Teaching Sociology
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What is Critical about Sociology?
Steven Buechler

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Bringing the Facts to Life: Facilitating Student Engagement with the Issue of Domestic Violence
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Revised: November 5, 2007
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Teaching Sociology publishes several types of papers. The basic distinction is between articles and notes. Generally, articles are longer than notes, more analytical, contain an extensive literature review and data analysis. Notes are shorter (usually 15 pages or less), contain a shorter literature review, and present and assess a teaching technique. The distinction reflects the dual purposes of the journal: 1) to provide a forum for analyzing the teaching of sociology, and 2) as a forum for the exchange of specific teaching ideas.

Articles are evaluated using some combination of the following criteria:
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5. How thoroughly and accurately does the author ground the paper in the literature?
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6. How extensively does the author extend previous ideas and bring some intellectual closure to the topic?
7. In an empirical study, how sound is the methodology and how accurately do the presented results reflect the data? If applicable, how is student success measured and is there evidence that demonstrates that learning outcomes were achieved?
8. How well written is the paper?
   • How well integrated is the paper?
   • How well organized is the paper?

Notes are evaluated using some combination of the following criteria:
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4. How thoroughly does the author consider implications for the teaching of sociology?
5. How cogently are the ideas and implications presented?
6. How well developed is the author’s basic point/argument?
7. How well written is the paper?
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Revised: August 22, 2007
You think you know ghetto?
Contemporizing the dove “Black IQ test”*

Kenneth Laundra
University of Portland

Tracy Sutton
Michigan State University

The mistakes the Negroes make in their own matters were so childish, stupid and simpleton-like as frequently to make me ashamed of my own species. (Galton 1870)

Measuring student intelligence has been problematic in the United States since standardized testing first began in the early 1900s. First developed in 1905, intelligence testing in the United States was popularized with the Binet-Simon Intelligence Test, with subsequent revisions through 1916 (most notably by Henry Goddard and Lewis Terman) geared toward psychometric modifications such as increasing the number of questions, creating a “ratio IQ,” establishing a standard deviation, and scaling the test to more closely approximate a normally distributed curve (Valencia and Suzuki 2003). These modifications, which were intended to improve reliability, were flawed in one very important methodological way, however. The original sample of 1,000 children intentionally excluded African Americans, Latinos, and other minority children in order to control for race (Valencia and Suzuki 2003; Zoref and Williams 1980). This original sample was almost exclusively white and middle class, setting the stage for later concerns regarding the accuracy of such tests in measuring intelligence in minority students. The furious debate that ensued throughout the academic community following the publication of The Bell Curve (Herrnstein and Murray 1994; Nisbett 1995) was pivotal in reviving the critique over the viability of standardized testing and, specifically, the degree to which cultural biases, socioeconomic status, and other variables in such tests were responsible for lower scores among African Americans. While several studies attribute test score differences to racial bias in testing (Scarr 1981; Valencia and Suzuki 2003; Vroon 1980; Zoref and Williams 1980), others find no basis for this claim (Jensen 1980) or argue that class position, differences in learning styles and perspectives on intelligence, and/or other environmental variables play a role in outcome discrepancies between whites and nonwhites (Green and Griffore 1980; Gordon and Rubain 1980; Schmeiser and Ferguson 1978; Steele 1997).

The omnipresence of standardized testing in student populations is illustrated by the most popular contemporary tests such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), the American College Test (ACT), the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT), the Law School Admission Test (LSAT), and the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). All of these employ many of the traditionally narrow conceptualizations of intelligence originally established by the Binet-Simon Intelligence Test and are used by some scholars to advance the notion that intelligence differences between whites and racial minorities may be based in actual genetic or hereditary differences rather than cultural or environmental factors or in the testing construct itself (Herrnstein and Murray 1994; Nisbett 1995). Do these kinds of standardized tests reflect a white, Eurocentric bias? Do the common standardized tests used to evaluate students from all racial and ethnic backgrounds employ measures that are adequately sensitive to cultural differences,

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Editor’s note: The reviewers were, in alphabetical order, Rebecca Bordt, Lauren Dundes, and Roxanna Harlow.
such as semiotic differences in speech and writing? While scholars continue to debate these issues, strong evidence suggests that typically lower scores by racial minorities (particularly African Americans and Latinos) can be at least partially attributed to the testing construct itself as well as to other cultural and environmental factors inherent in traditional test taking.

