

REPORT ON TESTING OF CHILDREN OF
MIGRATORY AGRICULTURAL WORKERS
IN THE WAUPUN AREA

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STATEMENT OF PROBLEM:

To attempt to determine the educability in relation to mental capacity of children of Spanish-speaking migrant agricultural workers in the Waupun area.

SUBJECTS:

The group of children tested was composed of six boys and seven girls, ranging in age from five to thirteen years, and having virtually no formal education. At the time of the testing these children were receiving schooling in English under the joint auspices of the Community Council on Human Relations of Waupun and the Governor's Commission on Human Rights. They were children of Spanish-speaking migrant agricultural workers employed at that time in the Waupun area.

SELECTION OF TESTS USED:

The problem of selecting suitable measurement instruments was complicated by several factors: a) a distinct language handicap, the children for the most part had but a few weeks formal instruction in English and used Spanish exclusively in their social group; b) a literacy handicap, these children were virtually illiterate in both English and Spanish at the beginning of their summer schooling; c) a cultural handicap was also present in that the experiential background of this group was different from that of the American white groups used to standardize most existing tests.

It can be seen then that the subjects as a group were such that no measurement instrument designed for a white, English-speaking population would be wholly adequate. However it was felt that certain portions of the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children and the Goodenough "Draw-A-Man" Test would tend to minimize the importance of verbal and language factors inherent in most tests. Two instruments were used in hopes that one would in part serve as a check on the other, and that a fuller evaluation could be made.

The tasks involved in these tests were:

I. Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children--Performance Scale

- a) Picture Completion: Here the task was recognition of the important missing part of pictures of familiar objects. This was an attempt to measure the individual's ability to differentiate between essential and unessential details in these pictures.
- b) Picture Arrangement: Arrangement of cut-out pictures in a sensible, logical sequence was the task here. This, the test author claims, is a kind of measure of social intelligence.
- c) Block Design: This is the arrangement of multi-colored blocks in a pattern. What is probably measured here is performance in planning an approach and arranging colored blocks to reproduce a fixed geometric pattern.

- d) Object Assembly: This is a type of jig-saw puzzle in which the task is to assemble the parts as quickly as possible. This purports to measure whole-part relationships in a problem-solving situation.
- e) Coding: Here the subject must associate and insert signs (such as plus marks, dashes, circles, etc.) with geometric patterns according to a coded relationship--i.e. a dash goes with a triangle, a circle with a cross, etc. This is a speed test. It attempts to measure memory and, to a limited extent, learning.
- f) Mazes: The subject must trace a path through a maze and find the exit without making more than a certain limited number of mistakes within a time limit. This is claimed to be a measure of planning in problem solving.

II. The Goodenough Draw-A-Man Test

This task is to draw a man. The attempt is scored on the basis of completeness of detail, realistic approach, coordination of line, as well as content--i.e. clothing, correct number of fingers, eyebrows, etc. The author of this test believes that the child draws what he knows. This test should have a more universal application with non-English groups than the Wechsler Scale and was used as an additional measure.

OBSERVED BEHAVIOR DURING TESTING:

Each child was tested individually and spent about 45 minutes with the two examiners. In conjunction with the psychological examination each child was interviewed by one of the workers in an attempt to get as full a picture of the operating level of the individual as possible. Whenever the child was obviously unable to comprehend directions in English, the teacher was called in to supplement the directions in Spanish.

As far as it was able to determine, none of the children had ever been tested before. However, without exception, each entered the examination situation with enthusiasm, and the workers felt that each child was trying as hard as he could in solving the tasks set before him. This enthusiasm together with a serious attitude, a persistence of effort, and attempts to try even the most difficult of the tasks was marked for the group as a whole.

Some group peculiarities in comparison with excepted performance of white groups were noted. In the Picture Completion sub-test many of the group missed easier items introduced early in the test such as missing button holes on a full-dress suit coat or a missing spade in a seven of spades playing card, but correctly answered harder items toward the end of the test such as a missing spur on a rooster and the missing cleft hoof of a cow. This type of performance can probably be laid to differences in background of this group with the standardization group.

The group as a whole did better than their own sub-test average on the Coding and Mazes parts. The former has some aspects of the learning situation in that the earlier the subject "learns" the code the faster he can finish the test and gain a higher score. The Maze sub-test scores for the group indicated some ability to solve problems calling for planning in execution. The children seemed to enjoy these two sub-tests as well as any other.

RESULTS OF TESTING--INTERPRETATIONS:

In the opinion of both of the examiners the children as a group seemed to be within the normal range of mental capacity found in school children as a whole. It is very difficult to compare them with exactness in terms of Intelligence Quotient with the white, English-speaking group on whom the scales were developed. Therefore no attempt will be made to evaluate each child on this basis.

However both examiners felt that the group was definitely educable in terms of mental capacity. This potential capacity for education was demonstrated throughout the contact with the children in a number of ways:

- 1- Observation of the group during the testing situation--in their mode of attacking the tasks, in their attitudes, and in their relative success as measured by the standardized scoring procedures led the examiners to believe that probably none of the group was to be classified as "feeble-minded." It was felt on the basis of the testing results that their range of mental capacity would differ little from that found in many rural classrooms throughout the state.
- 2- The behavior of the group during the testing was indicative of strong motivation to succeed. When asked in the interview what one thing they would like to do if they had a month of free time, several of them answered that they would like to study and learn to read and write in English above all.
- 3- Their adaptiveness to a learning situation was seen in some measure by their ability to adjust quickly to the newness of a testing situation, by their perseverance in pursuing the tasks set before them, and by their learning as measured in several of the sub-tests themselves.
- 4- Accepting them at their present level of apparent achievement, classroom instruction which would be individualized enough to meet their specific needs and interests. This is not to say that these children are to be taught with the same techniques and methods which the average boy and girl are taught in Wisconsin's schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1- Further individual testing after some mastery of English has been achieved might prove fruitful in a further attempt to gain more definite estimates of individual intellectual capacity.
- 2- Coordinated cooperative efforts utilizing the resources of the United States Office of Education and the State Departments of Public Instruction of Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, Arizona, and California might point to more suitable measurement devices for dealing with the Spanish-American minority.

- 3- Grade placement as it is normally viewed is very difficult with a group such as this. The ungraded, one-room school has much to offer the particular needs of this group. Transition from Spanish to English must be gradual. After acculturation and achievement of minimum fluency in English and minimum achievement in reading has been attained, a more meaningful grade placement might be attempted with the aid of standardized achievement batteries.
- 4- Because of the peculiar socio-economic position of the families of these children and their migratory character during their residence in Wisconsin, consideration of a type of travel-school or traveling faculty might help in arriving at the answer for this particular educational problem.
- 5- A careful follow-up plan for keeping in touch with these children throughout the year would be highly desirable as an aid in a careful child study plan which in the long run would enable the educational planning for this type of child to be more meaningful.

CONCLUSIONS:

- 1- The group tested seemed in the opinion of the examiners to be educable.
- 2- Because of the specific handicaps to learning of members of this group, special educational facilities must be made available within the normal classroom structure.
- 3- One very important other consideration in planning the education of this group is the socio-economic position it holds in our society. Education then becomes one part of the total adjustment process of this minority group.

Submitted August 4, 1950 by:

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