CHAPTER 1

Introduction to Counseling Assessment

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you will be able to

- Describe the relationship between counseling and assessment
- Identify the various types of assessments commonly used in counseling practice
- Articulate the history and origins of testing and assessment practices
- Recognize the challenges inherent in the practice of counseling assessment
- Identify and locate assessment competencies required by professional counselors
- Demonstrate knowledge of assessment in CACREP accreditation standards
- Discuss controversial issues in counseling assessment

As you continue your training as a professional counselor, you are no doubt beginning to realize that there is no "one-size-fits-all" counseling approach that can be applied to all clients. If there were, counselor training programs would require far less coursework to complete. The reason we as counselors have such a variety of approaches, techniques, and interventions at our disposal is that each client who seeks counseling is unique. Every individual presents with his or her own set of issues and circumstances that allow him or her to experience life differently. What may be viewed as a source of great distress for one person may not even register as a concern for another. Because each client's situation is different, it is important for counselors to acquire as much information about their clients as possible so that they can provide them with treatment options tailored to their specific needs.

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Assessment is the process by which counselors gather the information they need to form a holistic view of their clients and the problems with which they present. As a counselor, you will regularly assess your clients throughout the counseling process, especially in the early stages. Consider for a moment the following scenario: A female client presents for counseling tearful and distraught. She states that her life feels like it is falling apart, and she does not know what to do or where to turn for help. As a counselor, you probably have many questions you would need answered before you could begin to help this woman. For example, why is she so despondent? What has happened to make her feel like her life is falling apart? How long has she felt this way? Does she have any resources or support to help her through this trying time? Your ability to find answers to these questions will determine how the counseling process unfolds and how successful it ultimately will be. With so many questions needing answers, it becomes important to know how to effectively employ appropriate assessment techniques and procedures. In this chapter we will introduce you to the practice of counseling assessment and present an overview of the assessment process. In addition, we will examine the historical role assessment has played in both clinical and nonclinical settings. Learning about the important developments and advances that have helped shape assessment practices and procedures throughout history will help you appreciate how we have reached our current understanding of client assessment.

WHAT IS ASSESSMENT?

Before beginning our discussion of assessment, we believe it would be most beneficial to present an operational definition of the term. In 1985, members from the American Educational Research Association (AERA), the American Psychological Association (APA), and the National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME) got together to produce a document known as the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* (herein referred to as the *Standards*). The *Standards*, written for both a professional and layperson audience, is a collection of best practices that describe how tests should be developed as well as appropriate uses of tests in various educational, psychological, and employment settings. The intent of this group of professionals was to create a frame of reference to which clinicians and test administrators could turn to ensure that they were making and using tests appropriately. The *Standards* have been revised twice since their original publication date. In the third and most current edition, the term **assessment** is defined as "a process that integrates test information with information from other sources (e.g., information from other tests, the individual's social, educational, employment, health, or psychological history)" (AERA, APA, & NCME, 1999, p. 3). As you can see, this definition highlights the broad nature of the assessment process. By collecting client data from various sources, using a combination of formal and informal techniques, counselors are able to formulate a more comprehensive and accurate understanding of the client and his or her reason for presenting for counseling services (Drummond & Jones, 2010). How does this definition compare to how you previously thought of counseling assessment? Guided Practice Exercise 1.1 invites you to think about how you conceptualize the assessment process.

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GUIDED PRACTICE EXERCISE 1.1

Understanding Counseling Assessment

For many counselors, the term *assessment* conjures up images of standardized tests and rigid scoring protocols that place labels on clients. In this chapter we hope to dispel this myth and show you that counseling assessment encompasses much more than standardized testing and can actually be a useful tool for you to successfully advance the counseling process. Imagine that you are scheduled to see a new client this afternoon for the first time. All you know is that the client was referred to you to discuss an issue with anger management. Assessment could be used to help you better understand the scope of the problem. What information would you like to have about the client and the presenting problem to more accurately understand the situation and begin formulating an effective treatment plan?

Throughout the professional literature you will see the term *assessment* used interchangeably with other terms such as *appraisal* and *evaluation*. Although these may seem like they are the same, there are subtle nuances that differentiate the activities. Like assessment, both appraisal and evaluation also make use of various methods of formal and informal data collection. However, a noted difference is in how the collected information is used. When counselors assess clients, their goal is to document and describe what is going on with the clients. Thus assessment is largely an objective activity. On the other hand, appraisal and evaluation both involve a process whereby counselors are asked to make judgments based on the evidence that they collect. These activities are more subjective in nature. Considering the reasons you need to acquire information about your client's presenting problem will help you understand which activity you actually are conducting.

Another term you might see used in the literature is *psychological testing*. A **psychological test**, as defined by Anastasi and Urbina (1997), is an objective, standardized measure of behavior. In the first half of the 20th century, counseling professionals were known to use tests fairly regularly in their work with clients. In fact, educational and vocational counselors, as well as trait-and-factor theorists, employed a variety of tests to learn more about their clients and tailor their treatment approach to best meet the needs of their clients. Consequently, many people interpreted assessment and testing as referring to the same practice (Leppma & Jones, 2013). However, as noted in the latest revision of the *Standards*, assessment encompasses much more than testing. In reality, the modern scope of assessment activities goes far beyond the exclusive use of standardized tests (McQuaid et al., 2012). Assessment activities include the collection of data from direct (client) and indirect sources (family, friends, co-workers) using both formal and informal methods. Included in the list of assessment methods are such interventions as observation, interviewing, screening, and standardized testing (see Case Illustration 1.1). As you can see, tests represent only one source of information for counselors to use. As a result, the use of the word *testing* to refer to any and all assessment activities has primarily ceased. Instead, we view the practice of assessment in a more holistic sense to refer to the collection of ways through which we begin to know more about our clients and the issues for which they present for counseling services.

