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Study: Tool to assess test bias flawed

Tuesday, August 3, 2010



INDIANAPOLIS, Aug. 3 (UPI) -- The tools used to check tests of "general mental ability" for bias are themselves flawed, a team of U.S. researchers suggest.

Herman Aguinis, director of the Indiana University Kelley School of Business' Institute for Global Organizational Effectiveness, and Steven A. Culpepper at the University of Colorado Denver and Charles A. Pierce at the University of Memphis, created the largest simulation of its kind -- using nearly 16 million individual samples to yield more than 8 trillion pairs of individual test/outcome scores.

They built bias into most samples to resemble real-world results and used newly available super computing technology to check tens of billions of scores.

The study, published in the Journal of Applied Psychology, finds the procedures currently in use overwhelmingly and repeatedly missed the bias inserted in the data.

"The belief in the fairness of the tests and the accuracy of the gauges to check them has been so deeply engrained that to challenge them would be akin to questioning the sun as center of the solar system," Aguinis says in a statement. "The irony is that for 40 years we have been trying to assess potential test bias with a biased procedure, and we now see that countless people may have been denied or given opportunities unfairly."

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