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A Review of Sattler and Ryan, Assessment With the WAIS-IV

April Fallon ^a

^a Department of Psychology, Fielding Graduate University

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BOOK, SOFTWARE, & TEST REVIEW SECTION

Book Review

Sattler, J., & Ryan, J. (2009). *Assessment with the WAIS-IV*. LaMesa, CA: Jerome Sattler, Publisher, Inc. (xii + 321 pp.).

Jerome Sattler and Joseph Ryan have published a fresh approach on the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale–Revision IV (WAIS–IV). Sattler has previously provided us expertise in cognitive assessment with his books on the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children and children’s assessment, but this appears to be his first concerted foray into the Wechsler Scales for Adults. It is an excellent resource for students, teachers, and experienced clinicians, providing clear and concise details on the standards for administration, interpretation, and report writing. However, what distinguishes this book from others written on the topic is that in addition to an explanation and delineation of the intellectual elements that the test measures, it offers an additional lens through which to view the raw data. It is a book that considers the client or patient in his or her contextual environment—one that respects the relational examiner–examinee aspects and their possible impact on the results. This review first summarizes the contents of the book, emphasizing the unique ways in which student, teacher, and clinician can each glean something different from the resource. This is followed by a discussion of how their approach affects the framework of interpretation differentiating their work from others.

This book is impressive in its detail of background, administration, and interpretation of the new WAIS–IV given the limited research that is currently available on this version. It is an easy-to-follow, sturdy hardbound book to be used as a reference for years to come. It is of particular interest to the personality assessor in that it encourages the mining of data from this intellectual test for purposes of understanding the individual in his or her broader sociocultural and personality context.

The book is organized into six chapters followed by an additional 100 pages of appendices. Each chapter is formatted similarly with unique content followed by a section on thinking through the conceptual, theoretical, and practical issues; summary; key points; and study questions. This organization is particularly helpful for students learning about the WAIS.

Chapter 1 outlines the general guidelines for administration. It reviews examiner characteristics, implying the importance of viewing the interactive nature between examiner and the examinee of the test. For example, topics such as examiner flexibility, vigilance, eye contact, appearance, self-awareness, and expectancy effects (e.g., halo effects) are explored. The authors provide a handy checklist on general test administration practices, which is useful both for students to review and to serve as

a model for faculty and supervisors to provide feedback to neophyte students. Suggestions for administration beyond what is available in the official manual are provided. Additionally lots of little tips, such as recommendations for efficiently recording responses and guidelines for clarifying responses, provide further elucidation of the administration manual published by Pearson. There is a thorough discussion on the testing of limits and a section on administering to individuals with special needs.

Chapter 2 describes the details of the standardization, reliabilities, validities, factor analyses, and relationships of full-scale scores to indexes. It also provides supplemental information on the administration, including required physical abilities; required auditory, visual, and language functions; and how problems could impact the administration and results. The list of examiner problems provides students with a gold standard for self-examination and gently encourages even the most experienced among us to scrutinize our own behavior on an ongoing basis. The inference here is that our own relational strengths and weaknesses can influence the scores that the examinee might obtain.

Chapter 3 reviews how to administer, interpret, and test the limits of each subtest. In each section, consideration is given not only to the specific cognitive skills required for each subtest, but also the nonintellectual factors or personality factors that can significantly influence performance. That is, in each section or subtest, the examiner is asked to assess how the examinee perceives the task, suggesting that each task could have a cognitive-perceptual meaning that might impact performance. The examiner is asked to consider what problem-solving abilities the examinee is utilizing. For instance, in the vocabulary section the examiner is encouraged to think about the possibility of emotional overtones. In Matrix Reasoning, Figure Weights, and Visual Puzzles, examiners are presented with potential hypotheses such as negativism, apathy, and anxiety. In the Cancellation subtest, questions of anxiety and impulsivity are proposed. One could imagine that attunement to these characteristics could generate hypotheses about aspects of personality and be confirmed by behavioral, self-report, and performance measures of personality.

Chapter 4 covers interpretation, which includes a method for analysis, guidelines for what to pay attention to, and how to know if it is noteworthy to report. Each of the primary factors is reviewed. Factor measurement and meaning are suggested, as well as some guidelines for how to interpret differences between the factors. It introduces the Cognitive Proficiency Index, a procedure not covered in the original publisher materials.

Chapter 5 addresses report writing. It reviews principles of report writing, provides questions and topics to consider in the report, and furnishes examples. In addition to cognitive and memory abilities, attention is given to the importance of the presenting problems, background, familial factors, observations during assessment, the importance of affect (e.g., emotional distress, emotions under control, response to frustration, etc.), motivation, social interactions, and interests. The emphasis on these nonintellectual factors underscores their potentially significant impact on individual functioning.

Chapter 6 focuses on aging and cognitive ability. It details the changes in brain function and physical abilities that occur with aging, and also covers various kinds of dementia. The book finishes with 100 pages of quantitative tables for the WAIS-IV that nicely supplement the materials supplied by Pearson. One of the tables details the indicators of psychological or physical difficulties followed by possible explanations of each.

