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THE USE OF PROJECTION FOR THE STUDY OF THE PUERTO RICAN CHILD: AN UNTRODDEN PATH

The problem

In a study of the vocabulary of Puerto Rican pre-school children, Dr. Ismael Rodríguez Bou¹ pointed out that the content of the children's responses to varied stimulus material prove particularly significant. An expressed desire by the author that something be done with his data by someone willing and able to devote the necessary time to the project became our point of departure.

Some time elapsed before we had an opportunity to examine the stimulus material employed: a series of pictures selected on the basis of ordinary interests of children. An analysis of

¹ Rodríguez Bou, Ismael, "Los niños hablan", *Revista de la Asociación de Maestros de Puerto Rico*. Febrero 1950.

the different responses given by the children to the pictures made manifest its richness in projective content.

The responses of many children to the pictures, one showing a policeman helping a lady and children to cross the street, one child watching other children play with toys, a birthday party and other pictures showing food, appeared important from the point of view of probable deep psychological motivations not easily detected by means of ordinary methods of research. Many children went further than just naming the perceptual stimuli as is to be expected.

Our knowledge of depth psychology did not go beyond the orientation acquired through the study of general graduate courses in educational psychology and the day by day reading of current literature necessary to keep sufficiently informed to teach undergraduate courses in a College of Education. One year of experience under Klein and Blackwell in the study of the Rorschach technique — (University of Texas 1946-47) the administration and interpretation— was the closest we had been to projective techniques and their clinical use.

Thus, in spite of our genuine interest in the Rodríguez Bou material and our conviction that no well conducted research would result in a waste of time, we were hesitant to present it as a suggested topic for a doctoral dissertation. Dr. H. T. Manuel's insinuation, "I don't know how ample your readings on projective techniques have been", led us to matriculate "in absentia" for a seminar course that would facilitate examining the literature more thoroughly. A review of some of the literature has revealed: first, some of the difficulties encountered by clinicians who have used and are using different types of projective instruments for the study of personality; and second, the unsurmountable possibilities discovered so far as careful research and analysis of finding proves the instruments valid. And leaving aside for the time being these particular picture-stimuli and the possibility of submitting them to deep psychological analysis, we have tried insights through a purely literary research. These insights have gone so far as focussing our attention on the use

of projection for the study of the Puerto Rican child: an untrodden path.

Very few studies of Puerto Rican children have been made to this day and most of them in pursuit of statistical data to meet particular purposes. We propose that psychological analysis of children's behavior be made and psychological researches be conducted to discover how well or how badly children are growing up in our overactivated sociological and political medium.

The studies being carried on by the Department of Education and those to be undertaken at the University of Puerto Rico by the newly organized office for the psychological study of children ("Oficina de Evaluación y Orientación de las Escuelas Elemental y Superior de la Universidad de Puerto Rico") will probably have a word to say within the following years.

Aims and Scope of Personality Testing

Guilford, Terman,² and others agree on the present status of psychological testing. Concerning the study of personality, they compare it, by its zeal and effort, to the same zeal and effort exercised in the study and measurement of intelligence many years ago. Terman says: "We are not measuring personality but exploring with improvised tests, too often haphazardly, to see how people respond".³ He wrote so about personality measurement, it is true, some twenty years ago, but there is ground to believe that this improvisation is still going on. Terman was indeed talking in a period when such projective devices as the Rorschach or the TAT were almost unknown.

The last decade has exhibited a profound interest in the objective study of personality. The conventional psychiatric interview and other diagnostic techniques have given way to newer methods of personality assessment considered more con-

² Guilford, J. P., "Trends in personality research", *Education*, 1941, 61, 636-642.

³ Terman, L. M., "The measurement of personality", *Science*, 1934, 80, 605-608.

venient today.⁴ The Woodworth Personal Data Sheet was the first of a long list of instruments all claiming the first place soon after World War I as instruments or methods of assessing human traits. The questionnaire, the rating scale, and the more recent personality inventories have acquired wide reputation and their use does not seem to have suffered loss.

