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Intelligence or Misorientation? Eurocentrism in the WISC–III

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Intelligence testing with children of African descent has a turbulent history. Cultural biases in test content, administration, and standardization procedures have resulted in inappropriate diagnostic classifications for many African American children. Yet, intelligence testing continues to enjoy widespread clinical practice, and the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children—Third Edition (WISC–III) is one of the most popular tests. This article examines the Eurocentric basis of the test and reveals the WISC–III's antagonistic and incompatible relationship to an Africentric conception of intellectual and mental health.

The dog that learns how to bury bones and to hunt more effectively for meat to feed himself and his family—that dog is educated. When that dog learns how to stand on its two hind legs and wear a dress and dance to music, that dog is simply trained. He is miseducated. He is cute, and you will pay money to see him do it, but he is not an educated dog; he is a trained dog. (Akbar, 1982, p. 3)

Akbar's distinction between education and training is a critical one. It highlights the difference between behaviors that promulgate the growth, well-being, and indeed the survival of an organism, and those that simply give the illusion of a mental acuity. A typical dictionary definition of education might be "the act or process of imparting or acquiring general knowledge and of developing the powers of reasoning and judgment" (*Random House College Dictionary*, 1988). However, this definition falls short if this general

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knowledge does not include knowledge of self-preservation. For example, Clarke (1995) states that education has one purpose—to teach the student to be a handler of power.

Fortunately for most humans, only zoo and circus animals are made to wear cute outfits or do tricks in order to be considered intelligent. However, for individuals of color, those who are the most “trained” and the least “educated” are those who are considered intelligent. This is particularly true for individuals of African descent (hereafter referred to as African, regardless of geographical location). Furthermore, the performance required to be considered “intelligent” on current standardized tests alarmingly approximates a circus act. That is, these tests do not assess African children’s ability to problem solve within a liberating framework or to produce self-sustaining behaviors.

It is important to note here that African people in the Diaspora are not a homogeneous group. Differences in geographical locale and class exert real influences on the ways in which African cultural thought and behavior are manifested. In addition, these values are not static, unchanging systems, but in fact are continuously shaped by interaction with the circumstances of society. However, just as one can intelligently discuss Native American or Asian values, the same is true of African culture.

Asante (1990) argues that “the unity of experiences, struggle, and origin causes . . . major cultures to have an internal unity. So it is with African culture” (p. 4). It is this internal unity that causes extended family and kinship networks to be central in African American families (Boyd-Franklin, 1989) as well as African Caribbean families (Gopaul-McNicol, 1993). Soyinka (1990) highlights the sense of “Africaness” or continental unity various African groups share. For example, the Yoruba refer to themselves and their descendants in the Diaspora as *enia dudu*, the black peoples. Thus, we can examine some of the beliefs that are characteristically African and that are shared by peoples throughout the Diaspora.

For African children, group scores have averaged 1 standard deviation below that of European American children. This difference has stimulated much controversy, and a number of scholars have vigorously argued that several factors are responsible for the lower scores of African children. For example, Helms (1992) extensively discusses the lack of cultural equivalence in cognitive ability tests and the inappropriateness of explaining Black-White differences in a context that inadequately conceptualizes culture. Crane (1994) critically examines the voluminous literature on the race gap and provides the reader with ample evidence that the difference is not due to lower levels of intellectual functioning. This evidence includes analysis of theoretical and statistical flaws in heritability research data, as well as

sociocultural factors such as differences in breast-feeding, nutrition, and lead exposure. Schiele's (1991) discussion of African-centered epistemology reveals the ways in which intelligence tests fail to incorporate African-based ways of knowing. Finally, Hamilton (1993) points out that current tests cannot adequately assess giftedness in African children because they are constructed with a Eurocentric axiological, epistemological, and logical basis.

In addition to a substantial literature that critiques the theoretical and philosophical foundation of intelligence testing, several scholars have developed alternative assessment paradigms. For example, Williams (1975) developed the Black Intelligence Test of Cultural Homogeneity (BITCH) to assess African children within a framework where test material is more familiar to them. The test items drew on the Black experience at that time. Mercer and Lewis (1978) devised the System of Multicultural Pluralistic Assessment (SOMPA). This system used the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised (WISC-R) as its core, but included measures of sociocultural, medical, and adaptive functioning. These other measures were used to render a more comprehensive, culturally relevant educational and cognitive portrait. It was thought that the WISC-R alone was inappropriate in this endeavor.