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CASE ILLUSTRATION 1.1

A school counselor has been contacted by a teacher for assistance with a student who is having difficulty in class. The teacher informs the school counselor that the student is disruptive and is preventing other students from learning. The school counselor agrees to intervene and work with the student to see what may be going on. To better understand the nature of the disruptive behavior, the school counselor may employ several assessment strategies to gather additional information. The school counselor might sit in on a class session and observe the student directly to see what the disruptive behavior actually looks like, what precedes the behavior, and what if any reaction the student receives from exhibiting the behavior. The school counselor might also talk to the student to see what benefit the behavior serves. Other teachers might be consulted to see if this behavior exists in other classes, or the student's parents might become involved to assess whether this type of behavior is exclusive to school or is one that the parents see occurring at home as well. In this case illustration the school counselor is using several assessment methods to gain as much information as possible to begin working on a solution to the problem with the student. Without this information the counseling process would be a lot less directed and focused and may not be successful.

Purposes of Assessment

Assessment plays an integral role throughout the counseling relationship. From the moment we first meet a client through the last session we have together, counselors are always assessing and gathering data. The more information we have about a client, the better we are able to help the client achieve a successful outcome. Depending on where we are in the counseling process with a client, the scope and goals of assessment practices vary. Generally speaking, assessment serves four primary purposes in the counseling process: (a) screening, (b) diagnosis, (c) treatment planning and goal identification, and (d) progress evaluation (Erford, 2006). A more in-depth discussion of each of these purposes can be found in Chapter 6.

Having now provided you with a better idea of what counseling assessment entails, we will present a brief historical look at how assessment practices have evolved through the years. Our reason for including the following section is twofold. First, program accreditation standards mandate that students be taught this information. The Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP, 2009) directs counselor training programs to include in their curriculum a discussion of the "historical perspectives concerning the nature and meaning of assessment" (p. 12). Second, examining the past is a great way to help understand the present and shape the future. Accreditation standards aside, having a basic working knowledge of the history of assessment will not only allow you to better understand current assessment issues and practices (Drummond & Jones, 2010), but also help you to avoid repeating past mistakes related to the misuse of assessment procedures and interventions. When used in an informed and valid manner, assessment activities can be useful tools for a counselor to employ.

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HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

The history of psychological assessment and testing is one that is marked by necessity and innovation (Geisinger, 2000). As a result, assessment and testing practices feature prominently in several vocational, educational, and clinical settings. In this section, we will highlight some of the major events and milestones in the history of assessment. While it is generally accepted that the modern assessment era begins with the 20th century, there is recorded evidence of assessment practices being used as many as 4,000 years ago. An introduction to these early usages will help you better understand how assessment helps us today in the various settings in which counselors might work.

Assessment Practices in Ancient Times (BCE)

One of the earliest recorded uses of assessment practices was in China around 2200 BCE. At that time the Chinese empire was rapidly expanding in both size and scope. To maintain order and control throughout the empire, the emperor required a large number of officials to assist in governing the people. Individuals who held these positions were held in high regard and paid quite well. Many government officials were able to support their entire family for years to come with the salary they received. As a result, they were highly sought-after positions. To assist in selecting the most qualified individuals to serve in these important positions, the Chinese government initiated a civil service examination. The examination was a grueling affair, lasting for three full days and testing individuals on a variety of topics, including civil law, military affairs, agriculture, revenue, geography, music, archery, horsemanship, and writing. To be successful, potential candidates needed to spend a great deal of time studying in preparation for the examination. In theory the examinations were open to all citizens, allowing for individuals to be selected based on their own merits rather than any family or political connections they might have had. However, the time and expense associated with preparing for the examination typically resulted in officials being selected predominantly from the wealthiest families. Although many took the examination, only about 3%–5% passed and became government officials. Despite the fact that testing conditions were not ideal (participants were kept isolated for long hours and asked to complete several grueling tasks), the civil service examination remained in use until 1905. Despite its flaws, this early usage still incorporated many of the assessment practices we use today, including standardized test administration and documenting content validity. A more detailed discussion of these topics will appear in subsequent chapters.

The Ancient Greeks provide us with another example of early assessment usage. For the Greeks, testing was an established adjunct to the educational process (Anastasi & Urbina, 1997). In 500 BCE Socrates developed philosophies that emphasized the use of assessment in educational planning. He advocated for the importance of assessing an individual's competencies and aptitudes prior to vocational selection. Socrates' original ideas also are seen in the work of perhaps his most famous student, Plato. In his most well-known book, the *Republic*, Plato (circa 380 BCE) suggested that people should work at jobs consistent with their abilities and endowments. In other words, the career choice individuals make should be based on a thorough analysis of who they are as individuals, including what they believe

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and value as well as what skills and talents they currently possess. Plato was a firm believer that matching skill and aptitude with career choice was essential in building a strong and reliable workforce. Despite the innovative approaches used by the ancient Chinese and Greeks, much is lost to antiquity and little recorded history of the usage of assessment exists for the next 2,000 years. It is not until the 1500s that we again begin to see assessment play a functional role in society.

Assessment Practices in the Middle Ages (1500s)

In the 1500s a Spanish physician by the name of Juan Huarte began studying and researching the human faculties of memory, intelligence, and imagination. Huarte believed that people use different faculties to address problems that arise in their lives. While some people may use imagination to conjure solutions for an existing problem that might work, others rely on memory and apply prior remedies that have proved to be effective in the past at solving problems. Each approach has its own merits. The selection of which faculty to activate is unique to the individual. Huarte's work in human intelligence led him to publish an influential textbook in 1575 called *Examen de los Ingenios Para las Scienzias*, which translated into English reads *The Trial of Wits: Discovering the Great Differences of Wits Among Men and What Sort of Learning Suits Best With Each Genius.* In his book, Huarte posits that all students should be assessed prior to the beginning of their academic training. Based on the results of this assessment, students should be placed in programs that prepare them for careers that best match their intellectual capabilities as determined by their assessment. In so doing, Huarte effectively called for the first usage of mental or intelligence testing. Consequently, his work is widely regarded as being a precursor for the modern field of educational psychology. These early examples laid the foundation for the period of rapid growth and development of assessment practices known as the modern testing movement.

