SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE AND PERSONAL COMPETENCE
IN MENTALLY RETARDED ADOLESCENTS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis has been to assess the validity of Greenspan's (1979, 1981) hypothesis that mental retardation should be defined to include deficits in conceptual intelligence (IQ), practical intelligence (adaptive behaviour), and social intelligence (interpersonal skills). Greenspan has combined these three constructs to form part of an untested model of personal competence, which subsumes within it a further tentative model of social intelligence. Both models were designed to provide a framework for the systematic investigation of social and nonsocial competence, and have implications for the definition and diagnosis of mental retardation.

An integral part of this thesis has been the selection and evaluation of a battery of measures, chosen to assess a variety of conceptual, practical, and social intelligence variables. A group of 11 such measures was assembled and assessed in a preliminary study which was designed to ensure that the final battery consisted of reliable and discriminating measures. This small-scale study revealed that two measures were unsuited to present needs, so that two replacements were selected and their reliability established. Furthermore, all measures were modified in order to improve their suitability for use in an Australian special school setting. A preliminary analysis of the pattern of relationships between variables provided justification for a more thorough investigation of Greenspan's models.

A second study addressed a finding from the preliminary study that there were sex differences in test performance, in an attempt to determine whether these results were a consequence of true differences in performance, or due to an interaction between the sex of the experimenter and that of the subject.
The results of this analysis confirmed that the sex of the experimenter did not differentially affect the performance of males and females on a selected test measure, and consequently resolved concerns of a methodological artifact.

The main study was designed to test the construct validity of Greenspan's models of personal competence and social intelligence. Incorporated within this study was a more extensive investigation of the reliability of the social intelligence measures than had been permitted in the preliminary investigation. The internal, inter-rater, and test-retest reliabilities of the seven measures of social intelligence were documented as a necessary precursor to an investigation of validity. Factor analyses of Greenspan's models of personal competence and social intelligence provided partial support for predictions derived from these models. Taking the more general model first, three factors were extracted and labelled 'social-interpersonal competence', 'verbal intelligence' and 'accuracy of inference'. The social-interpersonal competence factor consisted of practical and social intelligence variables which combined to form a more general construct than that predicted by Greenspan. A second analysis completed on the social intelligence measures revealed that this construct could not be hierarchically organized. Six of the seven variables used, however, seemed to collectively define social intelligence. A further analysis of the variables defining the 'social-interpersonal competence' factor, also failed to reveal any superordinate structure to this construct.

A final investigation was designed to assess the criterion validity of the social-interpersonal construct extracted in the preceding analysis. Three measures were selected to represent each of the social-interpersonal, verbal intelligence, and 'accuracy of inference' factors, and these were compared
with three criterion measures of social and interpersonal competence. Two of the three criterion measures served to validate both the social-interpersonal competence and verbal intelligence factors, but did not successfully discriminate between the two. The remaining criterion measure failed to validate any of the factors. Thus, although the construct validity of the social-interpersonal competence construct was demonstrated, the criterion validity of this construct has yet to be established.