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978-0-521-84935-7 - Dynamic Assessment in Practice: Clinical and Educational Applications

H. Carl Haywood and Carol S. Lidz

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DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT IN PRACTICE

Dynamic assessment embeds interaction within the framework of a test–intervene–retest approach to psychoeducational assessment. This book offers an introduction to diagnostic assessors in psychology, education, and speech/language pathology to the basic ideas, principles, and practices of dynamic assessment. Most important, the book presents an array of specific procedures developed and used by the authors that can be applied to clients of all ages in both clinical and educational settings. The authors discuss their approach to report writing, providing a number of examples to demonstrate how they incorporate dynamic assessment into a comprehensive approach to assessment. The text concludes with a discussion of issues and questions that need to be considered and addressed. Two appendixes include descriptions of additional tests used by the authors that are adapted for dynamic assessment as well as information about dynamic assessment procedures developed by others and sources for additional information about this approach.

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Carol S. Lidz has held faculty positions in psychology at Temple University and the Graduate School of Education of Touro College, where she designed and directed the school psychology program. In 2004, she joined Freidman Associates, where she provided school neuropsychological assessments of children with learning disorders. She is the author of books, chapters, and articles on dynamic assessment and assessment of preschool children. She lives in Philadelphia and is engaged in research and professional writing.

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Dynamic Assessment in Practice

CLINICAL AND EDUCATIONAL APPLICATIONS

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Go straight to pine

Trees to learn pine

And to bamboo stalks

To know bamboo

– Basho (1644–1694)

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Preface

Dynamic assessment (DA), an interactive, test–intervene–retest model of psychological and psychoeducational assessment, is a rapidly developing approach of increasing interest to practicing psychologists. In one form or another, DA has been applied in psychological, neuropsychological, speech/language, and educational contexts. Several major texts now describe the various theories, models, and procedures of DA. These texts provide information primarily concerning the background, research, and descriptions of DA procedures; however, none of the texts puts these procedures into the hands of practitioners in a way that equips them to implement the approach. Furthermore, although trainers are often well informed about theoretical models and, in many cases introduce their students to the ideas and principles of DA, few trainers actually work with their students to develop and refine their professional application of these skills.

Seeking to fill this void, we describe in this book basic DA approaches and procedures and elaborate the full instructions, scoring approaches, and interpretation possibilities of DA procedures that we and others have developed and that we actually incorporate into our own practices. We use these procedures to extend, supplement, and enrich our assessments to bridge the gap between assessment and intervention and to deepen insight into the functioning of our clients. We present DA not as a substitute or replacement for existing approaches to assessment but as an extension of and addition to these more traditional procedures; DA provides important information that is simply not available from other sources.

This text is unique within the DA literature in that we conceptualize the assessment process in relation to a model of mental functioning to which the procedures are anchored. The model, derived from a developmental view of “normal” intellectual and cognitive functioning, is a positive (not deficit-based) description of the functions involved in mental processing that relate to learning. The procedures address the assessment–intervention gap and help practitioners to identify the special needs of

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individuals being assessed as well as to generate plans for programming and instruction.

The book is organized, both physically and conceptually, to take account of the assessment needs and practices primarily in clinical psychology and school/educational psychology. It is in these two domains that dynamic assessment is most urgently needed. This book is relevant for either graduate students or practicing professionals in the fields of clinical, school, and counseling psychology and neuropsychology. It is appropriate as a text for graduate courses in advanced diagnostic assessment. Although designed primarily for use by psychologists, it would also be of interest to advanced practitioners and university educators in the fields of speech/language pathology and both special and regular education.

Readers might wonder why we have invited two distinguished scientist-practitioners to write forewords to the book. It is precisely because we have addressed the book principally to practitioners in the applied domains of clinical psychology and education, and we sought help in setting these two giant enterprises as application sites for the theories, approaches, and practices presented here.

Chapters 1 through 3 concern theory and basic principles, intended to introduce readers to dynamic assessment and to start out with a level playing field for both novice and veteran practitioners. Chapters 4 through 8 provide specific instructions for administration of dynamic assessment procedures that we have designed and used in our practices. Chapter 9 is addressed to one of the major concerns of DA trainers and newly trained practitioners: the reporting of the outcomes of DA. In our own experience training both graduate students and seasoned professionals to do DA, report writing has emerged as a strong concern; therefore, we have provided some guidelines as well as examples of such reports. Chapter 10 serves as a summary and discussion of special issues in dynamic assessment. There are two appendixes that provide readers with information about dynamic assessment procedures that are currently available from publishers as well as an array of dynamic resources such as Web sites and training sources. The book contains additional materials that readers can download and print for their own use, including some original tests as well as forms, scoring sheets, and guides. These materials are accessible at the Cambridge University Press Web site: www.cambridge.org/9780521849357. To access this material, the required username is lecturer and the password is solutions05. We have included this downloadable material in an effort to make DA materials and procedures more readily available and accessible to professionals who need them. We must insert two words of caution about use of these materials. First, it would be grossly incorrect to assume that these materials are the sum of DA tasks and

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materials, or even that they are representative of the field. They are what these two authors use and propose to other users. We happily acknowledge the existence and utility of many other sets of DA materials. Second, access to testing materials is no substitute for professional training in their use. Training in DA continues to be a large issue (see Chapter 10), but no matter what approach one takes to DA, specialized training in its theories, approaches, applications, materials, and interpretation is still essential.

