

response to an item was to be noted by shading the appropriate portion of the diagram:—

Serial No. of Subject.....
E.S.N. Sample.

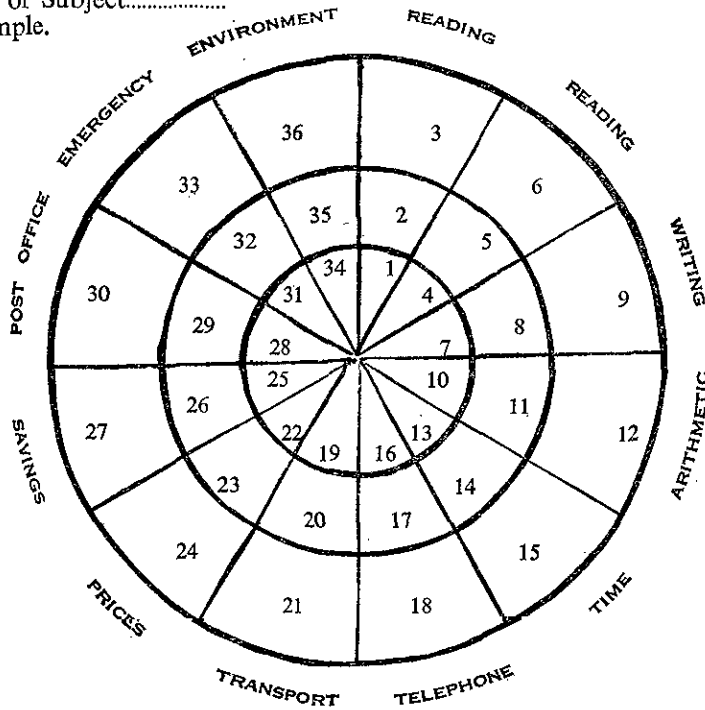


Fig. 1

Two pilot studies were carried out; the internal consistency of items tested by the calculation of phi coefficients; the allocation of items to three areas of progressive difficulty was examined and the reliability of the test as a whole tested by the correlation of split halves of the test.

The analysis proved the second pilot test to be an acceptable instrument and was used on all the subjects of the experimental sample—a group of 62 ex-special school pupils, mean age 19 years 11 months (range 16 years 9 months to 23 years), mean IQ 70.39 (SD 10.2, range 50—96). It was intended to use the test with all the subjects of a control sample of ex-Secondary Modern School pupils (Mean IQ 99.2 SD 6.1, range 90—110), matched for age and area of residence with the ESN sample. After the first dozen boys of this sample had tackled the test with comparative ease, further testing of these boys was abandoned. Asking boys of the ESN sample to submit to the test presented some difficulties. Most of the subjects were very conscious of their deficiencies in reading, writing and general knowledge and were likely to refuse to submit to a test of these subjects, knowing too well that their performance would belie the image they wished to present of their new grown-up status. The investigator recalled the lessons on telephoning, use of time tables and the completion of application forms during the subject's latter years in school and expressed a hope that these lessons had helped him after he left school. He then told the subject that the top classes still had such lessons and that the investigator had made a test to assist the teachers and children. He explained that before the test could be carried out it had to be tried out on as many

boys as possible—the more the better—to see if the questions were too hard or too easy. He then invited the subject to help by submitting to the test. All the subjects agreed to take the test. Four, however, evaded items in which they were required to address an envelope and complete an application form. Initial reluctance usually disappeared after early success on the easy items of Area 1.

Results of the test are given below as percentages of the sample passing items and provide a useful indication of the competence of the sample as a whole in various social skills:—

<i>Item No.</i>	<i>Items, Area 1</i>	<i>% of total sample passing</i>
1	Reading Age above 8½ years	95
4	Sight Vocabulary (1)	89
7	Able to write name and address	94
10	Able to recognise various coins	92
13	Can make arrangements to keep an appointment	92
16	Knows cost of local telephone call	94
19	Can make a journey involving change of transport	95
22	Knows cost of simple everyday purchases (1)	87
25	Knows two official forms of savings	92
28	Recognises postal order	94
31	Knows procedure for calling fire brigade	89
34	Knowledge of environment (1)	92

<i>Item No.</i>	<i>Items, Area 2</i>	<i>% of total sample passing</i>
2	Reading Age between 8½ years and 10½ years	69
5	Sight Vocabulary (2)	79
8	Can address envelope	60
11	Can do simple calculations up to 10/-	74
14	Can use a calendar	71
17	Can make a local phone call	71
20	Familiar with buses in Borough	89
23	Knows prices of everyday purchases (2)	61
26	Understands use of cheque book	81
29	Can differentiate items requiring licence	79
32	Understands need to notify employer of sickness	87
35	Knowledge of environment (2)	73

<i>Item No.</i>	<i>Items, Area 3</i>	<i>% of total sample passing</i>
3	Reading Age above 10½ years	35
6	Sight Vocabulary (3)	60
9	Can complete an application form	48
12	Can do simple calculations over £1	39
15	Knows meaning of 12 noon	73
18a	Knows meaning of 'trunk call'	39
18b	Can find number in telephone directory	37
21	Knows routes to Liverpool via tunnels	39
24	Knows prices of everyday purchases (3)	46
27	Knows meaning of bank interest	50
30	Recognises registered letter	45
33	Understands procedure for claiming sick pay	48
36	Knowledge of environment (3)	77

Reading was investigated by two instruments, Schonell's Graded Word Reading Test and a Sight Vocabulary Test devised for the present investigation. As both tests assess ability to recognise words on sight and correlated highly ($r=.723$; $t=7.2512$; $P=.01$) the need for the second test required some justification. An examination of the results of the graded word test showed 27.42% of the sample leaving school with word recognition ages of eight years or less, a level of attainment of doubtful value in coping with the written word of everyday life. For these boys, reading of newspapers and official forms would be an arduous task, and, no doubt, avoided whenever possible. The Sight Vocabulary Test was compiled therefore to test a form of reading which could not be avoided if the subject was to guard himself from danger, comply with the law or find his way about a town without assistance.

