

COLOR AS AN INDEX OF THE FILIPINO CHILD'S DEVELOPING PERSONALITY

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This exploratory study was developed as a result of an interest in the diagnostic and developmental implications of the Luscher Color Test, as applied to the Filipino setting. Three hundred sixty (360) Metro Manila school children participated in a 2 x 2 x 3 factorial design, with age, sex, and SES as independent variables. The resulting color profile is consistent with earlier findings showing violet as the most preferred color, except among the 10-12 year olds who chose yellow. Second preference established red as most common among the younger children and yellow for the older age group. The findings with regards to the color characteristics of structure and function are discussed in the light of the dynamics of personality development.

Color has often been associated with personal characteristics since the earliest times. In psychology, pioneering studies (Guilford, 1939, Goldstein, 1939) attempted to demonstrate the effects of color on movement, varieties of sensation, and the subject's general attitude. Likewise, attempts at assessment of developmental features of perception and cognition, were made utilizing color-form preference categorization (Fortier, 1953; Ravens, 1956, 1962). It was, however, the Rorschach Inkblot Method (1944) which consistently showed pure color responses (C) dominating those of younger children; color-form (CF) responses dominating those of older children, with C responses dropping off rapidly; and at a later stage of childhood through adolescence and into adulthood, form-color responses (FC) dominated. Such findings suggested the direct relationship of color with the developmental process. This implied the development of color response from an immediate experience that dominated perception, to one where it was integrated with form. The shift from color to form dominance was attributed to maturation; increased personality differentiation from affective to intellectual; increased meaningfulness of the environment in terms of utility; less concern for primitive characteristics; increased verbal skills; and introduction to reading and writing (Goldfarb and Klopfer, 1944).

Today, there are those who believe that the greatest promise of psycho-

diagnostics rests on the individual's sensitivity to color. This was attributed to color's sudden impact on perception which cuts through rational deliberation. Despite the apparent logic behind the use of color as a diagnostic tool, there are very few techniques based on color responses alone. When the Luscher Color Test was introduced in 1947, it provoked discussion among specialists. The apparently simple methodology aroused skepticism (Burros, 1972), and conflicting views persist (French, 1971, Klar, 1961, 1964, 1968; Flehinghaus, 1961; French and Alexander, 1972).

To facilitate understanding of Luscher's color psychology, two basic color characteristics merit interpretation: Structure and Function. Structure, defined as the "objective meaning" of a particular color remains the same regardless of its position in the individual's order of preference. For example, the color Blue has the objective meaning of "peace and tranquility." On the other hand, Function, or the "subjective attitude toward color," varies for every individual. In the Luscher Color Test, the subject is required to rank the eight color panel from most to least preferred color. The color most preferred is placed in the first position, while the least preferred is placed last. By observing where in the row a color occurs, one can determine what "function" that color represents. Blue in the last position, for example, represents a lack or a rejection of tranquility and peace.

Using the Luscher Color Test, Flehingham (1961) examined the color choices of 1,600 pre-adolescent school children and found that 75% preferred Violet as first color choice. However, he noted that "with increasing age and a progressive change in ego differentiation, the percentage of those with predilection for Violet decreased and that decrease was marked in boys than in girls." Violet, in the Luscher Color Test, is a shade midway between Red and Blue; the state of parallelity suggested effort to unite without achieving this. For Luscher, Violet was an "expression of a fluctuating state of indecision, and an unstable ambivalence between the active component of red and the passive of blue" (Luscher, 1970). Klar (1961) observed this unstable and indefinite color of Violet to be the choice of those who, due to hormonal changes, were unstable and undecided within themselves and were prone to imaginative daydreaming, and fantasy. Likewise, in a study of backward children, ages 10 to 12, (Klar, 1968) the preference for Violet was prevalent. This was attributed to developmental delays based on prolonged years of magical thinking. This concept is similar to Freiberg's (1953) "magic years" of early childhood wherein primitive thought processes result in imagination and fantasy images.

METHODOLOGY

The research utilized a 2 x 2 x 3 factorial design with age, sex and socio-economic status as independent variables. Sex was operationally defined as male and female. Socio-economic status was divided into high (HSES) and Low (LSES) groups. Considered HSES were individuals who reside in the areas designated as upper middle or upper income bracket — in this case, Greenhills, San Juan, or Quezon City; presently studying in a private co-educational school — specifically, OB Montessori Greenhills and OB Montessori Sta. Ana; and whose parents have a college education and are either professionals or have their own business.