Around the same time, the Jesuits began expanding assessment practices by introducing the use of the written examination. In 1540, Jesuit universities were administering written examinations to students across Europe. The results of these examinations were then used for screening, placement, and evaluative purposes. While the use of written examinations was seen as an improvement over existing methods of evaluating students and their acquisition of knowledge, there were inherent biases in the approach. According to Crusan (2010), "since literacy was the exclusive privilege of nobility and the clergy, the use of written examinations served as a means of social control" (p. 20). In other words, only the social elite would have the means to succeed at a written examination. Nevertheless, the use of written assessments became quite popular and represents one of the primary assessment strategies used in educational settings today.

The Modern Testing Movement (1800s)

The origins of the modern testing movement can be traced back to the Victorian era and the work of English biologist Francis Galton in the 1800s. Inspired by the work of his cousin Charles Darwin, Galton began studying heredity. Specifically, he examined variations in human ability; hypothesizing that successful individuals were those who had inherited

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superior qualities from their parents and previous generations. His work is recorded in his book *Hereditary Genius,* published in 1869. To test his hypothesis, Galton sought to compare the abilities of biologically related and unrelated individuals. Based on the premise that individuals learn based on their interactions with the environment around them, he employed a series of sensory discrimination tests. The more perceptive an individual's senses, the more information that person would be able to derive from the surrounding environment and the better equipped that person would be to make intelligent decisions. Galton's research led him to conclude that human mental abilities and personality traits were largely inherited (D. Seligman, 2002). Additionally, Galton's work led to the development of several statistical concepts used in measurement and research today, including the normal curve and correlational analyses. In fact, it was Galton who encouraged his student Karl Pearson to develop an appropriate way to indicate the strength of association between two variables. The commonly used Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (*r*) is the result of their work.

Wilhelm Wundt stands as another pioneer in the assessment and testing movement. Regarded as the "father of experimental psychology," Wundt established the first psychological laboratory at the University of Leipzig in Germany, in 1869. Wundt and his colleagues also were drawn to studying human intelligence. In particular, they were interested in identifying the factors associated with intelligence. Their experiments were largely focused on sensory phenomena. Wundt and colleagues assessed participants' sensitivity to various visual, auditory, olfactory, and tactile stimuli by measuring simple reaction time. However, unlike Galton, they were more interested in identifying those characteristics that made humans similar than those that made them different. As Anastasi and Urbina (1997) note, the early experimental psychologists were more concerned with the formulation of generalized descriptions of human behavior than they were with measuring individual differences. To best illustrate the purpose of Wundt's work, consider the following experiment. An individual is asked to place a hand in a bucket filled with ice. The frigid temperature of the ice would cause most people to recoil their hand from the bucket. Experimental psychologists would measure the time it took for you to remove your hand and compare the results. The focus here is on the fact that removing your hand is the appropriate response that would be common for all participants. Those who did not remove their hand and were able to endure the cold temperatures of the ice were accepted as statistical outliers in the study and excluded from further analysis. The work of Wundt and others at the university laboratory highlighted the importance of rigorous control of experimental conditions. This emphasis led to the development of standardization procedures that play a prominent role in modern assessment practices.

A discussion of the early testing movement would not be complete without mentioning the work of James McKeen Cattell. An American psychologist, Cattell was actually a doctoral student of Wundt's at the University of Leipzig. Following his graduation he accepted a postdoctoral fellowship in London and had the opportunity to study in the laboratory of Francis Galton. In 1888 he returned to the United States and accepted a position as professor of psychology at the University of Pennsylvania. It was here that he established the first American experimental psychology laboratory. In 1891 he accepted a faculty position at Columbia University, where he served as a professor and department head for the next 26 years, training the next generation of American psychologists.

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In addition to starting the experimental psychology movement in America, Cattell also is well known for his early work in human intelligence. In a paper published in 1890, Cattell introduced the term **mental test** for the first time in the professional literature. In his paper Cattell described a process by which a series of tests could be administered annually to college students to assess their intellectual level. Representing his view of intelligence as being multifaceted, his mental tests were designed to measure several human characteristics, including muscular strength, speed of movement, sensitivity to pain, keenness of vision and hearing, weight discrimination, reaction time, and memory (Anastasi & Urbina, 1997). The inclusion of memory as a tested characteristic of intelligence was a pioneering innovation of Cattell's. While he believed he was pioneering the assessment of intelligence by measuring these constructs, subsequent researchers found no discernible relationship between performance on Cattell's mental test battery and academic performance. In the late 1890s and early 1900s, the work of psychologists Alfred Binet and Victor Henri would render the mental tests developed by Cattell irrelevant.

The work of early researchers like Galton, Wundt, and Cattell helped establish a base understanding of how standardized testing and observation could be applied to gain additional knowledge about people. Their efforts led to rapid growth and expansion for the assessment field during the 20th century. Because of the many practical applications associated with being able to measure differences between and among people, assessment practices were applied in many different directions, including the assessment of intelligence, achievement, and personality (see Guided Practice Exercise 1.2). The following sections detail some of the seminal developments in assessment in the modern era.

GUIDED PRACTICE EXERCISE 1.2

Historical Influences on Modern Practice

Discuss how the work of Galton, Wundt, and Cattell influenced the development of modern testing. Discuss some key historical events that influenced how modern-day assessments are used.

Assessment in the Modern Era (1890s–1910s)

In the 1890s French psychologists Alfred Binet and Victor Henri began publishing in the area of human intelligence. They believed that the previously held views of intelligence were focused too heavily on sensory aspects and that intelligence involved more complex functions then those originally identified by Cattell and Galton. The two published a paper together in 1895 in which they defined intelligence in terms of a collection of complex mental abilities such as memory, abstraction, judgment, analytic processing, and reasoning. The full extent of their findings would not be realized until nearly a decade later. In 1904 the Minister of Public Instruction in Paris commissioned a group to study "educationally retarded" children. The committee, of which Binet was an appointed member, was

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charged with finding a means to differentiate mentally retarded from normal children so that alternative education could be provided for those most in need. The work of this committee resulted in the publication of the initial Binet-Simon scale of intelligence (Binet & Simon, 1905). Binet and Simon envisioned intelligence as a learned entity. As a result, their instrument was developed to assess an individual's intelligence based on his or her age. The individually administered test consisted of 30 items designed to assess judgment, comprehension, and reasoning. Items increased in complexity throughout the test. An example of a simple task would be for a child to shake hands with the examiner. A more complex task would require the child to point to various body parts named by the examiner. The most complex tasks asked children to repeat back a series of seven random digits or provide rhyming words for a given word. Revisions to the test were made in both 1908 and 1911. The 1908 revision included the introduction of the term **intelligence quotient (IQ)**. The intelligence quotient was a ratio of a person's mental age and chronological age. Mental age was the level at which a child could pass all of the tasks deemed appropriate for a given age. For example a 6-year-old child who was able to successfully complete all tasks usually passed by 8-year-olds would have a mental age of 8.0. A more detailed description of the Binet-Simon intelligence tests appears in Chapter 7.

