

SELECTED PROJECTIVE METHODS IN ASSESSING PERSONALITY CHANGES IN KINDERGARTEN AND PRIMARY AGE CHILDREN

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STRESZCZENIE

Celem niniejszego opracowania jest przybliżenie czytelnikom wybranych psychologicznych testów projekcyjnych do badania osobowości, jako narzędzi badających przemiany osobowości dzieci w wieku przedszkolnym i wczesnoszkolnym.

W niniejszej pracy autorzy przedstawiają wybrane testy projekcyjne, przydatne do badań przemian osobowości dzieci w wieku przedszkolnym i wczesnoszkolnym, poprzez badanie ich preferencji, kompetencji wewnętrznych, cech charakteru i aktualnych stanów osobowości. Przybliżają w niej także pojęcie przemian, osobowości projekcji.

Introduction

The aim of this study is to describe selected psychological projection personality tests as tools that help assess personality changes in kindergarten and primary age children.

Man has always been intrigued by a possibility to ascribe various senses to forms he saw and has always used unstructured stimuli to boost his imagination.

Year by year and day by day in our private and professional life, at home and at work, among friends and among strangers we put on masks to hide our real personality, often without even realizing it [Tarczyński 1997].

The authors of this paper present selected projection tests useful in personality change assessment occurring in kindergarten and primary age children through studying their preferences, internal competences, personality traits and momentary personality state. They explain the term of change, personality and projection.

In all projection methods the studies focus on ways to project our hidden personality traits, tools we use to cope with reality and emotional states of the studied people. Like a film projector we transfer our desires, emotions, problems, fears and expectations onto our surroundings [Gotlib 2000: 13-14].

The study of personality is an active process of searching data needed to make decisions, about activities aiming at the change of men's actual psychosocial state or used to assess these changes [Paluchowski 2001].

A study can be two-directional, as it is an important link in the information flow between social practice in its wide sense and psychology as a science. Various study models can be defined [Brzeziński 2000; Piotrowski 1991; Siek 1986; Strelau 2000: 257-270].

Every psychological test is rooted in a certain concept, which can define personality in various ways. There are a great number of psychological tests and scarcely fewer personality definitions. Hence prior to presenting particular methods the authors should define personality.

Personality was defined in various ways depending on theoretical assumptions adopted. According to the most general definition personality contains everything that can be said about a person. It is also a skill or ability in social interaction, evaluated in terms of obtaining positive reactions in others, in various circumstances; in short, it is the most obvious impression a person makes on others [Siek 1993, Pervin 2002].

It is well known that there are very many personality theories in psychology and everybody who is involved in this science tends to present their own theory [Reykowski, Kočańska 1980: 10-11]. All the more so that on the basis of relations between an individual and their surroundings we can develop virtually infinite number of characteristics and any attempts to reduce them (classify) result in *almost every researcher selecting their own features. Consequently, there are as many personality theories as authors of studies* [Reykowski, Kočańska 1980: 14-15]. Psychoanalysts, behaviourists, psychologists from cognitive or humanistic branches will all have different views on personality theories [Formański 2003: 112-113].

By starting interaction with the environment a child adjusts to it by creating a reflection of the world in its own personality. Through interaction with the world the child expresses its attitude to situations, events etc. This is thanks to a regulation system which enables us to create images of the world in our minds. Those images are then emotionally evaluated against what we see or experience. We desire something and seek it, at the same time trying to protect ourselves from it. We act and implement our ideas, evaluating them. Thus personality can be defined as a system based on exchanging information with the environment and transforming it into actions. Personality is both a recipient and a creator of information [Reykowski, Kočańska 1980: 16-18].

In Eastern concepts a phenomenological method, which describes individual's direct experience, was adopted. The change is a way to deep personality change through meditation, self-knowledge and psychophysical training. The ideal type of enhanced personality is a point of reference for analysis of mind's activity. Personality is understood as a series of phenomena in which the basis is a current relation between the psychical state and the object of feelings. It is subject to a continuous flow in sequences of successive moments. Eastern systems divides elements on healthy – insight and unhealthy – illusion, as opposites of each other. They differ in their strength. If a mind is determined by a factor or several factors it specifies personality, motives and behaviour. Unrepeatability of psychical elements is a source of individual differences. The state of mind pushes for seeking or avoiding particular things [Iyengar 1990; Peisheng, Weiqi 1987].