For academicians interested in broaching this issue with students in the classroom, such as students studying race in a sociology, psychology, or education class, it is important to demonstrate those elusive factors that play a role in divergent scores across racial groups and income levels. This task can prove difficult without clear illustration. One way to demonstrate these effects is a tangible classroom activity that provides greater insight into such bias in testing. This paper offers a modernized version of a widely used mock questionnaire—Dove’s “Black IQ Test” (Aiken 1971)—intended to draw out factors related to test bias for classroom discussion.

Validity is a major weakness of any standardized test of intelligence. Specifically, the degree to which the instrument actually measures intelligence can be debated on the grounds that intelligence is too broad a concept to be operationalized by any single test. For instance, Vroon (1980) argues that intelligence has been measured in various ways in terms of abstract thinking, critical thinking, learning and memorization, perceptual ability, and neurobiology (measuring biophysical changes in the central nervous system and brain). It has also been suggested that intelligence has other dimensions not typically measured by any of these definitions. Creativity, emotional, social, and moral intelligence are other such dimensions that have entered the debate more recently (Goleman 1995; Salovey and Sluyter 1997; Stevenson and Lee 1990). In addition, there has been criticism of the validity of intelligence test scores (creating a false hierarchy of intelligence) and that these scores have been too eagerly embraced by academic institutions as an all-encompassing indication of ability based on limited measurements of what is defined as “intelligence” (Dennis 1995; Gould 1996; Sternberg 1996).

Moreover, cultural differences in intelligence, in all its varied forms, have been identified as problematic for typical intelligence tests used in academic settings. Knowing the answers to a mathematical question on the SAT test, for instance, is ostensibly different from a reading comprehension question that has been written in a predominantly white dialect and context, including homographs (words that are spelled alike but have different meanings) (Kulick and Dorans 1983; Schmitt and Dorans 1990). For instance, a report issued in 2003 by Ray Freedle, a research psychiatrist at the Educational Testing Service, shows some evidence that African Americans actually perform better than whites on difficult questions (questions laden with difficult or technical terminology) and worse than whites when the questions contain ordinary words. This finding suggests that many commonplace words have divergent definitions across both race and class. Freedle (2003) states:

It is well known that common words often have many more semantic (dictionary) senses than rare words. Many high-frequency analogy words such as “horse” and “snake” have many dictionary entries. Various researchers have hypothesized that each cultural group assigns its own meanings to such common words to encapsulate everyday experience in its respective culture. Thus, individuals from various cultures may differ in their definitions of common words. Communities that are purportedly speaking the “same” language may use the same words to mean different things. (P. 13)

Other researchers point to the cultural context in which words are employed in standardized testing (Schmitt and Dorans 1990). Green and Griffore (1980), for example, argue that test bias is evident in three distinct ways. First, is bias due to content factors involving vocabulary differ-
ences between middle-class whites (who primarily design such tests) and poor, urban African Americans who may have not learned the meaning of certain words more commonly used among wealthier, white students. For example, tests given to second graders intended to measure mechanical skills of beginning readers (as opposed to vocabulary breadth, which is a different kind of test) that employ words such as “chimney,” “sapling,” or “harvest” are less likely to be known by second graders raised in poor, urban, and/or foreign language-speaking homes and may result in lower scores but not necessarily lower intelligence. Second, is bias due to norm differences, such as the use of any “national norm,” like a standard national score on any particular measure of intelligence. These authors note that these averages are typically calculated using nonrandom, predominantly white, middle-class samples as the basis for the standards by which all other groups are compared. Third, is bias due to the testing situation itself, what they call “atmosphere variables,” including speed of the test, test-wiseness (prior experience with similar test designs), format and type of questions, examiner characteristics, and perceived use of test result. For example, a poor, urban African American student may have less experience taking a timed, reading comprehension exam and, further, may be more likely to perceive the testing environment as threatening and stressful than his or her white, middle-class counterpart, which may result in lower overall test scores.

