

ROSENZWEIG PICTURE-FRUSTRATION STUDY (P-F)

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A projective test which assesses patterns of reaction to typical stress situations. It is an all-too-obvious fact that frustrating experiences are a common feature of everyday life, and it is equally apparent that they provoke emotional responses. Building on these two facts, S. Rosenzweig (1947--49) has constructed a test which presents the subject with frustrating situations on the theory that the way they are handled will be a significant index of emotional adjustment. The test consists of a series of cartoon situations which depict frustrating circumstances experienced in everyday life. In one of these cartoons, a car splashes a pedestrian and the driver says, "I am very sorry we splashed you. I tried to avoid the puddle"; in another, a woman had just knocked over a vase, and the hostess says, "How awful! That was my mother's favorite vase." The characters are shown without facial expressions or special posture that might suggest the nature of their reactions, and the subject is asked to indicate what the second person in the situation would reply, writing down the first words that come to his mind. It is assumed that he identifies with the frustrated character and that his replies are a projection of his own typical reactions. After the twenty-four situations are presented he is asked to read aloud both the printed speeches of the frustrating character and his own responses. The examiner takes note of any significant omissions or inflections in his voice during the reading. The responses are basically interpreted in terms of three types of aggression. First, "extrapunitive" responses are directed outward, at people or things. In the first situation above, the pedestrian might swear at the driver or demand that he pay his cleaning bill. Second, "intropunitive" responses are directed inward, toward himself; the pedestrian might say, "It was my fault. I should have stood farther away from the curb," or "I guess I didn't look where I was going--as usual I did a stupid thing." Third, "impunitive" responses make light of the problem and are usually delivered in a conciliatory tone; "It was an accident. It could have happened to anyone," or "Don't worry, it was an old suit." The examiner is also alert to three other kinds of reactions to frustration: "obstacle-dominated" responses, in which the problem created by the experience is emphasized; "ego-defensive" responses, in which a defense mechanism is used; and "need-persistent" responses, which focus on the solution of the problem. In scoring the test these three possible reactions are combined with each of the three aggressive reactions described above, to give a total of nine possible responses. To illustrate, the following replies in the splash situation are all extrapunitive, but the first is obstacle-dominated, the second is ego-defensive, and the third need-persistent: "I am sorry too, the suit is new," "Why don't you watch where you're going", and "What about cleaning the suit". Responses to this test have been thoroughly analyzed, and norms are available. Two of the most important considerations are the consistency of the responses and the general trend throughout the entire series of situations. A subject who says, "I'm sorry," in all situations is bound to be responding in an inadequate and inappropriate way on some of them--for example, this remark is more appropriate in the broken vase situation than in the splash situation. Inadequate responses of this kind often indicate low frustration tolerance, a sign of immaturity. The test itself presents so many situations that it is important to note changes in the mode of response while it is being given. This would be an important indicator of the way the subject would handle a long series of frustrating situations. There

is also a children's form of the P-F test designed for ages four to fourteen, presenting situations that might occur in any child's life. This test is handled in the same way as the adult form except that the examiner makes an additional analysis of responses, noting what special needs are being thwarted and whether the frustrating person is another child, a parent figure, or other individual. Both forms are usually administered in conjunction with a battery of projective tests. Although the P-F test is primarily used in assessing personality and adjustment, it has also been employed in studying the way different racial and nationality groups react to frustration. In addition, a similar technique has been applied in studying attitudes toward minority groups and opinions on social issues such as the prevention of war.

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