The change or development is understood here as *any longlasting process of directive changes in which the successive stages of the change of the given object can be distinguished, it is also a process of directive changes during which objects go from easier and less perfect forms or states to more complex and perfect ones in a certain respect* [Nowy Leksykon: 1998], it is a sequence of visually presented events connected by chronological order and a cause-and-effect relationship encompassing also a psychological action [Sulek 2003: 11-12]. They are fast and distinct changes for better, that develop skills [Tempała 2000: 257; Pieter 1974: 251-255]. Personality changes in a certain period of life are based on an unintentional, in a form of fun, recreation of the serious forms of fight for survival that were practiced in ancient epochs of socio-historical development of humanity [Pieter 1974: 259-260].

The change goes to a direction that is consistent with individual's values towards greater diversity, better organisation, arrangement and integration. As a result a person becomes more independent in making his own decisions and solving problems. However, a lot depends on theoretical concepts which an investigator choses [Brzezińska 2000: 63-66].

PROJECTIVE METHODS

1/ Rorschach test

The test was created by the Swiss doctor Herman Rorschach [1884-1922] and its creation was inspired by the differences in which Rorschach's patients perceived the given inkblots. The most important appeared to be not the inkblots themselves but the personality assessment technique based on a person-specific visual perception. The response depends more on innate traits of perception and on individual experience from the past than on an outside stimulus. It was not so important what the patient sees but how he sees something, in what way he perceives colour, shape etc. The general theoretical establishments of test analysis are as follows:

- if a subject sees an inkblot as a whole it means that he is able to perceive the most important correlations and is subject to systematic thinking,
- If the subject's attention stays fixated on details, it is a fastidious and pedantic man,
- if the person sees something different than most of people it means that he has exceptional personality with an especially sharp sense of observation
- somebody who in outlines of the backgrounds sees concretes, if he is psychically healthy, thinks unconventionally, is prone to discussion, stubborn and contrary [Stasiakiewicz 2004].



Picture 1: A sample inkblot card [Benda, 2002]

Rorschach test is an extremely accurate and multifunctional tool that allows to assess many various aspects of personality on the basis of the way the abstractive, visual stimuli is perceived [Benda 2002: 39-44].

A clear perception of inkblot shapes is viewed to be an indicator of concentration and one of the most important features of intellect. Responses dealing with figure movement are considered to be a measure of intellectual level, inner life, introversion and emotional stability [Jung 1997]. A crucial role in perception plays colour and movement.

Rorschach test has undergone many modifications, interpretations and methods of its use. Nowadays the most popular is John E. Exner's comprehensive system.

Rorschach test belongs to the group of projective tests (projection is understood here as an externalization process of individual's personality traits) that beside apperception, drawing and graphological techniques allows the subject to impose his personal world of symbols and his own baggage of experience on the material contained in the test [Stasiakiewicz 2004].

The general goal of the Rorschach test is the assessment of the structural and processual personality traits that determine an individual and social pattern of individual's functioning. This goal can be achieved thanks to three features of the test:

1. Test material, structuralized in the sense of perceptive identification and cognitive representation, which causes a wide variety of the material and diversity in test instructions. The degree that allows for spontaneous projection on the test material decides about its projectivity.
2. Projective behaviour understood as a test response, specific for a subject and differentiating an individual from others (interindividual); responses having interpretive character i.e. they are not reflection of perceptive features of the material (intraindividual); responses that reveal individual's unconscious traits (paradigmatic sense) or as a dominant response in subject's way of psychological functioning [Stasiakiewicz 2004]. Stimulus material as well as the differentiation of this material and instruction causes that in the Rorschach test appear the following types of behaviour:
 - a) selective perception (where the subject of analysis is the area of perceived stimuli, its cognitive categorization and the degree of the integration of elements),
 - b) interpretation of meanings (assigning psychological and social features to sentences, objects, people, fictionalization of events and relations),
 - c) projection (creating figures, objects and events that do not exist in the test material),
 - d) choice
3. The interpretation and evaluation in the Rorschach test has an idiographic character that does not depend on interindividual categorisation of traits, behaviour and empirical inference of their being possessed by the subjects but on the description of their psychological functioning. The basis for meaning of test behaviour is the identified collection of psychological features of relations between them which constitutes a personality theory. Hence, the methodological holism is used.

Personality is an irreducible whole, a structure that undergoes changes. Its functioning and influence on an individual's behaviour is an effect of mutual interaction of elements [Stasiakiewicz 2004].

It has several rules:

- 1) it is based on evoking visual perceptions by means of shapeless inkblots; a selection among perceptions constitutes an index of subject's personal attributes,
- 2) an individual response on unspecified stimulus is his own contribution,
- 3) an individual reveals himself more if he is involved in creative processes,
- 4) there is a parallelism between subject's response and his behaviour in social relationships [Grzywak-Kaczyńska 1967: 8-9].