Cultural differences in intelligence across race have been demonstrated in a variety of other ways as well. For example, researchers have discovered higher nonverbal reasoning skills than verbal skills among American Indians and Latinos, unlike whites, who tend to score better on verbal ability (Irvine and Berry 1988; Suzuki et al. 2001). These differences, although greater within groups than between groups (greater variation within each racial category than between different races), signal a need to acknowledge that our supposedly objective methods of measuring intelligence lack cultural sensitivity in both the words used to ask certain questions and in the dimensions of intelligence that are emphasized. As such, tests that tend to emphasize verbal and mathematical ability may afford advantages to those belonging to a racial or ethnic group in which those particular elements of intelligence are culturally supported (and financially supported via stronger educational institutions), such as whites or Asian Americans. By statistically minimizing other forms of intelligence that might serve to raise overall average scores for certain minorities, academic administrators are structurally restricted in their decision-making process when it comes to important decisions such as admissions or scholarships. Without other means of measuring intelligence, educators and administrators cannot accurately assess any individual student’s overall intellectual ability, not to mention their ability to succeed in college, and must rely almost exclusively on biased standardized test scores in making decisions. This limitation is further evidenced by studies demonstrating a weak relationship between academic achievement tests and future success in college (Vars and Bowen 1998).

To the extent that socioeconomic status and class position affect the educational opportunities that are available to them, racial minorities may suffer more than their white counterparts in terms of adequate preparation for academic tests of intelligence as well. Little credence seems to be given to divergent socioeconomic conditions that play an important role in determining test scores, such as fewer educational resources in poorly funded schools (e.g. test tutors, access to testing software, and test-taking courses). The fact that academic achievement improves when poor black children are exposed to teaching methods designed to create positive attitudes toward scholastic achievement is compelling evidence that environmental variables play a role in test scores (Scarr 1981). For exam-
ple, researchers have found that the mere expectation by a teacher that a student will improve his or her intellectual ability actually produces real gains in IQ scores (a phenomenon known as “the self-fulfilling prophecy”) (Aiken 1971). This finding coincides with similar research by Steele (1997) and Smith (2004) who find that African American students’ scores often suffer from a “stereotype threat,” occurring when members of a group must perform a task for which that group is negatively stereotyped, such as academic testing. Together, all these various findings demonstrate the multifaceted ways in which we might critique our current system of standardized testing in education.

**TURNING PROBLEMS INTO PEDAGOGY: CONTEMPORIZING THE “BLACK IQ TEST”**

Clearly, there are many veiled ways in which bias manifests itself in education and, more specifically, in our standardized testing procedures. As educators, this suggests a need for sensitivity to these biases, including biases in the construction of the testing instruments themselves. In fact, understanding the degree to which any bias exists in testing is both theoretically and pragmatically important for anyone involved in the academic process. For administrators responsible for establishing admissions and acceptance criteria and for educators using tests and giving grades, sensitivity to bias remains crucial as we have the power to affect opportunities for both potential and current students. Understanding the limits of standardized testing might result in greater appreciation for different expressions of intellect, allowing us, as educators, to saturate our classrooms with a broader range of ideas not limited by biased and restrictive standards for this thing we call “intelligence.” For students, acknowledging the cultural and political contentiousness of standardized testing reveals the inherent weakness of such assessment but can also provide students with a more tempered understanding of the relative value of their own scores in perceiving their future potential.