In 1916, an educational psychology professor at Stanford University by the name of Lewis Terman published a revised version of the Binet-Simon intelligence scale. In addition to translating the instrument into English, Terman performed several statistical analyses and conducted numerous normative studies on the original scale. The result of these efforts led to the replacement of many of the tests of mental ability at age levels other than those for which they originally were designed. In addition, Terman added several new subtests he both created himself and borrowed from other sources. His revisions have proved to be successful, and for this reason the test is now referred to as the Stanford–Binet test of Intelligence.

The advent of World War I in the 1910s saw the military also begin applying the assessment of intelligence to its recruiting efforts. As World War I began and it became apparent that the United States would be entering the fray, Robert Yerkes, then serving as president of the American Psychological Association, urged the membership of his society to get involved in the war effort. The result was the publication of the Army Alpha and Beta tests in 1917. Developed by a group of psychologists specializing in the study of human intelligence, the tests were designed to assess intellectual and emotional functioning of recruits entering the military and to assist in the selection of officers and the assignment of recruits to specific military occupations or units. Because of the large number of recruits that needed to be screened in a relatively short period of time, these tests were designed to be group-administered rather than individually administered tests. The **Army Alpha** was a test that measured verbal ability, numerical ability, ability to follow directions, and knowledge of information. The **Army Beta** was the nonverbal counterpart to the Army Alpha. It was used to evaluate the aptitude of illiterate, unschooled, or non-English-speaking recruits. Both instruments used a multiple-choice response format, a relatively new innovation pioneered by Arthur S. Otis. Although Otis gave permission to administer his mental tests to over 1.75 million soldiers, the war came to an end before they could be put to use in the selection and assignment of new recruits. Although not used in an official context during World War I, the Army Alpha and Army Beta tests were released to the public

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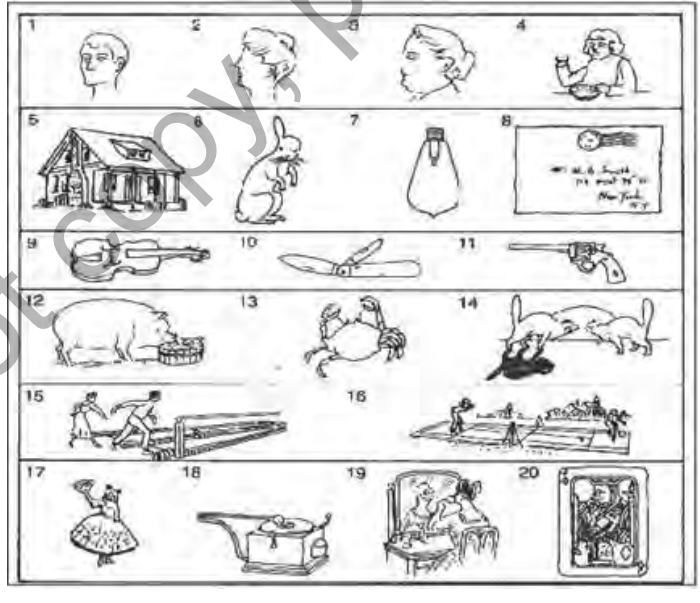
following the war and served as the foundation on which subsequent military screening instruments were built. In addition, these tests provided the prototype for most other group-based tests used to assess a variety of constructs (e.g., achievement, intelligence, specific aptitude, psychopathology). Figure 1.1 illustrates examples of items appearing on the Army Beta test.

A discussion of the early part of the 20th century would not be complete without mentioning the advent of the vocational guidance movement. Two of the leading figures in this movement were Frank Parsons and Jesse B. Davis. Often referred to as the father of guidance, Parsons is best known for his work with the Boston Vocational Bureau. It was here that he developed his three-step model of career counseling. His model required counselors to (1) gather information about the person, (2) gather information about the world of work, and (3) match the person to the appropriate occupation in the world of work. While Parsons did not develop any specific strategies or tools for assessing these three areas, his ideas were important in the development and construction of many career and vocational inventories that would follow. Jesse B. Davis was one of the first individuals to establish a systematic school guidance program. As a high school principal in the Chicago area, Davis encouraged his faculty to begin integrating career assessment into their curriculum. The vocational guidance movement led to the development of the school counseling specialization currently practiced.