Indeed, for many years, psychologists have discussed the cultural biases in previous editions of the WISC (e.g., Gopaul-McNicol, 1993; Sandoval, 1989). This article focuses on one particular intelligence test, the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Third Edition (WISC-III), and uses it as a case example of the European-centered, culturally hegemonic thrust of intelligence testing on African children. Heretofore, this test has not been critically examined in this manner. Indeed, Suzuki and Valencia (1997) point out that research in test bias has declined in general. The WISC-III is an appropriate example because it is perhaps the most widely used test for assessing cognitive functioning in children aged 6 to 16. The ways in which the WISC-III conceives of and measures intelligence results in a measure of "training" rather than "education" or "intelligence." Helms (1992) argues that because intelligence tests are heavily loaded with White cultural influences, test scores essentially measure mastery of White culture. Thus, there are serious implications for the mental and spiritual health of African children who are tested with it.

What is at the heart of these critiques is the notion that intelligence quotient (IQ) tests do not adequately measure intelligence. What is intelligence? How can we measure it? The literature is replete with different definitions of the construct, and a thorough review here is far beyond the scope of this article. Some of the definitions given have included: the ability to learn, the ability to solve problems, and adjustment-adaptation to the total environment (Sattler, 1992). Suffice it to say, psychology as a discipline has yet to demon-

strate unanimity in defining intelligence (Hilliard, 1994). Sattler (1992) reviews many models of intelligence, including Spearman's (1927) enduring model, *g*, or generalized mental ability. Also prominent are Cattell and Horn's fluid-crystallized intelligence model. The reader is encouraged to see Sattler (1992) and others for general reviews of intelligence models.

Intelligence has been operationalized by IQ since Terman defined it in the 1916 version of the Binet-Simon Scale (Sattler, 1992). IQ replaced the earlier concept of mental quotient, which represented mental age divided by chronological age. Today, IQ is taken as a reliable measure of a construct psychologists are unable to define. Lezak (1997) argues that because psychologists have defined intelligence in such myriad ways, IQ as a concept has outlived any usefulness it may have once had and must be abandoned. Indeed, she contends that IQ scores are inherently meaningless and misleading. However, the authors of the WISC-III contend that the abilities measured by the test are "valued to varying degrees by our culture, and all relate to behavior that is generally accepted as intelligent behavior in one way or another" (Wechsler, 1991, p. 1). The question then becomes, whose culture? As we will see, these are values that stem from European ideological thought and behavior.

The WISC-III manual points out that although the test taps several different mental abilities, all of which are seen as representative of intelligence, it cannot be presumed that it covers all aspects of an individual's intelligence. Then we must assume that the scale developers have selected those tasks that they deem best able to represent intelligence. Thus, we have a window through which to examine the European-centered nature of this view of intelligence. An in-depth, item-by-item analysis of the WISC-III is beyond the scope of this article, and ethical guidelines for psychologists require that test security be maintained (American Psychological Association, 1992), thus precluding the inclusion of actual test items. Wherever possible, however, basic descriptions using WISC-like samples written by this author will be used for the reader to understand the nature of the test. In some cases, entire subtests can be examined critically and can illustrate the values that undergird the test as a whole.

Before we examine the test content, the standardization samples reveal much about the European-supremacist thrust of the test. In terms of racial-ethnic group representation, European American children comprise 70.1% of the sample, African children 15.4%, Latino children 11.0%, and "Other" children 3.5%. In this sample, Other referred to Native American, Eskimo, Aleut, Asian, and Pacific Islander. This normative sample is presented as appropriate because it closely matched the U.S. population (as given by the

1988 census). Conceptually, however, it is an impenetrable mystery. Unless a child is 70% European, 15% African, 11% Latino, and 3.5% Other, these norms do not make sense. Why is it appropriate to test an African child with an instrument that is normed on a sample where 70% of the children are European American? Tanner-Halverson, Burden, and Sabers (1993) make a similar argument in their study of WISC-III normative data in Tohono O'odam children. The authors contend that whether or not norm samples properly represent U.S. demographics, the test should not be used to infer intelligence for a group that comprises only 4% of the sample. Then it would be most appropriate to use norms that are established solely within each racial-ethnic group. This is particularly true when we consider that by the year 2056, most U.S. residents will not trace their ancestry to Europe (Comas-Diaz & Greene, 1994).