Ellis⁵ made a study of all inventories constructed from January 1946 to December 1951, discovering that more use of personality inventories was made during that period than of any other type of assessment instrument. *The Mental Measurements Yearbook* reviews personality tests of the paper-pencil type for group administration as compared with other more personal, less quantitative instruments. Its emphasis on the paper-pencil type helps sustain Ellis' finding about the wide use of the personality inventory.

The newer methodology being employed for the study of personality commands a word of caution about the former, not necessarily old methodology. The questionnaire, the rating scale, and the inventory ask the subject to express his personality on the basis of overt activity only. Lawrence K. Frank⁶ says that the regular standardized personality test is based on the conception that personality is an aggregation of discrete, measurable traits, factors, and other separable entities which are present in the individual in different quantities and organized according to individual patterns.

One can clearly discover a feeling of doubt about how much one should rely on standard questionnaires and inventories. Besides the undue emphasis placed on the average, mode and median personality, some discrepancy may exist between the overt response of an individual and his underlying psychological processes. We must not undervalue, however, the practical use of said instruments in early research and even most

⁴ Ellis, A., "Recent research with personality questionnaires", *Journal of Consulting Psychology Monograph*, 1944, 30, 3-55.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Frank, Lawrence K., "Projective methods for the study of personality", *Journal of Psychology*, 1939, 8, 839-413.

recent studies undertaken. Our knowledge about adolescence, derived from G. Stanley Hall's zeal and questionnaire research has a great merit indeed.

The whole field of personality measurement has been reinforced by the newer deep psychology techniques to the point that a reevaluation of the concepts about personality has proved necessary. The concept of normality, for instance, has leaned over to individual experience centering around the self and its counterpart rather than the traditional leaning toward the average. The overemphasis on intellectual index based on academic ability has led the way to a more all embracing concept of the total child.

No one would claim, though, that the panacea has been reached. One decade or two of testing has led to the establishment of well equipped, expertly handled, testing divisions in schools and colleges throughout the world. The standard test has become a standard way of studying human behavior to the point of diagnosing one's particular personality make-up according to median or modal tendencies in the population. No more has come out from the use of standard tests and large scale measuring, but reliable data to substantiate sound principles of human behavior. An analysis of "intra-psychic" experience of the individual self, no less scientific, the Q. methodology for example, hitting the inner self, could parallel and supplement the data derived from the use of tests and R. methodology.⁷

Testing in Puerto Rico

The first large scale use of standard tests on Puerto Rican population was made in 1926 by the International Institute of Teachers College, Columbia University,⁸ and probably the first time that tests have been employed in a large scale in two dif-

⁷ Stephenson, William, *The Study of Behavior: Q. Techniques and its Methodology*, the University of Chicago Press, 1953.

⁸ The International Institute of Teachers College, Columbia University, *A Survey of the Public Educational System of Porto Rico*, Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York City, 1926.

ferent languages, excluding the testing program conducted some years ago along with the construction of the Interamerican Tests. Nine thousand five hundred children from the fifth elementary grade through the first year of the university were tested on this occasion. A modified form of the Standard Achievement Test was employed for testing reading, arithmetic, information, language and spelling. The Pintner Non-Language Mental Ability Test and the Thorndike College Entrance Examination were used with school children and university students, respectively, as a means of assessing their mental ability.

The Commission recommended the use of scientific methods for measuring the work of the schools, based on the experience derived from two decades of testing in Continental America and pointed out the need for the establishment of a bureau of research in the Department of Education.

No mention was made, however, of the probable effect of a rapidly changing culture on Puerto Rican children and even less about small or large scale measurement of the same.

This aspect dealing with the evaluation of the Puerto Rican personality and its counterparts is yet to come. Varied aspects of the personality of school children will have to be studied scientifically so that other facets of the personality, besides achievement and intellectual capacity, may be evaluated.

A little study of the kind was made in 1949 as a part of a locally conducted Survey of the Observation Schools of the University of Puerto Rico. Such angles as the children's attitudes toward the school, their introverted or extroverted disposition their tension-producing areas, and the nature of their levels of aspiration were studied. The unpublished report⁹ includes the use of Bell's School Inventory, Pintner's Aspects of Personality, and Lee-Thorpe's Occupational Interest Inventory, upon translation privileges granted to the College of Education of the University of Puerto Rico for this particular use.