Because of the popularity of such standardized testing in many academic realms and because student scores remain influential in terms of later educational and occupational opportunities, a keener awareness of testing bias is critical for any teacher interested in examining effects of such biases with their students. But how might an educator broach this subject with their students? One practical application developed for the classroom is Adrian Dove’s “Chitling Test of Intelligence,” a.k.a. The Dove Counterbalance General Intelligence Test or the “Black IQ Test” (Aiken 1971). This tongue-in-cheek test is not a test at all but a series of multiple-choice questions designed to illuminate both language and cultural differences between whites and blacks. It is not intended as a serious method of measuring these differences but instead as a thought experiment for students to contemplate whether intelligence tests are accurate measures of intelligence, given their inherent cultural biases. In this original “test,” students are asked to answer a series of questions regarding the meaning of various African American terms. By asking students to define such terms as “gas head,” “jet,” and “snake eyes,” or to answer questions about how long to cook chitterlings or how much a “short dog” costs, students are able to see in more dramatic fashion how cultural bias in testing can affect scoring outcomes.

This humorous test is particularly valuable for our white students who may not have considered their unearned advantage when it comes to educational assessment, making it a tremendously powerful means of exposing issues related to educational inequality, institutional racism, and white privilege. While it is difficult to offer live examples of the disparate effects of race and socioeconomic position in our classrooms, this test provides students a live opportunity to fail a test—to feel stupid and, hence, to think more critically about the nature of
intelligence and intelligence testing within the larger social context. Not knowing a popular dance at African American family functions should not be used as a standard measure of intelligence. Why, then, should we measure the intelligence of those raised in poor, nonwhite backgrounds using contemporary, wealthier white language and culture? While it may be that students will be better prepared for success in a largely white world by familiarizing themselves with white ideas and words, we should not assume that intelligence is the province of those who are familiar with those ideas and words. Dove’s original “test” was developed to demonstrate this important point about how we think about intelligence.

Dove’s test has lost its utility, however, as decades have passed since it was first introduced as a learning tool in the early 1970s. The terms and ideas expressed in the mock test have largely been replaced by more modern black slang. Hence, the instrument’s ability to convey lessons about language bias in testing has been diminished, as students from all racial/ethnic backgrounds have difficulty interpreting the now-historic slang used in the test. In my own sociology classes, for example, I have used this mock test in an effort to illustrate bias in testing only to discover that not a single student, black or nonblack, could answer more than one or two questions correctly and many complained about how outdated the test actually is. Most African American students have simply never heard these terms before! Times have changed, and the cultural milieu from which black slang originates has changed accordingly, representing old ideas with new words and providing new words for new ideas. This fact should surprise no one and the need for fresh slang in this exercise is obvious to any teacher who has attempted to employ Dove’s clever but now dated mock questionnaire. In response to this need, I provided students with an opportunity to revise and update the Dove test. The complimentary test offered below is the product of that assignment, developed almost entirely by my coauthor, a former student with a much stronger grasp of contemporary black slang than myself.

A few caveats need to be made regarding this contemporized version of the Dove test. First, in the tradition of Dove, this test is tongue-in-cheek and is not intended to serve as an objective assessment of student intelligence. It was developed to illustrate race/class differences in semiotic fashion and to offer a more tangible means of demonstrating the larger issue of bias in intelligence testing. It is intended to be humorous—an icebreaker of sorts—for teachers to initiate a more critical discussion of supposedly objective measures of intelligence at large in society. Second, racial differences in the results of this test should not be considered methodologically or statistically valuable to academicians. Any differences between whites and minorities on this test must be considered in the context in which the test is to be used, as a learning exercise and not as a means of measuring differences in intelligence between racial/ethnic identities. While a pilot study of 160 students did show that whites scored poorly overall compared to nonwhites (see below), this result is almost tertiary to the point of the assignment, which is simply to take the test, to provide a visceral experience of the phenomenon of bias in testing, and to provide a basis for more robust class discussion about testing bias, institutional racism, and white privilege.

