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Assessment
Institute



CAABA

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PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS

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ENHANCING MENTALIZING ABILITY IN THERAPEUTIC ASSESSMENT: A COLLABORATION APPROACH

Presenters: Inge Van Laer, Hilde De Saeger, and Jan H. Kamphuis

Within Therapeutic Assessment, the focus is on working collaboratively with the client to nuance their existing narrative about themselves and the world. This process helps the client regain perspective. To facilitate a shift in the client's narrative, we encourage them to join us on the observation deck. This metaphorical approach is based on the assumption that it helps clients gain more insight into existing patterns, leading to greater understanding, self-compassion, and mildness. In other words, during a Therapeutic Assessment, we appeal to the client's mentalizing ability and help it grow from a collaborative stance. Midgley et al. (2017) describe in their book that mentalizing ability develops during childhood, with two essential building blocks: attention regulation and emotion regulation. Attention regulation involves the ability to direct attention to both the external and internal worlds. Emotion regulation involves recognizing, differentiating, and managing emotions. These foundational skills are crucial for the development of mentalizing, which is the ability to understand the mental states that underlie our own and others' behaviors.

When working with clients with personality pathology, mentalizing is often compromised. This makes it challenging for us as assessors to get the client on the observation deck with us. By understanding the building blocks of attention regulation and emotion regulation, we can provide more tailored support to meet the client's needs. This approach reduces the risk of overwhelming the client and asking too much of them. Additionally, it offers opportunities to work in a culturally sensitive manner, recognizing and respecting the diverse backgrounds and experiences of our clients. During the workshop, we will discuss the building blocks of mentalizing, including attention regulation, emotion regulation, and mentalizing ability. We will explore how to assess what the client needs to get their mentalizing ability back online. This involves understanding the client's current level of functioning and identifying areas where they may need additional support. We will then work on applying specific techniques to help the client climb the observation deck. These techniques are designed to enhance the client's ability to reflect on their own and others' mental states, promoting greater self-awareness and empathy. In particular, we will consider the implications of these techniques during the entire Therapeutic Assessment with a special focus on selecting appropriate psychological tests, extended inquiries and assessment intervention sessions. This includes setting appropriate goals, creating a supportive environment, and using interventions that are tailored to the client's unique needs. By doing so, we aim to create a therapeutic process that is both effective and compassionate, helping clients to develop a more nuanced and compassionate understanding of themselves and their experiences.

THE MILLON INVENTORIES AS ALLIANCE AND THERAPEUTIC DIALOGUE BUILDERS: USING THE MCMI-IV AND MACI-II IN THERAPEUTIC ASSESSMENT

Presenter: Seth Grossman

The attuned, therapeutically oriented assessor recognizes that the greatest growth potential occurs when a person feels connected to another (in this case, the assessor) and feels heard and understood. Part of that undertaking happens when the assessor and client figure out how the person is currently functioning (e.g., diagnosis, life circumstances), but the larger part comes from discovering how it is the person got to the present moment. Most assessors familiar with the MCMI-IV and other Millon instruments are aware of how these tools inform diagnostics; not as many have a grasp on how to apply the underlying theory to help illuminate the person's life story in pursuit of a more sympathetic personal narrative.

This half-day workshop highlights methods for using theoretical material embedded in the Millon Inventories in building a working alliance and finding effective collaborative dialogue in therapeutic assessment. Through both didactic and hands-on methods, assessors will gain in operational knowledge that will serve to inform extended inquiry, assessment intervention, and feedback.

The Millon instruments, on their own, provide support for Therapeutic Assessment both by identifying central struggles and core motivational conflicts, as well as by highlighting characteristic behaviors, dynamics, phenomenology, and temperament. Struggles and conflicts highlighted by the core evolutionary principles add depth to the person's explanatory narratives about their life's journey, while the characteristics reflected in the domains may identify targets for the assessment intervention sessions and ultimate recommendations in feedback.

While the Millon instruments are self-report, they hold something of a unique space in context with other methods and instruments. The theory, which models both observable, conscious phenomena and less conscious, inferred dynamics, may best be employed at a level between more empirically derived self-report measures (e.g., MMPI, PAI), and performance measures (e.g., Rorschach, Wartegg). The Millon measures, then, frequently highlight gaps between the two major traditions and lend depth and explanatory power to these different levels of data. This workshop will demonstrate several examples of the role of the MCMI-IV when used in coordination with other instruments.

Participants will engage in small-group or dyadic exercises, as well as full-group discussion. While there is a portion of the workshop that covers theory in a more didactic manner, the intent of the workshop is to maximize time spent in a more collaborative mode, generative of ideas, insights, and attunement drawn from a combination of the test data and the person's lived experience.