⁹ Survey of the Observation Schools of the University of Puerto Rico. Report of Committee on Child Guidance; Ramón Romérez López —Chairman (Typed Copy).

The Testing of Intelligence

The measurement of intelligence on an individual basis started with the translation of the Stanford Revision of the Binet Simon Scale in 1926.¹⁰ Afterwards, two other translations of the Stanford-Binet, Revised Edition, Form L, have been made, although no norms or adaptations based on experimental basis were attempted. Credit goes for the Division of Educational Research and Statistics of the Department of Education of Puerto Rico for the translation, adaptation, and development of norms on experimental evidence for the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, Stanford-Binet, Revised, Form L, and the Goodenough Intelligence Test.¹¹ The Wechsler Bellevue Test of Intelligence was recently translated with minor adaptations by Mercedes Rodrigo and Jorge J. Dieppa.¹² As a rule, Continental norms are employed in view of the lack of locally determined norms. In spite of that, the study of behavior along with tests and the results of tests has gained wide acceptance in Puerto Rico.

Tests to discover the general ability of students have been employed during the last 25 years. Special mention must be made of one really serious attempt to build a test of achievement for Puerto Rico and to develop norms, by Fred C. Walters and Mercedes Chiqués Walsh.¹³ No other attempt at standardization of an achievement test is known.

The University of Puerto Rico started employing ability tests to screen college entrants soon after the above mentioned test had been used. No attempt has yet been made to screen students on the basis of nation-wide tests, except by the College of

¹⁰ Fred C. Walters, Malvina L. Monefeldt, and Alfredo Silva, *The Stanford Binet Intelligence Test* (Translation-mimeographed).

¹¹ Roca, Pablo, "Problems of adapting intelligence scales from one culture to another", *Revista de la Asociación de Maestros de Puerto Rico*, April 1954.

¹² Rodrigo-Bellido, Mercedes and Dieppa, Jorge. *Manual de Instrucciones de las Pruebas de Inteligencia Bellevue*, Psychiatry & Neurology Service, Medical Division, Veterans Administration Center, San Juan, P. R., 1953 (Mimeographed).

¹³ Fred C. Walters and Mercedes Chiqués Walsh, *Detalles del Test Hispanoamericano de Habilidad y Aprovechamiento*, University of P. R., College of Education Publications, No. 13, 1935.

Law, the School of Medicine of the University of Puerto Rico, and by the Department of Education for selection of personnel for promotions in school administration and supervision. Yet nation-wide tests like the Graduate Record and College Entrance Examinations are administered more than once every year for candidates applying for admission to colleges and universities in continental United States.

Testing has been gaining more and more acceptance. The Veterans Administration maintains a testing division under expert care. So does the Department of Education and the University of Puerto Rico. Testing is constantly going on in these centers, thus reinforcing the work of the psychiatrist, the psychologist, the guidance expert or counselor. A newly established Office of Evaluation and Guidance at the Elementary and Secondary Schools of the University of Puerto Rico may be leading the way for more service centers of this type.

The Study of Personality using Projective Devices

Resenzweig¹⁴ does not consider the apperceptive devices as tests in the strictly psychometric sense. Their different relationship to traditional statistical norms, as well as the dependence for their interpretation on "intra-individual psychodynamic content", give them a unique character. The peripheral strata of the personality may constitute conscious, well-studied patterns of disguise to cover up real motivations of behavior. The apperceptive or projection tests aim at studying underneath the periphery.

The responses given by the individual under the standard method of testing personality, we have said, must be studied with some degree of caution, in spite of the group tendencies and mean or modal behavior tendencies of the population revealed by them.

The responses elicited to projection stimulus material may

¹⁴ Rosenzweig, Saul, *Psychodiagnosis*, Grune and Stratton, N. Y., 1949.

be constitutive, the subject imposing structures upon amorphous substances such as clay, finger paint, or semiorganized fields like the Rorschach cards; they may be interpretative, the subject organizing his self around structured stimulus material such as the figures in the Murray's Thematic Apperception Test; they may be cathartic responses, the subject releasing repressed energy through canals of expression well in line with his repressed desires.¹⁵ We could well refute Resenzweig saying that projective devices certainly are a different kind of tests aiming no less than other standard tests to assess personality.

