EXPLORING THE CHILD'S PERSONALITY

ABOUT THE EDITOR

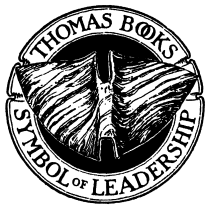
Doctor Carina Coulacoglou (born in 1956 in Athens, Greece) is a child psychologist and test developer. She studied psychology at the University of London and later obtained a Master of Sciences (MSc) in Child Development from the same university. Her interest gradually moved towards the psychology of fairy tales and she embarked on a Master of Philosophy (MPhil) at the University of Sussex (UK), followed by a Ph.D., which concerned the development of the Fairy Tale Test (FTT). The test has been standardized in Greece and is currently published in many languages. She is also the author of several papers on the FTT as well as two textbooks (in Greek) about psychometrics and personality assessment. Over the years, Doctor Coulacoglou has taught courses in Psychometrics and Psychological Assessment in various educational institutions in Greece.

EXPLORING THE CHILD'S PERSONALITY

Developmental, Clinical and Cross-Cultural Applications of the Fairy Tale Test

Edited by

CARINA COULACOGLOU, Ph.D.



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Dedicated to my life companion.

and

In memory of Paul Kline.

PREFACE

I decided to embark on the mission of editing the present book, when I realized that I would like to share with others my experience in using the Fairy Tale Test (FTT). I could perhaps refer to this long-term experience as a journey of wisdom and "enchantment" in the depths of the child's psyche. The writing and editing took approximately four years, since at the time of its conception, some of the cross-cultural studies were still under way.

Through the use of the FTT we attempt to describe and elaborate on various issues of child development, especially those that relate to the structure and the unfolding of personality. What is worth noting is that fairy tales are still very much alive and captivating in children's mind and hearts. They haven't lost their appeal probably because their symbolisms and reflected values remain the same through the passage of time.

When I first decided to standardize the test in various cultures, I did not know what to expect, mostly in terms of how the material will appeal to children from nonwestern countries. To my surprise I discovered that at least three of the most popular fairy tales (i.e., *Little Red Riding Hood, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and *Cinderella*) are translated in most languages. In addition, most book illustrations represent "westernized" characters in terms of both external features and clothing.

Fairy tales with giants, however, are not as popular as the above stories. For instance, Japanese children are scarcely familiar with the story of *Jack and the Beanstalk, Tom Thumb* or giants known from literary fairy tales such as Oscar Wilde's *The Selfish Giant,* or *Gulliver's Travels.*

Through the application of the FTT in diverse cultures, I had the opportunity to find out that supernatural characters such as giants or witches with well-known aggressive, antagonistic, menacing or magical abilities are not necessarily perceived as such from children in nonwestern countries. Giants in China, for instance, are usually nice and protective; Rakshashas or Rakshashis in India are man-eating demons, while giants in Japan do not exist as such.

Children's responses to the FTT questions revealed that their reactions are not so much motivated by the external attributes of the character (e.g., skin color, facial traits, clothes, gender, etc.) as much as to what this character represents or symbolizes. This is perhaps the major reason that makes this tool cross-culturally sensitive and universally appealing.

It is worth emphasizing the importance of standardizing the FTT in such cultures as Russia, Turkey, India and China whereby test standardization is not common practice, let alone the standardization of a projective instrument. Had it not been for the perseverance, broadmindedness, sensitivity, conscientiousness and determination of all my collaborators in completing this important task, the standardization of the FTT would have remained a figment of imagination.

The FTT was designed based on modern psychometric theories, in terms of including large samples and a variety of validity studies. Since its creation ten years ago, many things have been accomplished: an initial standardization in Greece of approximately 800 children (between 7 to 12 years of age), followed by a second one which included a younger age group of children (6-year-olds) and resulted in the addition of three personality variables. Furthermore, construct and criterion validity studies took place. Another significant achievement concerns the several standardization projects that have taken place and are still under way.

For decades, psychologists have been classifying personality tests as either objective or projective. Objective tests correspond to assessment instruments where the intended response is represented by a limited set of options, and scored according to a pre-existing key. On the other hand, in projective tests the respondent is required to generate a response in the face of an ambiguity, whereby the person projects unconscious or subjective material. A recent debate in the field of personality assessment concerns this terminology as being unclear and misleading. Objective tests by definition carry desirable and positive connotations such as precision and objectivity, encouraging certain prejudices against projective techniques. As a result alternative terms, such as *Performance Based Tests, Constructive Method, Free Response Measures, Expressive Personality Tests,* and so on, have been proposed in order to replace the term projective. Although I am aware of this debate and realize that these two terms do not fully reflect the complex and distinctive methods actually used for personality assessment, the term "projective techniques" is employed throughout the book as this still remains the most popular term for the purposes of scientific communication.

CONTENTS

The present book is divided in six sections. The first section entitled "New Developments in Projective Techniques for Children," provides a basis for understanding the function and nature of projective tests in general (chapter 1), and the Fairy Tale Test in particular (Chapter 2).

Most specifically, in Chapter 1 the authors review the recent developments in projective techniques in children, by discussing two major tests, the Rorschach and the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), while setting apart the contribution of the Fairy Tale Test as a novel instrument in the field of personality assessment in children.

In Chapter 2 the author presents in an elaborative way the association between fairy tales and unconscious processes. More specifically, she describes the origins and function of fairy tales, their main characteristics, the children's interest in fairy tales in terms of their psychological development and coping with inner conflicts, the roles of aggression and violence in fairy tales and, finally, their clinical applications.