Subjects considered to be LSES were individuals who reside in economically depressed areas — in this case, Malibay in Pasay; presently studying in San Juan Nepomuceno School, a parochial school run by the Religious of the Assumption in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Culture; whose parents have an average grade school education and are either skilled, semi-skilled, contractual or casual workers, market vendors, or unemployed.

Subjects were further divided into three age groups: Young (Y) which included those 4-6 years, Middle (M) between ages 7-9; and Old (O), between 10-12 years old. Age distinctions were made in order to explore the existence of variation in color choices in the Luscher Color Test.

The results of the Luscher Color Test, eight color panel — specifically, the first and second color preferences and concentric/excentric approaches are the dependent variables focused on this paper. The first color preference represents the individual's essential method or *modus operandi*. It is the means which one adopts to enable him/her to achieve objectives. The second color preference symbolizes the objectives and goals of the individual.

The added structural components of concentricity and excentricity in the eight color panel of the Luscher Color Test, shed light into the individual's orientation toward the world. According to Luscher, the four psychological primary colors of blue, green, red and yellow, should occur in the first five positions of the eight color test in order to suggest a "healthy psychological system." Concentric means passive, or subjectively concerned. Operationally, concentric is defined as the predominance of blue and green in the first half of the row of color preference. Excentric means objectively concerned, actively interested in the environment either from the viewpoint of imposing upon it through one's behavior, or drawing from the environment for stimulation. Operationally, excentric is the predominance of red and yellow or both in the first four positions in the order of preference.

Sampling

A total of 360 children were purposively selected as the subjects of this study. Two schools were chosen, taking into account the specified criteria for HSES and LSES. From each SES, 180 children were chosen with 60 children for each level specified, boy and girls evenly distributed (see Table 1)

TABLE 1

Independent Variables of the Study and Corresponding Number of Subjects (N=360)

SES	SEX	AGE GROUP		
		(Y) 4-6	(M) 7-9	(O) 10-12
HI	male	30	30	30
	female	30	30	30
LO	male	30	30	30
	female	30	30	30

Procedure

Three researchers, with B.S. Psychology degrees, were trained to facilitate data gathering. Each researcher obtained the following information from the child: date of birth, number of siblings, position of the child in the family, occupation of father, occupation of mother, preferred play activity alone, preferred

play activity with others.

After the short interview, the Luscher Color Test, eight color panel, was administered to the child. An average of 20 minutes was spent with each child.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Violet as a First Color Preference

In a frequency count of the first color choices, there was a predominance of Violet across ages, sex and SES. The result supported the findings of Flehminghaus (1961) on the color choices of pre-adolescent European children in the Luscher Color Test. As such, one can hypothesize the universality of fantasy experience as an initial method of working out one's relationship with the environment; and the apparent popularity of the color Violet among children, at least in the German speaking countries, and now in the Philippines. The realm of imagination and day dreaming is the child's initial attempt to understand and adapt to seemingly overwhelming environmental inputs, irregardless of whether these inputs are occidental or oriental.

Interestingly, the one way ANOVA of the first color preference of Violet, as shown in Table 2, yielded significant differences across the three age group ($F=3.657$; $p < .01$).

TABLE 2

One way ANOVA of First Color Preference-Violet across three age groups of Filipino Children

SOURCE	SS	DF	MS	F
A. (Between)	1.68889	2	.844446	3.657**
Within	82.43330	357	.230906	
Total	84.1222	359		

** $p < .01$

On the other hand, the results in Tables 3 and 4 indicated these differences are a factor of age and maturation.

The Second Color Preference

The second color preference for this particular group of Filipino children re-

fect an extroverted, outgoing orientation. A frequency count established Red as the most common second color preference for younger children (4 to 6); yellow dominated those of older children (7 to 9). As outgoing and excentric colors, Red and Yellow differ in their fo-

cus — Red, in the Luscher Color Test suggests extraversion, active physical exploration through touch, sight, taste, hearing; while Yellow suggest a mental expansiveness associated with intellectual development.

Significant difference across age, for the combined excentric colors of Red and Yellow as second color preference in the Luscher Color Test ($F=6.08$, $p < .01$) was obtained.