Figure 1.1 Sample Questions on the Army Beta Test of Intelligence



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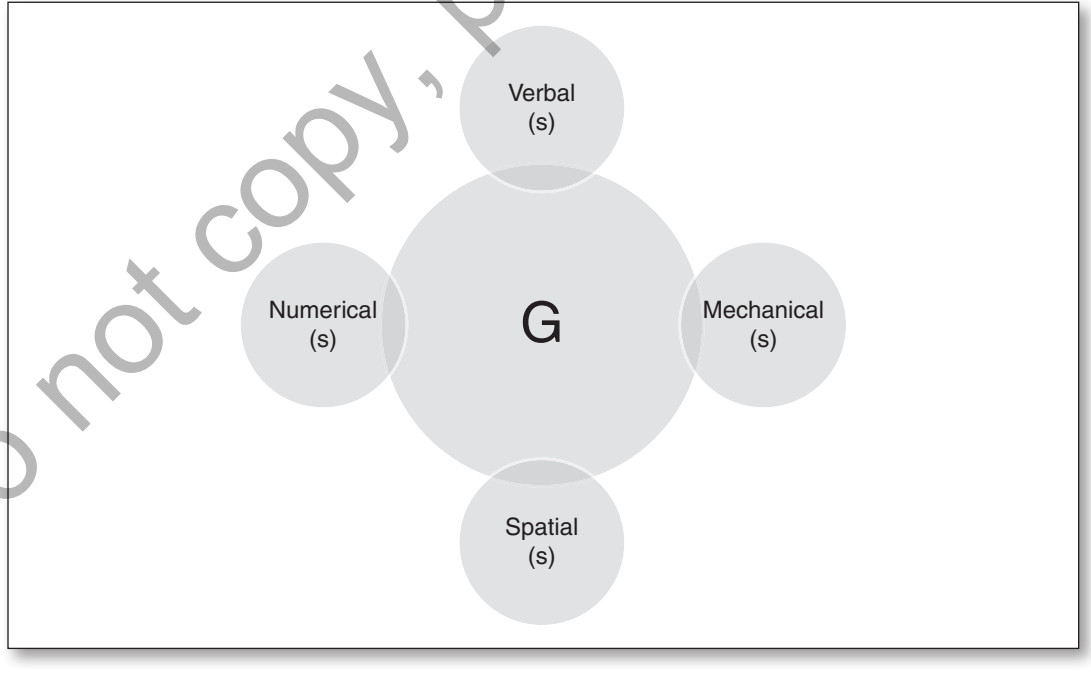
Assessment in the Modern Era (1920s–1930s)

Although the intelligence tests developed by Binet and Simon and the Army Alpha and Beta tests developed by Yerkes and the APA served social purposes (educational and military selection and assignment), they largely were developed without any real theoretical foundation. In the 1920s and 1930s, a focused effort was made to develop a strong theoretical understanding of what intelligence really was and how it could best be measured. To this end, a number of prominent psychologists began developing their theories on intelligence. Charles Spearman (1927) proposed one of the earliest theories of intelligence. Spearman believed that intelligence actually comprised two factors: general intelligence (g) and specific intelligence (s; see Figure 1.2). General intelligence referred to an individual's overall intellectual ability. It is evident across many different tasks and activities. In his research, Spearman found that those individuals who scored highly in a particular intellectual task tended to score high on other tests of mental ability. An example of an individual with a high *g* factor would be a student on the Dean's list in college. The high grade point average required to be on this list would indicate that the student is able to perform at a high level in all classes, be they math, language arts, or science. The other factor represents specific intelligence. This is the mental ability needed to perform well at a distinct task that may not be generalizable to other areas. I might be able to understand tax codes and prepare my own income tax returns each year, but I may have no idea how to change the oil in my car.

Figure 1.2 Charles Spearman's Conceptualization of Global (G) and Specific (s) Intelligences



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In the 1930s Louis Thurstone argued that the *g* factor proposed by Spearman did not exist and was in fact just a statistical artifact created by the mathematical analyses used to study it. In its place, Thurstone (1938) identified seven independent factors, called **primary abilities**, which constituted human intelligence: word fluency, verbal comprehension, spatial visualization, number facility, associative memory, reasoning, and perceptual speed.

In 1939 David Wechsler, a clinical psychologist at Bellevue Psychiatric Hospital in New York City, introduced a new assessment instrument designed to measure adult intelligence. His instrument, known as the Wechsler-Bellevue Intelligence Scale, featured a battery of intelligence tests. The scale was designed to measure the "global capacity of the individual to act purposefully, to think rationally, and to deal effectively with his environment" (Wechsler, 1939, p. 3). His tests became extremely popular and led to several revisions. In 1955 he revised the test and renamed it the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS). The WAIS has since been revised in 1981, 1997, and its most current version (WAIS-IV) in 2008. Wechsler's test provided a couple of important advances that have helped shape our understanding of intelligence and how it can be measured. First, his test consisted of several subtests that measured various aspects of mental ability. Combined, these subtests provide a global measure of one's intelligence. Second, he introduced the use of a deviation IQ score. The deviation IQ score, unlike the ratio IQ score used in the Binet-Simon test, allows for comparisons to be made between individuals. An average score of 100 was established with a standard deviation of 15.

In the 1920s and 1930s, interest in assessment was not limited to examinations of individual intelligence (Whiston, 2009). In 1921 Hermann Rorschach developed the Rorschach Inkblot Test under the title *Psychodiagnostik*. The Rorschach Inkblot Test includes 10 inkblot cards that feature ambiguous stimuli. Test takers are asked to describe what they see in the image. Their responses are then interpreted based on the determinants (form and color of the shape) and localized details of the stimulus that triggered their response. Another personality test developed during this time was the Thematic Apperception Test (1935), in which test takers were presented with a picture and asked to tell a story about it. Their story was to include a depiction of what was going on, what happened previously, and what was likely to follow. Their responses were examined and themes were identified. A further discussion of these and other projective personality tests is provided in Chapter 10. Following up on the work of Parsons and the career counseling movement, standardized vocational inventories were developed. The Strong Vocational Interest Inventory (1927) and Kuder Preference Record–Individual (1932) emerged as viable instruments to use in assessing individual interests and aligning those interests with vocational careers.

The rapid growth of the assessment field led to a need to classify the instruments and inventories being developed. In the 1930s Oscar Buros set forth to establish a reference source that would list available assessment instruments and evaluate their structure and uses. He titled his reference the *Mental Measurements Yearbook* (*MMY*). The first *MMY* was published in 1938 and, according to Buros, it allowed "leading scholars to publish candidly critical reviews of commercially available tests designed to serve the interests of both practitioners and the public at large" (Buros Center for Testing, 2014). The *MMY* is published every 2–3 years and the current edition, the 19th, was published in 2013.