Test results should not be interpreted as strictly signifying racial differences in knowledge. Today African American culture has been largely co-opted by more mainstream currents, most notably the modern media system, often in the context of what is commonly known as “hip hop” culture. As a result, many more nonblack students are familiar with African American culture and slang through the mainstreaming of hip hop culture which originates in (but in some ways transcends) black culture in the United States and overseas (Kitwana 2006). In addition, due to the intersecting realities of race and class in the United
States, we cannot assume that any differences between whites and blacks are due solely to race-based factors and not also to other environmental variables or class differences, such as the effect of income on academic opportunities and achievement. As such, any classroom discussion based on the results of this mock test should acknowledge differences in knowledge based not just on race but in familiarity with African American culture, hip hop culture, socioeconomic position, and other variables operating in society. Again, while this updated mock questionnaire cannot directly expose students to these real life experiences—we cannot require our students to grow up in the ghetto and/or attend poorly funded schools—it can provide a sort of shaming ritual (failing a test) intended to prepare students for a larger, more important discussion of why these differences exist in the context of educational inequality.

**PERFORMING PEDAGOGY:**
**EMPLOYING THE CONTEMPORARY
“BLACK IQ TEST”**

The mock questionnaire we developed, based on Dove’s original “Black IQ Test,” is called “You Think You Know Ghetto?” (see Appendix A). The title, we feel, reflects the tongue-in-cheek nature of the questions, distinguishing it as a classroom thought experiment rather than a staid effort to measure outcomes. The questionnaire was administered in an introductory sociology class but could also be an integrated classroom exercise in any college-level sociology, psychology, or education course dealing with race/ethnicity.

After a more traditional lecture on the subject of white privilege, including a review of Peggy McIntosh’s list of white privileges (McIntosh 1988), students are asked to pinpoint other ways in which white privilege affects them (regardless of the student’s race). For both whites and non-whites this conversation typically evokes personal examples based on McIntosh’s list. At this point, students are asked to consider more covert ways in which such privilege operates institutionally, such as within the social institution they currently occupy – the educational system. Students often cite examples of preferential treatment by teachers toward white students in terms of informal favoritism in grades K-12, or of the dearth of nonwhite curriculum in both texts and course offerings at all education levels. What these examples tend to exclude are the more indiscernible structures that may perpetuate educational inequality, such as the use of standardized intelligence tests in determining a student’s academic achievement level and subsequent life opportunities. Students tend to assume that “objective” intelligence tests are truly objective.

It is at this point that the mock questionnaire is introduced as an overhead projection (although individual handouts would presumably have the same effect). Students are asked to answer the questions as best they can. At this point, the instructor may announce that the activity will be graded using the averages of all nonwhite participants. This (optional) announcement can be used later to illustrate bias in grading standards (i.e., the common use of predominantly white samples as a baseline). Students are given approximately five minutes to jot down their answers on a blank piece of paper. At some point prior to completion the instructor may also wish to abruptly stop the exercise and announce that time has expired. This action can be used later to illustrate bias in the form of those “atmospheric variables,” particularly test speed and test-wiseness among white and nonwhite takers (Green and Griffore 1980). When students finish, the questions are reviewed one at a time with answers being provided by the instructor in conjunction with classroom discussion (and a good deal of laughter!).

