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Ethics of Assessment	
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F.1.1:	
Ethics vs. Law	
Ethics: what one should or should not do, according to principles or norms of conduct	
■ Ethics codes are not produced by	
democratically-elected legislatures	
■ Enforcement mechanisms are usually informal,	
but may be complex	
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Ethics vs. Law	
■ Law: what one must or must not do, according	
to legal dictates	
 Laws are created by democratically-elected legislatures in democracies such as Canada 	
Laws come with explicit penalties for	
infractions and a formal enforcement system	

Ethical use of tests – issues:	
1. Competence	-
2. Informed Consent	
3. Knowledge of Results	
4. Confidentiality	
5. Test security	
6. Divided Loyalties	
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1 Commentence	
1. Competence	
 Develop competence in assessment concepts 	-
and methods	
Recognize boundaries of your competence	
- Compatones is year important if test result	
 Competence is very important if test result affects someone's life 	
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2. Informed Consent	
■ Generally, the client/subject (or guardian) must	-
voluntarily consent	
■ Psychologist must inform client about nature	
and purpose of assessment in understandable language	

Informed	consent -	exce	ptions

- Sometimes, it is acceptable to test without getting consent – e.g., you have given implied consent to be tested by registering in this course, but I have never sought your explicit consent
- Sometimes it is necessary to test without getting consent, even when consent is explicitly refused by person to be tested – e.g., when mandated by law

3. Knowledge of Results

- Must fully disclose test results in understandable language
- But, do not do so in a way that reveals the content of test items, because that content is proprietary information (e.g., somebody owns it – it's not yours to reveal)

4. Confidentiality

- Test results are confidential information
- Release of results should only be made to another qualified professional after client's consent

5. Test Security	
■ Test materials must be kept secure	
 Test items are not revealed except in training programs and when mandated by law, to protect test integrity 	
■ Test items are private property	
6. Automated Scoring/Interpretation Systems	
■ Psychologist is still responsible for proper	
interpretation of test results	
 Psychologists are professionals – they take personal responsibility for their work 	
,	
7. Divided loyalties	
■ Who is the client?	
The person being tested, or the institution you work for?	
What if these parties have conflicting interests?	
How do you maintain test security but also explain an adverse decision?	

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- Suppose you are asked to test a child who might have disorder X or Y
 - X is very common and so the government provides resources to help schools deal with it
 - Y is not common and no resources are available in school to deal with it
- If your testing suggests Y, will you report Y or X, so the child gets *some sort* of help?

Professional Issues

- Theoretical issues
- 2. Test adequacy
- 3. Actuarial vs. clinical prediction

1. Theoretical Issues

- Are you measuring a stable characteristic of the person being tested?
- If so, differences in scores over time reflect measurement error or subject variables such as fatigue

1. Theoretical Issues
Are you measuring a stable characteristic of the person being tested?
In fact, we have little evidence that this is true for many psych domains, so what is the value of your test result?
 Especially problematic for personality tests prior to age 30 or so
1. Theoretical issues
Are you measuring a stable characteristic of the person being tested?
 Suppose you test someone as part of a hiring process. If the test result says that person does
not have the characteristic you're looking for, does that mean they could never acquire that
characteristic?
2. Adequacy of tests
■ How do we measure test adequacy?
What should go into an assessment of test adequacy?
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2. Adequacy of tests
■ We often ask whether they are sound
psychometrically, but we need to ask "is the
best test available good enough?"
Society uses that standard when testing
becomes a legal issue
■ The answer is not psychometric
- The diswer is not payenometric
3. Actuarial vs. clinical judgment
■ U.S. Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart said
in a 1964 case that he didn't know how to
define pornography, but he knew it when he saw it.
■ Is it possible for us to make good judgments on
a question when we cannot articulate the basis for the judgment?
ior the judgment:
2 Actuarial vs. clinical judgment
3. Actuarial vs. clinical judgment
 Actuarial judgment occurs when we feed test scores into statistical formulas to diagnose a
psychological condition or predict future

performance.

future performance.

■ Clinical judgment occurs when we have a

trained psychologist interpret test scores to diagnose a psychological condition or predict

1. Dehumanization
Does computerized testing and analysis of test results create a danger of minimizing human uniqueness?
 Humans are very complex – which allows us to be individuals, different from each other – but testing and interpretation generalize

1. Dehumanization

- Is generalization a problem?
 - Computer-scored and administered psychological tests might determine important aspects of your life
- If you think this is a problem, why do you think so? What evidence do you have that this hurts people?
- What alternative approach would you use?

2. Access to psychological testing

- We've considered possibility of being hurt by tests – but what about possible benefits of tests? Who gets those benefits?
- WAIS-IV kit costs \$1000 for tester to buy the kit. Cost must be passed on to someone. Who should that be?