Lizette Matthews & Cecilia Bouwer

Reducing cultural barriers in projective assessment through dynamic assessment

Projection media are valued widely in psychological assessment. However, various pitfalls exist in the administration and interpretation thereof, for instance cross-cultural influences. Seeking to enhance trustworthiness without compromising the projective power of responses, this study investigates the influence of a Dynamic Assessment Technique of Questioning (DATQ) during projective assessments with adolescents in mono- and cross-cultural situations as well as the influence of culture on the emotional assessment situation using DATQ. The main findings suggest a positive influence of DATQ in mono- and cross-cultural assessments regarding projections, projection assessment processes and participants' emotional experiences, as well as a lowering of cultural barriers. Interview data reveal cultural influences on projected content, suggesting the relevance of a conversation about culture in all cross-cultural assessments for more accurate interpretation of responses. All standardised instructions and procedures should be revisited to control for cultural influences on assessment.

Vermindering van kulturele struikelblokke tydens projektiewe assessering by wyse van dinamiese assessering

Projeksiemedia word algemeen hoog aangeslaan in sielkundige assessering, ofskoon toepassing en interpretasie verskeie risiko's inhou, byvoorbeeld rakende kruiskulturele invloede. Met die doel om betroubaarheid te bevorder sonder vermindering van die projeksiekrag van terugvoer, is die invloed van 'n Dinamiese Assesseringstegniek van Invraging (DATI) tydens projektiewe assesserings met adolessente in mono- en kruiskulturele situasies, asook die invloed van kultuur op die emosionele assesseringsituasie tydens toepassing van die DATI, ondersoek. 'n Positiewe invloed van die DATI is bevind op mono- en kruiskulturele assesserings met betrekking tot projeksies, projeksie-assesseringsprosesse en deelnemers se emosionele ervarings, asook 'n afname in kulturele belemmerings. Onderhouddata toon 'n kulturele invloed op geprojekteerde inhoud, duidend op die waarde van gesprekvoering oor kultuur in alle kruiskulturele assesserings vir meer akkurate interpretasie van terugvoer. Alle gestandaardiseerde opdragte en prosedures behoort nagegaan te word om kulturele invloede op assessering te beheer.

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The social diversity of the South African population poses a considerable challenge to the helping professions, especially in respect of differences in language, culture and socio-economic context. This challenge arises from the diverse nature of expectations and needs of all individuals, both clients and professionals, more specifically in respect of psychological assessment. South Africa not only has eleven official languages, but the country's Constitution also recognises other languages spoken in the country (sa-venues 2011). The issue of language-in-assessment has special relevance, given the fact that English is widely used for political and commercial exchange in the country, despite the fact that it is the first language of only 8.2% of the population (Southafrica.info 2011). A negligible number of local psychologists are mother-tongue speakers of a language other than English or Afrikaans. Consequently, the vast majority of assessments that are conducted in English take place in an additional language of the client.

Language and culture are closely associated (Padilla & Borsato 2008; Finchilescu 2005). In addition to the imperative of constantly maintaining linguistic accuracy at both the receptive and expressive levels of communication during an assessment, construction of a true interpretation of the results depends, *inter alia*, on the psychologist's recognition and understanding of any cultural nuances in the client's responses (Bethlehem et al. 2003), irrespective of whether it is a mono- or cross-cultural assessment situation. For the unwary assessor, an assessee's perception of a power relationship stemming from a dominant/non-dominant or majority/minority group affiliation could form an additional, and indeed obscuring, overlay upon their cultural differences (Vázquez & Garcia-Vázquez 2003).

Maree (2010) points out that a woefully small number of researchers engage in the science of assessment. Research about psychological assessment is variously declared to require a holistic approach, ethical practice, a solid theoretical base, valid and reliable assessment practice, and a contextual focus.[1] This confirms that cultural differences should be carefully considered in psychological assessment.