When we examine the role of education in the sample, the biases built into the test are quite clear. There are marked discrepancies among groups in how much education was attained by parents of varied backgrounds. Consider those who obtained 16 or more years of educational training: for Europeans, nearly 16% received this much education. In marked contrast, not quite 2% of the Africans in the sample received a comparable amount. Again, whether these proportions match the U.S. sample is irrelevant. The issue remains, the WISC-III is heavily loaded with test items that rely on a particular set of educational experiences. If these experiences are not equal across the board, the sample is inappropriate.

Thus, the norm sample for the WISC-III is unacceptable for comparing racial-ethnic groups within the United States. Then how are they at all useful for assessing the intelligence of children who live outside the U.S. borders? The WISC-III is described as "an individually administered clinical instrument for assessing the intellectual ability of *children* [italics added] aged 6 years through 16 years, 11 months" (Wechsler, 1991, p. 1). This test purports to measure "g" (universal intelligence) for all children. Thus, we are to assume this test is appropriate to assess cognitive capacity of children from around the world. On the latest revision of the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS-III), one subtest was revised by removing a question on U.S. presidents, as "the content was based solely on U.S. culture or history" (Wechsler, 1997, p. 13). Then if a question that taps only U.S. culture is inappropriate for a supposedly universal test, why is an entirely U.S. normative sample acceptable? The vast majority of the Earth's population is not European and has knowledge and value systems that are different from or in direct opposition to European culture. In addition, most of the world's population does not speak White American standard English as a first language. Thus, an

intelligence test that is normed on a select group of highly educated European people who live in America embodies the height of cultural imperialism and ethnocentric arrogance.

Sattler (1992) questions the use of "pluralistic" norms and argues that "the use of pluralistic norms gives rise to new questions—what norms should be used for a child who has a Mexican father and a Hungarian mother?" (p. 570). Currently, the answer is European norms, which is not seen as problematic. Moreover, the status quo—enforcing substrate of North American psychology firmly rejects the notion of norm samples for majority world peoples that use a self-referential base.

The WISC-III standardization sample is a clear representation of the European rhetoric, in which Europeans are seen as universal. Ani (1994) describes the fallacy of universalism as fundamental to the European *utamawazo*, or cultural structuring of thought. Here, European nationalism is shrouded by a pretense of universality. In this way, majority peoples are trained to believe that the ideological and social bases to European behavior are in fact human constructs and applicable to all people. Thus, in the European *utamawazo*, it is perfectly logical to use Europeans as the normative standard for all people. The aggressively hegemonic nature of a universalistic stance eludes most Europeans, including psychologists. Katz (1985) contends that it is easier for Whites to identify and acknowledge the different cultures of people of color than to accept their own racial identity. Thus, because the Europeans are viewed as the center of the universe, whatever is profitable and necessary for European people's survival is projected and superimposed as necessary for all people (Baldwin, 1989). This is true in the WISC-III, which is simply one microcosm of the European social reality. Prilleltensky (1989) argues that psychology can be conceptualized as a minor subsystem in a larger social system, one that maintains the status quo. Then the WISC-III is yet a smaller subset of this social net. A brief delineation of what comprises and promulgates the European survival thrust is helpful in our study of the WISC-III.

Salient in the European worldview is an attempt to control and master nature (Baldwin, 1985; Katz, 1985; Nobles, 1976). Nature is not seen as an interrelated part of the cosmos with which people interact but as a hostile other to be controlled and conquered. Similarly, scientific methodology and technological advancement represent the highest form of experience, as they are objective and severed from emotional or spiritual links. Through science, everything in the experiential world can be quantified, and individuals are able to predict, control, and manipulate the environment (Ani, 1994). Nature is seen as an object, a material to be owned. An emphasis on the ownership of

materials and using materialism as an index of one's worth is also salient in the European worldview (Baldwin, 1985).

