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MEMORANDUM
To: Harold Weisberg
From: Gary Schoener
Date: 4/23/69

Subject: Sirhan psychiatric testimony, with special reference to Newsweek

Note: My background is this: 1966 BA in Psychology, cum laude, With Distinction in all subjects, Cornell University
PhD candidate, Clinical Psychology, U. of Minn.
Research Assistant, Dept. of Psychiatry Research, U. of M.

I am interested in hypnosis and have read much of the experimental literature on the subject. Currently I am engaged in hypnosis research.

1. The Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale cannot be used to detect "psychotic tendencies" i.e. there is not one iota of proof that this is possible--naturally, psychotic behavior can manifest itself during the testing just as during an interview, but the test adds nothing in and of itself--"regressed to infantile behavior" and "fragmented under stress" are terms which are not even accepted as meaningful by many psychologists, nor are their any criterions for their application
2. The MMPI, in which I am well trained, which was developed here, and which my boss (Paul Meehl) helped put together, is badly misused. Idividual item responses have no meaning whatsoever, despite what was said at the trial. The test was empirically derived, so that persons obtaining certain scale scores or patterns of scale scores can be predicted to have certain characteristics. On retesting, although the scales are often quite stable, individual items are answered in an opposite fashion to the first testing. Avoiding responding to the statements mentioned in Newsweek, or the responses to any items, are totally meaningless. The failure to respond to an item has even less meaning than the response to it, and is worth less than nothing.
3. Rorschach interpretation is an art, and there is no indication that it has any meaning whatsoever. In other words, although there is considerable evidence that the MMPI can lead to some very correct statements about personality, there is no such evidence for the Rorschach. There are easy alternatives to every interpretation mentioned in Newsweek. In fact, the examples chosen by Newsweek were absolutely ludicrous, and would be disagreed with by a number of top Rorschachers, which is a dubious distinction anyway. Finally, there is no reason that the Rorschach can't be faked, even without coaching. All you have to do is say queer things. The MMPI has validity scales which can check for this. If the MMPI profile ppovided no good evidence of maladjustment, so that they had to focus on item responses, then I would be interested in exploring Sirhan's validity scale pattern. All of this is true also with the TAT. Finally, projectives are heavily affected by cultural background as are all psychological tests.
4. Using the Bender to diagnose psychosis is utter nonsense. It is a test for deficits related to brain damage. Again, the Newsweek article leaves one with the impression that the only good test, the MMPI, produced no solid evidence of psychosis. If this is true then Sirhan could be faking and the psychologists, in any event, are nuts.
5. The study of Sirhan under hypnosis is absolute bullshit. From the research literature: 1. There is no way to insure that a person is under hypnosis unless they are in deep trance and you can try sticking them with pins--otherwise, faking is easy. 2. There is no evidence that hypnosis produces an accurate or truthful recounting of an event. Quite the contrary. It is easy to produce a distortion, due to either the subject or the demand characteristics (often hard to spot) in the hypotic situation. 3. saying that Sirhan had self-hypnotized himself is totally meaningless horseshit--there could be no evidence sufficient for it. Sirhan could have been in a dissociated state, but there is no way of knowing now. Hypnosis could add nothing but possibly falsery here, or distortion due to subtle cues provided by the hypnotist without his awareness.