Gestalt psychology, with its emphasis on figure and ground, on the importance of organization and configuration rather than on addition of constitutive parts, brings a dynamic conception of personality which is the underlying thesis of projection testing. As Lawrence K. Frank puts it, . . . "a process of organizing experiences and structuralizing life space in a field".¹⁶

It is the private world of the individual which projection aims to disclose. Frank invites one to reflect upon the emergence of personality as an outcome of the "interaction of cultural agents and the individual child". He sees no surer road than putting individuals in the position of projecting their inner selves without their awareness of doing so. This we have to accept in a rather complicated theorem not from the point of view of what a child, adolescent or adult human being is able to do with either structured or unstructured stimulus material, but from the point of view of the interpretative efforts of those in charge of assessing and describing the personality make-up of the individuals tested, or as Abt and Bellock say, "the functional study of the individual . . . the intrinsic structure and internal properties of the system itself".¹⁷

As contrasted with behaviorism, the dynamic, functional, and holistic theses of historical psychology lie back of the pro-

¹⁵ Frank, L. K., "Protective methods for the study of personality", *Journal of Psychology*, 1939, 8, pages 389-413.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Abt, L. E., and Bellack, Leofold, *Projective Psychology*, Alfred A. Knopf, N. Y., 1952.

jective technique, giving it a special detachment as a device highly significant for the study of human beings.

History of Projection

The majority of people out of the university circles, and even many within, are not informed about what is projection and how it came into being.

A rather distinguished couple in our campus recently stopped us in front of the main library to inquire about "that Rorschach affair" they had been hearing about. It has to be so because the history of projection is a fairly recent one. The term *projection* was given wide currency by Lawrence K. Frank in 1939.¹⁸ Back in 1839, however, Francis Galton was deliberately working with the word-association technique, which Sigmund Freud used later on as free association paving the road of psychoanalysis. Alfred Adler and Carl Jung followed by using association as a way of unfolding experience thus revealing complexes. More recent attempts at projection are the Rorschach Inkblot material appearing in 1921 and Murray's use of the apperception figures appearing in 1935. Information on projective techniques has begun to appear in textbooks in psychology lately, in spite of the great amount of literature appearing in periodicals since the decade of the thirties. The more recent editions of the *Mental Measurements Yearbook* review projection tests as accepted not to say standardized tests of personality.

Recent expositions in the field by Abt and Bellock, by Bell, and by Anderson and Anderson review not less than eight different projective tests.¹⁹ Although the Rorschach and the TAT are coming to the attention of the public more and more, other devices like finger painting, figure drawing, sentence comple-

¹⁸ Rosenzweig, S., *Psychodiagnosis*, Grune and Stratton, N. Y., 1949.

¹⁹ Abt, L. E. and Bellack, L., *Projective Psychology*, N. Y., Knopf, 1952.

Bell, J. E., *Projective Techniques: A Dynamic Approach to the Study of Personality*, N. Y., Longmans, Green & Co., 1948.

Anderson, G. M., and Anderson H. H., *An Introduction to Projective Techniques and other Devices for Understanding the Dynamics of Human Behavior*, N. Y., Prentice-Hall, 1951.

tion, and others, merit mention as forms of projection no less valid.

Attempts at using projection to study behavior problems of the Puerto Rican have been rare. No published report is yet known. Carlos Albizu Miranda²⁰ has made a study of the influence of social class membership upon the selection of certain Rorschach factors, using a population of middle and lower class individuals, for his doctoral dissertation in clinical psychology in Purdue University.

A private report of a little piece of research by Mrs. Patria C. Crespo of the College of Education may also be mentioned. She collected anecdotes of first grade and second grade children of the Elementary School of the University of Puerto Rico for a study to be continued under Professor Jersild of Teachers College, Columbia University.

Puerto Rican Cultural Condition Commands Study Through Projection

Ayala²¹ refuses to accept the phenomenon of collision due to culture contacts in Puerto Rico. Concerning the language problem, he defends the North American influence and recognizes no linguistic hybridism or bilingualism, but points out the alteration of language patterns to best serve socio-political relations between the Island and the Mainland. There exist in Puerto Rico nevertheless basic cultural patterns not less important other than language, religion, social and economic changes, work trends and widely publicized political transformations. The nature of these forces, the speed and conditions in which they happen to occur may be producing a particular effect on the Puerto Rican personality. Could this effect be disclosed early in the life of children, these could be guided more wisely.