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Assessment in the Modern Era (1940s–1950s)

In the 1940s, the fascination with personality assessment increased. Researchers looked to add to the existing projective instruments available by creating more standardized and formal measures. One noteworthy event in this period was the development and publication of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) in 1943. The MMPI was developed to provide an objective measure of psychopathology. At the time, personality tests were projective in nature (e.g., Rorschach Inkblot Test, Rotter Incomplete Sentence Blank), and the subjective scoring of these instruments led to much variability in clinical diagnoses among professionals. The authors of the MMPI, Starke R. Hathaway and J. C. McKinley, sought to make an objective measure that featured criterion keying of items. This means that the items on the test were selected based on their ability to accurately tap and assess various signs and symptoms of many diagnostic labels. The MMPI became a universally popular instrument and has been used in many settings. Revised in 1989, the MMPI-II remains one of the most widely used personality assessments by counselors and other mental health clinicians.

The increase in the use of tests during this period led to a need for a more systematic way of managing the assessment process. In an effort to address growing criticism of assessment practices, the American Psychological Association developed a set of standards that outlined the appropriate selection and usage of tests. These standards would be revised in later years and evolve into the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* jointly published in 1985 by APA, AERA, and NCME. In addition to the development of professional standards, advances in scoring methods also took place. The formation of the Educational Testing Service (ETS) led to the development of electronic scoring methods. These new methods greatly reduced the number of scoring errors that were common using hand-scoring methods and allowed for more complicated scoring procedures to be employed.

Assessment in the Modern Era (1960s–1970s)

By the 1960s, testing and assessment had become common practice in a variety of fields. Educational, vocational, and military applications had millions of individuals being tested and placed in various programs based on the results of their tests. The widespread use led many to begin questioning the validity of the testing process. In particular, there were many complaints that testing and assessment were flawed practices inherently filled with many biases. In particular, assessment instruments were scrutinized for ethnic bias, fairness, and accuracy (Whiston, 2009). This increased scrutiny revealed many problems with existing instruments. It was noted that many instruments were normed using samples that were not representative of the larger population, and therefore gender and ethnic biases existed. As a result several legal precedents were established that helped shape the way assessment was practiced. Among the more notable legal challenges was the 1967 case *Hobson v. Hansen*. In this case, a federal court ruled that group-administered ability tests were discriminatory and biased against minorities. As a result, these tests could no longer be used as the sole source of data in determining special education placement in the schools.

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The Era of Discontent, a term Maloney and Ward (1976) used to refer to this period, also brought about a change in the way assessment was to be practiced. The noted problems led to a call for greater training and control over the use of tests and assessment measures. Minimum competencies were established to provide a standard of care and regulate who was allowed to administer various testing instruments. Besides increased standards, the 1970s also saw passage of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) in 1974 and the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (PL 94-142). FERPA had several components that related to the practice of testing and assessment. In addition to giving parents and children over the age of 18 access to their own records, FERPA also specified topics that could and could not be assessed without parental or, for students over 18, student consent. PL 94-142 led to the widespread use of intelligence and achievement tests in the schools. Together, the events of the 1960s and 1970s helped tighten the testing process and further establish the credibility of the assessment process.

Assessment in the Modern Era (1980s–1990s)

In response to some of the concerns raised in the 1970s, the 1980s saw revisions made to many of the more popular assessment instruments. These revisions primarily dealt with increasing the diversity of the sample groups used to norm the instruments. This practice enabled these instruments to be used more effectively with an increasingly diverse client population. Among the many revised instruments released during this decade were the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-II (1989), the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-III (1989), and the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-Revised (1981) and Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-III (1997). In addition, new assessment instruments that were designed to be more sensitive to the cultural differences in a diverse society were created. Most notable among this group of new instruments was the Kauffman Assessment Battery for Children released in 1983.

The 1990s saw a rise in authentic assessment. **Authentic assessment** refers to assessment tasks that test student abilities by measuring how well students perform in real-life contexts. In this approach, teachers assessed students using measures consistent with the instructional area being taught and gathered multiple indicators of student performance in order to assess student success. The use of authentic assessment changed the way teachers evaluated their students in school. Now, student success was determined by their ability to not only *recall* important information presented in class, but also *apply* it to a real-world setting. Using a variety of assessment measures ensured that a student's performance was accurately being represented in the test results and was not simply an artifact of the type of test being used. In other words, authentic assessment allows students who may not be the best test takers to demonstrate their knowledge and ability in other ways such as projects, essays, reports, or case studies.

Current Assessment Practices (2000–Present)

Current testing practices are being influenced heavily by the use of computers and technology. These innovations have helped facilitate the testing process and allow for greater precision in score reporting and interpretation. As Scalise and Gifford (2006) note, the use

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of computer-based assessment measures vastly expands assessment possibilities beyond the limitations of traditional paper-and-pencil instruments. As Internet access increases, the ability of counselors and educators to reach previously unreachable populations will expand and influence the way services are delivered (see Guided Practice Exercise 1.3).

Continual revisions to existing instruments have been made in response to new knowledge and technologies. Revised versions of the Strong Interest Inventory (2004), the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-IV (2003), and the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-IV (2008) have all been released, and more are planned for the coming years. Although the future of the practice of assessment is difficult to predict, it no doubt will include a greater push to be more inclusive and sensitive to individual differences.

GUIDED PRACTICE EXERCISE 1.3

Identifying Assessment Instruments Currently Used

The types of assessment instruments you are most likely to use in your counseling practice will depend largely on the setting in which you work, the age of the clients you see, and the problems you are likely to encounter. To help you better prepare for working in your chosen field, contact a counselor in that field (a school counselor or licensed professional counselor), and ask that person to share with you the assessment instruments he or she most often uses or is required to be able to interpret in his or her work as a counselor. You can then get a head start on your career by reading more about and gaining additional exposure to these instruments.

ASSESSMENT COMPETENCIES REQUIRED OF PROFESSIONAL COUNSELORS

To conduct assessment properly, there are several competencies counselors are required to possess. These competencies are included in several sources and should be reviewed by counselors before engaging in assessment-related activities. A review of the assessment competencies counselors should possess, as well as the source of these competencies, is included in this section.

