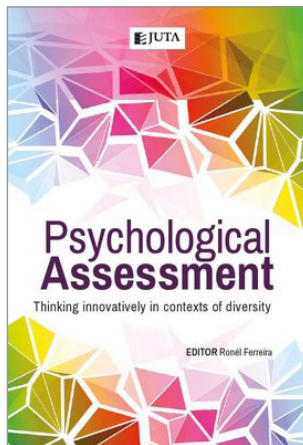


PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT: THINKING INNOVATIVELY IN CONTEXTS OF DIVERSITY: EDITED BY RONEL FERREIRA

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Picture courtesy of JUTA

Psychometric assessments in South Africa have been marred by controversy. Not only has the discipline of psychology been accused of being complicit with the apartheid regime, but some even argue that in post-apartheid South Africa psychology continues to maintain structural legacies introduced by apartheid (Suffla & Seedat, 2004). The book *Psychological Assessment: Thinking innovatively in contexts of diversity* attempts to grapple with these historical matters and how they affect psychometric practice in

South Africa. The current text does this candidly without burying the reader in a heap of psychometric jargon.

In the first part of the book, authors openly admit that psychological assessments have been complicit in furthering the ends of the apartheid regime. Even though this is the case, one would have liked this critical issue to have been elucidated upon. Notwithstanding, the authors detail issues that affect psychometric practices in the present, for instance, the lack of access to psychological services by the majority of black South Africans. This theme is elaborated upon in chapters 2 and 3, where African epistemologies are discussed and juxtaposed to Euro-American epistemologies. In my view, these two chapters deal with the crux of the matter, particularly as they discuss the nuances of personality and personhood from an African onto-epistemological view. Chapters 4 and 5 discuss the technical aspects of psychometric assessments. The intention of these chapters, particularly chapter 5, is to equip psychological practitioners with the skills to determine the validity of psychological tests in line with the Employment Equity Act and professional ethics.

Part 2 becomes less theoretical and details alternative ways of approaching psychological assessment. Foregrounding this section though is chapter 7 which discusses the history of psychological assessment. Specifically, it delineates the history of psychometric assessment in South Africa by relating it to developments Europe and America. In line with part one of the book, chapter 7 draws attention to the complicity of psychometric assessment in justifying systemic racism, for instance, this is done by referring to earlier work by Fick (1939) which argued that lower scores in intelligence tests amongst Africans were due to heredity.

Following this discussion, chapters 8-11 provide alternative approaches to conducting psychological assessments for careers, vulnerable populations, children and families. Discussions in these chapters are still foregrounded by the contextual challenges facing South Africans, such as the difficulty of utilising psychological assessments in this culturally diverse context.

Lastly, part 3 of the book presents the reader with creative ways of rendering psychological services, various assessment methods are detailed such as using the creative arts in therapy, sandwork as an assessment technique, Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association model in equine-assisted psychotherapy and using body mapping to assist in life design (Chapters 12-15). Similarly, chapter 16 focuses on the elderly and discusses the Mmogo-method. The Mmogo-method is a data collection method which assesses the quality of life amongst the elderly at an individual and group level. Chapter 17 presents reflections by practitioners in private practice regarding the nature of therapeutic practice in a multicultural context – these reflections consider issues such as the approach taken to therapy and what healing means in different cultures. Following that, chapter 18 discusses the complexities of ethics in the digital world, that is, it considers the ethical challenges that psychological practitioners face in the digital

age where digital communication platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn etc. are available.

In conclusion, this book is refreshing because it openly admits the contextual challenges facing psychometric assessments and the practice thereof in South Africa. I think the view taken in this text is invaluable, in the light of previous attempts which may have presented psychometric assessment as value free. Crucially, the book provides some grounding for fruitful debate and scholarship insofar as psychological assessment practice in South Africa is concerned, while also encouraging psychological practice of the highest ethical and moral standards.

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