1   See Bouwer 2011; Donald et al. 2010; Grigorenko 2009; Hood 2009; Murphy & Maree 2009; Fabri 2008; Teglasi et al. 2007; Flanagan & Esquivel 2006; Foxcroft & Roodt 2005; Lopez & Snyder 2003.

Across the world, the psychological research and training community has to meet this obligation. The ethical regulations of the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) require psychologists to deliver culturally appropriate services that include avoidance of unfair discrimination, appropriate use of assessment methods, and accommodation of cultural diversity (HPCSA 2004). The HPCSA clearly recognises that cultural factors may affect the psychologist's judgement or reduce the accuracy of interpretations. This leads one to consider how factors such as perceptions, values and discourses that are possibly culturally influenced might inform the behaviour and conclusions of both the assessor and assessee in emotional assessments – and how cultural differences might affect the assessment process itself. Qualitative, dynamic forms of assessment that accommodate individual differences may have the potential to yield more trustworthy results and therefore beg investigation.

This article addresses the following question: How will a dynamic assessment technique of questioning influence the process and results in mono- and cross-cultural assessment situations, when administering a projection test? Hence, the projective formulation of clients was examined within their cultural context whilst simultaneously enhancing the richness of their projections by supporting the assessor-assessee situation through less formal, yet strictly non-directive ways of interaction.

After a brief conceptual orientation regarding the constructs of projective assessment, culture and dynamic assessment, as applied in this study, the discussion will move to the method, findings and implications of the research. Due to space constraints, the focus is on the findings concerning four participants only. Readers interested in more details about the data or the other participants are referred to Matthews (2010).

1.   Conceptual orientation

1.1   Projective assessment

Grant & Crawley (2002: 33) summarise projection as occurring

> when an individual attributes unacceptable qualities and characteristics of themselves to another person; there is then a

> distancing or judgement of the other person [...] Working with
> projection involves exploring sensitively the internal feelings and
> experiences that have given rise to the projection.

Some practitioners may be dismissive of the power of projective
assessment, due to the time-consuming nature of the interpretation
thereof (Ephraim 2008). Merrell (2003), highly critical of both
projective and expressive media, is of the opinion that the reservations
about projective techniques may be based on how they are used, rather
than on the techniques themselves. Even so, the value of projective
assessment has been widely recognised in research (Cramer 2004;
Sunderland 2004; Bellak & Abrams 1997). Jenkins (2008) endorses
this position, stating that projective processes and stories provide
insights that differ from those yielded by other forms of assessment
in that, in structured self-reporting, clients are sometimes inclined
not to say what they do or to do what they say. The clients' freedom to
interpret and respond to projective pictures as they please, without the
assessor influencing the results, contributes to the value of the data.

When using projective techniques, the client is presented with
a stimulus and requested in a prescribed way to tell a story. The
theoretical reliability and validity of the technique *per se* as based
on psychological theory and research may, however, hold little
guarantee of the trustworthiness of its application in cross-cultural
assessment situations. It may even place clients from cultures that
differ from that of the assessor at risk. Clients create unique stories
according to their specific context (Krause 1998), which presumably
includes a cultural influence on their perception of, and familiarity
with the particular stimuli and the assessment process. Research has
revealed various pitfalls in the administration and interpretation of
projection media. These include leading questions, non-standard
test administration, lack of a uniform interpretation system and
cross-cultural influences, all of which may well be expected to
impact on cross-cultural assessment situations (Jenkins 2008; Grieve
2003; Teglasi 2001).

In this study, a dynamic assessment technique of questioning
(DATQ), validated in an earlier study (Matthews & Bouwer 2009), was
used to investigate cultural influences on the responses and process
during projective assessment. 'Rich projection' was defined to signify

either the enhancement/expansion of the content of the projection, self-initiated connection, explanation or elucidation of details in the projected story, or anticipation of the conclusion of the projected story.

