INSIGHT

EDITORIAL

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William Hacker, who was listed as a prospective member in issue #1 of this journal, has agreed to become a member of Titan, bringing our total membership to ten. I have included Mr. Hacker's letter in this issue along with my response.

This issue also contains a puzzle submitted by Professor Cedric Stratton. I also received a telephone call from Professor Stratton a few days ago and he expressed enthusiasm for the idea of having annual meetings for our group.

I have received responses to my Trial Test "A" from three of our current members and I have been promised responses by two others. That would mean a 50% response rate from our ten members, which is far better than I would have expected.

Professor Stratton's solutions to the spatial problems have already helped me to correct my solution to problem #34, but I have not yet had time to tackle problems 33 and 35 again. I thank the other participants for their explanations of their solutions to these problems, too. With this help I'm sure I'll be able to figure out the correct answers eventually.

I received a phone call from Chris Cole a few days ago, too, and he mentioned the idea of applying to the MacArthur Foundation for a grant to have my test distributed more widely, e.g., to the alumni of major universities throughout the U.S., so that we can attempt to locate "the hundred brightest people in the country." I will keep members informed of any progress that is made in obtaining such a grant. Chris said he knows Professor Murray Gell-Mann of Caltech, who is on the advisory committee or board of trustees of the MacArthur Foundation, a philanthropic organization with assets of $4 billion that is noted for its particular interest in assisting gifted people. Gell-Mann, of course, is noted for his adoption of the word "quark" from James Joyce's Finnegan's Wake for use in physics.

I still owe members a copy of Vidya, which I neglected to include with the previous issue of Insight, as well as the rest of the scatter diagrams showing scores on my Mega Test vs. other tests.

William Hacker
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Dear Ron,

I have made two cross-country moves since you published Insight #1 (thank God for the name change; now, if you'll just change the name of the society as well--almost anything would be an improvement. That's it!--call it Almost Anything), and have received issues 3 and 4 only this past week. I'll obviously not be able to complete TT "A" by your requested deadline, but I'll try to devote some time to it during July. . . .

A couple of comments:

1. You estimate that 24, the median raw score of the 35 participating Triple Nine members on TT "A", corresponds to the 99.9 percentile. Assuming that most of the 35 both are legitimate Triple Nine members and gave serious effort to the test, your estimate is almost certainly too high. It is likely that the lowest seriously achieved score obtained by the group of legitimate Triple Nine members is only slightly below the 99.9 percentile (assuming that the test is fairly reliable). Given that, say, 25 of the 35 scores are "valid," and that the lowest of these scores is 18, then the 99.9 percentile probably corresponds to 21 or 22. And considering that the 35 scores represent individuals who are more "gung-ho," more highly motivated, more self-confident, than the average Triple Nine member, the 99.9 percentile raw score is probably lower still.

For the prupose of norming this (or any other) unsupervised/-untimed (u/u) test, I think it would be worthwhile to request that test takers supply information concerning (1) time spent (perhaps broken down into categories of useful time (time spent arriving at answers to questions the test-taker had a reasonable expectation of getting correct) and wasted time, and (2) the (subjective) degree to which the test-taker feels he/she gave "his/her all" to the test--reported, say, on a scale of 0 to 10.

2. Frankly, I don't think u/u tests are of much value in gauging IQ. The unsupervised aspect of such tests will unacceptably (and uncontrollably) increase the contribution (relative to IQ) of honesty/dishonesty in the raw score. The untimed aspect will increase the contribution of motivation/perseverence, luck, and reference resources. To put this in technical terms, the large variance in these parameters will contribute to a large raw-score variance, which in turn implies test unreliability.

Collateral information (such as the timing and "level of effort" information I suggested in comment 1) might be used to "correct" raw scores to some extent. But now the honesty of the test takers would assume an even more significant role than before. And two new contributors to corrected raw-score variance would be created--time-keeping accuracy and imprecision caused by the possibily subjective quality of some of the collateral information. Use of collateral information would probably help to increase test reliability somewhat, but not nearly enough, I think.

Still, it's fun to create and take these tests, isn't it?

<div align="right">
Sincerely,
William Hacker
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Editor's Reply:

I have no objection to a change in the name of the Titan Society. Anyone who wants to make suggestions should feel free to do so. I assume that "Almost Anything" was intended to be a facetious suggestion. Here are a few somewhat more serious possibilities that might be worth considering:

(1) (A) The Society of Cerebrators
     (B) The Cerebrators' Society
     (C) The Cerebrators

(2) The Savant Society

(3) The Socratic Society

Regarding my estimate that the median performance of Triple Nine volunteers on my Trial Test "A" would correspond roughly to the 99.9 percentile, this is based on the performance of a similar group of Triple Nine volunteers on my Mega Test. On that test they had a mean (roughly idential to their median) performance of 22 out of 48. This was also about the 99.9 percentile, judging from 187 scores on previously taken tests reported by volunteers from several high-IQ societies. These 187 scores averaged just slightly under the 99.9 percentile, and the corresponding 187 raw scores on my Mega Test averaged just slightly under 22 correct.

When I normed the Mega Test, I did obtain estimates of time spent on the test, but I subsequently made no use of the data since it would be hard to weigh its significance. So I decided that a one month time limit would be a sufficient limitation for my purposes, mainly intended to deter anyone from becoming too obsessed with what is intended to be more an entertainment than a chore.

Regarding the reliability of the test, a member of the Prometheus Society recently objected that one of my problems, namely, the verbal analogy

PAIN : RUE :: BREAD : ?

is "obviously" not a good indicator of intelligence because it is easily solved by someone who knows French. Yet when one looks at the actual performance of people on this problem, the results are striking. Consider the 42 members of Intertel, Four Sigma, and Mega whose performance on each problem in my Mega Test is reported in the test's Score Interpretation Booklet. The above problem is numbered #9 in that booklet. Of the 27 persons who scored 25 or lower, 24 got problem #9 wrong and only 3 got it right, i.e., 89% got it wrong and 11% got it right. But of 15 persons who scored 26 or higher, 2 got problem #9 wrong and 13 got it right, i.e., 14% got it wrong and 86% got it right. Many other problems in my test tend to discriminate just as sharply as this one, despite the fact that the test is untimed and unsupervised. If the test's reliability is seriously degraded by the fact that it is untimed and unsupervised, it is not clear to me how it could have problems that appear to discriminate as sharply as this one. Can people consistently solve this verbal analogy simply by spending extra time on the test, for example? I am inclined to doubt it.

A Puzzle

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Exchange the positions of A and B pieces by jumping over either their own kind, or the other kind. Any jumping order may be used. Jumps as in checkers. Only the empty positions labelled may be used, and all jumps must be horizontal or vertical. You may back-track to retrieve stragglers. No diagonal jumps allowed. The problem is to identify the absolute minimum number of moves to complete the exchange, and when identified (it can be proved that there is such a minimum), to identify the exact midpoint of the sequence by position.

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A A A 0 0 0 0
A A A 0 0 0 0
A A A 0 0 0 0
      0 0 0 0
        B B B
        B B B
        B B B
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