American Counseling Association (ACA) *Code of Ethics*

The ACA *Code of Ethics* is a document that establishes the principles defining ethical behavior and best practices in counseling. All ACA members are required to practice in accordance with the *Code of Ethics.* The *Code of Ethics* contains eight main sections and is revised every 7–10 years. In the 2014 *Code of Ethics*, the most recent version at the time of this writing, Section E is devoted entirely to evaluation, assessment, and interpretation. Included in Section E is a discussion of the competencies needed to use and interpret assessment instruments, informed consent in assessments, release of data to

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qualified professionals, diagnosis of mental disorders, instrument selection, conditions of assessment administration, multicultural issues, scoring and interpretation of assessments, assessment security, obsolete assessments and outdated results, and forensic evaluation. These standards help ensure that counselors are using sound assessment procedures in a professional manner that is appropriate to the situation and beneficial to the client.

In addition to acting in accordance with the ACA (2014) *Code of Ethics*, counselors should become familiar with a number of additional standards designed to help guide assessment practices. In 1985, the Joint Committee on Testing Practices (JCTP) was established by AERA, APA, and NCME as a consortium of professional organizations and a forum for counseling and education-related associations to improve test use through education. Despite disbanding in 2007, the JCTP published several useful documents related to testing and assessment such as the *Code of Fair Testing Practices in Education*, *Responsibilities of Users of Standardized Tests*, *Standards of Qualifications of Test Users,* and the *Rights and Responsibilities of Test Takers: Guidelines and Expectations.* Each of these documents is still used and referenced by assessment specialists. A brief description of each of these valuable assessment resources is provided below.

Code of Fair Testing Practices in Education

Originally developed by the JCTP in 1988, the *Code of Fair Testing Practices in Education* describes the primary obligations test developers and administrators have toward test takers. A revised version was published in 2004 to address advances in assessment practice. Included in the code are 31 standards that provide guidance for both test developers and test users in four key areas: developing and selecting appropriate tests, administering and scoring tests, reporting and interpreting results, and informing test takers. Although initially developed to address testing and assessment in education settings, the principles presented are applicable to counselors as well.

Responsibilities of Users of Standardized Tests

In 2003, the Association for Assessment in Research Counseling (AARC; formerly known as the Association for Assessment in Counseling) developed the *Responsibilities of Users of Standardized Tests* (RUST). The RUST statement outlined what professionals needed to be aware of in terms of effectively integrating standardized tests into the assessment process. The RUST statement includes standards in seven categories: "qualifications of test users, technical knowledge, test selection, test administration, test scoring, interpreting test results, communicating test results" (p. 1). Adherence to these standards is seen as a way to ensure responsible testing practices among counselors and educators.

Standards of Qualifications of Test Users

The *Standards of Qualifications of Test Users* (AAC, 2003b), based on the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*, RUST, ACA and American School Counselor Association (ASCA; a division of ACA) ethical standards, were developed by the ACA Standards for

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Test Use Task Force to address qualifications of counselors to use assessment instruments and defined seven competencies in the following areas: skill and knowledge of theory as applied to testing; understanding of test theory, construction, reliability, and validity; working knowledge of sampling techniques, norms, and descriptive correlational and predictive statistics; ability to review, select, and administer test appropriately; administration and interpretation of test scores; cross-cultural and diversity considerations; and knowledge of standards and ethical codes.

Rights and Responsibilities of Test Takers: Guidelines and Expectations

The *Rights and Responsibilities of Test Takers: Guidelines and Expectations* (JCTP, 2000) clarifies "the expectations that test takers may reasonably have about the testing process, and the expectations that those who develop, administer, and use tests may have on other test takers" (p. 1). This document was designed to help address some of the confusion people may have about tests and the role they play in the assessment process. Whereas the RUST statement describes what counselors should do, the *Rights and Responsibilities of Test Takers* describes what clients need to do in the counseling process.

AARC Assessment Competency Standards

As a division of ACA, AARC regularly collaborates with other divisions to produce assessment competency standards in various counseling specialty areas. These competency standards provide a description of the knowledge and skills counselors aspire to possess in order to be effective in assessment and evaluation. Counselors can now access competencies for assessment in career counseling; marriage, couple, and family counseling; mental health counseling; multicultural counseling; school counseling; and substance abuse counseling. For example, AARC and ASCA (1998) created the *Competencies in Assessment and Evaluation for School Counselors* that outlines nine competencies and skills listed under each competency. According to the second competency, school counselors can identify, access, and evaluate the most commonly used assessment instruments:

- They know which assessment instruments are most commonly used in school settings to assess intelligence, aptitude, achievement, personality, work values, and interests, including computer-assisted versions and other alternate formats.
- They know the dimensions along which assessment instruments should be evaluated; including purpose, validity, utility, norms, reliability and measurement error, score reporting method, and consequences of use.
- They can obtain and evaluate information about the quality of those assessment instruments. (pp. 1–2)

These standards merely describe a set of best practices that can be employed by counselors employed in the schools. School counselors should also act in accordance with the ASCA (2010) *Ethical Standards for School Counselors*.

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More recently, the International Association of Marriage and Family Counselors collaborated with AACE to form the Marriage, Couple, and Family Counseling Assessment Competencies (Garrett et al., 2011). As outlined in the second competency, counselors understand basic concepts of standardized and nonstandardized testing and other assessment techniques. Marriage, couple, and family counselors can

- explain the differences between norm-referenced and criterion-referenced assessment,
- articulate the need for and use of environmental assessment,
- understand and use performance assessments,
- understand the use of individual and group test and inventory methods,
- effectively make and document behavioral observations during assessment, and
- understand the limitations of computer-managed and computer-assisted assessment methods. (p. 1)

Assessment-Related CACREP Accreditation Standards

In addition to the aforementioned assessment competencies, an accrediting body has established assessment standards. Established in 1982, CACREP grants accreditation to graduate counseling programs that have met the standards set forth by the counseling profession. The purpose of the CACREP (2009) *Standards* is to establish educational excellence and ensure that students develop a counselor professional identity and master the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to practice effectively (CACREP, 2009).

