

to identify through quantifiable characteristics. One could, for example, identify acids by using a pH meter. But this test would not define acidity. Indeed, it measures acidity only in virtue of a theory.

By conflating the distinction between a definition and a test used to identify (a criterion), there is a tendency to draw attention away from many variables, in this case variables such as appropriate and inappropriate responses. How these terms function is surely crucial. Moreover, by dropping the entire concept of operational definition and focusing on the variables, Hasenfus and Magaro could conclude not just that 'there are some similarities between operational definitions . . . [that] as measured in the schizophrenic "deficit" does in some instances equal creativity', but rather that there are some similarities between certain schizophrenics and certain creative people. Their conclusion is about definitions, but surely there is more involved.

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LITHIUM

DEAR SIR,

Marini (1977) as well as Brunswick *et al* (1977) criticize our study of RBC/plasma ratios (Lee *et al*, 1975). While Marini's paper contains some mistakes, it does highlight to us a defect in the way our data were presented. We do not claim a relation between the ratio and plasma levels in all patients, but only in some (7 of 12). Where the ratio remains fairly constant despite changing plasma levels, the axis was rotated for statistical purposes which have not always been understood. Our paper makes this point but fails to emphasize it.

Psychiatrists will find the debate difficult to follow, but Marini criticizes our demonstration of the value of using a quadratic equation to explain the

relation because he feels it fails at the one certain point when RBC and plasma lithium are nil. But he argues assuming that '0 ÷ 0 = 0!! By L'Hôpital's rule in such situations, 0/0 can be evaluated and is the ratio of the differential of the numerator over the differential of the denominator.

Marini (1977) quotes old papers implying a passive distribution of lithium. He suggests that the low RBC values reported are due to a lag in achieving equilibrium, but ignore the work of Greil *et al* (1974) who found that equilibrium is established within 8 h. Recently, lithium extrusion from RBCs against an electrochemical gradient has been shown to occur by means of a counter-current exchange with sodium (Haas *et al*, 1975; Duhm *et al*, 1976). This effect was not seen by Maizels (1968) who used sodium-free media.

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