

1/3/2025

Dear Colleagues,

I'd like to share a few resources with you that were written to aid in improving the quality of forensic evaluations. Note that these links are free to anyone – please share with anyone who might be interested and could make use of them. I've tried to make sure free links are included with each of them, but if you run into any trouble trying to get anything here, please just email me and I'll send it to you directly.

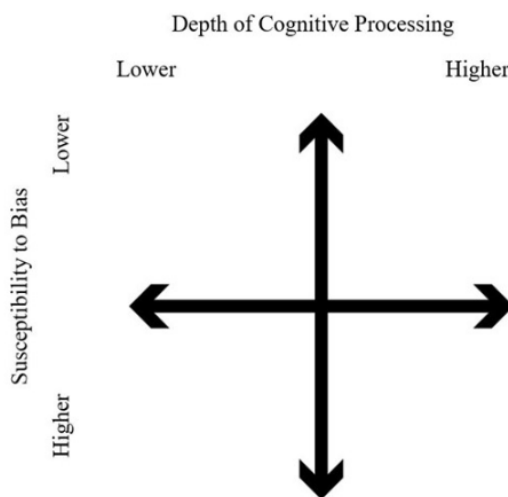
1. [Free link](#) to the main paper discussed in the managing bias training:

Neal, T.M.S., Lienert, P., Denne, E., & Singh, J.P. (2022). A general model of cognitive bias in human judgment and systematic review specific to forensic mental health. *Law and Human Behavior*, 46(2), 99–120. <https://doi.org/10.1037/lhb0000482>

This article was featured in the American Psychological Association spotlight series: [here](#).

Summary: Evidence of bias in forensic mental health emerged in ways consistent with what we know about human judgment broadly. We know less about how to debias judgments—an important frontier for future research. Better understanding how bias works and developing effective debiasing strategies tailored to the forensic mental health context hold promise for improving quality. Until then, we can use what we know now to limit bias in our work.

Figure



2. [Free link](#) to a project discussed in the reducing bias training:

Neal, T.M.S., Slobogin, C. Saks, M.J., Faigman, D., & Geisinger, K. (2019). Psychological assessments in legal contexts: Are courts keeping “junk science” out of the courtroom? *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 20(3), 135–164. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1529100619888860>



<https://journals.sagepub.com/stoken/default+domain/10.1177%2F1529100619888860+-+FREE/pdf>

Abstract: In this article, we report the results of a two-part investigation of psychological assessments by psychologists in legal contexts. The first part involves a systematic review of the 364 psychological assessment tools psychologists report having used in legal cases across 22 surveys of experienced forensic mental health practitioners, focusing on legal standards and scientific and psychometric theory. The second part is a legal analysis of admissibility challenges with regard to psychological assessments. Results from the first part reveal that, consistent with their roots in psychological science, nearly all of the assessment tools used by psychologists and offered as expert evidence in legal settings have been subjected to empirical testing (90%). However, we were able to clearly identify only about 67% as generally accepted in the field and only about 40% have generally favorable reviews of their psychometric and technical properties in authorities such as the Mental Measurements Yearbook. Furthermore, there is a weak relationship between general acceptance and favorability of tools' psychometric properties. Results from the second part show that legal challenges to the admission of this evidence are infrequent: Legal challenges to the assessment evidence for any reason occurred in only 5.1% of cases in the sample (a little more than half of these involved challenges to validity). When challenges were raised, they succeeded only about a third of the time. Challenges to the most scientifically suspect tools are almost nonexistent. Attorneys rarely challenge psychological expert assessment evidence, and when they do, judges often fail to exercise the scrutiny required by law.

3. **Entire free special issue!** This special issue of an academic journal responds directly to the paper above, written primarily for practicing psychologists, judges, and attorneys.



The FREE special issue on Psychological Assessment in Legal Contexts offers comprehensive, credible reviews and critiques of psychometric evidence & legal status of commonly-used psychological & personality assessment measures used in forensic evaluations, including 11 papers and a summary introduction with editorial analysis. Articles on the Rorschach/R-PAS, MMPI-3, PCL-R, MCMI-IV & MACI-II, PAI and PAI-A, SIRS-2, HCR-20V3, TSI & TSI-2, & MacCAT-CA, ECST-R, and CAST*MR are included. Entire free issue here:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/hjpa20/104/2>

These articles offer clarity about strengths & weaknesses of a number of instruments to inform psychologists' preparation for expert testimony, lawyers' preparation for direct and cross-examination, judges' evidence admissibility determinations, and scholars' future research. Teams of authors were assembled with different perspectives & areas of expertise to review each tool fairly, including several adversarial collaborations - a great tool for the advancement of knowledge. To increase visibility, accessibility, & impact, the articles are published as free access, available to download without charge. Please share with colleagues who might be interested and able to make use of this free resource.

4. **Free link** to "8 best practices in forensic psychology" project.

Neal, T.M.S., Martire, K.A., Johan, J.L., Mathers, E., & Otto, R.K. (2022). The law meets psychological expertise: Eight best practices to improve forensic psychological assessments. *Annual Review of Law & Social Science*, 18, 169-192.
<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-lawsocsci-050420-010148>



A supplemental excel spreadsheet with 117 questions to evaluate the quality of a psychological assessment report is also [publically available here](https://osf.io/jhpqu). It can be downloaded and used by anyone - <https://osf.io/jhpqu>.

Abstract: We outline and detail eight best practices that should be considered to evaluate the rigor and value of a forensic psychological assessment by drawing on decades of scholarship from and about fundamental basic science and forensic science, clinical and forensic psychology, and legal evidence admissibility. The key considerations include: (1) Foundational validity of the assessment, (2) Validity of the assessment as applied, (3) Management and mitigation of bias, (4) Attention to quality assurance, (5) Appropriately qualified expression of results and opinion, (6) Explicit consideration of limitations and assumptions, (7) Weighing alternative views or disagreements, and (8) Adherence with ethical obligations, codes of conduct, and rules of evidence. When providing a psychological assessment in a legal context that relies on the norms, esteem, and values of science, we argue these best practices should apply.

With warm regards,

Tess Neal, Ph.D.
Associate Professor & Dean's Professor of Psychology
Iowa State University
Editor-in-Chief
Psychology, Public Policy, & Law
tessneal@iastate.edu