BUILDING ADVANCED SKILLS FOR CONDUCTING AN EXTENDED INQUIRY

Presenters: Raja David and Jacob Palm

This workshop is designed for TA assessors who are looking to build their Extended Inquiry (EI) skills when working with adults. The focus will be on using the Crisi Wartegg System (CWS) for the Wartegg Drawing Completion Test (WDCT), The Early Memories Procedure (EMP), as well as self-report measures [Personality Assessment Inventory (PAI) and Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory 4th Edition (MCMI-IV)].

This workshop is built around clinical material from a TA of a mid-20s female. First, the client will be introduced, including history and the initial test data (PAI & MCMI-IV). In the large group, we will explore how that data can be used for exploration during an EI. Next, the client's Wartegg drawings, responses, and normative scoring will be provided, with consideration for how this data might be used in an EI. In small groups, participants will consider the Wartegg data and ideas for how to approach the EI. As a large group, the small group ideas will be discussed, and video of what occurred with the client will be shown.

During the second half of the workshop, the conversation about the client and the growing case conceptualization will continue. Next, participants will be introduced to the client's memories from The Early Memories Procedure (EMP). Participants will again break into small groups and generate ideas for how the EMP may be explored during an EI and how EMP data informs case conceptualization. Back in the large group, the small group's ideas will be shared, and the group will discuss the case conceptualization before watching video of what occurred with the client.

This workshop is best suited for participants who have some familiarity with TA, the WDCT, and the EMP. Workshop facilitators will assist with interpretation and orientation to the measures for new learners and those less familiar.

TO VALUE AND WORK WITH CLIENTS WITH SHAME USING CWS IN THERAPEUTIC ASSESSMENT

Presenters: Alessandro Crisi and Filippo Aschieri

In this workshop, the capabilities of the Wartegg test, used with the CWS (Crisi Wartegg System) in assessing the presence of shame and working with clients who suffer from this condition, are illustrated. As regards the assessment aspect, the CWS can detect the presence of shame thanks to the identification of specific indices that clinical practice has shown to be very often frequent in the TAs of clients with shame. As regards the work with them, thanks to its ability to evoke and stimulate the production of drawings with a strongly metaphorical meaning, the CWS has proven to be particularly useful and effective, especially in Extended Enquiry.

At first in the workshop, the Symptoms most frequently encountered in shame will be examined (insecurity / self-accuse, sensitivity / vulnerability, difficulty in the relationship with authority, social anxiety, depression, paranoia / distrust, dependence). Each of these symptoms will be addressed in detail by illustrating the formal indices and contents. The formal indices are undoubtedly the core of the psychological evaluation; the contents that often have a high symbolic meaning, help the client to better understand their internal dynamics. The contents that often have a high symbolic meaning, help the clients to become aware and better understand their own internal dynamics.

In the second part of the workshop, two cases of assessment and work with clients affected by shame will be illustrated. The first case involves a 48 years old Caucasian cisgender man, who looked for a couple TA with his wife lamenting her problem in engaging in sexual activities.

The TA, and in particular the WCS, helped the couple gain more awareness of the individual and systemic components of such difficulty. The case will highlight the effect of the Extended inquiry on the husband's self-representation, diminishing shame, and shading a new light on the origins of the couple's difficulties (a short video will be presented).

In the second case, a 38-year-old man, who, at first had an extremely negative and suspicious approach to the TA. In the Wartegg test, the man created highly personalized, original, and meaningful designs in each of the 8 boxes. He captured the evocative character of each stimulus sign in the test with extreme precision. And in each box, in perfect agreement with the psychological area stimulated by the evocative character of the stimulus-sign, he produced drawings concerning his own life. Such a metaphorical production has given rise to a truly unusual and profound extended inquiry which lasted 5 meetings. From the EI, extremely significant elements of the life and painful experiences experienced by the client emerged. Dealing with these issues led, already during the extended investigation, to an alleviation of symptoms of shame and an improvement in relationships within one's family of origin.

NEURODIVERSITY-AFFIRMING COLLABORATIVE/ THERAPEUTIC ASSESSMENT

Presenters: Krista Brittain and Ori Elis

The neurodiversity paradigm has gained significant traction in recent years as a framework for understanding neurological variation. The concept of neurodivergence is now more widely recognized, with visibility increasing—from professional athletes openly discussing their diagnoses, content creators sharing personal experiences on Instagram and TikTok, and even mainstream children’s programming, like a new show on PBS Kids featuring neurodivergent characters. This growing awareness reflects broader cultural shifts, but it also presents challenges, particularly for assessment psychologists who must navigate the complex confluence and divergence of neurotypes as cultural and clinical phenomena.

