of the target population. This makes it easier for him or her to interpret the results of the assessment. For example, the narrative accounts method, “ This is a collaborative method of biographical interviewing. The purpose is to reconstruct a clients life story using open-ended and reflective dialogue. This approach to assessment is construed as an egalitarian and unfolding relationship.” (Ridley, Li, and Hill, 1998, p. 1)

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Spengler, P. M. (1998). Multicultural assessment and a scientific-practitioner model of psychological assessment. *The Counseling Psychologist*.