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Psychological Assessment Models for Research and Practice: An International, Intercultural Future

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I have been preoccupied for more than 50 years with reconciliation of two disparate models of science applied to assessment practice. My graduate training in experimental psychology instilled a positivist-empiricist approach; my undergraduate education and subsequent exposure to existential philosophy nurtured a human science orientation. I have diligently employed both models in assessment research and practice and have been privileged by opportunities to describe what I construed as desirable futures for professional psychology (e.g., Dana, 1987, Dana & May, 1986), particularly in the area of assessment (e.g., Dana, 1984a, b).

Another opportunity for reconciliation of these assessment models is afforded by globalization in the form of instantaneous intercommunication using the Internet for information arbitrage. Globalization is fueled by politics, economics, culture, national security, technology, and ecology (Friedman, 1999). According to Friedman, the Internet has enabled a "democratization of technology". Globalization of our professional assessment enterprise constitutes a post-modern challenge to resolve our contemporary failure to use major assessment instruments responsibly in the interests of human welfare. In contrast with European countries, professional assessment efforts in the United States are frequently devoid of comparable social responsibility (see Fagulha & Dana, 1997). An unquestioned, proprietary, and culture-specific model of assessment

technology in the United States has restricted applications of our standard assessment instruments internationally. In the absence of cross-cultural validation for equivalence of these exported instruments, there are potential consequences that can caricature, stereotype, pathologize, and even dehumanize well-functioning persons. Going beyond the individual level, there is also danger of fostering an assessment-derived, ostensibly universal understanding of intelligence, personality, and psychopathology in all human beings on the basis of mainstream, largely middle-class, Caucasian norms developed in the United States.

It is no accident that culture is prominently included among Friedman's interfacing, interacting, indispensable, and equally important components of globalization. Culture and cultural knowledge may provide the "groundbass" for globalization. Globalization implies an increasing homogeneity of substance and action within a context of distinct cultural and national entities and personal identities. Outside of the United States, culture is perceived as central for describing and understanding human beings (e. g., Pawlik & Rosenzweig, 2000). Moreover, I believe that cultural psychology per se can encompass both experimental and applied areas (Dana, 2000, November). Nonetheless, applied areas of psychology in the United States do not share an appreciation of culture or an awareness of the centrality of culture in the lives of many individuals. As a consequence, clinical-professional psychology has almost entirely excluded culture from research presence and assessment importance (Kazarian & Evans, 1998). Recent articles in the *American Psychologist* have decried this omission as "malpractice" (Hall, 1997) and evidence of a conspicuous absence of social-justice oriented practice (Brown, 1997; Strickland, 2000). These contemporary reminders resuscitate more general historic criticisms of psychology as inadequate for

human beings (Koch, 1969) and irrelevant to social problems (Sarason, 1981). It appears that psychology, particularly in applied areas in the United States, has been largely unable to implement our aspirations for a coherent world because we have unwittingly elucidated an egocentric and culture-specific metaphor in training that has exclusively extolled a positivist-empiricist model of science (Dana, 1987).

Unfortunately, on the threshold of this new millennium, the effects of power, sexism, and racism in professional psychology education in the United States remain coupled with sustained disregard for non-White cultural perspectives. These issues constitute formidable societal obstacles to the creation of a humanized science of professional psychology.

Psychological assessment emerges from a century of historical perspective to recognize culture as the heart of a new model now visible through globalization lenses. I will suggest several facets of an assessment paradigm predicated upon alterations in training, research, and practice consistent with reconciliation of scientific models. These facets are driven by use of the Internet for immediate communication of unlimited information resources at negligible cost and incorporate culture in assessment *assumptions, methods, reports, use of findings, and anticipated technological effects within a future-oriented, global perspective.*