The Sight Vocabulary Test consisted of 15 notices, five in each of the three areas of progressive difficulty:

AREA 1	AREA 2	AREA 3
GENTS	FIRE ESCAPE	TRESPASSERS WILL BE PROSECUTED
DANGER	ENQUIRIES	CYCLING PROHIBITED
NO ENTRY	LEVEL CROSSING	DANGEROUS CORNER
EXIT	LOST PROPERTY	RESTAURANT
CANTEEN	TOILETS	WAR DEPARTMENT

Notices in Area 1 were read correctly and quickly by 89%, in Area 2 by 79% and in Area 3 by 60% of the total sample. The proportion failing to pass the test items denotes the existence of a problem for which no allowance can be made for the limited intelligence of the subjects. If the subnormal is to function freely and efficiently in a community without danger to himself or to others, he must be completely competent in his ability to read notices of the nature of those chosen for the Sight Vocabulary Test. This need for complete competence was very apparent when testing boys who owned motor cycles. Six of the boys were competent, the seventh unable to recognise quickly NO ENTRY, DANGEROUS CORNER and LEVEL CROSSING.

Written English

In the tests of written English 94% were able to write their own name and address, 60% to address an envelope and 48% to complete an application form satisfactorily. Of all the test items this was viewed by the testees with the greatest disfavour and very few subjects tackled the items without persuasion from the investigator. Remarks made before and during the test indicated a lack of confidence common to almost all the sample. Reassurance that they had lost nothing in reading ability did not shake the conviction that their ability to write and spell had deteriorated since leaving school. The large proportion (52%) failing to complete an application form indicates a problem of greater dimensions than the sight vocabulary, but one more easily avoided by the subject. The existence of the problem among parents was known to the investigator. For many years parents had sought his help in completing official forms, seldom without subterfuge. The purpose of the interview sought was generally stated to be an enquiry about their son's progress. When this had been discussed, the form was produced. Misaid glasses was a common reason given for the need for assistance.

Arithmetic

Schonell (1948) assessing the use made of arithmetic taught in schools, claims that nearly 90% of the arithmetic of everyday life is concerned with shopping. For this reason the tests of arithmetical ability were devised as shopping situations—knowledge of the value of coins, the giving of change and mental calculation of the cost of several large items. 92% of the sample recognised the various coins shown and could manipulate them to make up larger amounts. 74% could do simple shopping sums involving calculations up to ten shillings. Only 39%, however, were able to do the calculations necessary for the purchase of larger items involving sums over £1.

Evidence of parents substantiated these findings. One parent complained that she was tired of repairing holes in her son's trouser pockets caused by carrying excessive small change. She was aware that he made no attempt to add up his purchases and, whenever possible, tendered a ten shilling note or a pound note to the shopkeeper. She changed his accumulation of small change for notes at frequent intervals.

Further evidence of incompetence was found in the section of the questionnaire dealing with budgeting of earnings. Only 12% of the sample knew the amount of National Insurance contributions paid weekly and 30% the approximate amount of their income tax.

The remaining items of the test sampled competence in a variety of fields—knowledge of local transport, use of the telephone, post office savings, emergency procedures and knowledge of environment. Where the results can be compared with those of Londt (1960), the institutionalised subnormal shows a lower level of competence than the ex-special school subject:—

	PROPORTIONS PASSING TEST ITEM	
	PRESENT STUDY	LONDT'S STUDY
Able to use telephone	71%	28%
Understands sick note procedure	48%	30%
Knowledge of two official forms of savings	92%	52%
Simple calculations	74%	44%
Checking bills for amounts over £1	39%	30%

A further analysis of the data since the research was completed suggests that the social competence of the sample was associated significantly with success in employment. Dividing the scores of the social competence test into two groups, those above and those below the mean, the association with five categories of success/failure in employment (a scale based on the proportion of time boys had been unemployed since leaving school) was calculated and found to be significant:—

$$\text{Chi Square} = 11.6933 \text{ df } 4. \text{ P} = .02$$

The Social Competence Test proved to be a useful diagnostic instrument, assessing objectively the extent of the problem of lack of understanding of the mechanics of everyday life and a potential instrument for forecasting, when at school, success or failure in employment. The findings did not reveal, however, the subterfuges employed to disguise lack of understanding, the extent to which problems were avoided or how often a capable adult intervened with help or advice. The frustrations of the subnormal in trying to cope in a society geared to normality can be imagined, but are difficult to assess objectively. There was some evidence of an anecdotal nature from parents and some evidence from the research

instruments suggesting that social incompetence was a source of anxiety, frustration and conflict with authority. Of all the problems revealed by the research, however, social competence was perhaps the most tangible and, if tackled before the subnormal leaves school, relatively easy to diagnose and remedy. As often as possible practice should be in the real situation and not through simulated situations in the classroom. A boy who spends a school morning buying a postal order, pricing a transistor set, making enquiries at the bus depot or travel agency, telephoning his findings back to school will gain more life experience than he would in a morning spent at his desk. The business of life is best learned at the main railway station, in the market, in the factory, in the large departmental store, in the Town Hall and in the shop window. The local weekly newspaper contains more useful lessons than the conventional English workbook. In the boy's final year at school there should be a sense of purpose and urgency. The teacher must daily seek out gaps in the boy's knowledge of everyday life, always on the alert to use a situation to practise the basic skills of the adult life the boy is soon to enter.

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