

The Lowenfeld World Technique: Studies In Personality

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BOOK REVIEWS

THE LOWENFELD WORLD TECHNIQUE: STUDIES IN PERSONALITY. By RUTH BOWYER. Pergamon Press, 1970. Pp. 223 + xiv. Price: 40s. hardback, 25s. flex. cover.

Most child psychologists and child psychiatrists will agree that young children sometimes re-enact personal problems whilst playing with small toys. The problem is to differentiate fictitious, imaginative play from revealing recapitulations. The idea of presenting the child with a standard set of toys and a sand tray on which to place them has obvious attractions for those who believe that communication with young children is facilitated through their play. The Lowenfeld World Technique goes further, and claims that the child's personality is revealed in the 'World' he constructs in the sand tray.

Bowyer's work first failed to see light of day when it was prepared for a book which was never published. She chose, in this second attempt, to summarize previously published papers—both her own and others—although this involved some repetition. For this reviewer, the high point of the book is reached on page 90 where Charlotte Bühler changes see unexpectedly on the last line. Otherwise, little else relieved the tedium of reading uncritically paraphrased papers presented in a series of disconnected, but repetitive chapters.

Anastasi long ago pointed out that one of the major problems in using projective techniques is that '... the interpreting of scores is often as projective for the examiner as the stimuli are for the subject'. Where there are unstandardized scoring procedures the need for reporting inter-scorer reliability is great. Despite this, the reliability of the World Technique is mentioned only in passing, and is reported to be 'High'. Validity is examined in a very quaint way. The 'Worlds' of 150 mental defectives were assessed and descriptions of each patient's personality and intelligence written. The descriptions were by an experimenter, and ten members of the hospital staff voted as to whether the description was like the patient or not. The staff were not asked to rate the patients independently beforehand, so that criterion contamination was maximized.

Elsewhere, the discussions on validity follow the now familiar pattern of special pleading one expects from champions of the projective hypothesis. Firstly, this is not a 'test', it is a 'technique'. It's not a test in the usual sense of the word, and its standardization is not relevant'. (p. 69). Secondly, '... their validity depends on how they are used, and cannot be shown beforehand to have a general coefficient of validity out of context'. (p. 77).

This book is not a very critical account of the sparse literature on the World technique. Bowyer frequently cites work which was in progress many years ago, the results of which were not available at the time the original papers were written. The very least one could have expected when the papers were translated into chapters was an up-dating of the findings. Even this modest expectation was not fulfilled.

Whilst the use of play material will continue to contribute to the form of communication between adults and children, there is still a great need to evaluate the validity of play techniques as diagnostic aides as opposed to exploratory interior techniques.

WILLIAM VITZ.

THE STUDY OF THE WHOLE MAN

An Introduction to Hominiology. By TIMONORA C. KAHN. Springfield: Charles C. Thomas, 1969. Pp. 365. Price \$12.50.

This book was primarily written to describe the course of studies originated and developed by the author at the Southern Colorado State College, where he is Head of the Department of Behavioral Science. An integrated study of mankind, embracing his origins, development, cultures and future, is clearly necessary, as even so traditional a university as Oxford has recently decided, but it is a pity that Dr. Kahn has chosen such an inelegant, hybrid title as 'Hominiology'. It may give to many in this country an impression of something rather bogus (which it certainly is not) in the way that people regard astrology, phrenology or scientology. A more descriptive title, such as 'An Integrated Study of Mankind' or even his own subtitle 'The Study of the Whole Man', might well be more acceptable.

The author describes in bits and pieces throughout the book what he means by hominiology and its aims, and it would be helpful if this were fully propounded in the beginning. In particular, the first four pages of the last chapter, with slight modification, might well be integrated into the introductory chapter.

In summary it might be said that hominiology was designed (1) to facilitate the comprehensive study of mankind, by providing an essentially non-disciplinary framework for impartial consideration of all pertinent facts and theories, (2) to provide a forum for students and experts in the numerous disciplines concerned with mankind, from palaeontology to philosophy, to ascertain the basic facts and theories of each discipline, and thereby broaden their horizons and help to effect greater tolerance

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