Central to the discussion are the less visible forms of bias inherent in presumably objective standardized tests. First, is content bias which includes using homographs (words that are spelled alike but have different meanings) such as the words
“blunthead” or “beast,” or the expressions “jukin” or “cakin it,” all of which are cross-culturally sensitive with dual or multiple meanings. Content bias can also be illustrated using other terms or phrases from the test such as “jet to the jects,” “cuddy buddy,” “booed up,” or “gwap.” These terms and phrases represent other vocabulary differences that often reflect the unique cultural milieu of poor and/or minority groups. In addition, knowing what a common curtain substitute is, what word is out of place (“shawdy,” “ma,” “shorty” or “boss”), when a young child in the ghetto should be in the house, a popular dance among many black families, or who the famous rap rivalry involved can also be used to illustrate content bias in terms of culturally specific knowledge that favors the experience of those raised in a specific racial and/or economic setting. Reminding students that academic achievement tests sometimes employ culturally specific terms (like “regatta” or “harvest”) or other culturally specific content can afford students with a keener sense of the inherent bias in these tests. At this point, the discussion should include the fact that not all poor blacks (or other minorities) are unaware of the more conventional, culturally specific expressions or knowledge used on traditional tests or that wealthier whites are always unaware of the culturally specific expressions or knowledge stemming from the ghetto. In fact, the reality that the mainstreaming of ghetto life (largely through the media’s portrayal of what is commonly referred to as “hip hop” culture) is an interesting trend in itself and students usually raise this point during the discussion.

Second, bias due to norm differences can be illustrated by asking students how they feel about the fairness in using a nonrandom, race-based standard for grading. Reminding students that academic achievement tests have traditionally set a white, middle-class baseline for evaluating scores universally across all racial groups and income levels can be a powerful reminder of privilege. At this point the instructor should clarify that the assignment will not actually be graded!

Third, bias due to atmospheric variables (situational variables surrounding the test taking itself) can be illustrated by asking students how they felt when not given adequate time to answer unlikely or unfamiliar questions rooted in a culturally biased context. This experience helps students to appreciate divergent learning strategies constrained by a standardized testing format (e.g., time limits). A more general discussion of other variables such as access to practice tests and test coaches or “stereotype vulnerability” (i.e., students who are aware of racial or gender stereotypes about their group’s intellectual ability score lower than those who are not aware) can be raised here as well.

Finally, after this immediate review and discussion, the teacher provides a debriefing of concepts learned. Specifically students learn that institutionalized racism, classism, and white privilege operate in our educational system at all levels, that they are pervasive (incorporated into our most basic testing procedures), and that it is often invisible to privileged sectors of society. It should be noted that this instrument was integrated during a week-long lecture on the subject of white privilege and institutional racism and was not delivered without first introducing students to these ideas and debriefing them regarding what was learned.

MEASURING STUDENT LEARNING: DOES THE MOCK QUESTIONNAIRE WORK?

To illustrate the utility of this mock questionnaire (You Think You Know Ghetto?) to demonstrate testing bias we examined answers from an initial pilot study. The pilot study employed a nonrandom, convenience sample of 160 students from two introductory sociology courses. We found that among these 160 students, black students (N=26) scored better on every question compared to nonblacks (white students as well as other racial minorities) (N=134),
but that white students scored much better (though lower than their black counterparts) on questions dealing with black culture that have reached mainstream status in the popular culture. For instance, while many white students know what a “C-note” is (77 percent) (Note: this question was from a prior version of the mock questionnaire and has since been replaced), what a “blunthead” is (96 percent), and who was involved in the most famous rap rivalry (87 percent), many of them did not know in what city “jukin” originates (21 percent), what is a common curtain substitute in the ghetto (48 percent), or which word (“shawdy,” “ma,” “baby girl,” or “boss”) is out of place (21 percent). It is also interesting to note that racial minorities other than blacks collectively scored much closer to whites than blacks on this test, suggesting clear disparity between black and nonblack colloquial speech in general. Though larger and more representative samples might yield different baselines, the results indicate that the test does capture some of the cultural differences in language that could yield discrepancies in outcomes on standardized tests.

