

## How naive are educational psychologists

*G. A. Leyden writes* — It seemed such innocent, harmless fun; p.s.y.c.h.o.m.e.t.r.y. — I guess I don't have to tell you what that stands for. At first I thought I was big enough to handle it, but I know better now. I started by fooling around with the so-called 'soft' tests. You know. A bundle of Binets for laughs, only indulging in an occasional Bender on special occasions. I was just a social tester. But the thrill soon palled and then only the really hard tests could satisfy the craving. I.t.p.a., Oseretsky, Rorschach, Snijders-Oomen, McCarthy Scales, I tried them all in a quest for that ultimate experience. I was so far gone I really could imagine a road from my house to town which was downhill all the way there and downhill all the way back. I lived solely for the next consignment (belated — always belated) from the NFER, greedily devouring the contents for some short-lived relief from the waiting list. As the disease wracked the profession all available supplies were rapidly used up. The NFER began pushing some crudely produced, unrefined stuff. A green inset board that didn't inset. A grotesque ceramic cat that wouldn't fit under the little cardboard boxes induced wild-eyed hallucinations.

I realized I was testing to excess. In the grip of a morbid compulsion I was powerless to resist. My early morning shakes only subsided after I'd knocked back the first WISC of the day. I became an habitue of that seedy, twilight world of school psychological services and child guidance clinics (where psychometrics were freely available to those in the know). Consorting with known psychiatrists and social workers. Once a guy who could keep himself to himself, I was testing around.

The picture was much the same elsewhere although Sheffield introduced Prohibition and Exeter focused on the addict's social system in an attempt to combat the spread. But even in these areas underground 'test easies' flourished where you could pick up a bent Binet or an illicit WISC for the right price. Even the straight stuff was being printed with the Government Health Warning: "Testing can seriously damage your professional credibility!"

The processes of drying out and rehabilitation were painful and have been well documented. But most of us did recover from that particular disease. Some time ago in fact. Times — and practices — have changed. Or doesn't Mr Gregory (October Bulletin) read the papers?

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