Another assumption of interpretation of the Rorschach test is a multi-level character of personality from which follows an interpretative directive which is a vertical process of discovering conscious and unconscious, general and specific mechanisms that control its functioning. At interpretation of the Rorschach test it should be taken into consideration that personality is a functional structure [Hornowska 2001].

It serves to emphasize the relational character of elements that create it and the fact that features and determined by these features behaviours fulfill certain psychological roles in subject's psychological and social world. It is assumed here that the test situation is a model of real situation and generates test responses. They are projection materials which allow to reveal different features of subject's psychological functioning (perception, control styles, vision of the world, self-image, scripts models of interpersonal behaviours, preferences, needs, motivation etc.).

It is also assumed that the premise of projective inference refers to the carrier of projection. According to this premise subject's test behaviour in the projective test has an expressive, semantic and adaptive character [Brzeziński 2000].

Rorschach test should be conducted in a separate, quiet area preferably at a daylight. It is also important to take into consideration physical (illness, tiredness) and psychical state. Subject's questions should be answered evasively or postponed until the end of the test. A tester sits to be able to see the cards at the same time. The cards should lie on the left side of the subject, with inkblots put downwards so that they could not be seen. The study consists of subject's own responses, the questions that make them more precise, the usage of analogy, determination of the thresholds of sensitivity [Stasiakiewicz 2004].

2/ Lüscher test

Unconsciousness has always been reflected through phraseologisms of many languages. They have been formulated with the appearance of psychology as a science. Psychological investigations of correlation between colours and moods allow to state that colours can be representative for the state of mood, they are vehicles for inner contents, they show emotional states and confirm a display of affective reactions [Kwiatkowska 1994].



Picture 2: A sample card of Lüscher's Test [Łyp, 2003]

Assessing subjects' response to colours, the following components can be specified from a colorful stimulus:

- affective content (on the one hand dependency on the other excitement)
- excitatory potential (specified for each colour)
- activating value (power and duration of reaction)

Colour, apart from ability to express mood, reveals internal contents and thereby reflects man's personality. Subject's personality traits, his emotionality and physiological state together with temporary states are possible to determine thanks to correlation between colours and personality traits [Klar 1974].

Colour tests are projective tests because an inference is made on the basis of derivative correlations between colour preferences and permanent personality traits as well as specificity of subject's momentary experience [Piotrowski 1991].

Colour tests include subtexts that evaluate and determine preferences for colours. Assessing by means of the Lüscher test requires two colour characteristics:

- objective, primary (structure) where physical properties of colourful radiation are assigned to symbolic meaning common to all people
- subjective (function) which is an indicator of subjects' subjective attitude to a particular colour.

The structure of colour is the same for all who are able to distinguish colours. Characteristics attributed to a given colour can be explained by the heritage of human past, recorded in the deep layers of unconsciousness. Almost in the whole history of humanity specific colours were connected with the same psychical reactions [Łyp 2003: 6-8].

Function of colour crystallizes individually throughout life creating personal attitude to a particular colour. It depends on individual personality traits [Łyp 2003: 9-10].

Significant differences in assessment of one colour impose the necessity to assess colours without associating it with any object and steering the subject to objective structure of colour, which makes the basis to the analysis of colour preferences. Because of a vast variety of colour tones and saturations as well as substantial sensitivity of many subjects to the brightness of the colour it is important to use archetypal colours in tests .

There are two groups of colours distinguished in the test: primary colours (blue, green, red, yellow) that symbolize the most important psychical needs and secondary colours (violet, brown, black, grey) which deal with negative tendencies.

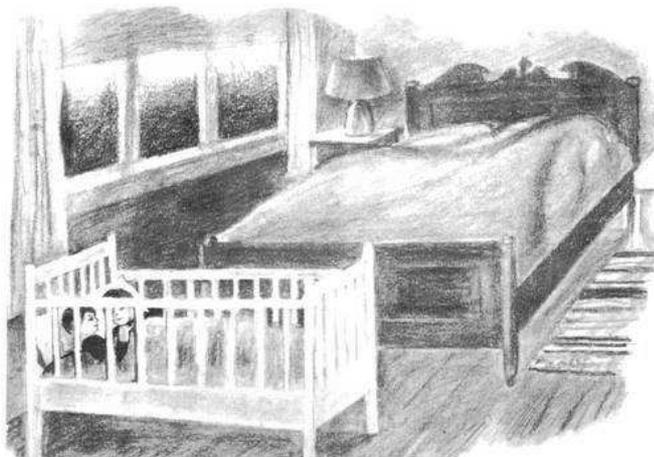
The test should be conducted at daylight. Colorful plates should be put on white background. The tester should stay neutral during the test and instruct the subject to choose one of the given plates that suit him the most. After choosing a plate by the subject, the tester puts it away and again gives instructions to choose from the plates that are left. The procedure is repeated until only one plate remains. The whole sequence is then written down. The test can be conducted in a single or double sequence but it should be noticed that interpretation can be made even with a single sequence. There are several rules that should be obeyed during the test:

