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# Review of 'Handbook of Multicultural Assessment: Clinical, Psychological, and Educational Applications'

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## **Book Review**

Suzuki, L. A., & Ponterotto, J. G. (Eds.). (2008). *Handbook of Multicultural Assessment: Clinical, Psychological, and Educational Applications* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

706 pp ISBN: 0787987034

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The third edition of Suzuki and Ponterotto's *Handbook of Multicultural Assessment: Clinical, Psychological, and Educational Applications* provides comprehensive reviews on a variety of topics related to culturally appropriate assessment. The text includes updated chapters from previous editions, along with several newly conceptualized chapters that reflect the most current research in the field. Some chapters from previous editions were consolidated, resulting in a streamlined volume which will be useful to professionals and trainees in psychology, education, and social service disciplines.

The 706 pages of text are divided into two major parts: General Assessment Issues and Testing Issues. These parts are each subdivided into three sections, with a total of 29 chapters written by 53 contributing authors and the editors. The authors represent a range of experience levels and disciplines, including first year doctoral students and professors; practicing psychologists and researchers; and specialists in counseling, school psychology, clinical psychology, and education. The authors generally examine multicultural assessment issues from empirically-oriented perspectives, while also making use of case studies to clarify their discourse.

Although the content of the textbook is comprehensive and well-researched, the organization of the sections and chapters is a bit confusing. Part 1: General Assessment Issues contains sections on General Multicultural Assessment Issues, Assessing Immigrants and

Refugees, and Daily Living Assessment. Part Two: Testing Issues contains sections on Personality Assessment, Assessment of Cognitive Abilities, and Forensic Assessment. The last section, Forensic Assessment, has little to do with specific testing issues, as it focuses on assessing child maltreatment and cultural considerations in determining competency to stand trial. Therefore, this section might be more appropriately placed in the General Assessment Issues part of the text. The section on Forensic Assessment also, inexplicably, contains the text's summary chapter, "Multicultural Assessment: Trends and Future Directions," written by the editors. Furthermore, the section on Daily Living Assessment contains three chapters, one of which is "Culturally Competent Vocational Assessment with At-Risk Adolescents in Middle and High School," which seems to have been stuck in this section not because it belongs there but because there was no better place to put it. The chapter is ill-paired with chapters on "Assessment of Diverse Family Systems" and "Cross-Cultural Considerations in Quality of Life Assessment." While these organizational blunders may seem like minor issues, they can frustrate the graduate course instructor who uses the text to outline a semester of class readings.

The content, however, is excellent. The conclusion of the first chapter, "Issues in Culturally Appropriate Psychological Assessment," written by Amado Padilla and Graciela Borsato, emphasizes the importance of advocating a systems approach that is culturally sensitive. The publication of this text is one step toward that goal, as the chapters unfold to paint a comprehensive picture of where we are and where we need to head in order to ensure that professionals are aware of the many ways in which assessment methods can be discriminatory and invalid if conducted inappropriately. Graciela and Padilla also penned Chapter 21, "Educational Assessment of English-Language Learners," which will be of particular interest to school-based practitioners struggling to understand their responsibilities in assessing language

proficiency, assessing academic achievement, and using testing to make high-stakes educational decisions with English Language Learners (ELLs). ELLs currently comprise approximately 11% of the school-age population in the United States and this number is expected to increase to 30% by 2015. Nearly 30% of these ELLs are educated in our nation's biggest cities (Council of the Great City Schools, 2007). It can be difficult for educational systems to adapt to such a rapid shift in demographics. Providing professional development training on multicultural issues found in the *Handbook of Multicultural Assessment* is one way to facilitate this adjustment.

The editors clearly took care to ensure there were no "gaps" in their coverage of topics. The volume contains thorough coverage of cross-cultural use of major instruments and specific assessment procedures. All of the expected areas were touched upon (e.g., clinical diagnoses, ability testing, personality assessment). Additionally, the text contains an entirely new section devoted to assessing immigrants and refugees, a chapter on vocational assessment of at-risk adolescents, and one on multicultural issues in computer-based assessment. The latter chapter, written by Muninder Ahluwalia, describes the benefits of using technology tools when assessing individuals with disabilities and how computer-based assessments can be useful in a variety of settings, including schools, universities, and clinics. Although there are potential benefits to computer-based assessments, Ahluwalia cautions that sufficient access to and experience with computers is important to ensure that factors unrelated to those being tested do not have an impact on effective administration, scoring, or interpretation. For example, students in impoverished urban schools who have limited access to computers may score more poorly on computerized versions of traditional assessments.