For mental health and educational professionals, adapting assessment practices to be inclusive, affirming, and culturally competent is no small task. In a landscape where neurodivergence is increasingly acknowledged as a valid and valuable part of human diversity, there is a heightened responsibility to ensure that assessments are both accurate and respectful of neurodivergent individuals’ identities. The increasing prominence of neurodivergence also means that professionals must be attuned to the ways in which cultural attitudes, biases, and ableism can shape diagnostic processes and outcomes. This includes both the challenges of navigating diverse neurotypes and the opportunities to evolve assessment practices to better serve neurodivergent individuals.

One way to approach these challenges is through Collaborative/Therapeutic Assessment (C/TA), which offers a client-centered, humanizing framework for conducting psychological assessments. Because C/TA focuses on building a therapeutic relationship between the assessor and the client as well as the client being the expert of their own experience, it provides a framework for making the assessment process more inclusive and affirming for neurodivergent individuals. This workshop will explore how the core values of TA can be applied to the assessment of neurodivergent individuals and neurodiverse families, helping to create a more supportive and empowering environment. These values will also serve as a foundation for discussion about how to adopt a neurodiversity-affirming approach to C/TA.

In this half-day workshop, Drs. Ori Elis and Krista Brittain will provide an overview of recent cultural shifts in the understanding of neurodivergence, including the evolution of language— such as the ongoing debate between identity-first and person-first language—and the impact of ableism on both neurodivergent and neurotypical individuals. Presenters will also review different models of disability, including the social and cultural models, and relate them to the lived experiences of neurodivergent communities, particularly those of autistic and ADHD individuals.

The session will explore the importance of cultural and professional competence in working with neurodivergent clients, highlighting how assessment practices can be adapted to better reflect these evolving understandings. Using case examples, the presenters will demonstrate how to shift toward a neurodiversity-affirming C/TA approach at every stage of the process. Participants will have opportunities to reflect on their own biases and practices, learn strategies for more neurodiversity-affirming assessments, and engage in discussions about how to improve their work within the framework of Collaborative/Therapeutic Assessment. Ultimately, this workshop aims to equip professionals with the tools to provide more ethical, inclusive, and effective assessments for neurodivergent clients and neurodiverse families.

CONCEPTUALIZACIÓN E INTERVENCIÓN EN LA ECT EN LATINOAMÉRICA

Presenters: Daniela Escobedo Belloc and Ernesto Pais

El modelo de Evaluación Colaborativa y Terapéutica (Finn, 2007) ha demostrado ser una metodología eficaz para integrar la evaluación psicológica con la intervención terapéutica, promoviendo el autoconocimiento y apoyando los cambios positivos en las personas que consultan. Si bien se ha planteado la adecuación de este modelo al contexto latinoamericano (Pais & Escobedo, 2022), su aplicación en Latinoamérica plantea desafíos y oportunidades particulares, dados los elementos socioculturales y económicos de la región.

Este Workshop brindará a los participantes herramientas para utilizar las técnicas de evaluación psicológica con fines terapéuticos, desde la etapa de conceptualización del caso, hasta la etapa de intervención, dentro del proceso de una Evaluación Colaborativa y Terapéutica.

Se explorará cómo los test y las técnicas pueden funcionar como amplificadores de la empatía, facilitando una comprensión profunda del consultante y favoreciendo la alianza terapéutica. A través de ejemplos clínicos (se incluirán extractos de video de pacientes reales) y ejercicios prácticos, se abordará la diversidad de intervenciones que posibilitan co construir con las personas, narrativas más compasivas sobre sí mismas, posicionándolas cercanas al cambio.

Se debatirá en torno a la adaptación de las técnicas y las posibilidades de intervención, tomando en cuenta las particularidades de Latinoamérica, su cultura y el alto impacto del trauma en poblaciones en situación crisis y vulnerabilidad socioeconómica. Además, los participantes podrán reflexionar sobre estrategias para optimizar la aplicación de las técnicas en sus propios contextos de práctica clínica.

Este Workshop está dirigido a psicólogos y estudiantes avanzados de la carrera de psicología, interesados en profundizar en el uso terapéutico de la evaluación psicológica y en enriquecer su trabajo con herramientas que integren a la evaluación con la intervención.

Questions can be directed to the conference Chairs, J.D. Smith at jd.smith@hsc.utah.edu or Pamela Schaber at drpamelaschaber@gmail.com.