Concepts of time include adherence to a rigid schedule and the view of time as a commodity (Baldwin, 1985; Hays, 1995). The "progress and future orientation" (Katz, 1985) is given by a plan for future, delayed gratification, and high value on continual improvement and progress. European American technological advancement dictates that everything can be made better and that there is no end to efficiency; it is irrelevant that there is nothing concrete toward which the culture advances, other than rational order (Ani, 1994).

Dana (1993) discusses the emphasis on individualism in the European ethos and argues that the self for this population has firm boundaries that are characterized by personal control and a self-concept that excludes other persons. As an outgrowth of the self-other distinction, we find a firm division between psyche and soma. Indeed, Descartes (version 1990) stated,

I am only a thing that thinks. Although perhaps . . . I have a clear and distinct idea of myself—insofar as I am a thing that thinks and not an extended thing—and because on the other hand I have a distinct idea of a body—insofar as it is merely an extended thing, and not a thing that thinks—it is therefore certain that I am truly distinct from my body, and that I can exist without it. (p. 439)

The European worldview lacks the concept of spirituality and emphasizes Platonic epistemology and abstracted rational faculty. Here, intellectual activity is separated from emotion and focuses on the dominance of linear, logical reasoning (Ani, 1994). Ani also discusses the European *utamaro*, or energy source of the culture, and argues that because the European context lacks spirit, the European *utamaro* lacks the balance that comes from an informed experience of the whole self. Thus, the self that emerges as a result seeks to further despiritualize its surroundings. In turn, by despiritualizing the world, Europeans have denied themselves the possibility of transcendence; constructs such as abstract thought, conceptual absolutes, and the syntax of universalism become means through which to attain the illusion of transcendence.

This brief review of European cultural thought and behavior anchors our critical analysis of the WISC-III. The ideologies that structure the European worldview permeate the WISC-III. This is true on both a macro level (e.g., European-dominant standardization sample) and a micro level (test items). Helms (1992) has thoroughly delineated the European-centered cultural components in cognitive ability tests as a whole. For example, rugged individualism leads to "correct" answers being those that require reasoning

independent of social context. Also, the view of time as a valuable commodity leads to the view that the faster one obtains the “right” answer, the brighter one must be. In this article, we will see the ways in which Eurocentrism structures the WISC–III.

CONCEPT OF INTELLIGENCE

In the WISC–III, intelligence is defined as “the capacity of an individual to act purposefully, think rationally, and deal effectively with the environment” (Wechsler, 1991, p. 1). Immediately we see the Eurocentric nature of this definition. Rational thought and control over nature are valued in European ideology, but they are by no means representative of the value systems of majority world peoples. This conception of intelligence stands in stark contrast to that of ancient Kemet, where intelligence was thought to be located in the heart and was understood as adherence to Maat (Akbar, 1994). Sattler (1992) claims that intelligence tests assess competence in the common culture rather than middle-class culture. Furthermore, he argues that “for a democratic society to endure, these common cultural forms and practices need to be maintained and extended to the culture as a whole” (p. 568).

This argument makes sense only within the European *utamawazo*. First, we are to believe that a democratic society truly exists. This analysis ignores the fact that the European American community controls the basic institutions (e.g., education, health care) that formally define the American social reality; thus, the basic philosophy and values that emanate from this community are present in the institutions it controls (Baldwin, 1985). Moreover, people of color are systematically denied equal participation in this culture. Thus, the concept of a common culture is inappropriate. In addition, Sattler’s (1992) argument asserts that the hostile imposition of Eurocentric epistemological systems on majority world peoples is to their benefit. This is the stance of the WISC–III.

Sternberg (1995) defines intelligence as the ability to perform in culturally valued ways and produce culturally valued products. Thus, the WISC–III definition of intelligence celebrates the African child’s ability to think and behave Eurocentrically. In other words, the test measures cultural misorientation, or the acquisition of a pseudo-European self-consciousness (Baldwin, 1985). Sternberg (1995) gives a poignant example of how we might conceive of intelligence: “Put me out on a raft to navigate by the stars, and you won’t be seeing me again—I will have failed the ultimate intelligence test—the ability to adapt or die” (p. 13). Then if the WISC–III assesses an African child’s

ability to assume an alien survival thrust, this unquestionably depicts failure to adapt in a life-sustaining manner. Indeed, Woodson (1993) argues that because thought controls action, a miseducated (misoriented) individual automatically seeks an inferior position of his own accord.

