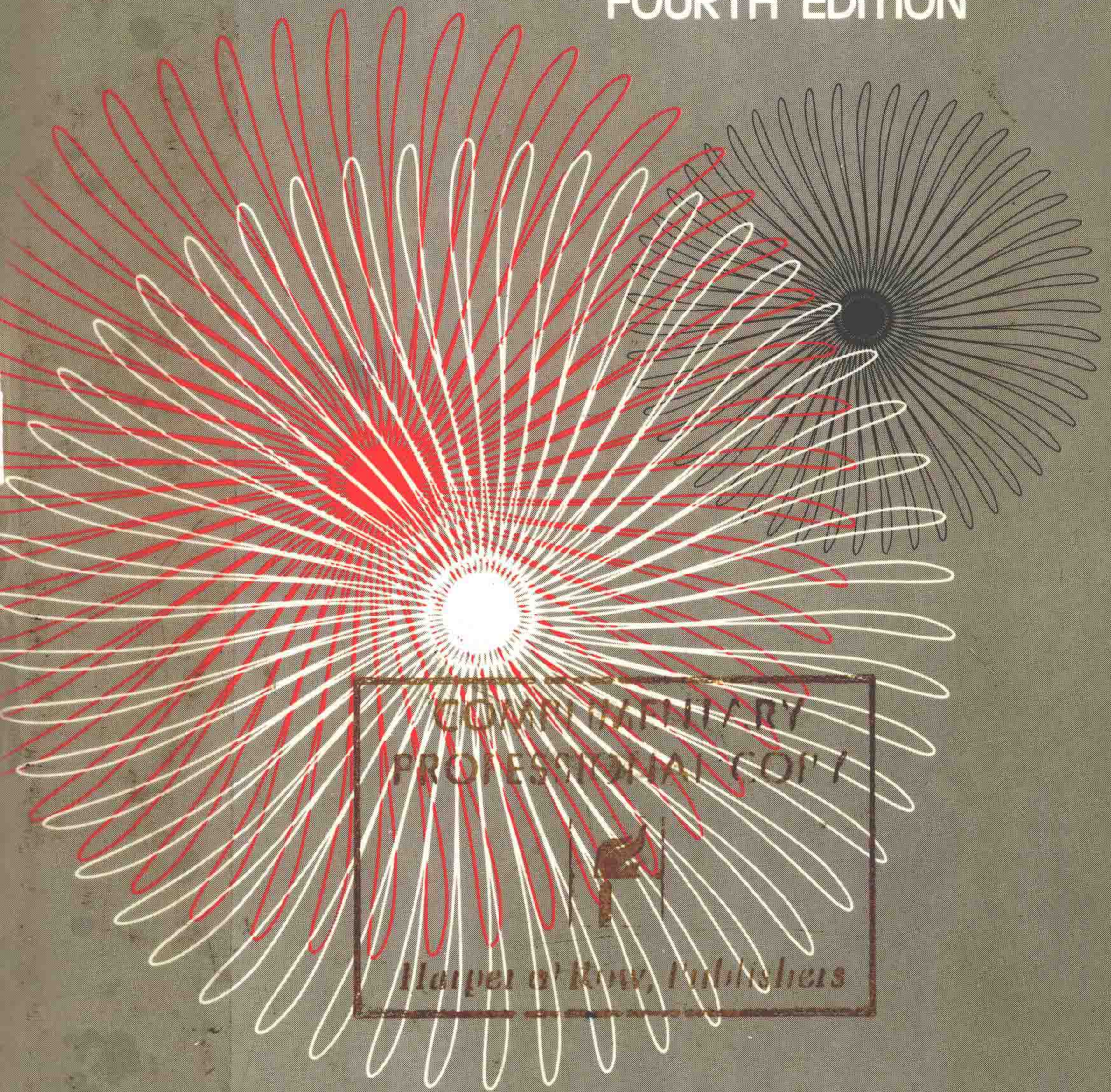


# **ESSENTIALS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTING**

FOURTH EDITION



**Lee J. Cronbach**

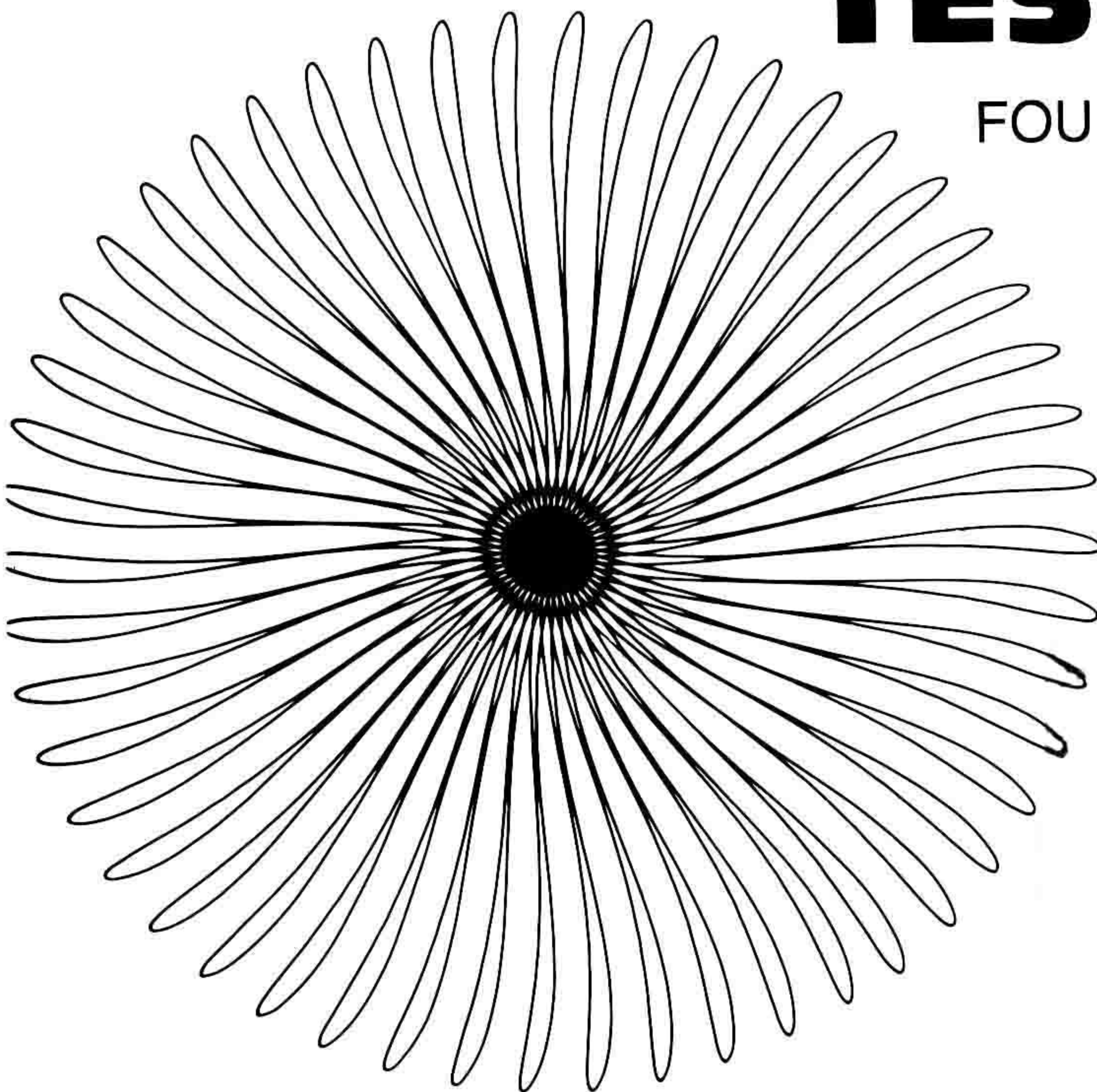


**Lee J. Cronbach**

Stanford University, Professor Emeritus

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FOURTH EDITION



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# Preface

This book is intended for three audiences: professionals in testing, other professionals who encounter test scores and score reports in their work, and citizens. And, of course, it is addressed to students who will be playing these roles. Testing specialists are concerned with constructing, selecting, giving, and interpreting tests. The second audience spreads over many professions. Physicians and teachers receive reports from psychological examinations; lawyers argue cases in which tests supply important evidence and cases where tests themselves are the focus of dispute; business executives pass judgment on plans for employee selection; science educators have to decide whether unsatisfactory test results imply that the curriculum should be changed; and many kinds of research teams work with behavioral data. Thirdly, tests and test findings affect the lives of citizens and their social institutions. Therefore, citizens properly make up the jury when controversies about the role of tests in social management arise.

When a first version of this book appeared in 1949, a reviewer spoke of it as “impatiently contemporary.” He was right—there was much news to tell. The 1940s had seen brilliant applications of testing in military classification and in analysis of breakdowns and emotional disorders. Professionals had come to recognize the role of social backgrounds in the developing of abilities. They had come to prefer multiscore aptitude profiles to single scores, and tests intended to produce meaningful profiles had appeared. The Minnesota Multiphasic had rocketed to stardom in evaluating neuropsychiatric casualties, and observations in standardized stress situations had enabled the Office of Strategic Services to evaluate fitness for exotic responsibilities. The innovations have not fulfilled the hopes of those days, but they revolutionized thinking about assessment.

