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The effect of cultural variables on the Goodenough-Harris Drawing Test and the Standard Progressive Matrices

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Other than the question of 'possibility,' is one concerning the 'desirability' of having a 'culture-fair' test. Anastasi says

> if we rule out cultural differences from a test we might thereby lower the validity against the criteria we are trying to predict. The same cultural differentials that impair an individual's test performance is likely to handicap him in school work, job performance or any other activity we are trying to predict (1978, pg 561).

It would seem from this that Anastasi, and followers of this view, feel that IQ tests correctly discriminate against people from 'minority' and 'underprivileged' socio-historical conditions. The point is well taken that predictive validity would drop if tests did become culture-fair, but the implications of merely accepting the status quo and thus use of the tests, is paramount to giving validity to the test as an instrument of discrimination.

To take a hypothetical example; there are two twelve year old black children, John, who has been born in an urban area and Sipho, who was born in a rural area. Both apply for entrance into a private school in Johannesburg. It is presumed that both boys are of 'average' intelligence for their community group. From the results of the present study, John would do better on the test than Sipho would, and thus John is accepted while Sipho is not. The school rationalize

that John would have a much greater chance of coping with the school than Sipho would - predictive validity shows this. Further, if John gets the school position he will ultimately be a greater asset to society as a whole because of his greater intellect and should thus be given a chance above Sipho. John goes on to pass school and makes a success of his life.

On the other hand Sipho has been labelled 'mildly retarded.' He was tested on the SPM and this is his categorization. It is unfortunate for Sipho that the testee used the SPM and not the DAP, because on the latter test he would have tested at a 'borderline' level. Nonetheless, Sipho's mother is told that her child is retarded and instead of gaining entrance into the private school, he is taken out of school altogether. Though in other circumstances Sipho may have been sent to a remedial school or remedial class, no such facilities exist, and besides, Sipho's mother has no money to waste on her retarded child. Sipho lands up a drunk and a delinquent.

These bizarre set of circumstances are not fantastical and could easily arise. The only difference between John and Sipho is that John's socio-historical circumstances dictated that his cognitions develop in relation to his urban context while Sipho's were in relation to a rural context. Consequences become even

more severe when blacks are compared with whites on an IQ test as the differentials between urban blacks and whites is greater than the black urban/rural one.

If the De Lange Commission recommendations are implemented, as has been seen (pg 96), children with IQs below 80 will receive 'special' education. Thus if the test used to implement this is the 'culture-fair' SPM then every twelve year old rural child of 'average' 'intelligence' will receive 'special' schooling. It is well established fact that the life chances of a person who has received 'special' education is severely limited.

If the Commission decided to review its 80 points criterion score it would run into the problems discussed on pgs 172 - 173. Alternative criteria for 'streaming' do not offer much assistance. Using Feuerstein's Learning Potential Assessment Devise could have possibly offered a viable alternative, but the fact that it takes up to eight hours with one person makes it unpractical. How to decide who will receive which education would appear to be a large problem for the commission if they are to truly not discriminate against cultures.

The question asked in the introduction "Do IQ tests

warrant continued usage - specifically in the South African situation?" must now be answered. There seems little doubt that the predominant use of IQ tests have been as 'bourgeois rationalizations' and as instruments of 'technocratic rationality' and that they were mainly designed for the manpower needs of capital. Nonetheless it would seem that the tests can have other uses (this does not imply other value-free uses). For example in clinical situations certain IQ tests are good diagnostic instruments of emotional problems. They may be used to help educators identify potential strengths and indicate weaknesses.

IQ assessments could also be used in devising intervention programs by identifying particular areas which need training. Whatever one's view on the westernization of the peasantry might be, if they are not going to be exploited then they are going to have to modify their 'cognitive style' away from a 'practical' one, to one which requires greater abstract and syllogistic thinking.

The fundamental issue when using intelligence tests in cultures other than the one in which the test was devised, though, is the fact that the tests are <u>not</u> 'culture-fair.' If one is to be 'fair' to a minority group testee then one must have a thorough knowledge and understanding of that person's socio-historical

circumstances, the test used, and of the effects of particular cultural variables on that particular test. If for example, a child falls into a retarded level of functioning this would be meaningless if he is scoring 'average' for his particular group, but he may indeed have mental retardation. As Dennis (1966) pointed out, if a whole population is scoring in the retarded range on an IQ test, but functioning adequately as a community group, then there is probably something wrong with the diagnosis rather than the people in that group! On the other hand a person who is truly retarded does need special facilities and one of the ways to assess this is on an IQ test.

As has been seen, so-called 'culture-fair' test scores themselves differ depending on socio-historical circumstances. This further points to the extent of the knowledge that one has to have of one's test and of the cultural effects on that test before use is made of a particular test.

In final conclusion it will be ventured to say that a large part of the exploitative aspect of IQ test use has been through seeing 'intelligence' as a capacity. The oppressive ideological use made of the test has rested on this conception derived from positivist thinking and research. This thesis concludes that if 'intelligence'was seen as part of a cognitive process

which develops through activity within a socio-historical and emotional framework, IQ theorizing and research would begin to move out of its 'dead-end'; people would be seen more as actors in their world and less as commodities; societal and intelligence hierarchies would be better understood; and indiscriminate labelling would be abolished. The way in which intelligence is viewed, and IQ tests used, is critical in many peoples' lives. Thus though its use as a 'bourgeois rationalization' couched as a scientific instrument must be condemned in the strongest possible terms, the tests themselves do have constructive uses for individuals and for society as a whole, if seen for what they are - i.e. as reflections of dialectically acquired cognitions.

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ENDNOTES

*1 For example in the works of Blum (1978), Karier (1977), Evans and Waite (1981), Simon (1980) and Lawler (1980).

*2 For a more in-depth explanation of logical positivist use in psychology see Kendler (1974).

*3 For example Pihl & Nimrod (1976), Strumpher & Mienne (1968), Kerr (in Court 1977), Mehrotra (in Court 1977).

*4 These studies are outlined and critiqued in Blum (1978).

*5 The articulation of the points of view of the three theorists here is the writers and does not claim to reflect the level of articulation of the original writers. For the originals see Scarr (1981).

*6 For example, Klineberg (1935), Lee (1951), Klingelhofer (1967), Kroeger (1980).

*7 For a full explanation of this see Hammond-Tooke (1980).

*8 Percentile rank in these hypotheses refers to the percentile in relation to the norms on which the tests were standardized.

*9 When in standard score form, the DAP is converted to a mean of 100 (standard deviation of 15) while on the SPM the relative achievement of the testee is evaluated in terms of a conversion table in which a raw score corresponds to a percentile rank relative to age. Thus for example at age eight, a mean standard score on the DAP is 100 while a mean score on the SPM is 21. The units of measurement are different, thus standard score means are not comparable.

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*1Ø When subgroup comparisons were made, interaction with age was discarded as raw scores which increase with age are meaningless in this context. The only way subjects relative score to age norms can be compared is by using percentile rank. This is unlike the DAP where age scores are comparable as each age group has a mean standard score of one hundred and standard deviation of fifteen.

*11 This was assertained through verbal communication with two separate township dwellers.

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