OPERATIONALIZING INTELLIGENCE: WISC-III SUBTESTS

The first subtest the child encounters is picture completion. Sattler (1992) describes this subtest as assessing the child's ability to recognize the depicted object, appreciate its incompleteness, and determine the essential missing part. For example, an item might depict a lamp, and the child would be required to glean that the light bulb is missing. As items progress in difficulty, so too do the missing details increase in irrelevant minutiae. This subtest symbolizes the disequilibrium of the European *utamaroho*. Why should the ability to notice these missing details be considered intelligent behavior? Ani's (1994) discussion is relevant here. The salience of missing details may reflect the fact that the European *utamaroho* is an unfulfilled spirit that continually seeks completion and wholeness. Perhaps for individuals operating from an African worldview, in which an appreciation of harmony is central, the missing details in these pictures would escape scrutiny. For example, among the Akan, "Besehene" is one Kente cloth pattern, literally taken to mean "king of cola nuts." The design was inspired by how handsomely cola nuts are arranged in their pods and celebrates nature's creativity (Ofori-Ansa, 1993). Thus, the scenario in which an African child is presented with a seemingly ordinary picture and asked to appreciate its incompleteness is an incongruous enterprise. Bell (1994) argues that contextually sterile tests such as picture completion are low in meaning for the holistic problem solver. Thus, picture completion works against the grain of the African cognitive schematic.

Information, another subtest, psychometrically represents the second best measure of *g*, as 61% of its variance may be attributed to *g* (Sattler, 1992). This subtest assesses a child's knowledge of discrete facts about people, places, and things primarily centering on the European experience. For example, questions might assess knowledge such as "Who was the explorer who discovered the Mississippi River?" or "What are stalactites?" For any child, this subtest does not assess innate capacity; it is very clearly an assessment of what the child already knows, not what he or she is able to learn. However, for African children, this subtest is particularly oppressive because

it measures the child's training rather than education, as per Akbar's (1982) distinction. An African child who can recite sundry facts about ancient Europe or the minutiae of the natural world, but who cannot discuss who Queen Nzinga was or what the Ankh represents, is simply doing circus tricks.

Let us be clear that this does not imply a judgment about the child's African authenticity or a devaluation of the skills necessary to encode and retrieve these facts. However, a high score on information primarily reflects the child's educational experience. Clearly, children from schools with inadequate instruction (albeit in a European-centered curriculum) will not be able to perform well in this domain. Moreover, a high information score reveals nothing about the child's knowledge of self, which we must view as paramount.

In any case, the accumulation of trivia is only viewed as intelligent behavior in the European worldview, where quantification, materialism, and abstract reasoning are valued. Baldwin (1985) points out that in the European American cosmological schematic, objects, materials, and things index one's value. In the WISC-III, value is indexed by the amount of collected facts. The African cosmological schematic does not emphasize the accumulation of facts divorced from social context and relevance. Moreover, African children are taught to think creatively rather than to regurgitate statically (Gopaul-McNicol, 1997; Heath, 1989). The vocabulary subtest is reportedly the best measure of *g*, and the most reliable subtest (Sattler, 1992). It too emphasizes quantity, rather than quality of knowledge. Again, vocabulary is simply an index of what is known, not what can be known. On this subtest, the child is simply asked to define words but not to use them in a sentence, or to engage in any activity that shows the child is able to use the word productively. Yet, because the number of words known by a child is related to ability to accumulate information, the vocabulary subtest is presumed to be an excellent estimate of cognitive ability (Sattler, 1992).

This author is not ashamed to admit that before having seen the WISC-III, she did not know the answer to an information question about the natural world. However, unless knowledge of this botanical trivia reveals a secret doorway to the liberation of African people, that this fact heretofore eluded me will not engender internal disquiet. Yet, we must remain aware of the feelings of an African child being tested with the WISC-III. Implicit in the testing paradigm is the statement that "this is information you should know." The child is taught that knowledge of trivia about European American culture is necessary to be a competent member of this society and that assessing this knowledge will give valuable information about the nature of the child's academic difficulties. Surely children are aware that they are not being asked,

“Who was Frederick Douglass?” or “Who are the Hopi?” or “What is the capital of Thailand?”

