
Ethical Issues Relevant to Assessment

— EPSY 829: Ethics and Professional Practice —
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Introduction

- Psychological work is highly respected in society with psychological assessment often earning the highest regard.
- Psychological assessments are tools that help psychologists derive objective information about an individual's abilities, interests, learning capacities, and potential diagnoses.

Pros and Cons of Assessment

Challenges	Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Diagnostic labels● Stigma/judgement from others● Negative self-image● Unanswered questions● Legal trials● Job loss● Challenges with post-secondary admission● Wait-times for assessment and services● Misinterpretations● Person reduced to a score	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Increases self-awareness and ability to self-advocate for needed supports● Use evidence-based supports and interventions● Program and support acceptance

Statistically, only 16% of individuals receive an accurate diagnosis and out of those with an accurate diagnosis, only 16% of adults and 10% of children receive adequate supports (Mash & Wolfe, 2019).

Using the Codes to Guide Ethical Assessment

- We can use the Saskatchewan College of Psychologists' *Professional Practice Guidelines* (2010) and the *Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists* (CPA, 2017) to ensure we meet the highest level of ethical behaviour when assessing.
- Additionally, we can consult:
 - *Practice Guidelines for Providers of Psychological Services*
 - *Provincial Standards of Professional Conduct*
 - *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*
 - *Guidelines for Ethical Psychological Practice with Women*
 - *Guidelines for Non-Discriminatory Practice*

Before - Planning the Assessment

- Variety of statements and questions should be considered prior to assessment taking place.
- Assessment and Competency
- Informed Consent

Informed Consent

- CPA I.27 - consent must be voluntarily given
- CPA I.23 and I.25 - all of the information that a reasonable person would need to make an informed decision must be shared and updated throughout the process
- CPA I.24 - the information given must be understandable to all
- CPA I.34 - caregivers give consent for children
- CPA I.19 - active participation from all involved
- CPA I.26 - clarify multiple relationships
- CPA II.20 and CPA II.32 - ensure appropriate use, give unbiased and professional opinions, and explain in culturally-appropriate ways
- SK 14.1 and SK 14.8 - relay results clearly so they are appropriately used

Competency

- CPA II.6 and CPA II.9 - work in area of competency
- CPA II.9 and SK 14.2 - up-to-date knowledge of testing psychometrics and training in assessment selection, procedures, scoring, and interpretation
- SK 14.4 - test selection on a case-by-case basis
- SK 14.5 - use the most recent edition and examine the pros and cons of an assessment; report any limitations
- CPA II.13, CPA II.18, and SK 14.3 - use methods that are valid to that specific person and ensure their diversity considerations match the normed population of the assessment; test should answer the questions sought; note any adaptations made

During/After - Conducting and Reporting

- Ethical Considerations (who, what, when, where, why)
- Assessment Limitations
- Report and follow-up meeting
- Assessment Responsibility

Confidentiality

- CPA III.10 - objective reporting
- CPA I.37 - report on questions sought
- CPA I.41 - respect the client's right to privacy regardless of communication mode
- SK 14.6, SK 14.7, and SK 14.9 - accurate interpretations given based on up-to-date information (even if a computer program is used to interpret)

Additional Considerations - Release of Assessments

- Outside services: education system, insurance companies, and the legal system
 - Can affect client's employment, educational supports, or testimony in court
- Law and Ethics
 - Assessment information and written reports
 - Subpoenas
 - Documentation

Additional Considerations - Sales and Copyright

- Psychological testing and assessments
- Assessment responsibility
- Training purposes and certification
- CPA IV.11 - protect testing techniques and interpretations from being misused
- SK 14.10 - protect the physical tests and methods used

Additional Considerations - Assessment with Children

- Reason for assessment
- Diagnosis (helpful or harmful)
- Cognitive or Behaviour
- Impact on individuals, family members, & community

Additional Considerations - Ethical and Diversity

- Aware of gender, age, sexuality, race, culture, language, and disabilities
 - Assessments were created without considering diversity of clients.
- Assessment Responsibility
 - Assessment Instruments
 - Documentation
 - Interpreter

Discussion Question

- After hearing these ethical considerations, do you or do you not think we should be conducting assessments?
- Can you think of additional times when assessment is ethical or unethical?

Conclusion

- The CPA principles - Respect and Dignity of the Person, Responsible Caring, Integrity in Relationships, and Responsibility to Society - need to be at the forefront of our assessment practices.
- There are both positive and negative outcomes of testing and thus, it's not a practice we could just stop doing.
- Instead, we need to use the codes to guide our practice before, during, and after assessment so that we are ensuring minimal harm to clients and maximum benefit!

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