TABLE 3

Percentages of the First Color Choices in the Luscher Color Test across Age and Sex for LSES Group of Filipino Children

SEX	AGE GROUP		
	4-6	7-9	10-12
M	Violet 36.67%	Violet 30.00%	Yellow 36.67%
F	Violet 46.67%	Violet 40.00%	Violet 33.33%

TABLE 4

Percentages of the First Color Choices in the Luscher Color Test across Age and Sex for HSES Group of Filipino Children

SEX	AGE GROUP		
	4-6	7-9	10-12
M	Violet 43.33%	Violet 36.67%	Violet 20.00% Yellow 20.00%
F	Violet 53.33%	Violet 46.67%	Violet 43.33%

TABLE 5

One way ANOVA of Red and Yellow as Second Color Preference in the Luscher Color Test across three age groups of Filipino Children

SOURCE	SS	DF	MS	F'
A (Between)	2.42222	2	1.211110	6.08**
Within	71.10830	357	.199183	
Total	73.53060	359		

** $p < .01$

The findings indicate an outwardly oriented objective for the Filipino child. An earlier choice of red suggests the need to physically know the world. This

knowledge is processed through the five senses which filter external stimuli to suit the child's level of physical matu-

rity. On the other hand, the later choice of yellow suggest the developmental

readiness for mental assessment through logical deduction and analysis.

TABLE 6

A 2 x 2 x 3 ANOVA of Concentric/Excentric Scores of the Luscher Color Test across Age, Sex and SES among Filipino Children

Source	SS	DF	MS	F
A (Sex)	4.44458	1	4.44458	1.577
B (SES)	49.87740	1	49.87740	17.693**
C (Age)	35.93870	2	17.96940	6.374*
AB	2.17822	1	2.17822	.773
AC	8.50562	1	8.50562	3.017
BC	6.10596	2	3.05298	1.083
ABC	7.00488	2	3.50244	1.242
Within	981.00200	348	2.81897	
Total	1095.06000	359		

**p < .01

*p < .05

Concentric/Excentric Scores on the Luscher

Concentric and excentric scores of the different age, sex, and SES groups were also investigated. The results shown in Table 6 suggest the presence of significant differences between SES ($F=17.693$; $p < .01$) and among age groups ($F=6.374$; $p < .05$). The discrepancy between the color preferences, in terms of concentric/excentric content, is present in males 4-6 years old, both LSES and HSES, with the excentric or outward oriented approach more prevalent in HSES group. This can be attributed to early and positive socialization with adults at home, parents, yaya, peers and teachers in early childhood education settings, television, and books. The presence of the yaya, though controversial in western child rearing approach, appears to be an important factor in social interaction. This adult, initially hired to attend to the child's physical needs, generally provides emotional support as well, by virtue of close daily interactions with the child. As a result, the HSES child has a headstart in the development of self-esteem, social awareness and confidence.

Increase in excentric scores among older LSES males may be due to the early freedom provided, through necessity of home situation. In LSES, children are left to fend for themselves while parents search for daily subsistence. The lack of caretakers and the necessity of constricted living conditions make it necessary for the LSES child to orient himself to the world outside the home. Whether he is ready or not, he becomes "street wise" in order to survive and learn "coping techniques that are used for achieving adaptive ends" (Landa Jocano, 1975). These techniques are learned early through imitation and sometimes through deliberate instruction. But, "as fast as these are learned, so are they discarded when they cease to be useful in coping with everyday problems."

On the other hand, the chances of the HSES male to be exposed to environmental threats which require the alertness and adaptability of his LSES counterpart may not be present. His orientation therefore, is often restricted to the structured set ups of school, home and peer group. Generally, these reflect and reinforce existing HSES values and attitudes. Moreover, there is a tendency for

HSES to place importance on the education of male children as they are carriers of family name and honor. With this future set before the child, his needs are anticipated to minimize obstacles and conflicts which may defer him from the valued goal — that of academic achievement, career, and life success.

A prevalence of excentric colors are likewise noted in the 4-6 year old and 10-12 year old HSES females. The emphasis on social orientation for this SES group may account for alertness to social cues and emotional nuances, especially among important others. These children, by virtue of their SES, are oriented toward the development on interpersonal skills, specifically manners, protocol, and consideration of others. Breeding is the mark of one's acceptance in HSES, as it reflects the socioeconomic level. Likewise, the opportunity for HSES to be exposed to endeavors such as travel, television, films and books further contribute to their prevalent excentric orientation. The HSES female is further freed from the necessity of undertaking domestic chores, unlike the LSES who as Landa Jocano (1975) observed, are "expected to participate in household responsibilities such as caring for younger siblings."