1.2   Culture

Scholars have difficulty agreeing on a definition of culture, and this hampers valid psychological assessment (Padilla & Borsato 2008). Some scholars view culture as influencing behaviour, thoughts and communication (Cheung et al. 2006; Lago 2006). Hofstede (1980: 25) explains culture as "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another", whereas Geertz (1973: 89) describes it as "a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and their attitudes toward life". He supports Max Weber's view that "man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun", declaring "I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretative science in search of meaning" (Geertz 1973: 5). Padilla & Borsato (2008) recognise the relevance of more than only geographical, racial and ethnic factors in an assessment situation and include other factors such as the fluency of the assessor and assessee in the language used during assessment, the time that the assessee has been living in the country and the extent of acculturation.

The 50-year-old definition of Kroeber & Kluckhohn (1952: 181), which suggests the conceptualisation of permanence in the phenomenon, is still used widely (Tabane & Bouwer 2006):

> Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; cultural systems may on the one hand be

> considered as products of action, on the other as conditioning
> elements of further action.

Fabri (2008: 214), by contrast, views culture as "fluid and dynamic, as
are the political, social, and economic situations of countries, regions,
and the world". In similar vein, Tabane & Bouwer (2006) argue that
contextual influences on culture emphasise its dynamic nature.

While adopting a broad view of culture to accommodate multiple
possible influences in the client's projective responses, the following
working definition, drawing from definitions by Geertz (1973: 5-13,
1973: 89), Fischer (2009: 29), Grieger (2008: 134) and Reber et al.
(2009: 184), was formulated for this research:

> Culture is a learnt, transmitted pattern of meanings, a system
> of inherited conceptions of accepted rules and regulations for
> interaction adhered to by a group, expressed in symbolic forms.
> This includes any variables that may ground differences in meaning,
> such as nationality, language, race, ethnicity, age, sex, sexual identity,
> socio-economic status, spiritual belief, worldview and physical or
> other barriers.

Possible issues that could arise in a cross-cultural assessment included
the anticipation of differences by both the assessor and the assessee;
differences actually perceived; power relations, as well as doubt about
understanding and being understood. It is to be expected that a client's
unique context will always inform his/her storying of the stimulus
plate. In Jenkins's (2008: 5) words: "how a person tells a story reflects
a host of mediating processes that connect perceptions, thoughts and
feelings to actions, knitting together the psychological context and
behaviour in vivo".

It was also considered necessary to explore whether applying the
standardised procedure of projective assessment less formally could
help to overcome possible cultural differences and thus facilitate both
the assessment process and the product.

1.3   Dynamic assessment

According to Tzuriel (2001) and Zeidner (2001), dynamic assessment
(DA) has the potential to overcome some of the cultural barriers in
psychometry. This test-train-retest assessment model – an expansion
by Feuerstein and associates (Lauchlan & Elliot 2001) of the concept

of Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development – was developed in response to the shortcomings of static testing, specifically in respect of performance in the cognitive domain (Tzuriel 2000). Lundt (1993: 155) defines DA as "mediated or assisted assessment ..., [which] involves a dynamic interaction between tester and learner [testee] with a focus on the process rather than the product of *learning*" (our emphasis, LM & CB).

DA recognises the learner's ability to learn from the DA interaction *per se* (Van Eeden & De Beer 2001). It also challenges the positivist imperative to adhere stringently to standard assessment procedures – assessors "can assist, encourage and teach in ways that are most helpful to individual learners and thus gain a more valid picture of their potential" (Elliotte 2000: 62). Mediation during the assessment could involve numerous acts to optimise learner potential, for example repeating information; focusing learners' attention; supporting their analysis of the question or information; actually providing direction, additional information, description, demonstration or feedback, and even modifying task complexity (Bouwer 2011). Obviously, not all of the above strategies are permissible in projective assessment.

2.   Method

2.1   Research design and participants

A multiple case study was conducted with ten participants, aged between 14 and 19, who had been referred by their parents to a private practice for psychological intervention. Data drawn from full assessments that addressed the particular needs of each unique participant were used for the study. In terms of ethical compliance, the authors adhered to the principles of freedom to withdraw, privacy and protection from harm/risk, and obtaining informed written consent from the parents and adolescent participants. Participants came from Afrikaans, English, German, Gujarati, Hindi, Ndebele and Shona home-language groupings. Since the majority of the clients coming for interventions did not speak one home language exclusively, the selection criteria were extended to include combinations of English and another home language.