In a CACREP program, students are required to complete eight core curricular areas of study, one of which is assessment. Standard II.G.7 Assessment in the CACREP (2009) *Standards* outlines the specific curricular experience required of every student in the program. Assessment includes studies that provide an understanding of individual and group approaches to assessment and evaluation in a multicultural society. In regard to Standard II.G.7 Assessment, students should demonstrate knowledge and skills related to

- historical perspectives concerning the nature and meaning of assessment;
- basic concepts of standardized and nonstandardized testing and other assessment techniques, including norm-referenced and criterion-referenced assessment, environmental assessment, performance assessment, individual and group test and inventory methods, psychological testing, and behavioral observations;
- statistical concepts, including scales of measurement, measures of central tendency, indices of variability, shapes and types of distributions, and correlations (see Chapter 2);
- reliability (i.e., theory of measurement error, models of reliability, and the use of reliability information; see Chapter 3);
- validity (i.e., evidence of validity, types of validity, and the relationship between reliability and validity; see Chapter 4);

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- social and cultural factors related to the assessment and evaluation of individuals, groups, and specific populations; and
- ethical strategies for selecting, administering, and interpreting assessment and evaluation instruments and techniques in counseling (see Chapter 5). (pp. 13–14)

The 2009 Standards also suggest that in addition to the assessment-related core curricular experiences outlined in Section II.G.7, programs (addictions counseling; career counseling; clinical mental health; marriage, couple, and family counseling; school counseling; and student affairs and college counseling) must provide evidence that students possess knowledge and skills related to practice in six broad areas: (1) foundations; (2) counseling prevention and intervention; (3) diversity and advocacy; (4) assessment; (5) research and evaluations; and (6) diagnosis. Under each aforementioned broad area, certain objectives in terms of knowledge and skills related to practice are outlined. The assessment category under each degree is divided into sections G (knowledge) and H (skills). For example, students seeking a master's degree from a CACREP-accredited school counseling program should possess assessment *knowledge* in the following areas:

- understands the influence of multiple factors (e.g., abuse, violence, eating disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, childhood depression) that may affect the personal, social, and academic functioning of students
- knows the signs and symptoms of substance abuse in children and adolescents, as well as the signs and symptoms of living in a home where substance abuse occurs
- identifies various forms of needs assessments for academic, career, and personal/social development (CACREP, 2009, pp. 42–43)

Students must also demonstrate the following *skills* related to assessment:

- assesses and interprets students' strengths and needs, recognizing uniqueness in cultures, languages, values, backgrounds, and abilities
- selects appropriate assessment strategies that can be used to evaluate a student's academic, career, and personal/social development
- analyzes assessment information in a manner that produces valid inferences when evaluating the needs of individual students and assessing the effectiveness of educational programs
- makes appropriate referrals to school and/or community resources
- assesses barriers that impede students' academic, career, and personal/social development (CACREP, 2009, p. 43)

The professional competencies and the CACREP (2009) *Standards* describe the knowledge and skills that counselors need in the areas of assessment (see Guided Practice Exercise 1.4). The appropriate use of assessment results informs recommendations and effective treatment planning. Thus, as defined by both professional competencies and ethical codes, counselors are expected to have knowledge, skills, and training in assessment.

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GUIDED PRACTICE EXERCISE 1.4

Personalizing the CACREP Standards

The professional competencies and the CACREP (2009) *Standards* describe the *knowledge* and *skills* that counselors need in the areas of assessment. After reviewing the CACREP standards related to assessment, what areas in terms of both knowledge and skills can you identify as areas of strength? Which specific standards do you hope to improve or gain more knowledge?

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES IN COUNSELING ASSESSMENTS

Assessment continues to be a crucial and controversial issue in counseling. One of the more controversial issues is the use of tests with culturally diverse clients. Counselors must continually evaluate whether the assessment practices they use with clients are appropriate to use with diverse populations (see Chapter 15 for a more in-depth examination of the use of assessments with diverse populations). In addition, the use of test results to make high-stakes decisions also receives plenty of attention. As you will see in Chapter 16, a long history of important decisions related to educational and career access and placement has been based on data and test results that are both unreliable and invalid for the purposes they were being used. Because of these gross misuses, many individuals are hesitant to participate in assessment activities for fear of how the results may be used to their detriment. Finally, the use of computers and technology in counseling and assessment also is a source of much controversy. Computers are now being used to administer, score, and interpret test results. While these practices have certainly made the role of the counselor easier in some aspects, there is still much debate over how these instruments compare to traditional methods of assessment and how their use in the counseling process may affect clients.

KEYSTONES

- Assessment is a process of data collection that integrates test information with information from other sources. Key processes include identifying the reason for referral/stated concern, gathering background information, conducting observations of the client, interpreting test results in light of all other information known about a client, and generating a list of potential interventions that could be employed based on all available information.
- Assessment practices have been in use for thousands of years and have played a major role in structuring our social and educational systems.
- World War I was a major event in world history that had a profound impact on interest in individual differences and sparked the rapid development of numerous intelligence tests.

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- Counselors are responsible for following a number of standards to help guide assessment practice, including the ACA (2014) *Code of Ethics*, *Code of Fair Testing Practices in Education, Responsible Test Use,* and *Rights and Responsibilities of Test Takers: Guidelines and Expectations*.
- The professional competencies and the CACREP (2009) *Standards* describe the knowledge and skills that counselors need in the areas of assessment.

KEY TERMS

assessment
Army Alpha
Army Beta
authentic assessment
intelligence quotient (IQ)
mental test
primary abilities
psychological test

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Websites to Assessment-Related Organizations

- American Counseling Association
  www.counseling.org
- American Educational Research Association
  www.aera.net
- American Evaluation Association
  www.eval.org
- Association for Assessment and Research in Counseling
  http://aarc-counseling.org
- National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing
  www.cse.ucla.edu
- National Council on Measurement in Education
  www.ncme.org

Assessment and Testing Documents

- ACA Position Statement on High Stakes Testing
  http://aarc-counseling.org/assets/cms/uploads/files/High_Stakes.pdf
- Code of Fair Testing Practices in Education
  http://aarc-counseling.org/assets/cms/uploads/files/codefair.pdf

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- Responsibilities of Users of Standardized Tests
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- Standards for Qualifications of Test Users
  http://aarc-counseling.org/assets/cms/uploads/files/standards.pdf
- Rights and Responsibilities of Test Takers
  http://aarc-counseling.org/assets/cms/uploads/files/rights.pdf

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