

Suggestions concerning Modification of Standard Techniques in the use of the Lowenfeld Mosaic Test in the Study of Non-Western Peoples

Objective

Since the constituent parts of the L.M.T. have been made up of materials familiar to Western peoples, uncertain assumption in regard to them will be implicit in all Western users. It is unlikely that any of these would be spontaneously present in non-Western peoples, except through their contact with the West.

In order, therefore, to make sure that the response of the non-Western subject will be spontaneous, certain modifications in technique are essential.

Analysis of the development of responses by Western children to the L.M.T. (i.e. subjects who, because of their youth, cannot already have had experience of this type of materials) has shown that there is a regular series of developmental stages which occurs in practically all children. In the present state of our knowledge of the test it is impossible to distinguish in these responses that part of the response which arises from immaturity in itself and that which is caused by unfamiliarity with the material.

In non-western peoples it is clear that the materials composing the test will be completely unfamiliar. In some studies, i.e. of children, the immaturity factor will also be present. Before the significance of responses made by non-Western separate these factors from one another. These notes are designed to assist in such discrimination.

Notes on the Modification of Technique for Use with Non-Western Peoples

Early Stages in Response of Western Children

The stages of response to the L.M.T. are as follows:

1. Picking up and handling the pieces and putting them in the mouth.
2. Picking up blocks of pieces, throwing them about or picking up single pieces, looking at them and dropping them anywhere.
3. Picking up single pieces, the eye being caught by the colour, looking at them and dropping them anywhere on the tray.

4. The subject picks up one or more pieces and places them on the tray. His eye is caught by a resemblance between the shape of the piece or a pile of pieces and some other object and he puts a name to this resemblance, calling a single diamond 'kite' or a pile of square pieces 'hankies'. **This is known as the 'kite' reaction.**

5. The subject takes one or two pieces out of the box and puts them anywhere in the tray, looks at them, showing interest mainly in the shape. By pushing one piece against another he discovers the equality of the sides of some of the pieces and that making use of this equality brings about a new shape – thus two half-squares pushed together make a square or two equilateral triangles a broad diamond. Pleasure at this discovery leads, at the most primitive level of this response, to repetition of the first discoveries, so that the tray becomes covered by pairs of pieces, placed either at random on the tray or in rows across the tray. This response is termed **objective experimental response.**

What has been described above is the initial form of this response. The same essential procedure can be and is developed along several lines, leading to the successful or unsuccessful formation of Fundamental Patterns, or of simple geometric combinations involving a few pieces at the time but not falling into the class of Fundamental Patterns. All three modes of combination can and are often used by the same subject, and also combined with the placing of single pieces on the tray.

6. Certain subjects, having placed a few pieces on the tray in order to observe their general characteristics, suddenly see them as drawing materials and arrange them to produce on the tray the shape of some previously known form. This is called the **Form Response** and appears in four varieties:-
 - a) Use of the pieces placed end to end to form lines which present to the maker the **outline** of an object.

 - b) The pieces are placed on the tray ignoring their exact form or colour and without any careful fitting of piece to piece, so that taken together a 'gestalt' appears, representative of some definite object. This is called the **Fox** variety (after a very successful example of this type of response made by a Swiss child of 5 years).

 - c) The colour and form of the pieces are carefully observed, and the pieces fitted carefully together so as to produce an accurate representation of an object. This is known as **Rhinoceros** variety (from a very successful rhinoceros constructed by an Englishman). All can be simple responses but b) and c) can show considerable power of imagination and constructions.

- d) It may be expected in certain social and anthropological groups accustomed to the making of traditional patterns through combination of pieces or shapes somewhat similar to those composing the L.M.T., that these patterns would be made with the L.M.T. material. These would then be called **Traditional** variety.
7. Some subjects follow a different line of development and make use of the pieces without the desire to product the appearance of objects, and without interest in the geometric appearance of objects, and without interest in the geometric relation between the pieces. The pieces are then placed in juxtaposition to each other, but without geometrical correspondences. This is called the **Slab** response. The resulting mass of pieces may be small or large, single or combined with other forms of response.
8. In all the response so far considered **the tray** has played no part **as a defined space**, the pieces have been placed on it in the same way as they would have been were the tray part of a table. In response 8 the reverse occurs – the focus of response of the subject is the **tray** which to him constitutes the main feature of the test and appears as a **defined space to which he is required to respond**. In such a response the box of pieces becomes secondary and the selection of pieces is made in response to the qualities of the tray. This is called the **objective space reaction**.

Suggested Modifications in Technique of Administration

Stages in response:

- (1) (Stages (1), (2) and (3) refer to handling the pieces only,

In the standard mode of administration for Western people instructions concerning the pieces are given by the investigator before the subject has any opportunity to handle the pieces, and with this technique any possibility of the appearance of stages 1 – 3 is precluded. Only the individual judgement of the anthropologist at work can therefore decide with each individual piece of investigation whether or not it is desirable merely to **present** the box and the tray without saying anything about them at first, in order to give the subject the opportunity of taking out the pieces, examining, biting them, etc.

- (2) It is probably unwise to use the double box with non-Western subjects, as this amount of material can be rather overwhelming and, at any rate at first, it may be wise to use the single box. It is also suggested that, instead of replacing in

the box pieces used in explaining the test, these might be laid in the lid, so as to serve as examples of the shapes to be found in the different racks.

- (3) Experience has shown that there is a very definite semantic difficulty in being sure that the words used in the definition of the goal 'make something' will really convey to the subject that an entirely spontaneous result is desire which need not conform to any standard of excellence. It is suggested, therefore, that a pilot trial be made using different words, and that the completed designs then presented to fresh persons of the same group, with an enquiry as to what word they would use to describe it.
- (4) Owing to the point raised under (1) it seems provable that the practice factor will be more powerful with non-Western than with Western peoples. The writer feels it would be unsound to draw deductions from **single** samples of designs from any culture hitherto unstudied by mosaics.
- (5) In work with new groups, careful note of the **method** by which the result is arrived at is even more important than with Western peoples, as, owing to the inherent geometric relations of the pieces, juxtaposition can arise by chance which, looked at from the point of view of the completed design, appear to have a coherence which is quite illusory.

Suggestions concerning the general plan of work

1. That a pilot trial be made of the response of selected subjects, and the carbon copies sent to Dr. Lowenfeld, Institute of Child Psychology for comment (carbon copies of mosaic designs are made by placing two sheets of paper on the tray with **writing**, or 'pen', carbon paper between the two. The carbon copy may be on thinner paper.)
2. That in every case in the **pilot group** the test be administered twice to the same individual with, if possible, an interval of one day or more between.
3. That the designs be put before suitable similar subjects for general evaluation, i.e. 'are these nice?' 'Which are better? And so on.
4. That trouble be taken to ascertain what the subjects think about the colours of the mosaic pieces: Do they like them? Would they prefer other colours? Etc.
5. That the carbon copies of designs be accompanied by a note concerning the prevalent colours, in the country under study, of vegetation, houses, dress, etc.