The blatant European supremacy built into the information scoring criteria is notable. In the general directions for administering the test, “spoiled” responses are discussed. These are responses in which the child reveals a fundamental misconception about the subject matter. For example, if asked, “What is an umbrella?” and the child responds, “Something you wear over your head, it keeps the rain out, it’s a hat,” the answer is spoiled by the inclusion of “it’s a hat” (Wechsler, 1991). Yet, on the information subtest, a spoiled response is not seen as such when the response relates to Europe. For example, the scoring criteria for an item about ancient Kemet dictates that if a child incorrectly associates the answer with Europe, when in fact it is located in African history, the examiner is to give credit. Here, the answer is not seen as spoiled even though the child has revealed a fundamental misconception about the topic. It is not unlike the “spoiled” history written by scores of European authors who identified many African legacies as European in origin. Other subtests also blatantly inferiorize the history of African peoples.

Coding, a visual-spatial subtest of the WISC–III, is described as a poor measure of *g*, as only 20% of its variance can be attributed to *g* (Sattler, 1992). This subtest requires the child to quickly complete a written matching task. Sattler (1992) describes the subtest as assessing a child’s ability to learn an unfamiliar task and states that the speed and accuracy with which the child performs gives a measure of his intellectual ability. Poor psychometrics aside, it is again evident why such a task might be valued as intellectual fitness when we understand the European worldview.

First, the emphasis on time is deeply entrenched in the European *utamawazo*, and is apparent here. The faster the child completes the task (or, the better able the child is to transcend nature), the more intelligent he or she is deemed. In addition, the subtest conceptualizes learning as based on facility with individualized tasks that have little bearing on real-life application and survival. Although this task is singularly esoteric as an example of learning an unfamiliar task, it is easily quantifiable and objectified, it can be used to measure the race against time, and hence it is valued. It is also important to note that the ability to quickly figure things out for oneself is not the same as the ability to learn, though they are likely related (Crane, 1994). Gopaul-McNicol (1997) points out that although speed may be critical for work such as air traffic controlling, most of life’s everyday events do not require decision making in the few seconds typically allocated for problems on IQ tests. Of all possible ways to conceptualize novel learning, the European *utamawazo* has presented a task in which the individual must memorize a series of random patterns she will never use again to adapt to the real world.

Coding is not unique in its emphasis on time. Indeed, most of the visuo-manipulative tasks on the WISC-III (e.g., block design, object assembly) rely heavily on time bonuses for maximum points. The timed conditions of WISC-III subtests is contradictory to the African concept of time. Pennington (1990) argues that the more a group perceives itself as in control of fate and destiny, the more time-conscious it will be. This is clearly true of the European American cultural mosaic. However, time in African culture is conceived only as it relates to events and must be experienced to become real; time is inseparable from the life force and therefore unmeasurable (Pennington, 1990).

Digit span is similar to coding in its emphasis on noncontextual information. Here, the child is orally presented with a series of digits that increase in length from item to item. In the first part of the subtest, the child is asked to repeat them verbatim, and in the second part, he or she must repeat them backwards. Sattler (1992) states that the task "assesses the child's ability to retain several elements that have no logical relationship to one another" (p. 1089). Again, these are skills that tend not to be valued outside the European American cosmological schematic. Even when useful skills are assessed, it is done in a manner that is far removed from real-life application. For example, on the arithmetic subtest, the child is asked to complete orally presented mathematics problems (that can only be repeated once) in his head, as fast as possible, without the use of pencil or paper.

Similarities is the fourth subtest on the WISC-III. Here, the child is required to discern the relationship between increasingly difficult pairs of words (e.g. "How are a cake and a cookie alike?"). Eurocentric psychology highly values this subtest as a measure of a child's abstract thinking skills. Thus, in the above example, if the child answers, "You eat them both," she would receive 1 point. However, if she states, "They are both desserts," she would receive 2 points. It is thought that the 2-point responses are abstract rather than concrete, which presumably reflects a lower level of cognitive functioning. The emphasis on dichotomy, categorization, and hierarchy is noteworthy in this scoring scheme. Two-point responses are "better" than 1-point and indicate that children with more points are "smarter." This scoring scheme reflects the values of exclusiveness-dichotomy, differences, and materialism-ordinality discussed by Baldwin (1985). Sattler (1992) provides anecdotes of unusual answers given by children. For example, in response to a question about food, one child stated, "Both give me hives." With the WISC-III's "objective," logico-rational epistemology, creative, experientially based answers such as this are unscorable.

