Comparison of Different Culture Raters of Mood and Cognition in Older Adults from Two Ethnic Groups

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SIGNIFICANCE

Accurate assessment of mental health in older adults may be complicated by cultural norms and attitudes about the expression of emotions. “Inter-rater reliability” is consistency when two observers are observing the same thing at the same time using the same instrument. Raters’ culture bias may influence results in research and in clinical practice.

QUESTION and DESIGN

QUESTION
Can raters of differing ethnic groups interpret and assess cognitive and emotional status as well as those of the same culture?

DESIGN
Descriptive comparison, secondary analysis of videotaped interviews from a study of culture bias in testing for dementia.

PROCEDURES

Research assistants from same and different ethnic groups viewed videotaped interviews individually and scored subjects on cognition, mood, affect, and depression with widely used observational measures.

MEASURES

Mood
Dementia Mood Assessment Scale (DMAS): 17 Likert items measures negative mood, higher score = greater dysphoria

Affect
Observed Emotion Rating Scale (OERS): emotions rated over 10 minutes, positive (alert, pleasure) and negative subscale (anger, anxiety, sadness)

Depression
Cornell Scale for Depression in Dementia (CSDD): 19 Likert items measuring symptoms, higher score = greater depression

Cognition
Mini Mental State Exam (MMSE): 30-item cognitive test
FULD Object Memory (OM): # objects remembered
Clinical Dementia Rating Scale: (CDR) Global rating, 6 items

SAMPLE

• 418 observations of videotapes
• 30 European American (EA) and 34 Afro-Caribbean (AC) older adults age 55 and older, low income, community-dwelling
• 15 university graduate student raters in nursing and psychology from Afro-Caribbean, European American, Hispanic American (HA) ethnic groups

DATA ANALYSIS and RESULTS

Scores were compared using ANCOVA, covariate-cognitive status with Bonferroni post hoc analysis.

Rater’s ethnic group (EA, HA, AC) was related to scores in mood, positive affect and global ratings of cognitive status.

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CONCLUSIONS

When raters from different cultures observed videotaped behavior they agreed on the more objective measures (MMSE,OM), as expected. Culture bias was evident when subjectivity was high, as in emotion, mood and global ratings of cognitive status. Raters’ and older adults’ culture should be matched whenever possible.

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