Best Practices in Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health Care
Series Editor: Fred R. Volkmar

Nancy E. Moss
Lauren Moss-Racusin

Practical Guide to Child and Adolescent Psychological Testing

Springer

Best Practices in Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health Care

Series Editor

Fred R. Volkmar
Yale University
New Haven, CT, USA

Best Practices in Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health Care series explores a range of topics relevant to primary care providers in managing a broad range of child and adolescent mental health problems. These include specific disorders, such as anxiety; relevant topics in related disciplines, including psychological assessment, communication assessment, and disorders; and such general topics as management of psychiatric emergencies. The series aims to provide primary care providers with leading-edge information that enables best-care management of behavioral health issues in children and adolescents. The volumes published in this series provide concise summaries of the current research base (i.e., what is known), best approaches to diagnosis and assessment, and leading evidence-based management and treatment strategies. The series also provides information and analysis that primary care providers need to understand how to interpret and implement best treatment practices and enable them to interpret and implement recommendations from specialists for children and effectively monitor interventions.

More information about this series at http://www.springer.com/series/15955

Nancy E. Moss • Lauren Moss-Racusin

Practical Guide to Child and Adolescent Psychological Testing

Springer

Nancy E. Moss
Yale University
New Haven, CT, USA

Lauren Moss-Racusin
Yale University
New Haven, CT, USA

ISSN 2523-7128 ISSN 2523-7136 (electronic)
Best Practices in Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health Care
ISBN 978-3-030-73514-2 ISBN 978-3-030-73515-9 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-73515-9

© Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2021
This work is subject to copyright. All rights are reserved by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.
The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.
The publisher, the authors, and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, expressed or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

This Springer imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

For Gary/Dad

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank Drs. Lisa Wiesner, Ronald Angoff, and Cynthia Mann for their helpful suggestions. As pediatricians, their perspective on the accessibility of psychological testing was extremely valuable.

The authors would also like to thank Dr. Laurie Cardona-Wolenski for her early contributions to formulations of social-emotional test data.

Dr. Moss built her initial knowledge of psychological testing largely with the guidance of Drs. Margaret Steward and Thomas Morrison, at the University of California, Davis. Their teaching and modeling were unparalleled. Dr. Moss is particularly grateful for the mentorship of Dr. Sara Sparrow at the Yale Child Study Center. Dr. Sparrow was a towering figure in the field of psychological assessment with children and adolescents. Her wisdom underlies everything of value in this book.

Finally, the authors are grateful to the many children, adolescents, families, caregivers, and clinical colleagues who, in calling upon us to complete or interpret psychological testing, have continued to help us refine our psychological assessment skills and advance our knowledge.

About the Book

Healthcare providers have a growing role in helping parents, caregivers, children, and teens to both understand their ongoing developmental and mental health problems and to obtain needed services and support. Tackling such problems and concerns is a complex task. Psychological test data can provide much needed assistance to healthcare providers as they work to meet this challenge. Yet, because the use of psychological assessment is rarely addressed in traditional healthcare training, many healthcare providers are unfamiliar with how and when to refer patients for psychological assessment. The providers are often equally unprepared to understand and interpret psychological test results.

This book addresses this gap. It reviews the origins of psychological testing, as well as the referral process, thereby helping providers to understand the kinds of questions that can be readily addressed through testing. The book also helps providers be more specific in their referral questions to maximize the utility of the testing. The overall process of psychological assessment is discussed in detail to give providers an understanding of how assessments are done. The formal and observational data that derive from the testing, along with ways in which these data can expand an understanding of an individual's needs, are explained.

Subsequent chapters address specific domains of psychological assessment: intelligence; speech and language; visual-motor coordination; memory; attention, concentration, and executive functioning; academic achievement; behavior; adaptive functioning; social-emotional functioning; and developmental status. These sections review what these domains are, the importance of assessing them, and the most commonly encountered psychological assessment instruments for them.