2.2 Data collection

Data collection comprised a three-phase administration of seven projection stimuli, two semi-structured conversations, psychocultural analysis, observation, field notes and reflective journaling.

In Phase One of the projective assessment (aimed at obtaining baseline data), Stimuli 1 and 2 were introduced in accordance with Murray's (1971) standard instructions, namely using only the permitted responses and prompts. Phase Two presented Stimulus 3 and was devoted to mediation and the adaptation of DA for projective assessment. This entailed an expansion of the assessor actions, as standardised by Murray (1971) (for example, repeating the assessee's words or phrases; focusing attention on the stimulus picture by tapping on it or continuing to stare at it to suggest contemplation of the picture; directing the assessee's analysis by using utterances such as *'OK?'* or *'... and?'*; actual prompting through questions such as *'... and then?'*, *'What led to this?'* *'How will it end?'*; probing for more information for the sake of further illumination by repeating the last words of the client, and, at the end of a story, providing feedback on the act of projection, though obviously not the content). During this training phase, the strictly non-contaminating verbals and nonverbals utilised by the assessor with the specific client were clarified and explained (for example, *'Did you see when I was nodding my head? That meant that I was trying to encourage you to continue with your story.'*). If needed, the Murray instruction was also explained or enriched when 'shortcomings' in the client's perceived storying became evident. In Phase Three, Stimuli 4 to 7 were administered with the assessor performing the behaviours mediated in Phase Two without any explicit intervention.

The projective stimuli consisted of six plates from the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) (Murray 1943), namely TAT 1, 2, 3, 7, 14 (selected with a mind to gender) and 16 (to ensure one culture-free stimulus if the DATQ were to trigger cultural influences), and Card 6 from Roberts-2 (Roberts 2005) (selected for possible cultural connotations of difference). TAT 16 and Roberts-2 Card 6 were rotated in stimulus position 6 and 7 to ensure a balance between a culture-free stimulus and a possibly culturally loaded stimulus. The rest of the stimuli were rotated in positions 1 to 5.

The semi-structured conversations addressed participants' experience of the standardised procedure of projective assessment *versus* the DATQ (for example, *'Did you understand what to do from the beginning?'*) and cultural influences that might have affected the assessment process and/or the projections. During the latter, the Cultural Assessment Interview Protocol (CAIP) (Grieger 2008) was used as a guideline, covering themes such as cultural identity, cultural identity development, acculturation, family and cultural expectations, existential/spiritual issues and perceptions of assessor characteristics and behaviours in a flexible order. For the psychocultural analysis, the Scoring Sheet for the Psychocultural Scoring System (SSPSS) was used (Ephraim 2008).

The assessor was an Afrikaans-speaking white female. All the cross-cultural assessments were conducted in English. Cultural sensitivity featured in the assessor's constant awareness of possible linguistic/cultural assessor-client differences that could impact on the interaction during the assessment, conversations and interpretation of the projective responses.

2.3   Data analysis

Responses (transcribed *verbatim*) were supplemented with behavioural data drawn from video recordings, observations, field notes and reflections. Acknowledging the uniqueness of projection, each participant's data were analysed separately, and predominantly qualitatively. The fourfold data analysis comprised projection analysis, structural analysis of projections, analysis of cultural influences, as indicated by the SSPSS, and thematic analysis of semi-structured conversations. To answer the research question, the results of the first three analyses in respect of Phases 1 and 3 of the projective assessment were compared, against the backdrop of the thematic analysis of the semi-structured conversations.