Our major purpose in writing this book has been to put DA into the hands of practitioners and their trainers, or as close to that goal as we can get with the written word. We want readers to be able to move beyond passive expression of interest into actually doing DA. We are both of retirement age and have worked long and hard to enhance the continuing development of this approach. We have conducted research, trained practitioners, and designed procedures. We have talked and tested, but most of all we have listened and learned. We have tried to put what we have learned and what we have designed into these pages, hoping to pass our experiences on to the next generation.

We are grateful to those who have inspired us and to those on whose shoulders we stand. Reuven Feuerstein has of course been an important catalyst for much of the work that has been done in this area, and certainly for us he has been at various times both mentor and collaborator, and always friend. Both of us have learned a great deal from our graduate students and those psychological and educational professionals who have come to us for DA training in literally dozens of workshops in many countries. Most of all, we have learned extremely important lessons from the many individuals whom we have examined using the methods of DA. They have our sincere gratitude.

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This text bucks a trend in clinical psychology. Much of modern-day assessment in the field has sadly become the formulaic application of computerized rules that unabashedly serve the singular goal of satisfying health insurers' mindless requirements for a psychiatric diagnosis. The practice of assessment has become restricted by those requirements. Technicians, or – even more frequently – computer programs, transform a client's responses to multiple-choice questions into numbers and categories that allow a clinical psychologist to begin intervention. In the best case, the intervention is “evidence-based” and grounded in empirical evaluation. But the divide between assessment and intervention has grown deeper, and the client's well-being has suffered.

Haywood and Lidz provide a much-needed antidote to this trend. They carry the torch of the rich tradition of transactional psychology and dynamic assessment in this novel text that brings these principles to life. This is a dynamic application of dynamic assessment.

The critical principle is that there is no divide between assessment and intervention. Intervention *is* assessment, and assessment *is* the intervention. The clinician learns about the client by testing the client's skill, knowledge, and ability to learn. The clinician asks a question, the client demonstrates, and the clinician aligns that response with an intricately structured, multi-dimensional schema and then asks another question. It is the relationship between clinician and client that is transactional, dynamic, and growing. The interaction is simultaneously an assessment of the client's current level of functioning and an intervention to boost that level. The recursiveness of the exchange between the clinician and the client is the engine for growth.

The concepts that guide dynamic assessment are steeped in the tradition of cognitive developmental theories of Vygotsky and Feuerstein, who recognized that human beings are not static entities but are always in states of transition and transactional relationships with the world. It is the

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transaction with the world that brings cognitive growth. These concepts have been kept alive with more recent revisions of cognitive developmental theory by Campione, Brown, and Bransford and with theories of multiple intelligences by Gardner and Sternberg.

The concepts are of obvious importance in the applied domain of intellectual assessment and intervention with problems of intellectual disability, learning disability, and reading failure. They are quite consistent with cutting-edge applications by other leading educational practitioner-theorists, including Mel Levine and Howard Gardner. But they are also of crucial importance to clinical psychological problems such as conduct disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, depression, and even social disorientation in disorders of old age. The distinction between the cognitive and the social is an artificial one, and the dynamic assessor brings them together. For childhood externalizing problems, the child's "learning disability" is difficulty with focusing attention on specific tasks or recognizing others' emotions or intentions. The child's experience with the world is shaped by the world's contrary reaction to the child's difficulty, and the ensuing transaction escalates into conflict, fighting, and maladaptive behavior. The dynamic assessor's task in these cases is to understand the child's current level of "reading" the social world. When the clinician communicates different emotions, does the child grasp the distinction between sad and mad, or anger and fear? Does the child understand how to read his or her own emotional reactions? Does the complexity of these emotions overwhelm the child, leading to off-task behavior that is observed by others as inattention and hyperactivity? The clinical dynamic assessor will use the same principles of dynamic assessment to understand the child's way of experiencing the world, to suggest a slightly new way to the child, and to evaluate the child's response to this suggestion. The dynamic transaction between clinician and client is both assessment and intervention.

The concepts are consistent with the transactional nature of cognitive therapy for depressive disorder. The cognitive therapist asks questions to learn how the client thinks in social interactions and precisely where the client's cognitive distortions occur. Then the therapist suggests an alternative or suggests an activity that will enable the client to experience an alternative. The client's response to that activity drives the next intervention. Is this process assessment or intervention? It is both – it is transactional, and it is consistent with dynamic assessment principles as articulated in this text.

Expert dynamic assessment requires professional skill. Although this text provides the most hands-on applications to date, it is not a cookbook. Clinical expertise requires practice, experience, and feedback through

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supervision. These skills are developed through the same principles of dynamic assessment that Haywood and Lidz prescribe for clients. In this way, this text provides a dynamic assessment approach to teaching dynamic assessment. It is decidedly anti-cookbook and anti-computer.