Ani (1994) argues that "European culture functions consistently to remove the concrete, the emotional, and the existential from the individuals' conscious-

ness and thereby from her experienced reality. An abstraction is devoid of all human and emotional possibility; it defies genuine emotional identification” (p. 389). Nowhere is this aspect of European cosmology more evident than in the similarities subtest. Psychologists in training are taught to assess propensity for abstraction in the children they test without asking the more important questions posed by Ani: What does it mean to think abstractly, and what does it mean in terms of the interest of White society?

Together, the subtests picture arrangement and comprehension purport to tap skills in social mores, perception, and interaction. However, Sternberg (1993) argues that the WISC–III measures little or nothing of interpersonal or intrapersonal intelligences. Indeed, he states that one can do quite well on the WISC–III “without a drop of creative intelligence and with just a few drops of common sense” (p. 162). On picture arrangement, the child is presented with a series of pictures in a disarranged order, and under timed conditions must put them in the “right” order, so that they depict a story that makes sense. On comprehension, the child is asked to answer questions about what to do in certain social situations. Both subtests reveal much about a Eurocentrically defined social universe.

On picture arrangement, the process by which a child creates an arrangement is rewarded when it is Eurocentrically based. Correct responses are those that are derived from logico-deductive, rationalistic intellectual processes. Although social situations are depicted in the cards, the child is unable to rely on the cues they would use to apprise real-life situations; this is particularly true for the African child. For example, the reliance on affect, symbolic imagery, and rhythm in African epistemology is well documented in the literature (see Schiele, 1991). Bell (1994) contends that the relational learning style used by African Americans relies on social cues of object cues. Boyd-Franklin (1989) argues that White Anglo-Saxon Protestant and Jewish cultures emphasize an intellectual connection, whereas African culture uses vibes (multilevel perceptions based on gut feelings). Baldwin (1981) describes this as multidimensional-polysense perceptual orientedness, whereby Africans involve all sensory systems in interpreting reality and interacting with others. This includes psychokinesis, precognition, vibes, and proprioceptive processes. This contrasts markedly with the scientific, objective, rational orientation emanating from the European worldview; it is this orientation that is rewarded on the picture arrangement subtest.

The scoring protocol for picture arrangement allows for only one “right” arrangement for most items, with added points for quick completion time. In addition to the emphasis on time, the concept of dichotomy (right/wrong) and hierarchy (good answer/bad answer) as discussed by Baldwin (1985) is evident here. Even with markedly ambiguous stimuli, there is only one “true”

answer, or “better” answer. The focus on linear time is also notable about this subtest. Because the European worldview views time and life as following a linear, forward-directed model, alternative realities that derive from a more cyclically oriented framework are deemed “wrong.” It is also interesting to note that thematically, the majority of the items are based on the premise that nature, or the outside environment at large, is dangerous, threatening, and unpredictable, typical of the European American worldview. For example, several items depict events where unexpected calamity befalls the characters in the pictures.

On comprehension, the child is asked a series of questions that purportedly assess the child’s level of moral and common sense, and knowledge about conventional standards of behavior (Sattler, 1992). Questions such as these have the potential to elicit very different answers from different children. Yet, because the European *utamaroho* projects concepts as either right or wrong, or as better or worse, only a few answers are deemed worthy of the highest score. Moreover, the scoring hierarchy is quite arbitrary and provides for much subjective interpretation, far from the “objective” standard promised by the manual.

Ani (1994) argues that the Platonic-influenced *utamawazo* undergirds the European ethical system, whereby ethical behavior is that which is rational and logical. Thus, the most ethical statement is that represented by the purest abstraction. Ani also argues that in this worldview, as long as words are part of an approved syntax, they can be divorced from action and feeling and still properly inform human action. When we examine the scoring scheme in comprehension, we see that these are cogent arguments. The “best” answers are those that are the most “abstract,” although they are the most divorced from true affective involvement. Bell (1994) points out that the European reflective rational process emphasizes metacognition and thus enhances social distancing in problem solving. This cognitive style is quite different from the African cognitive style, wherein social referencing is integral to problem solving. High comprehension scores also require the child to think in Eurocentric conceptual terms. Thus, he or she has little opportunity for unique self-expression (Sternberg, 1993) or for truly intelligent and revolutionary thought.

