

## Abnormal Psychology Chapter Four Notes

### Introduction

- **Psychological assessment** → refers to a procedure by which clinicians, using psychological tests, observations, and interviews, develop a summary of the client's symptoms and problems
- **Clinical diagnosis** → the process through which a clinician arrives at a general "summary classification" of the patient's symptoms by following a clearly defined system

### The Basic Elements in Assessment (pages 104-108)

- First thing that a clinician needs to do is identify the presenting problem/major symptoms and behavior the client is experiencing
- Taking a Social or Behavioral History
  - An adequate assessment should include a diagnostic label, an individual's personality traits, behavior patterns and environmental demands; all together integrated into a consistent and meaningful picture is referred to as a "dynamic formulation" because it not only describes the current situation but also includes hypotheses about what is driving the person to behave in maladaptive ways
    - Then, decisions about treatment are made collaboratively with the consent and approval of the individual; in severe cases, they may have to be made without their participation
- Ensuring Culturally Sensitive Assessment Procedures
  - **Cultural competence** → critical for psychologists to be informed of the issues involved in multicultural assessment
- The Influence of Professional Orientation
  - How clinicians go about the assessment process often depends on their basic treatment orientations; they focus on the type of assessments that their professions entail

### Assessment of the Physical Organism (pages 108-111)

- Sometimes medical evaluation is necessary to rule out the possibility that physical abnormalities may be causing or contributing to a mental disorder
- The Neurological Examination
  - **Electroencephalogram (EEG)** → used to assess brain wave patterns in awake and sleeping state; a graphical record of the brain's electrical activity
  - **Dysrhythmia** → irregular brain pattern
  - **Computerized axial tomography (CAT) scan** → reveals images of parts of the brain that might be diseased; provides rapid access, without surgery, to accurate information about the localization and extent of anomalies in the brain's structural characteristics
    - Only reveals anatomical features such as shape or a particular internal structure
  - **Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)** → replacing CAT scans; involves the precise measurement of variations in magnetic fields that are caused by the varying amounts of water content of various organs and parts of organs
    - Reveals brain structure
    - Sensitive to instrument errors or inaccurate observations as a result of slight movements of the person being evaluated

- o **Positron emission tomography (PET) scan** → allows for an appraisal of how an organ is functioning
  - Reveals functioning; “better” form of CAT scan
- o **Functional MRI (fMRI)** → measures changes in local oxygenation (blood flow) of specific areas of brain tissue that in turn depend on neuronal activity in those specific regions
  - Reveals brain activity; “better” form of fMRI
  - Results are difficult to interpret
  - Sensitive to instrument errors or inaccurate observations as a result of slight movements of the person being evaluated
- o **Aphasia** → a loss of ability to communicate verbally
- **The Neuropsychological Examination**
  - o **Neuropsychological assessment** → involves the use of various testing devices to measure a person’s cognitive, perceptual, and motor performance as clues to the extent and location of brain damage
  - o **Halstead Reitan battery test** → composed of several tests and variables from which an “index of impairment” can be computed; provides specific information about a subject’s functioning in several skill areas. Composed of...
    - **Halstead Category Test** → measures subject’s ability to learn and remember material and can provide clues as to his or her judgment and impulsivity; number presented, guess correct number=doorbell, wrong number=buzzer, person is required to determine from the pattern of buzzers and bells what the underlying principle of the correct choice is
    - **Tactual Performance Test** → measures a subject’s motor speed, response to the unfamiliar, and ability to learn and use tactile and kinesthetic cues; test surface with board with 10 different shaped spaces, have to place blocks in correct grooves, asked to draw blocks and board from tactile memory
    - **Rhythm Test** → measures attention and sustained concentration through an auditory perception task; 30 pairs of rhythmic beats played on recorder, asked if pairs are same or different
    - **Speech Sounds Perception Test** → determines whether an individual can identify spoken words and measures subject’s concentration, attention, and comprehension; nonsense words presented on recorder, subject asked to identify word from list of four printed words
    - **Finger Oscillation Task** → measures the speed at which an individual can depress a lever with the index finger

Psychosocial Assessment (pages 111-124)

- Attempt to provide a realistic picture of an individual in interaction with his or her social environment
- **Brief Psychiatric Rating Scale (BPRS)** → provides a structured quantifiable format for rating clinical symptoms such as over concern with physical symptoms, anxiety, emotional withdrawal, guilt feelings, hostility suspiciousness, and unusual thought patterns; contains 18 scales that are scored from ratings made by a clinician following an interview with a patient
- Psychological Tests

- More indirect means of assessing psychological characteristics; standardized sets of procedures or task for obtaining samples of behavior (often more precise and more reliable than interviews or some observational techniques)
- **Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale Revised** → commonly used test for measuring adult intelligence; includes verbal and performance materials and consists of 15 subsets
  - **Vocabulary (verbal)** → subset that consists of a list of words to define that are presented orally to the individual; designed to evaluate knowledge of vocabulary
  - **Digit Span (performance)** → test of short-term memory; sequence of numbers is administered orally and the individual is asked to repeat digits in the order administered. Task two involves the individual's remembering the numbers, holding them in memory, and instructed to say them backwards
- **Projective personality tests** → unstructured in that they rely on various ambiguous stimuli such as inkblots or vague pictures rather than on explicit verbal questions, and in that the person's responses are not limited to the "true," "false," or "cannot say" variety
  - **Rorschach Inkblot Test** → uses 10 inkblot pictures and the subject is instructed to say what they see, what it makes them think of, and what it means to you
  - **Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)** → uses a series of simple pictures, some highly representational and others quite abstract, about which a subject is instructed to make up stories; content of pictures is ambiguous
  - **Sentence Completion Test** → consist of beginnings of sentences that a person is asked to complete; help examiners pinpoint important clues to an individual's problems, attitudes, and symptoms
- **Objective personality tests** → structured; typically use questionnaires, self-report inventories, or rating scales in which questions or items are carefully phrased and alternative responses are specified as choices; far more controlled than projective
  - **Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI)** → widely used personality test for clinical and forensic (court related) assessment in psychopathology research in the U.S.

#### The Integration of Assessment Data (pages 124-125)

- The integration of all the data gathered at the time of an original assessment may lead to agreement on a tentative diagnostic classification for a patient (this information is then entered into a case record)
- Several factors to keep in mind when evaluating test results
  - **Potential Cultural Bias of the Instrument or the Clinician** → important to ensure that whatever instrument used can be confidently used with persons from minority groups
  - **Theoretical Orientation of the Clinician** → assessment is inevitably influenced by a clinician's assumptions, perceptions, and theoretical orientation; different treatment recommendations are likely to occur as a result