The projection analysis was performed in accordance with Bellak's TAT Analysis Blank, Analysis Sheet for use with the Bellak TAT Blank (Bellak & Abrams 1997), and an adaptation of Haworth's (1963) form for the identification of defence mechanisms. An earlier study (Matthews & Bouwer 2009) was partially replicated, but also expanded. Ten categories of analysis regarding main theme, main

hero, main needs of the hero, worldview, interpersonal object relations, significant conflicts, nature of anxieties, main defences against conflicts and fears, superego functioning and ego integration (Bellak & Abrams 1997) were applied. The main theme was unpacked by way of a multi-level analysis covering the descriptive, interpretive, diagnostic, symbolic and elaborative levels (Bellak & Abrams 1997).

The structural analysis considered the following: volume of verbal and nonverbal responses by both the researcher and the participant; change of direction in the story (where, how clear, initiated by whom); number of prompts (increase/decrease, effect on stories); emotional tone; formulation (choice of words); hesitations (compared with the extent of superego manifestations in the projection analysis); repetitions (including stuttering, depending on context); projective statements per picture stimulus; explanations (self-initiated clarifications, responses to specific questions); response pattern (number of words in response to each question/prompt); increase/ deepening of projective indications; indications that the participant responded to specific utterances/acts of the assessor; and format (e.g. narrative/visual description).

The SSPSS yielded a structured analysis of Agency and Communion themes as cultural influences (Ephraim 2008). Tendencies towards Agency were indicated by themes of power, autonomy, independence, achievement, mastery, competition and responsibility. Tendencies towards Communion were represented by love, esteem, intimacy, harmony, caring, nurturing, unity, inter-dependence, affiliation and solidarity. Thematic concerns were judged as positive, negative or unresolved (depending on the projective stories) and aided the understanding of each participant's cultural orientation (Ephraim 2008).

The thematic analysis of the semi-structured conversations addressed the participants' views and experiences in respect of the two projective assessment processes and sought to understand these in terms of their culturally relevant statements.

3. Findings

To neutralise the gender factor in the authors' analysis for this article, the focus is on findings pertaining to four girls who represent one

mono- and three cross-cultural assessments (codes indicate home language grouping + gender + language of assessment): AGA, a 14-year-old Afrikaans girl, possibly troubled by her parents' marital conflict; GGE, a 17-year-old German girl, floundering in her social environment because of her strong values; NGE, a 16-year-old Ndebele girl with fluctuating emotions and academic performance, and IGE, a 17-year-old Indian, Muslim girl (with home language English-Gujarati), whose oppositional behaviour impeded her optimal functioning.

Before investigating ways of mono- or cross-cultural influencing, it was necessary to ascertain simply whether the DATQ had benefited the product (projections) and/or process (interaction and response processes) of the projective assessment with adolescent girls, irrespective of the mono- or cross-cultural assessment context.[2] The projection analysis confirmed the positive influence of the DATQ for all four participants in all of the ten categories of analysis. The structural analysis (regarding process) indicated positive results for all four participants in nine of the thirteen categories. Table 1 contains the results of those categories of analysis that did not consistently show 'gains' in Phase 3 (the 'retest').

Table 1: Structural analysis categories not consistently showing positive 'retest' results

	AGA	GGE	IGE	NGE
% categories overall with enhanced 'retest' results (*e.g* 21/23 x100)	91.3	91.3	87.0	82.6
Structural analysis categories with enhanced 'retest' results (/13)	11	11	10	9
b. Number of projection statements per picture stimulus	√	√	√	?
f. Repetitions	?	√	X	X
h. Formulation	√	X	?	?
m. Format	X	X	?	X

Key:

√   Enhanced 'retest' results
?   Inconclusive evidence of a DATQ influence on 'retest' results
X   'Retest' results not enhanced

2   See Matthews & Bouwer (2009) for details of such analysis.

Table 1 suggests that the overall influence of the DATQ was strongest (91.3%) with those participants more directly associated with Western culture (first-language speakers of Afrikaans, English and German). AGA's positive result was rather unexpected, since the client-assessor relationship was stressful and difficult. Strained interaction and distinct discomfiture occurred despite the mono-cultural context, so the DATQ apparently succeeded in overriding both interpersonal and intrapersonal stressors. Although sufficiently high still to credit the technique with considerable power, the lower overall influence of the DATQ with those participants from an Asian (87%) and indigenous (82.6%) language grouping raised the possibility that some cross-cultural counter-influence still influenced the projective process.