- the subjects choose colours from primary colours
- colours should be chosen one by one
- colours should be perceived alone

Because of continuous choices that people make every day a scale of people, traits, values and objects, respected more or less, is formed. Thereby, on the one hand there appears the highly valued area, on the other hand the area of reluctance or even disdain. These preferences show the kind of activity the individual looks for, while disdain is directed to elements that arouse negative emotions [Łyp 2003: 17-18].

3/ Children's Apperception Test

Children's Apperception Test (CAT) is a test in which the objects of projection are not only central figures but it is also a background. It consists of cards made of white bristol that are starting points of responses and encourage the subjects to boost their imagination, to solve common life situations in their own way and to look closely at identical for all stimuli.



Picture 3: A sample card of CAT, version with people

It is a tool that does not exist beside the theory which claims that a CAT card is a picture that stimulates narration and fantasy; it is a task that invokes procedures for coping with a double instruction and the stimulus of hidden and open stimulation; a stimulation to reveal a way in which an individual organises his reality.

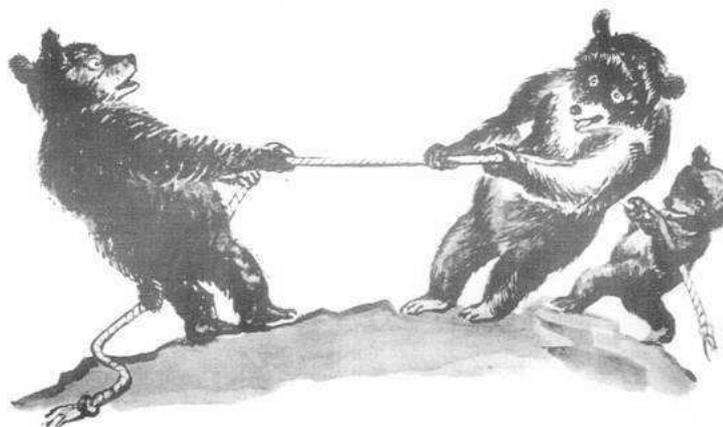
It uses man's tendencies to:

- interpret ambiguous life situations as similar to subject's past experiences or present wishes
- refer in their stories to their own experiences and express their own feelings or unconscious needs [Siek 1993: 187-211].

It invokes a process of a person representation (self and objects) with different degrees of complexity; a process of coping with a conflict by means of specific procedures characteristic for an individual. It allows a person to reveal hidden emotions, needs, instincts, emotional attitudes, complexes, personality conflicts. A specific value of the test is the possibility to reveal covered needs [Murray 1953].

It should be emphasized that extremely important is the differentiation of open needs (evinced in open actions and responses) and covered needs (striving for expression and affecting an individual's behaviour in a disguised way).

The index of the need power in CAT is the frequency and permanence of appearing response trends, the emphatic way of verbalization and the response time to fulfill the need. Nowadays psychologists assume that there are two basic groups of forces working in personality. The primary force deals with drives, needs, instincts, desires and wishes which are beyond the individual's consciousness. The secondary force deals with reaction habits embodied by society which strive for repression and control as well as transformation of some needs, wishes and drives to behaviours that would be compliant with the requirements of social norms [Siek 1993: 187-211].



Picture 4: A sample card of CAT, version with animals

The whole control is impossible and it never works. Considering that a man aims at reaching a compromise to fulfill their needs in tune with social requirements by means of the defense mechanisms. Revealed in CAT expressions of

needs are the representatives of the subject's psychical needs. They are compromise reactions that reveal in a diguised way unconscious processes that are explained by the following mechanisms:

- repression understood as automatic, reflex and unconscious effort of repelling specific psychical responses
- transference understood as unconscious redirection of feelings from the original object toward a new, substitute one,
- projection understood as a deformation of self perception and perception of other people, of objects and events that makes it impossible for an individual to perceive the reality in an objective way,
- identification understood as an unconscious desire to behave as an important person. It can consist in assimilating characteristics, thoughts and believes of others [Dollard, Miller 1967: 188-190; Laughlin 1963; Freud 1957: 48-52].