In an effort to determine the measurable consequences of the questionnaire and subsequent discussion, we also performed pre- and post-tests of students’ awareness of bias in standardized testing. Additionally we collected narratives from a nonrandom, convenience sample of 13 students in one class. Quantitatively we asked 222 students from four introductory sociology courses to respond to four simple statements about black intelligence and racial bias in intelligence tests before and after being exposed to the mock questionnaire to see if there would be any statistically significant differences among these students. All four Likert-style statements required students to indicate a strength of agreement or disagreement using a six-point scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” with no “neutral” option given (see Appendix B). A paired-samples t-test was conducted to evaluate the impact of the mock questionnaire. Results of the pre-/post-test show that students did, in fact, improve significantly on two of the four indicators. First, in response to the statement “Tests of intelligence are fundamentally flawed because the language used is biased, favoring whites,” there was a statistically significant increase in agreement from the pre-test (M=3.50, SD=1.33) to the post-test (M=2.97, SD=1.25) (t=-2.9, p<.004). The eta-squared statistic (.55) indicated a large effect size. Second, in response to the statement “I believe that standardized academic tests (such as the SAT, ACT or GRE) are racially biased against African Americans,” there was also a statistically significant increase in agreement from the pre-test (M=4.26, SD=1.19) to the post-test (M=3.75, SD=1.29) (t=-2.9, p<.005). The eta-squared statistic (.26) indicated a large effect size. With respect to the statements “It is probably true that African Americans are less intelligent as a group than Whites” (pre-test M=5.43, SD .92; post-test M=5.33, SD 1.07; t=-.81, p<.419) and “Standardized academic tests are an accurate measure of a person’s intelligence,” (pre-test M=4.75, SD 1.05; post-test M=4.89, SD 1.03; t=1.08, p<.285), no statistically significant differences were observed. Because mean scores were so positive initially (M=5.43 and 4.89 respectively for the pre-test), it is evident that there was little room for “improvement” on the post-test, resulting in insignificant results on these more general questions. These findings suggest that students did improve their understanding of bias in testing on a specific level, but that they did not shift their already positive opinions about black intelligence or critical opinions on academic tests in general (an interesting insignificant finding in itself).

We also invited students to write down what they thought of the mock questionnaire in open-ended, unstructured narratives immediately after exposure to the questionnaire. The most common response received was positive, suggesting that the mock questionnaire was perceived by students to be a useful tool to foster critical thinking about
standardized testing. For example, one student responded:

I have never heard 75% of those words that were used in the ‘ghetto’ survey. The survey just made me realize how sheltered we are in our education system.

Another student wrote:

It helps you understand because it reverses the roles and puts you in the role of minorities that you were oblivious to.

Still another student wrote:

The survey made me realize that there is a discrimination against non-Whites by word choice. This is something that has never crossed my mind. I have grown up in an environment where the language is similar to that of the testing style.

Finally, this student wrote:

I felt the ‘ghetto survey’ really opened my eyes. Before in class, I was thinking there is no way the SAT test could be biased. I now know the language is very different. I understand white privilege is under-appreciated and we should consider our privileges.

Of the 13 student narratives collected, only one was dismissive of the mock questionnaire, stating that it was “extreme and unrealistic.”

DISCUSSION

To this end, the “You Think You Know Ghetto?” test, when employed in the classroom as an exercise in critical thinking, can be a valuable tool for teachers interested in discussing both race and class bias in intelligence testing, as well as larger issues surrounding privilege. This testing activity is useful in providing a focused and live illustration of institutional racism and white privilege, and can be effectively used to generate a broader conversation about often unseen biases in society that ultimately disadvantage certain groups. By offering a tangible experience of the effects of cultural bias—failing a test written in an unfamiliar cultural context—students are better able to understand some of the more subtle, institutionalized mechanisms that drive much of modern racism in the United States today.

This exercise may be particularly valuable for white students who may reject the notion that standardized testing is racially biased, assuming that they have not been afforded advantage over some minority students in their education. Factors surrounding the construction of intelligence tests as well as certain “atmospheric variables” in the test setting itself can also be drawn out for classroom consideration using this mock test activity.