What if a comprehension test item posed the question “Why are more prisons being built?” In the contemporary scoring paradigm, answers such as “To keep up with the number of offenders” or “Because more crime is being committed” would be likely acceptable responses. However, an answer emanating from a majority world standpoint might list answers such as “To provide jobs and money for the industry” “To be better able to keep people of color

from full participation in society” or “To further the public’s belief that something is being done to stop crime.”

CONCLUSION

Our analysis of the WISC–III reveals that its limited conception of intelligence misses the mark in assessing the capabilities of African children. For example, Gopaul-McNicol’s (1997) multicultural/multimodal/multisystems model of assessment includes musical, artistic, and bodily-kinesthetic intelligences, concepts conspicuously absent from the WISC–III. In addition, the Eurocentric cultural underpinnings of the test result in a measurement of the child’s facility with European cultural thought and behavior. In the final analysis, then, for African children, the WISC–III provides a measure of “misorientation quotient” (MQ) rather than “intelligence quotient” (IQ).

It is likely that both the author and the reader would obtain high scores on adult versions of the Wechsler tests, such as the WAIS–III. These scores would reflect to some degree individual talents and strengths. However, they would also reflect years of negotiating the dominant society, and years of training and indoctrination in mainstream, Eurocentric curricula. Indeed, Azibo (1995) contends that the African psychological worker is usually a miseducated and conceptually incarcerated product by the time he or she completes a doctoral degree! But are we really to believe that the talents necessary not only to survive but to prosper in this country are best assessed through coding and picture arrangement? For centuries, African people have drawn on strengths and tools that reach far beyond the capabilities of standardized IQ tests. We cannot discount the fact that IQ scores can reveal patterns of relative strengths or weaknesses, or from a neuropsychological perspective, information about brain-behavior relationships. Yet, we must remain vigilantly aware of the difference between this type of data and a measure of global, innate aptitude.

Psychology has yet to deal with the fundamental problems inherent in intelligence testing. For example, Hilliard (1994) reviews serious problems in intelligence testing, such as the following: current tests do not represent an interval form of measurement, addition is performed on unlike quantities, and sciences such as cultural linguistics and cultural anthropology have not been considered. Yet, amid the unresolved theoretical morass of intelligence testing, the administration of standardized tests continues to be widespread in clinical practice.

This widespread administration would not be a problem if no harm were done. However, Hilliard (1994) elucidates the failure of mental measurement in being of instructional benefit to children. Indeed, he charges that perhaps IQ simply predicts the quality of school treatment children are likely to receive. For African children, one need only look at rates of placement in special education to see that mental measurement is doing serious harm. Kunjufu (1995) points out that although African children comprise 17% of the public school population, they comprise 41% of those in special education. Suzuki and Valencia (1997) state that African American children comprise only 11% of those enrolled in gifted-and-talented programs. These disparities are the direct result of the standardized intelligence tests such as the WISC-III, which are used for placement. Here, as with the race gap of 1 standard deviation, the inappropriateness of these tests is clear. Unless we believe that African children are actually less intelligent than European American children, we have no alternative than to believe that the tests do not adequately assess cognitive ability. And if these tests (and in this case the WISC-III) are inadequate, psychologists cannot continue to use them with African children.

Most important, we cannot expect that North American psychology will provide the tools to assess in African children true ability and education rather than training. Prilleltensky (1989) asserts that psychology is instrumental in maintaining the societal status quo, particularly by disseminating the values of the dominant society in the form of so-called value-free science. In addition, psychologists are "carefully conditioned not to deviate from the intellectual order prescribed by the contemporary ideological atmosphere" (p. 795). Nowhere is this conditioning more evident than in the blind administration of tests with poor construct validity and clear cultural bias. It appears that psychologists "no go think unless you tell (them) to think" (Kuti, 1996, track 1). Thus, African-centered cognitive assessment must come from African psychologists. Baldwin (1989) postulates that we must adopt an Africentric ideological posture in the totality of our professional activities. African psychology must dismantle the reign of European American cultural hegemony on young African minds, and it must do so in a manner that is "allergic to complacency" (Diop, 1974).

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