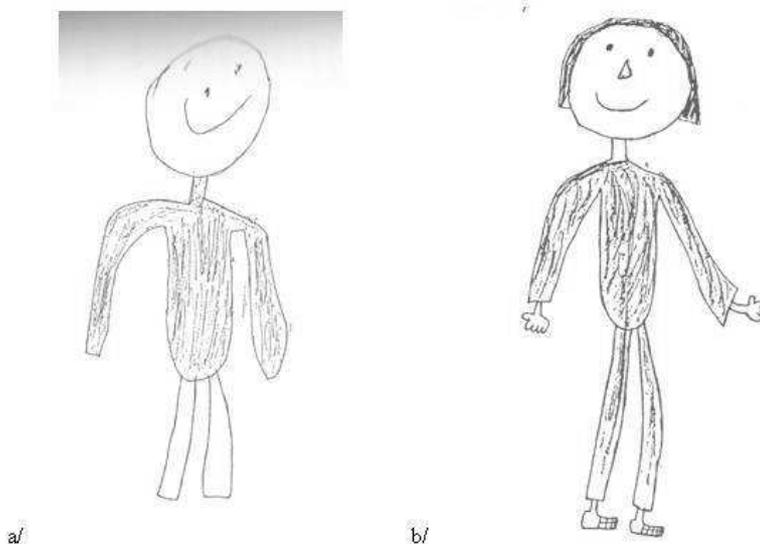
CAT should be conducted in safe, friendly and open atmosphere. It is important because creativity is a subtle, not controlled by will process that is blocked by intellectual superiority and stiff atmosphere. The atmosphere of investigation together with exposed cards are supposed to help the subject release defense mechanisms and reveal of his covered needs [Siek 1993: 187-211].

4/ Psychodrawing

A drawing as a form of expressing thoughts and emotions has been existing since anyone can remember. It is the basis of communication, which appeared even before the development of phonetic language [Oster, Gould 2000: 17]. It is not surprising, it is also used in work with children who can have problems with and description of experienced feelings.

A drawing as any other means of art is extremely personal and contains both conscious and unconscious contents. *During drawing, remembrances and fantasies connected with subconscious contents and containing less censored material are boosted. Patient can communicate in an unspecified way, not realizing that a house he is drawing is actually not the place he lives in. Such a protection from a direct confrontation with emotionally overstretched information makes expressing and showing feelings less anxious and possible to evoke the defensive behaviour* [Oster, Gould 2000:19].

Psychodrawing belongs to projective methods in which the material is the least strukturalized. The subject's task is to make a drawing on a specific subject (e.g. a house, a family, a tree, a man) but without giving detailed information. It is also possible to allow a child to decide about the subject. The child, then, can draw its own visions determining size, arrangements, colours and other traits of drawn people and objects [Wallon, Cambier, Engelhart 1993: 159].



Picture 5: A sample child's drawing: a/ 6-year-old child b/ 8-year-old child [Oster, Gould 2000]

Interpreting a drawing age, genetic and cultural aspects as well as social background should be taken into account. Visual art skills are not important here and are not evaluated.

A drawing is analysed both thematically and formally. Thematic analysis focuses on content specificity, if the drawing is realistic, if there are any elements that are omitted etc. Formal analysis, in turn, focuses on colour, type of strokes, the way the page is filled. It also takes into consideration people's and objects' size and how they are drawn, distance and proportions between them, level of detail and composition [Głowacka 1998: 33].

CONCLUSION

The authors of this work presented selected methods of investigating personality changes in kindergarten and primary age children, together with general characteristics of the selected personality concepts. Certainly the presented tools are only a drop in the ocean of options. However, they were presented by reason of their enormous diagnostic

advantages, great accuracy and the area they investigate. The selection was influenced by versatility of the presented tests and similar diagnostic value. The authors also took into consideration that the tests were easy to conduct.

It is important to have in mind that children's personality undergoes emotional, intellectual and spiritual changes. That is a sense of our studies [Ching 2009: 41-42].

These should be directional changes and if they are to be so the knowledge about personality traits is needed. Additional factor is that the investigation can make further development and deeper self-knowledge easier thanks to the knowledge that interpretation of a test provides.

Conscious change in personality figures on its integration and going beyond internal conflicts especially between consciousness and unconsciousness which are governed by different rules. Connection with unconsciousness enlivens and enriches man's inner life being a balance for his way of thinking, will and intellect [Doktor 1988: 33-44].

That is why, it is so important to plan the process of child's development in a conscious and intended way. Obtaining additional knowledge about personality by means of projective tests can be, by no means, extremely helpful here.

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