Primary care providers often comment that it is challenging to know specifically what can be done to meet particular patient psychological needs, as well as the approaches that mental health practitioners, educators, caregivers, and patients could use to ameliorate identified problems. To address this challenge, in each domain's chapter, common patterns of difficulty experienced by children and adolescents are outlined, along with a summary of useful intervention approaches across a range of settings, based on assessment results. This information can aid primary care providers in their efforts to evaluate and fine-tune services offered to

their patients. It is important to note that there is considerable overlap between the areas of difficulty discussed. Likewise, interventions that are outlined may be appropriate for more than one area of difficulty. These commonalities among difficulties and interventions reflect the comorbidity among disorders in child and adolescent mental health.

To facilitate critical reading and comprehension of a psychological assessment report, a fictionalized example is included at the end of this book. The purpose of this report is to pull together and demonstrate the assessment processes and components discussed throughout this book. Each section of the report is followed by in depth annotations so that the reader can see both a typical psychological assessment report along with guiding explanations. The report is written as the outcome of an independent educational evaluation (defined and explained later in this book). This type of assessment was selected, because primary care providers are likely to be involved with educators in the holistic care of school-aged youngsters and thus can benefit from a thorough orientation to this type of report. The identifying information and all other content in the report example are not representative of real individuals, for the sake of privacy and confidentiality. Any similarities to real people are coincidental.

Finally, it is important to emphasize a key foundational aspect of the material contained in this book. This book's discussion of psychological assessment is consistent with, and based upon, both contemporary research findings and many decades of clinical experience and assessment with children and adolescents. The reader can thereby gain the benefit of both empirical and practical, interpersonal knowledge and expertise.

Contents

About the Authors

Nancy E. Moss, Ph.D. Trained at the University of California and Yale University, Dr. Moss has over 30 years of experience in children's psychological testing. She has always emphasized the importance of communicating assessment findings clearly across disciplines so that medical professionals, parents, and all other caregivers can make confident, appropriate use of the findings on behalf of the children and adolescents tested. A Clinical Assistant Professor at the Yale Child Study Center, Dr. Moss combines teaching of Clinical Psychology Fellows with a long-standing private practice.

Lauren Moss-Racusin, Ph.D. After earning her undergraduate degree at Boston University, Dr. Moss-Racusin worked as a research assistant at the Yale University Consultation Center. She then completed her Ph.D. in clinical psychology at the University of Connecticut, her clinical internship at the University of Illinois at Chicago Counseling Center, and her post-graduate counseling fellowship at Temple University Tuttleman Counseling Services. She is now on staff at Yale Health Mental Health and Counseling. Dr. Moss-Racusin has focused on psychological assessment throughout her clinical training and values its integration within therapeutic practice.

Introduction

Contemporary psychological testing[1] has its roots in the early twentieth century efforts to measure intelligence in a systematic manner (Gregory, 2004). These beginning efforts expanded greatly during World War II, when the United States Armed Forces needed efficient mass screening methods to assign personnel for maximum effectiveness. Throughout the remainder of the twentieth and continuing into the twenty-first centuries, psychological assessment has developed richly. There has been tremendous growth in the number of functional domains that can be examined (Gregory, 2004).

At the same time, markedly increased conceptual and statistical sophistication, along with improved cultural and socioeconomic sensitivity, have allowed for greater confidence in assessment findings (Gregory, 2004). Historically, there have been various criticisms of psychological testing. Many of these criticisms have centered on racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic bias considered inherent in prominent assessment instruments (Gould, 1996). The challenges to psychological assessment have argued, validly, against ranking whole groups of people based on their performance on less than perfect, and sometimes mal-intended, instruments.

Contemporary test instruments are well standardized (i.e., normed on representative populations), such that test findings make it possible to determine how a given individual ranks in relation to fair expectations for someone of their age and developmental level. The instruments are generally standardized on populations that mirror current census data. With such standardization, it would be reasonable to expect that the statistical properties of the final test materials take into account racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity. However, formal psychological tests do remain vulnerable to criticism regarding structural bias in favor of dominant beliefs and

[1] It should be noted that several terms are commonly used to refer to formal appraisal of a youngster's functioning. Psychological testing, psychological assessment, and psychological evaluation can all refer to a structured, standardized examination of multidimensional strengths and weaknesses. Throughout this book, these terms are used interchangeably.

© Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2021

N. E. Moss, L. Moss-Racusin, *Practical Guide to Child and Adolescent Psychological Testing*, Best Practices in Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health Care, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-73515-9_1