Indications of cultural influence were found in the projections, many of which would certainly have been overlooked but for participants' remarks during the conversations on culture (e.g. an orientation where the mother is viewed as the decision-maker in the family; children not challenging the decisions of parents *versus* passivity; tolerance of cultural differences *versus* passivity). More themes with a Western orientation of individualism occurred in the stories of AGA and GGE. This was confirmed by the SSPSS results in that these two participants interacted with a larger number of Agency than Communion themes (AGA**16**:13 and GGE**18**:11). By contrast, more Communion than Agency themes were projected by IGE (22:**26**) and NGE (19:**20**), although both appeared to have difficulty complying with the cultural norms for women held by their respective communities (as confirmed by their relatively high Agency scores).

Cultural-cum-linguistic factors influenced interactions in both mono- and cross-cultural assessments. With AGA, giggling and the condescending/defensive type of behaviour frequently associated with the teen subculture were noted. Some linguistic misunderstanding was experienced during the cross-cultural assessments of IGE and NGE, especially due to differences in pronunciation, and both the assessor and assessees frequently asked for clarification/repetition of words/statements.

Notwithstanding cross-cultural barriers (for example, in respect of language, age, religion and worldview), the DATQ seemed to support

the assessment process increasingly – both cognitively and emotionally – as the assessments progressed. IGE, for instance, acknowledged that the training phase helped her to create more focused stories. NGE again had a negative view of women wearing slacks; so, the fact that the assessor was so clothed may initially have influenced the assessment situation, although in the end she acknowledged, "You don't get offended if I say something about my culture that's OK for you to do, but it's not in my culture".

Results from Phase 3 suggest that the DATQ enhanced the participants' understanding and acceptance of the projective task as well as the assessor-client relationship and reduced cross-cultural factors that may have encumbered the assessment process. AGA commented that, after struggling in the beginning, the storytelling became easier when she understood what was expected. GGE reported that the questions and interventions helped her to create 'richer' stories, although the assessor's silences seemed to have made her uncomfortable: "... you asked me a question and I knew, OK, so she still wants me to carry on a bit more"; "... [you] asked me, 'And then, what happened?' Then it was like, 'OK, something else'"). IGE experienced the DATQ as encouraging and building her confidence: "I think if I wasn't encouraged I would've just stopped at that point ... when you nodded your head, or you said, 'And?' it made me think more further into the story"; "It made me think in the back of my mind, like what facts am I leaving out that should be there [...] like a lot more sure of myself, like you were actually interested in my stories". NGE stated that the explanation during Phase 2 helped her to really understand what to do, and the prompts led her towards creating 'richer' stories: "... you just leading me on made me wanna talk more, like when you were nodding your head and saying those things. It made me feel like you actually cared, you listened to what I was saying". However, the prompts occasionally tended to disturb her line of thinking: "... not exactly that it bothered me, but it kind of drew me off a little bit [...] there was a point where I was trying to think of a word and then you said, 'Uhu?' and then I was like, what am I saying now? I was like [...] I didn't know what to say anymore".

A thought-provoking occurrence was the fact that themes stereotypically associated strongly with particular cultures seemed to be elicited only in the 'retest' phase. AGA's projections increasingly

revealed a belief that parental decisions may not be questioned, a perspective strongly reflected in her conversation about culture. With GGE, her strong values and religious stance seemed to diminish in that moral lessons only featured in Phase 1 and were superseded by an accommodation of multiple world views, and a strong position on gender roles and individual responsibility. IGE's projections increasingly contained references to women living under constraints (for example, opportunities for training and a career being withheld), although she seemed to view the containment of women as a fact of physical limitation rather than oppression. NGE demonstrated her perspective on authority and power, respect and gender roles more explicitly. A theme of inferiority appeared to prevail, which may be rooted in the Ndebele/Shona world view, as described by her. Her strong religious values as well as her view of the rigid nature of the Ndebele culture also came increasingly to the fore.