Assumptions

Our current assumptions are psychologist-oriented and technology-oriented within an Anglo-American perspective rather than consumer-oriented or admitting the legitimacy of other cultural perspectives. Theory, statistical methods, and research design provide an emic context in which alternative cultural perspectives and cultural issues are minimized in the development of personality and psychopathology constructs

as well as in the design, construction, standardization, and application of tests and other assessment methods. Only by assuming that culture resides at the center of an assessment enterprise, can the traditional null hypothesis of no cultural bias be replaced by an alternative null hypothesis of cultural bias, as Malgady proposed (1996) to reverse the relative seriousness of Type I and Type II errors. Consensual standards for multicultural research are now available for routine evaluation of all comparative, cross-cultural research, and multicultural research (Council of National Psychological Associations for the Advancement of Ethnic Minority Interests, 2000). An assessment example of the salutary effects of Malgady's alternative null hypothesis-the Multicultural Assessment-Intervention Process Model (MAIP)-is also available that emphasizes idiographic opportunities for inclusion of cultural information (for comparison with other models, see Ponterotto, Gretchen, & Chauhan, 2001). MAIP invokes use of specific moderator variables to provide information that can increase culturally appropriate usage of standard tests and suggest when available emic tests for non-White populations should be employed (e.g., Dana, 2000a, in press). MAIP provides credible assessment data for preparation of DSM-IV cultural formulations that can increase accuracy and reliability of clinical diagnoses and lead to applications of culturally appropriate, effective interventions (Dana, 1998). In addition, MAIP now provides a guiding framework for embedding cultural responsiveness in mental health services to multicultural populations in California (e.g., Gamst, Dana, Der-Karabetian, & Kramer, 2000).

Tests and Methods

At present, moderator information from tests or interviews pertinent to description of acculturation or racial identity status is infrequently used in assessment

practice. Nonetheless, cultural/racial information is necessary not only for selection of standard tests, but to justify any alteration of administration or interpretation of standard tests whenever more appropriate emic tests are unavailable and to provide essential information for preparation of cultural formulations. In order to understand and individualize multicultural clients, this information should include worldview and belief systems concerning health-illness, mind-body relationships, spirituality, individualism-collectivism, and locus of control-locus of responsibility.

Reports

The focus of assessment research and practice has been on tests to the relative exclusion of assessment reports as vehicles for communication of assessment findings to clients. In a consumer-oriented world, reports now belong to clients and need to be prepared for them in everyday language and utilized as therapeutic assessment. To fulfill this desideratum, assessment reports should develop a contemporary research literature comparable to what is now available for tests per se.

Use of Findings

We have always been aware that there are different potential audiences for assessment reports—clients, families of clients, professional referral sources, therapists, etc. In the United States, different report versions for various audiences are not often prepared, although in Portugal, for example, this remains a routine expectation. For multicultural clients, however, the family is often the client, regardless of which family member is the designated client, because the cultural self often includes the family as the locus of responsibility and power for making any decisions regarding a family member. The family, or specific family members, may be the desired and necessary audience for any presentation and discussion of assessment findings. An emphasis on culturally

responsible and credible reports means that such preparation necessitates sensitivity and tact as well as an in-depth understanding of cultural rules and expectations.

Technological Effects

Globalization implies a loss of the historic distance among nations, professions, and individuals with regard to unlimited information access, processing, and exchange resulting from a radical democratization of technology. It has been said that a seven-year period now recapitulates the 100-year impact of the Industrial Revolution upon society. Everyone in the world is now a potential consumer of assessment-related information. Assessment sophistication and knowledge is international in scope and not limited to the United States (e.g., Pawlik, Zhang, Vrignaud, Roussalov, & Fernandez-Ballesteros, 2000).

However, the scientific status of cherished standard tests-the Rorschach (Hunsley & Bailey, 1999), MMPI/MMPI-2 (Dana, 1995, 2000b), and TAT (Rossini & Moretti, 1997)-has come under adverse scrutiny in the United States and internationally. Simultaneously, there is an increasingly vocal demand for infusion of culture into all assessment areas as an antidote for bias, invidious comparison, and pathologization, among other assaults to the personal and cultural reality of persons of color (e.g., Ponterotto, Casas, Suzuiki, & Alexander, 2001). The assessment establishment has reacted by closing ranks to these assaults upon the status quo. I believe the Internet can stimulate international input toward a consensual resolution of current assessment issues invoked by exportation of assessment instruments advertised as genuine etics instead of emics. The validity of these instruments in other national and cultural settings can be demonstrated by an enlarged conception of science that includes values of cultural reality, social justice, and emergent humanity.

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