

THE BENDER-GESTALT TEST AND PSYCHONEUROTICS

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SINCE the publication of Bender's (3) "Visual-Motor Gestalt Test and its Clinical Use" many attempts have been undertaken to validate the clinical findings which she outlined in her Monograph.

In his "Tentative Guide to the Administration of the Bender-Gestalt Test" Hutt (7) did more than anyone else to put into practice the clinical use of the Bender-Gestalt, but his findings on Psychoneurotics have not been confirmed by empirical studies. However, it is of interest and encouraging to find many of the subsequent empirical studies substantiating most of the original clinical uses outlined by Bender and Hutt.

Both Bender and Hutt recommend the use of the Tachistoscopic method (presenting the nine Wertheimer figures one by one with a five-second exposure) and the copy method (reproducing from each card as it lay before them). None of the empirical studies, to the writer's knowledge, makes use of the Tachistoscopic method. This seems surprising since Bender affirms that by this method the level of maturity may be ascertained and Hutt postulates that it uncovers primitive trends and it may therefore be useful in incipient psychosis and brain damage. In fact, in his clinical findings on Psychoneurosis, Hutt takes into consideration both methods when he sums the pattern of responses of the psychoneurotics.

In an attempt at quantification Pascal and Suttell (8) have used only the copy method and come to the conclusion that it does not discriminate neurotics from normals, and Woltman (1) affirms that it fails to show "Personality disturbance in the neurotic personality because they seldom invade the Visual-Motor Sphere".

Such a statement appears to ignore the Gestalt concept since any pattern of action, spontaneous or deliberate, may be expected to vary in maturation, levels of growth, pathological states be they either organic or functional. The time to organize the Gestalt is of clinical, and diagnostic importance. A concentration on the quantification and validation of the copy method ignores completely the principle of Gestalten.

Yet, the step forward, as the result of Pascal and Suttell's quantification and validation, is so great that one is grateful for such a scoring system which gives:

- (1) A prognostic score in mental illness. Pascal (8) and Suttell, Swensen and Pascal (10).
- (2) Alcoholic signs. Curnutt (4).
- (3) Malignancy. Hanvik and Andersen (6).
- (4) Differentiates normals from psychotics. Robinson (9).
- (5) Gives organic signs. Pascal and Suttell (8).
- (6) Correlates highly with EEG in children. Hanvik (5).

However, when the Tachistoscopic method is used one finds that the "Personality disturbance in the neurotic personality" does invade the Visual-Motor Sphere.

The Tachistoscopic results are scored as in the copy method. This may be questionable but it is justifiable when one accepts the Gestalt principal in relation to a time factor in a temporal situation. It is for this reason that both the copy and Tachistoscopic method were used and scored according to the Pascal and Suttell method and third score added namely the difference between the copy and Tachistoscopic scores.

Herewith are the analyses of variance between three groups: normals, anxieties, and hysterics when scored according to Pascal and Suttell on the Tachistoscopic administration.

		Sum of Squares	df.	Estimate of Variance	F.	Level of Significance
Anxieties and Hysterics						
Between	..	1187.08	1	1187.08	6.006	
With	..	11462.77	58	197.634		
Total	..	12649.85	59	214.404		(5%)
Normals and Anxieties						
Between	..	2411.072	1	2411.072	15.308	
With	..	10712.3	68	157.504		
Total	..	13123.372	69	190.194		(1%)
Normals and Hysterics						
Between	..	2919.6	1	2919.6	13.283	
With	..	14946.4	68	219.8		
Total	..	17866.0	69	258.933		(1%)

Again the Tachistoscopic method has been found by the writer to be that which is most sensitive to changes when working with pre- and post-leucotomy cases. The difference score appeared to pick out those whose prognosis was favourable. Patients, who, from the Psychiatric Social Worker's Reports, appear to have made a good adjustment give a smaller difference score while poor adjustment cases obtain a large difference score. It has been further found in clinical experience that this method is also sensitive enough to pick out the insidious organically involved patients.

SUMMARY

The Tachistoscopic method in presenting the nine figures of the Bender-Gestalt Test is recommended as scored by Pascal and Suttell scoring norms. This method and scoring is much more sensitive in picking out personality disturbances than the copy method. A third score is suggested namely, the difference score. Analyses of variance are given on three groups, normals and anxieties, normals and hysterics, anxieties and hysterics. Here it is found that the Tachistoscopic method discriminates at the 1 per cent. level of significance between normals and anxieties, and normals and hysterics and discriminates further at the 5 per cent. level between anxieties and hysterics. Those tables are inserted merely to suggest the possibility that further work on this method is justifiable with a hope that validational studies might be forthcoming.

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