We believe that such discussions can be fostered through the use of this mock test, which is offered here for public use without constraint. We hope that other educators will use You Think You Know Ghetto? as a working document that can be modified in the classroom, functioning as a template for students to create their own versions and thereby encouraging active learning. By treating the exercise as a work in progress future versions will not become temporally static (as with the inspirational but outdated Dove test) but will instead remain grounded in contemporary culture. More importantly, we hope this test will serve educators as an accessible activity for introducing important ideas revolving around institutional racism, white privilege and inequality in education.
Appendix A. You Think You Know Ghetto?

Adrian Dove’s famous “Chitling Test of Intelligence” first demonstrated cultural biases in intelligence testing in 1971 by exposing dialectical differences in language through a tongue-in-cheek test of black culture. The following test developed by Laundra and Sutton (2007) is a more contemporary version of that original test to illustrate how language differences can (and still do) affect supposedly objective measures of intelligence.

Instructions: Choose the best possible answer for each question. Once you have completed the test, review the correct answers provided. Did you score better or worse than others of your same racial/ethnic background? What other factors besides race may have played a role in these divergent scores? Are these differences important for measuring academic intelligence?

1) Translate this phrase: “Jet to the Jects.”
   a. Run home
   b. Walk to the store
   c. Go to the house of your significant other
   d. Go to the projects

2) What is the most popular dance that is done at almost every black family function?
   a. The Hustle
   b. The Electric Slide
   c. Stepping
   d. The Bump

3) What is a “cuddy buddy”? 
   a. A person you skip school with
   b. A Cadillac
   c. A friend with whom you also have sex with
   d. Your next door neighbor

4) Historically, what time does a young child in the ghetto have to be in the house?
   a. Before the street lights come on
   b. Before dinner time
   c. Before 5:00pm
   d. Whenever they feel like it

5) A “blunthead” is a: 
   a. Brother or male cousin
   b. Person who is mentally ill
   c. Pencil or Pen
   d. Person who smokes a lot of marijuana

6) What is “cakin it”?
   a. Arguing
   b. Making cornbread
   c. Being lovey-dovey with your boyfriend or girlfriend
   d. Making pancakes

7) Which city did “jukin,” also known as footwork, originate from?
   a. Chicago
   b. Atlanta
   c. New York
   d. LA

8) One of these things is not like the other. Which word is out of place?
   a. Shawdy
   b. Ma
   c. Shorty
   d. Boss
9) Who were the rappers involved in the first and most famous Rap rival?
   a. Jay-Z and Nas  
   b. Ja Rule and DMX  
   c. Biggie and Tupac  
   d. Eminem and Benzino

10) What is “gwap”?
    a. A term used to refer to money  
    b. A term used to refer to male genitalia  
    c. A term used to refer to nice shoes  
    d. Another name for a college or university

11) What is a “beast”?
    a. A cop  
    b. A pimp  
    c. A very hairy man  
    d. A big dog

12) What is the most common curtain substitute?
    a. Clothes  
    b. Sheets  
    c. Spray paint  
    d. None at all

13) Being “booed up” means that you are:
    a. Cool  
    b. Spending time with your boyfriend or girlfriend  
    c. Constipated  
    d. Being ridiculed in public

Answer Key:
1) D  4) A  7) A  10) A  13) B
2) B  5) D  8) D  11) A
3) C  6) C  9) C  12) B

Appendix B

Questions used in pre-/post test.

1) It is probably true that African Americans are less intelligent as a group than whites.
2) Tests of intelligence are fundamentally flawed because the language used is biased, favoring whites.
3) I believe that standardized academic tests (such as the SAT, ACT or GRE) are racially biased against African Americans.
4) Standardized academic tests (such as the SAT, ACT or GRE) are an accurate measure of a person’s intelligence.

REFERENCES


YOU THINK YOU KNOW GHETTO?


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