The 7-9 year old HSES female appears to withdraw slightly from more outgoing pursuits. This reflects the "entrance into life" as Erikson terms the stage of "Industry versus Inferiority." For the 7-9 year old, that life is school life. In this period, "the child must forget past hopes and wishes. . . imagination is tamed and harnessed by impersonal things — even the three Rs" (Erikson, 1950). This period coincides with formal schooling and the beginning of a long and structured training geared for future success. The child learns to associate future success with "bringing a productive situation to completion." Thus, efforts at achievement gradually supercede the whims of play.

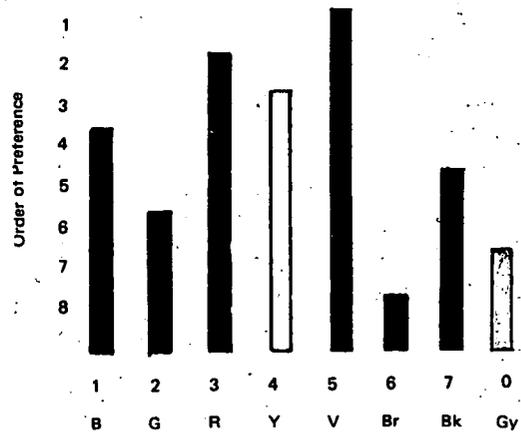
On the other hand, the LSES group, age 4 to 9, display an increased excentric orientation suggesting an expansion in socialization. This is brought about by the school environment and the learning of new skills which provide a glimpse of

a world outside the community. For a brief moment, at the ages 7 to 9, the LSES female has an opportunity to expand her horizons through school. It is, however, short lived and tapers off as she enters age 10 to 12, when her activities take on more realistic pressures of domestic responsibility. In a home where parents are often concerned with economic survival, the child is required to take on the role of caretaker of siblings, foregoing further academic explorations.

THE FILIPINO CHILD'S COLOR PROFILE AND DEVELOPING PERSONALITY

Age 4-6

Fig. 1. Color Preferences of Filipino Children Aged 4 to 6 years.



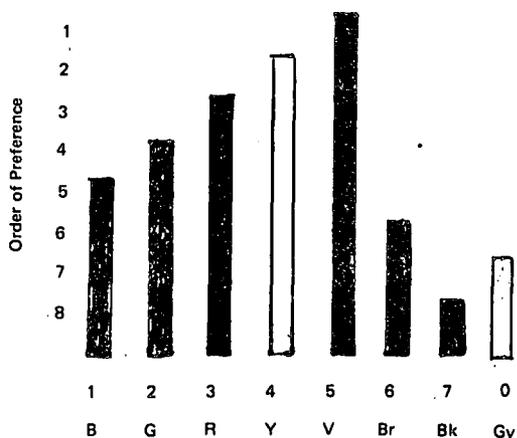
The general eight color profile of the 4 to 6 year old Filipino child as seen in Figure 1 indicate reliance on fantasy as a means of interacting with one's world. Fantasy, as represented by Violet in the first position, suggests the child's effort to fit, what is perceived in the environment, to existing primitive mental systems. Magic is reality and reality, magic at this stage. The world appears less constricted by rational "shoulds and dont's." Freiberg (1953) described these magical years of childhood as one where the child "is magician. . . in the psychological sense. . . his actions and his thoughts can bring about events." The color Violet is equated, by Luscher, to "enchantment, a dream made fact, a

magical state in which wishes are fulfilled." Scott (1970) notes that the preference of Violet among pre-adolescents highlights the fact that "to them, the world is still a magical place in which they have only to rub Alladin's lamp for the slave to bring them what they want. . ."

Red as a second color choice for the 4 to 6 year old, represents the desire to physically explore one's world. Together with Violet, the combination suggests an egocentric concern characterized by "a free possession of a surplus energy which permits one to forget failures quickly, and to approach what seems desirable, even if this is uncertain and dangerous with undiminished and more accurate direction." (Erickson, 1950). It is not surprising that physical and active play is the initial means employed by the child to explore the world and to test newly developing locomotor skills. An informal survey of play activities of the sample population displayed a distinct (63%) preference for spontaneous and free physical exploration: "Habulan," "Taguan," "Sipa."

Age 7-9

Fig. 2. Color Preferences of Filipino Children Aged 7 to 9 years.