Most of the topics contained within the text were written with insight and specificity. For example, in Baden and Wong's chapter on working with diverse populations of elderly

individuals, the authors present research on depression and pseudodementia and then describe specific problems related to using depression screening scales that are based on the Western medical model. Baden and Wong also describe scales that have been researched with non-Western populations and specify dementia assessments that are affected by poverty, gender, race, and education level. On the other end of the developmental spectrum, Meller and Ohr's chapter on assessing young children provides useful tables describing the purpose, domain of functioning, and measurement category of numerous preschool assessment instruments, along with narrative descriptions of the objectives and methods of the steps in family-oriented, culturally sensitive assessment of young children.

Chapter Eight introduces Ingrid Grieger's Cultural Assessment Interview Protocol (CAIP), which might prove to be a useful precursor to more formal psychological assessment procedures and diagnoses. This qualitative assessment tool can serve to guide clinicians in understanding clients' cultural context and thereby can facilitate the selection of appropriate assessment measures and treatment plans. While this "cultural assessment" may be used with all students or clients, it would be particularly helpful for those working in urban settings, which generally have more racial and cultural diversity than non-urban areas.

The section of the book on working with immigrants and refugees focuses on issues related to globalization and the need for practitioners and researchers to keep up with rapidly changing world issues. Of particular interest is Prendes-Lintel and Peterson's chapter on using an interpreter to deliver mental health services. The authors write about training and selection issues, as well as ethical standards and issues in the practice of using interpreters. The entire section contains anecdotal accounts that "draw the readers into the harsh realities facing

immigrants and refugees” (x). Indeed, such anecdotes sprinkled throughout the text enhance its readability and keep the reader interested.

One particularly insightful chapter was “Clinical Diagnosis in Multicultural Populations,” authored by Richard Dana, a prolific researcher in multicultural assessment principles. In the chapter, Dr. Dana describes how DSM-IV “has not served to facilitate access by ethnic minorities to culturally responsible behavioral health services” (110), largely because DSM diagnostic processes were developed from a Western worldview. The medical model, which is diagnostic in function, and on which the multiaxial system is based, poses significant limitations for diagnosis within diverse racial/ethnic populations. Dana offers alternative approaches for access and use of culturally competent services for ethnic minority populations and highlights the need for service providers to bridge the gap between research and practice.

While there has been an increase in multicultural assessment research since the second edition of this text was published in 2001, there still seems to be a “disconnect” between research and practice, and this gap is a recurring theme throughout the volume. The concluding chapter of the third edition of the *Handbook of Multicultural Assessment* highlights this issue and provides future directions for assessment that focus on applying best practices in a variety of settings rather than solely researching more ideas. For example, while many graduate programs have added a “multicultural assessment” class to their curriculum, it is essential that multicultural issues be infused into all educational and psychological assessment courses. Further, the text highlights the need for professionals not only to use the most appropriate measures for a given evaluation, but to recognize cultural divergence as an essential consideration in determining whether an evaluation is necessary in the first place.

The *Handbook of Multicultural Assessment: Clinical, Psychological, and Educational Applications (Third Edition)* is one of the most comprehensive texts covering contemporary issues in multicultural assessment. It certainly would be an excellent primary text in a multicultural assessment course or supplementary text in other graduate courses related to psychological or educational assessment. The text would also be a valuable addition to the bookshelves of current practitioners, educators, and researchers working with children or adults. The practical orientation of the chapters makes it easy to access specific information that can readily be incorporated into one's assessment repertoire. Application of the principles described throughout the text would allow professionals to enhance their knowledge base and implement more culturally responsive practices.

#### Reference

Council of the Great City Schools (2007). Council of the Great City Schools Research Brief: Improving teaching and learning for English Language Learners in urban schools. Washington DC: Council of the Great City Schools.