I trust that this fourth edition can also be called contemporary. It is not “impatient,” though; we have come to realize that human institutions change gradually and that technical advances can generate social problems as well as relieve them. In the 1970s, the push for broader distribution of opportunity has stimulated psychologists to reconsider all the consequences of test use. Through educational classification and employment selection, tests help determine who gains affluence and influence. Tests used in program evaluation affect the fortunes and the efficiency of social services. Reacting thoughtfully to criticisms of test use, the profession has begun to reverse some practices, the most notable advances of the 1970s being the greater flow of information



about tests to those affected by them. In some instances, after considering the alternatives, professional consensus supports a traditional practice; and, of course, the profession is sharply divided regarding some issues. Most of my professional activity since 1970 has been on this policy frontier.

“Contemporary” does not mean topical and transient. The ideas of the 1940s remain important; indeed, an astonishing number of awards given recently for scientific or professional contributions in psychology honored work founded on advances in measurement made in the 1940s and the early 1950s. The 1981 award to Anne Anastasi makes this an appropriate time to salute her as a competitor. The emphasis in successive editions of her text differs from mine, but her interpretations of research and her insistence on professional probity are admirable.

Current topics fit into a historical perspective. The fresh analytic methods of Sternberg, for example, connect with those of Piaget and with the ideas of Binet before him. And the issues in the *Bakke* case trace back to Jefferson. The 1950s and the 1960s were periods of consolidation. To name but two examples, the Test Standards of 1954 and J. McV. Hunt’s *Intelligence and experience* (1961) integrated, elaborated, and dramatized professional perceptions that had been scattered and inarticulate. The 1970s were a period of challenge and disestablishment.

Now the time has come for consolidation at a higher level. A current synopsis should take advantage of the criticisms, explain what resolutions are currently accepted and why, clarify the basis on which emerging techniques and practices are to be judged, and point out promising lines for further development. When such matters are addressed, there is again much news! The aim of this book is to present lessons of experience and theory and to highlight the values that enter into decisions. Undergraduate and advanced students, lay people and professionals will take different things from the book. Each of them, I hope, will become an informed participant in policy formation, and—within the limits of an introductory exposure—an astute user of test information.

I am indebted to many investigators and to staff members of agencies that produce tests for information, including unpublished data. I owe much to opportunities for exchange of views with students and with senior colleagues, notably, in the latter case, as a member of a multidisciplinary Committee on Ability Tests (Wigdor & Garner, 1982). Goldine Gleser, Richard Snow, and J. Thomas Hastings head the very long list of others from whom I have learned. More and more I appreciate how indispensable to work of this kind are librarians and secretaries. Claire Russell, in particular, performed wonders to move this and other work toward completion. My thanks to one and all.

LEE J. CRONBACH



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