The authors of this text are senior pioneers in the transformation of dynamic theory into clinical practice. They have been at it for decades. They live these principles, and they know firsthand how these principles really work. They bring their own experience to bear on these problems, and the result is a text that brings to life the principles of classic developmental theorists. This is a must-read for clinicians and educators, scholars and practitioners.

Kenneth A. Dodge, Ph.D., is the William McDougall Professor of Public Policy and Director of the Center for Child and Family Policy at Duke University. He leads an effort to bridge basic scientific research in children's development with public policy affecting children and families.

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Assessment specialists in the United States and Western Europe are fortunate to be able to select from hundreds of standardized norm-referenced tests. Test authors and test companies continue to provide a steady supply of additional excellent resources. Different assessment models and methods that supplement current resources also are needed, however.

This need was underscored in 1991 as I was preparing to direct the International Test Commission's conference on test use with children and youth at Oxford University. I reviewed then-current literature on desired changes in assessment practice (Oakland, 1995). Assessment specialists were requested to devote more attention to dynamic behaviors (e.g., problem-solving abilities) and less attention to static behaviors (e.g., general intelligence), to assess outcomes needed for the attainment of meaningful life activities, to identify temporary and improvable barriers to performance, and to emphasize formative evaluation methods.

Carol Lidz's book *Dynamic Assessment: An Interactional Approach for Evaluating Learning Potential* (1987) addressed many of these important issues. Her pioneering scholarship helped set the stage for other scholars and practitioners to become engaged in the use and development of what we now call dynamic assessment. Carl Haywood's early scholarship (e.g., 1992) also helped promote this important and emerging area.

Haywood and Lidz's current collaboration, *Dynamic Assessment in Practice: Clinical and Educational Applications*, synthesizes foundational scholarship (e.g., from Vygotsky and Feuerstein) and extends it in exemplary ways that enable assessment specialists to address issues I identified in 1991. Haywood and Lidz characterize dynamic assessment as an interactive process between the examiner and examinee with the goal of identifying pathways to the examinee's success. Processes central to dynamic assessment include identifying obstacles to more effective learning and performance, finding ways to remove or circumvent them, and assessing

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the effects of removing or circumventing obstacles on subsequent learning and performance.

Thus, the authors encourage examiners to focus on behaviors that are dynamic (i.e., changeable) – on problem-solving abilities, temporary and improvable barriers to performance, processes needed for the attainment of meaningful life activities – and to consider assessment and intervention to be linked inseparably and to be ongoing (e.g., using formative evaluation methods).

Haywood and Lidz describe dynamic assessment in ways that are complementary to other commonly used methods, including standardized testing, history taking, observing, and interviewing. Thus, dynamic assessment adds to and should not distract from well-honed assessment methods.

The ultimate goal of assessment should be an accurate description of behavior that helps promote development. The importance and currency of this goal are underscored by efforts to determine the degree to which students are benefiting from instruction and behavioral interventions (e.g., response to intervention). If students are not benefiting, professionals should focus on obstacles that can be circumvented or removed or behaviors that can be improved so as to better promote development. Thus, *Dynamic Assessment in Practice* is timely in that it provides methods to promote this goal.

In writing *Dynamic Assessment in Practice*, the authors intend to enable practitioners and instructors to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to use dynamic assessment. In part, this goal is achieved because both authors are excellent scholars and practitioners. These strengths are reflected in their command of literature (e.g., more than 300 references) as well as their ability to synthesize it in ways that promote practice. The addition of Web-based downloads that provide test forms and scoring sheets and guides practitioners and instructors further enhances the implementation of dynamic assessment.

Both authors have a distinguished history of devotion to finding pathways for children's success. Their interests and work have been on the cutting edge. Their passion for their work and persistence in its performance are important when undertaking a book of this magnitude and are reflected in the book's content and writing style.

The implementation of cardinal principles that form the foundation of dynamic assessment can be expected to have various unexpected positive consequences, one being the promotion of professionalism. Many assessment specialists work in systems that respect numbers more than professional judgment. The employment of principles advanced in *Dynamic Assessment in Practice* requires professionals to set aside numbers and to

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focus on dynamic behaviors. Professionals who are successful in implementing dynamic assessment methods are likely to be gifted in assessment (not just testing), to display instrumental knowledge of child and adolescent psychology, and to have a rich background in curriculum. In short, a high degree of professionalism is required to implement dynamic assessment successfully. Psychologists and other specialists, in an effort to enhance their knowledge and skills in ways that reinstate their importance as professionals rather than simply as psychometricians, can be expected to embrace the principles and methods described superbly in *Dynamic Assessment in Practice*.

Thomas Oakland, Ph.D., is Research Foundation Professor, Department of Educational Psychology, College of Education, at the University of Florida. His research has included children's temperament, test development and use, and legal, ethical, and professional issues in education and psychology.

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