²⁰ Albizu Miranda, Carlos, "A study of the influence of social class membership in the selection of certain Rorschach factors", Indiana University (Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis).

²¹ Ayala, Francisco, "The transformation of the Spanish Heritage", *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, January 1953, pp. 104-9.

Steward²² describes three Puerto Rican subcultures—the tobacco farmer, the coffee planter and “agregados”, and the sugar potentate and “jornaleros”. The study of these subcultures made by Kätheleen Wolf²³ about what it means to grow up in these different cultural media is worth reviewing and represents a serious attempt to study the Puerto Rican from the point of view of sociological research. It is the beginning of a proposed long study of the Division of Social Research of the University of Puerto Rico. In the sense that it has emphasized the subcultural differences, the distinctive life ways found among certain segments of the rural population rather than the common denominator of Puerto Rican culture, we can see in it an attempt that, developed further from the point of view of psychological analysis, might reveal the inner crust of the Puerto Rican if studied projectively. Rodríguez Bou’s material and his suggestion that something be done with it again comes to our attention as one of a series of attempts that could be made to reach deep into the developing self of the Puerto Ricans.

Let us not go too fast. We might need first many studies of varied aspects of behavior using questionnaires, inventories, and the like before we attempt serious study using projective devices. The path will have to be trodden before anything can be achieved.

Projection we must accept, would be best suited than questionnaires, inventories, or scales to study the effect, if any, that a changing culture may be producing in children. The method has developed enough so that it can be employed in large scale group testing. Harrower and Erickson²⁴ have proved the validity of such tests as the Rorschach Group Test and the Multiple Choice Rorschach. There are also evidences of the TAT being used to study large groups of individuals at a time.²⁵

²² Stefflard, Julian H., “Culture patterns of Puerto Rico”, *Annals of the American Association of Political and Social Sciences*, January 1953, pp. 95-103.

²³ Wolf, Kätheleen, “Growing up and its price in three Puerto Rican subcultures”, *Psychiatry*, 15, Vol. No. 4, Nov. 1952.

²⁴ Harrower, M. R. and Steiner, M. E., *Large Scale Rorschach Techniques*, Charles C. Thomas, 1951, Springfield, Illinois.

²⁵ Clark, R. M., “A method of administering and evaluating the TAT in

The newly organized Puerto Rican chapter of the American Psychological Association registering over sixty psychologists will certainly bring new interest and give the necessary impetus to these things. Students are showing a great interest in psychology as a profession. The plans for the establishment of a graduate school at the University of Puerto Rico may also open the door for the preparation of psychology experts and the beginning of many varied researches in the field.

Researches based on projection paralleling other large scale studies using standard group tests will help uncover aspects of the Puerto Rican individual thus far viewed only "a priori".

Summary and conclusions

A study of children's responses to several picture stimuli suggested by Dr. Ismael Rodríguez Bou lead us to deal with the problem of projection as a method that could be employed in the study of the Puerto Rican child. A survey of some of the psychological literature around the field of projection as a method and a measuring device has been necessary. The advantages of projective techniques over other standardized well-known forms of testing for assessing personality have been considered.

The incursion has taken us to the following conclusions:

1. The scientific study of children in Puerto Rico is very limited as compared to the same type of studies in the United States.
2. Tests of different kinds have been used in Puerto Rico for a number of years. We tend to consider them as the standard way of assessing personality.
3. The use of projection as a method of studying behavior is just about to take a start. Sporadic attempts have

group situations" (Ph. D. Thesis-University of Californai), *Genetic Psychology Monograph*, 1944, 30, 3-55.

been made on a very small scale, but no results have been published.

4. Projective techniques like the Rorschach Test and the TAT have been tried enough as group techniques to consider them valid devices for psychological study.
5. Upon the desirability of learning about the effect of a rapidly changing culture on Puerto Ricans, studies of children using projection devices could be attempted to parallel other studies using better known group tests.