HISTORY OF PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTING

I. DEFINITIONS

A. Psychological test = standardized measure of behavior
   - used to predict behavior
   - varying levels of skill, knowledge required to administer different tests

Psychological assessment = integration of information from various sources
   - to answer questions & make recommendations
   - high level of skill, experience required

B. Testing takes place under Standardized Conditions
   - all takers of a test are exposed to exact same stimuli in exact same manner
   - subject’s responses scored according to strict rules
     -> reduce subjectivity in scoring, reduce bias

C. Tests obtain samples of behavior
   - assume test captures representative behavior

D. Test behavior predicts other (target) behavior
   -> tests are judged on the basis of the predictive utility
   - test behavior need not even resemble target behavior

E. Tests are Objective or Projective

   1. Objective tests = unambiguous information, reliably interpreted

   2. Projective Tests = ambiguous stimuli (no right/wrong or clear answers)
      - person “projects” own needs/desires/problems onto stimuli

II. HISTORY OF PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTING

A. Chinese Civil Service testing
   - written tests to assess language competence for prospective civil servants
   - as long ago as 2,000 B.C.

B. Testing & Error
   - mid-1800's, Wundt studied mental processes to formulate general laws of behavior
   - could obtain consistent results for each person from trial to trial
   - however, differences between people remained
   - viewed these individual differences as error
     -> other psychologists viewed individual differences as important phenomena
       - basis for mental tests
C. **Francis Galton**
- thought intelligence “ran” in families, was heritable
  1) development of statistics
    - measure the extent to which variables are related
    - allows objective measure of heritability
  2) development of assessment of intelligence
    - objective measure of “genius”

Contemporary theory of intelligence based on Locke’s empiricism
- newborn = tabula rasa
  -> knowledge arrives via the senses
- to measure intelligence, obtain index of sensory acuity

**Problem**
- measures of sensory abilities were not related to other measures of intelligence
- could not demonstrate validity

D. **James Cattell**
- studied with Wundt
- individual differences
- from Galton adopted tests of sensory/motor function
- coined term “mental tests”
  -> prepared U.S. for acceptance of psychological tests

E. **Alfred Binet**
- needed to identify MR children, reliably
  - Binet - separating MR from mainstream children
  - measured higher intellectual processes

**Binet’s assumptions**
1) Intelligence grows with age throughout normal childhood
2) Best index of intelligence = verbal ability

**Binet-Simon scale - 1905 (revised 1908)**
- 30 items in order of difficulty
- memory, judgment, & reasoning
- distinguished younger from older children
- scores increased with age for each child
- scores correlated with school grades & with teacher ratings of intelligence
- test distinguished MR from normal children
Lewis Terman (Stanford)
- Stanford-Binet (1916)
- normed on 1000 American kids, 3-13

David Wechsler
- intelligence tests for adults
- revised for children (WISC, WPPSI)

WWI - group intelligence tests
- Army Alpha - for literates
- Army Beta - for illiterates or non-English speaking recruits

III. ETHICS - APA (1992) Ethical Principles

A. Limited test usage
   - very little exposure to actual tests in this class
   - little demonstration of tests/items to other classes

B. Test security
   - exposure to specific items can affect responses
   - could make normative comparisons invalid

C. Informed Consent
   - explain tests
   - explain findings & recommendations