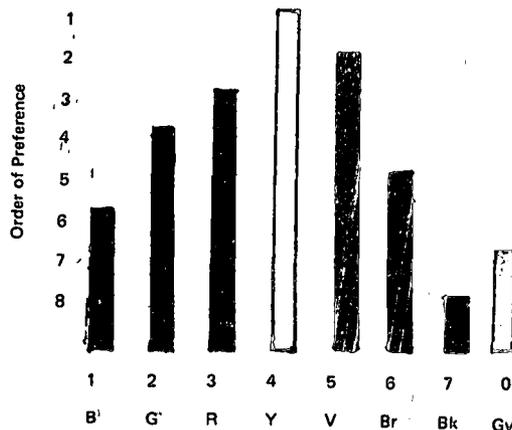
The first color preference of Violet for this age group, as shown in Figure 2, still indicates an active fantasy life. However, the second color choice of Yellow, suggests an acceleration in the intellectual sphere, and a concern for an objective understanding of the world. As this period heralds the entrance to

school, the focus is an increased concern for formal learning, and acceptance by a wider sphere of people. Acceptance by others entails adaptation to social convention and group mores. Conflicts brought about by the need to conform are worked out at the fantasy level. The child's position in this wider field suggests "an entrance to life — in this case, school life — where one puts aside hopes and wishes while exuberant imagination is tamed and harnessed to the laws of impersonal things" (Erickson, 1950). Yellow as a second color preference suggests the goal of intellectual expansion, a choice which supercedes and curbs physical priorities. The years 7 to 9 appears to be a period of transition. It is characterized by further refinement of visual motor skills, as one learns how to write and read; and the beginning of increased differentiation from affective to intellectual.

The first and second color preference of the 10 to 12 year old subjects suggests the flowering of Erickson's concept of "Industry versus Inferiority." This appears to be an intellectually expansive stage characterized by the growing need for affect changes in the environment. Erickson (1950) noted that "to bring productive situations to completion is an aim which gradually supercede the whims and wishes of play." Ego boundaries include tools and skills. The child learns the pleasure of work completion by steady attention and diligence.

Age 10-12

Fig. 3. Color Preferences of Filipino Children Aged 10 to 12 years.



It is likewise, a socially decisive stage as it "involves doing things beside and with others, giving the first sense of division of labor and of differential opportunity leading to a sense of identity" (Erikson, 1950). Yellow, representing mental and intellectual expansion, is the first color preference for this age group. It reflects the increased development of basic academic skills and with it, more access to new knowledge and understanding of cause and effect. With increased capacity for planning, anticipation, aspiration, the child tends to be future oriented. Violet as a second color preference, represents fantasy and imagination as a means of working out plans and schemes. Interest in adventure no longer needs to be acted out, but instead becomes a mental exercise. The development of reading and writing skills facilitate the journey to uncharted courses, and unstructured mobility tends to decrease.

The developmental and adaptive process, as discussed by Goldfarb and Klopfer (1944) are reflected in the first color preference of Violet in the Luscher Color Test, particularly in the subtle change of preference, with age. Fantasy, as symbolized by the color Violet, represents the child's method of dealing with the environment. The quality of fantasy, however, is affected by the developmental process. The shifts from Violet to Yellow as first color choice for older (10-12) children suggests the gradual replacement of fantasy by an expansive, outwardly oriented, mental curiosity. "Magical thinking" characterized by primitive mental systems are replaced by rational thought processes, based on reality experience. The older child confronts crisis utilizing learned socialized and structured methods of cause and effect.

SUMMARY

The Luscher Color Test has provoked controversy and skepticism despite the extensive history of color responsivity as a diagnostic variable in Clinical Psychology. The present focus of this paper, the exploration onto the richness and usefulness of the Luscher Color Test as a diagnostic tool, yielded some success. Of

principal importance is its apparent capacity to discriminate across age groups. Moreover, the first color preference of Violet among Filipino children, appears to support an earlier study made by Flehinghaus (1961) on pre-adolescent European children. Such findings suggest the universal character of fantasy and imagination as the initial method of working out one's relationship with the world.

A profile for the Luscher Color preferences of three age groups of Filipino urban children was presented, although it cannot be claimed as representative of other Philippine regions. Nevertheless, such findings could provide a springboard for further investigations. Finally, the results of the exploratory study suggest the usefulness of color, due to its capacity to cut across more sophisticated functions of form and style. This suggests that color, indeed, may be the greatest promise and challenge of psychodiagnostics.

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