Many handy charts peppered throughout the book, such as the Behavior and Attitude Checklist, can be used to organize client information. The authors give expressed permission to photocopy them for personal use. Chapter summaries and thoughtful questions are specifically geared for students, making it an excellent graduate school textbook choice, although instructors might wish for the inclusion of a section on the history of the scales, as this lays the foundation for understanding the current tensions in intellectual and personality assessment. Teaching faculty are offered specific methods for organizing feedback to the student. For example, Appendix B details every subtest and allows for feedback of administration and scoring of the WAIS-IV. For the experienced practitioner, each chapter provides a handy reference for questions as they arise. The patient checklists provide a method to organize and flesh out sections of the report, such as behavioral observations. If you want a cookbook, this volume might disappoint, as it offers an approach to understanding intelligence rather than a definitive set of interpretations.

From the beginning of this test's development, Wechsler and others have attempted to articulate and quantify the measurement and relationship between intellectual factors and general intelligence. In his 1950 paper, Wechsler noted "that general intelligence cannot be equated with intellectual ability, but must be regarded as a manifestation of the personality as a whole" (Wechsler, 1950, p. 83). His endeavor to capture elements of personality that impacted intellectual factors were articulated in his Level of Aspiration subtest, which was never added to the final version of the WAIS-R because of poor psychometrics and design flaws (Tulsky, Saklofske, & Zhu, 2003). Over the years the revisions of this test have reflected the tensions of how to measure and tether both intellectual and nonintellectual factors to approximate general intelligence. Indeed, personality assessors indicated that the Wechsler Scales were the most mentioned test utilized in a psychodiagnostic evaluation, even more frequently than the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory and Rorschach (Piotrowski, Sherry, & Keller, 1985). Empirical studies predominantly with the WAIS and WAIS-R reveal multiple efforts to demonstrate specificity as to how the presence of personality factors affects intellectual functioning with mixed results (e.g., Dolan & Anderson, 2002; Hymowitz, Hunt, Carr, Hurt, & Spear, 1983; Myers & Ellis, 1992; Nobo & Evans, 1986; Robinson, 1985, 1986; Shaffer, Erdberg, & Haroian, 1999; Terry & Berg, 1984). The revisions seen in the WAIS-III and now the WAIS-IV have attempted to more closely align the test with current thinking in learning theory

and to accommodate new empirical findings in neuropsychology, neuroscience, and school psychology (Larrabee, 2004). In this process, the subtests that might be more directly revealing of personality, such as Comprehension and Picture Arrangement, have been relegated to substitution status in the calculation of the primary indexes for that reason. Books and studies on the last two versions have similarly emphasized intellectual factors (Benson, Hulac & Kanzler, 2010; Hartman, 2009; Kaufman & Lichtenberger, 1999; Lichtenberger & Kaufman, 2009; Tulsky, Saklofske, Chelune, et al., 2003; Weiss, Saklofske, Coalson, & Raiford, 2010).

It is in the context of the more recent overlooking of the "nonintellective" components of general intelligence that the Sattler and Ryan volume can be examined and applauded. Encompassed within the Sattler and Ryan framework of standardized administration and interpretation, complete with percentiles, validities, and reliabilities, is an overt cultivation to consider the "whole person." Sattler and Ryan give voice to its significance with their excellent line of inquiry and observation of the client, the examiner, and the relationship between the two. Attention is focused on the individual's verbal and nonverbal behaviors before and during test administration. Sensitivity to these allows us to infer hypotheses about problem solving, personality traits, and interpersonal functioning. It is in Sattler and Ryan's assignment of possible meanings of nonverbal behavior that they come closest to stimulating the development of hypotheses about the interplay of personality function and intellectual achievement. The avocation of self-examination of tester behaviors utilizes the more contemporary theories of relational therapy with the inference that one's own relational strengths and weaknesses can influence the examinees' performance. Their encouragement to explore the nonintellective factors that are an integral part of the test and the testing situation upholds the tradition of viewing the person and his or her intellectual facilities within the broader context of human behavior. It supports the notion that intellectual abilities lie within the context of personality functioning.

Although the tables might change and items or subtests might be added or deleted, the approach that Sattler and Ryan take will not be as short lived. It is a deliberate and detailed attempt to balance the competing tensions as to where the examiner's attention should be focused. The approach taken, the questions to ponder, and the salience given to other aspects of the assessment environment suggest a way of conceptualizing the individual that embeds intellectual functioning within the broader aspects of the emotional, social, and conative human being. Their approach harkens back to the words of a brilliant psychologist: "To realize that general intelligence is the function of the personality as a whole and is determined by emotion and conative factors is also just a beginning. We now need to know what nonintellective factors are relevant and to what degree. This is the task which lies immediately before us" (Wechsler, 1950, p. 83). Sattler and Ryan, in an exciting new volume on the WAIS-IV, have articulated and concretized just such a beginning.

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APRIL FALLON

Department of Psychology, Fielding Graduate University