Since it was perceived as active listening, caring and encouragement, the DATQ was experienced as explanatory (enlightening the initial Murray instruction), and emotionally supportive and warm, thereby endorsing the entire assessment experience. NGE's description was especially heartfelt:

> It helped me because [...] I knew that you were listening. Because I hardly ever have that [...] It made me think that just because I have something wrong, doesn't mean that I can't carry on or do better for myself [...] You're open [...] you're not judgemental towards whatever I say [...] I got to just talk about what I'm feeling, using other peoples' situations. And (it) got me thinking how I could solve what was happening with me [...] I had to deal with stuff that I've just been putting off.

Three of the participants attended therapy following the assessments, and they displayed a deeper commitment and greater openness than customarily experienced by the researcher. AGA, however, decided against therapy, which may imply that the technique did not in all cases adequately enhance the assessment experience.

4. Discussion

The main shortcomings of the study concern the limited number of participants (altogether ten, from five language groupings) and a lack of control data by administering the projection plates only

in accordance with Murray's (1971) standard instructions. These limitations resulted in the findings not being generalisable at all. The limited case study design nevertheless facilitated intensive exploration of procedure and a rich analysis and description of data (Henning 2004), which served the specific research aims. The effect of the DATQ on the administering of projection plates was qualified by the (deliberately selected) cross-cultural assessment context. It was not possible to isolate either of the two matters at issue; in other words, the influence of culture (including degree of acculturation) and the language of assessment. Despite the semi-structured conversations, the assessor inevitably had limited knowledge of the culture of each participant and could not lay claim to fully knowing the context of any one. However, such limitations are controlled for within a post-modern epistemology through a reflective stance (Henning 2004). In this study, data collection and interpretation were monitored by means of field notes, reflective journaling and discussions with trained peers and colleagues who were familiar with the language-specific cultures of some of the participants.

Taking the earlier study (Matthews & Bouwer 2009) further, some understandings might now be construed concerning how to obtain rich, uncontaminated and meaningful projections from adolescents in mono- and cross-cultural/linguistic assessment situations. The DATQ appeared to contribute to the trustworthy enhancement of projective potential by reducing the possibly constraining or even negative influence of cross-cultural/linguistic barriers during the assessment process. The less formal procedure of administering the stimulus cards also seemed to contribute to enriched responses from culturally/linguistically different adolescent clients. The DATQ apparently facilitated the process in two respects: as a style of communication that suggests supportive acceptance, irrespective of cultural/linguistic differences (thus breaking through power relations possibly perceived), and as a particular technique to clarify instructions and call forth best effort for 'rich' projection.

The value of the cultural interview should not be underestimated. It not only facilitated the assessment process and the interpretation of the projections, but also turned out to have far more than a research function. The cultural lens should, therefore, be considered a vital component of any cross-cultural intake interview in order to clarify the

projective context. Training in the use of the DATQ with clients from different cultures appears to be imperative, since cultural influences that would have remained hidden were found in the stories as well as in the assessment process.

Psychological praxis with culturally/linguistically 'different' clients indeed requires serious contemplation and ongoing research. Psychologists should make sufficient effort to understand the possible cultural/linguistic influences on the psychological situation. Knowledge about possible cultural/linguistic effects should deliberately be sought and incorporated in the understanding of the client. The outcome of this study points towards a need for the training of students and registered psychologists in the cultural influences on projective responses and process; the use of the DATQ to enhance the Murray method; the use of cultural inquiry/interviewing to enhance understanding of the unique client, and the incorporation of the SSPSS. Sensitivity and awareness of the effect that the psychologist's own culture has on the process and the understanding of client responses should form part of the training and continuous development for all psychologists. Ultimately, psychologists might do well to revisit standardised instructions and procedures in all psychological assessment. This would ensure a concerted lessening of potentially negative cultural influences on assessor-assessee interaction, thereby improving the trustworthiness and validity of assessment results.

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