An investigation is reported into the measurement of the personality dimension P (psychoticism), which has emerged from factorial and other empirical studies as a third dimension in addition to E (extraversion) and N (neuroticism). Large groups of adult men and women and of male and female students were administered an inventory containing 106 potential P, E, and N items, and the results were factor-analysed. (The Social Sciences Citation Index® (SSCI®) indicates that this paper has been cited in over 110 publications.)

The results of some preliminary work we had done to factor-analyse correlations between items hopefully measuring the dimensions of P, E, and N on 500 adult males, 500 adult females, and 1,400 male and female students. The outcome clearly indicated the existence of three relatively independent factors corresponding to the hypothetical personality dimensions of P, E, and N. Reliability of the P scale, consisting of 20 items, ranged from 0.66 to 0.81 for the various samples tested.

This paper probably has been cited so frequently because it was the first to establish P as an independent psychometric variable descriptive of an important dimension of personality; since then, of course, an enormous amount of work has been done on this concept.1 Much of this work has been concerned with experimental, hormonal, and physiological studies investigating the nature and correlates of the psychoticism dimension, and, in addition, there has been much work to discover special populations (criminals, smokers, etc.) who, according to theory, should have high P scores and those who, in accordance with the empirical evidence, do have such P scores. Of particular interest has been the finding that when a given test (psychological, biochemical, or physiological) discriminates between normals and psychotics, it also discriminates in the same direction between high and low P scorers within the normal and/or the psychotic population.2

It is unusual for a paper published in a British journal to receive so much attention, but the novelty of the concepts probably ensured that it would not pass unnoticed. P is still our favorite baby, and the personality structure of P, E, and N has since been found invariant in 25 different countries.3 The P, E, and N scales, plus a Lie (L) scale, are now available commercially in the form of the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ), a widely used inventory for personality research.4 A detailed review of recent work with the EPQ is available.5