Psychological Assessment
Psychological Assessment

- One of the most prominent roles the forensic psychologist plays in the legal arena

- Forensic psychological assessment

  - an attempt to identify important variables regarding human behavior so that past and present behavior can be appraised within a set of specific legal guidelines and/or some aspects of future behavior can be predicted.
Types of Assessment Activities

- Forensic assessment occurs in
  - Criminal cases
  - Civil cases
  - Screening, selection and training of law enforcement personnel.
Forensic Assessment in Criminal Proceedings (6 stages)

1) At the time of arrest and the pre-trial process
   - assess a defendant’s competencies, such as competency to waive legal rights, competency to plead guilty or competency to stand trial.
   - Most common forensic psychological evaluation is competency to stand trial
Forensic Assessment in Criminal Proceedings (6 stages)

- 2) When the defendant raises an **affirmative plea**
  
  - such as extreme emotional disturbance, duress, self-defense, or insanity at the time of the offense.
  
  - Typical example is the insanity plea (criminal responsibility)
Forensic Assessment in Criminal Proceedings (6 stages)

- 3) After the defendant is in custody; help the courts in making decisions regarding bail.

- Individuals who pose a risk to themselves or others may not be appropriate for release.
Forensic Assessment in Criminal Proceedings (6 stages)

4) The assessment of victims of a crime.

- This could include the assessment of allegations of sexual abuse by children, allegations of rape (rape trauma syndrome) and chronic domestic violence (battered woman syndrome).
Forensic Assessment in Criminal Proceedings (6 stages)

5) At the sentencing phase regarding the punishment.
   - This is particularly relevant in death penalty cases. A forensic psychologist may be asked to conduct an assessment and provide testimony regarding mitigating and aggravating factors, regarding the defendant’s background as well as circumstances of the crime.

   - Also can address the likelihood of rehabilitation at the time of sentencing.
Forensic Assessment in Criminal Proceedings (6 stages)

6) At the time of release and parole of incarcerated individuals.

- In some jurisdictions, it has become routine practice for parole boards to require psychological evaluations along with any recommended treatment for individuals who are paroled from prison.

- Psychologists are asked to assess the future dangerousness of sex offenders.
Forensic Assessment in Civil Proceedings

- Civil law deals with non-criminal matters pertaining to the rights and duties of citizens.
  - child custody evaluations
  - termination of parental rights
  - personal injury examinations regarding emotional damages
  - employment discrimination and harassment
  - disability claims
  - workmen’s compensation
  - civil commitment proceedings
  - the evaluation of individuals in high risk occupations such as law enforcement.
Distinctions between a Clinical Evaluation and a Forensic Evaluation

- purpose of the evaluation
- examiner-examinee relationship along with the therapist-patient privilege
- who is the client
- motivation of the examinee
- written report
- the psychologist’s cognitive set
- professional accountability
- temporal focus of the assessment
The most widely use assessment tool is the clinical interview.

- Can be categorized as either a therapeutic interview or an assessment (diagnostic) interview.
- Interviews may be either structured or unstructured.
Psychological Assessment Instruments

- Psychological Tests: classified into three categories based on the relevance the instruments have to forensic issues.
  - clinical measures and assessment techniques
  - forensically relevant instruments
  - forensic assessment instruments
Psychometric Properties of Assessment Instruments

- **Reliability**
  - refers to the consistency of the test
  - usually expressed as a correlation coefficient.

- Four common types of reliability:
  - *test-retest reliability*
  - *parallel forms*
  - *inter-rater agreement*
  - *internal consistency.*
Psychometric Properties of Assessment Instruments

- **Validity** – is an instrument is an accurate measure what it claims to measure.

- **Types of Validity**
  - *content validity*
  - *criterion-related validity*
    - *predictive validity*
    - *concurrent validity*
  - ‘face’ validity
Psychometric Properties of Assessment Instruments

- **Normative Group**

  - The test is initially developed for work with a specific population.

  - It is important to establish a normative distribution for the given instrument so examiners know where the respondent stands in relation to the group.
Psychometric Properties of Assessment Instruments

- **Standard Error of Measurement**
  - The standard error of measurement indicates how much variation we can expect in a test score each time a person takes a test.
  - This is the difference between the actual score (the individual’s “true” score) and the observed score.
  - The standard error of measurement (SEM) is an indication of how much error there is in the test score.
TYPES OF ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS

- Measures of Intellectual Ability

  - Most frequently used IQ tests are the Wechsler scales

  - Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence (WPPSI) children ages two-and-a-half to seven years, three months.

  - Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC) children ages six through seventeen

  - Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS)
TYPES OF ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS

- Measures of Personality – General
  - Broadly classified into *objective* and *projective* techniques

  - **Projective** techniques rely on the *projective hypothesis* which assumes that people project their unconscious into their responses to ambiguous stimuli

  - **Objective** techniques use questions which are not ambiguous and for which there is a correct answer for the respondent.
Measures of Personality – Examples of Projective Techniques

- Rorschach Inkblot Test
- Thematic Apperception Test (TAT)
- Children’s Apperception Test (CAT)
- Rotter’s Incomplete Sentences Blank
- Draw a Person
Measures of Personality –
Examples of Objective Techniques

- Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory- 2 (MMPI-2)
- Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory (MCMI)
- Personality Assessment Screener (PAS)
- Personality Assessment Inventory
- Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (16 PF)
Measures of Personality –

Forensically Relevant Instruments

- Tests used to Detect Malingering
  - Miller Forensic Assessment of Symptoms Test (MFAST)
  - Rey Visual Memory Test
  - Structured Interview of Reported Symptoms (SIRS)

- Tests used to Detect Substance Abuse
  - Substance Abuse Subtle Screening Inventory (SASSI)

- Tests used to Detect Psychopathology
  - Hare Psychopathology Checklist-Revised (HPCL-R)
Measures of Personality – *Forensic Assessment Instruments*

- These tests address specific legal questions such as competency to stand trial, competency to waive Miranda rights, civil competency, allegations of child abuse, child custody issues, and criminal responsibility.

- These instruments constitute the backbone of most forensic assessments and are usually restricted to use by clinicians involved in forensic work.
Measures of Personality – *Forensic Assessment Instruments*

- Rogers Criminal Responsibility Scales (R-CRAS)
  - (insanity pleas; MSO evaluations)

- Bricklin Perceptual Scales

- Ackerman-Schoendorf Scales for Parent Evaluation of Custody
  - (child custody evaluations)
Forensic Assessment Instruments

- Will cover these instruments in detail throughout the remainder of the course.
- This chapter served as an introduction to psychological assessment
Web Sites

- Psychometric Society
  - www.psychometrika.org

- Malingering on Forensic Assessments
  - www.kspope.com/assess/malinger.php