The second section of the book "Empirical Research" includes two chapters. Chapter 3 presents an elaborative study of the various types of aggression as assessed in the FTT, and contributes towards a better understanding of the construct of aggression. The fourth chapter investigates idiosyncratic responses of children according to their responses to the Fairy Tale Test. It aims at exploring the nature of the bizarre response and attempts to form a preliminary guide to differentiating bizarre responses that indicate some form of psychopathology from those that indicate imagination and creativity.

The third section of the book, "The Study of Defense Mechanisms," consists of a single chapter (Chapter 5) that deals with the development and cross-cultural significance of defense mechanisms. More specifically, the author describes the origins and theories of defense mechanisms and their classification. In addition, she concentrates on how defense mechanisms appear in the Fairy Tale Test and their development through childhood, while discussing each one separately. Particular reference is made to the cross-cultural significance of defense mechanisms.

In the fourth section of the book, "Clinical Applications of the Fairy Tale Test," the emphasis is given on the clinical application of the test in three distinct groups of children with mental disorders: children with learning disabilities (Chapter 6); children with mild mental retardation (Chapter 7); and children with psychotic symptoms (Chapter 8). All three chapters highlight the way the Fairy Tale Test contributes to the understanding of underlying personality structures in relation to specific disorders.

The following section, "Cross-Cultural Applications of the FTT," includes five chapters presenting the application of the Fairy Tale Test across five culturally diverse countries on a large sample of children as part of the test's standardization: Russia (Chapter 9), China (Chapter 10), Greece (Chapter 11), India (Chapter 12) and Turkey (Chapter 13). Each chapter presents a detailed quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data, revealing the core personality of children in relation to their specific sociocultural background.

The last section, "Psychoanalytic Interpretation of Fairy Tales," consists of one chapter (Chapter 14) that provides some experimental validation of psychoanalytic theories of fairy tales through the Fairy Tale Test. More specifically, the authors analyze the psychoanalytic significance of the children's responses and discuss how those can supplement and verify psychoanalytic interpretations of fairy tales.

SCOPE

The scope of this book is to present its readers an in-depth study of the child's personality through the use of the Fairy Tale Test (FTT). The FTT has the significant advantage of providing information on a large number of personality parameters and their interrelations in a systematic way. Some of these parameters (such as ambivalence, sense of property, and sense of privacy) have not been examined by other personality measures. In that sense, the FTT is a tool that can be employed for a variety of purposes such as in the fields of developmental psychology, diagnosis and treatment outcome, and cross-cultural research.

The present book offers information on current theoretical issues about the psychological uses of fairy tales, the results of empirical studies with groups of children that psychologists commonly encounter in their practice (namely, children with learning disabilities and mild mental retardation), as well as the results of several cross-cultural applications. It is in fact a rare opportunity for the interested reader to come across an elaborative study of personality and culture, especially through the study of such diverse cultures such as China, India, Russia, Turkey and Greece. Another significant and perhaps unique contribution is the elaborate analysis of a large number of defense mechanisms, their development during childhood, as well as some cross-cultural comparisons.

I hope that the present book will inspire readers to study and use the FTT, and that it will be helpful in opening new ways in working with children, by learning more about the complexities and intricacies of their *distinct* personality.

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I would also like to thank and express my appreciation to all the contributors for sharing their knowledge and experience. With regards to the contributors of the cross-cultural studies, I would like to express my gratitude for taking part in such a demanding and unique project. I would like to extend my thanks to all the examiners of the FTT whose role in the standardization process was invaluable. I would also like to thank all the children who participated in data collection, their parents and teachers.

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Finally, I would like to thank Michael Thomas for his patience and trust.

CONTENTS

PART IV: CLINICAL APPLICATION OF THE FAIRY TALE TEST

PART V: CROSS-CULTURAL APPLICATION OF THE FAIRY TALE TEST

PART VI: PSYCHOANALYTIC INTERPRETATIONS OF FAIRY TALES

ABBREVIATIONS

(?)	An in-parenthesis question mark indicates probing made by the examiner/administrator to the child during administration of the FTT in order to clarify his/her response.
DM	Defense mechanism
FTT	Fairy Tale Test
LD	Learning disabilities
LRRH	*Little Red Riding Hood*
M	Mean
MMR	Mild mental retardation
N	Number of participants
Q	Question
SD	Standard deviation
SES	Socioeconomic status
SW	Snow White (from the tale *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*)

FTT Variables

AMB	Ambivalence
DMT	Desire for Material Things
DSUP	Desire for Superiority
SE	Self-Esteem
SPRO	Sense of Property
SPRIV	Sense of Privacy
AGRDOM	Aggression as Dominance
OA	Oral Aggression
ON	Oral Needs
AGRA	Aggression Type A
AGRRET	Aggression as Retaliation
AGRENVY	Aggression as Envy
AGRDEF	Aggression as Defense

FA	Fear of Aggression
NAFCT	Need for Affection
NAFIL	Need for Affiliation
DH	Desire to Help
NPRO	Need for Protection
ANX	Anxiety
D	Depression
AFTC	Adaptation to Fairy Tale Content
B	Bizarres
SEXPREO	Sexual Preoccupation
MOR	Morality
REL/MO	Relation with Mother
REL/FA	Relation with Father
REP	Repetitions
NAPPRO	Need for Approval
AGRINSTR	Instrumental Aggression

EXPLORING THE CHILD'S PERSONALITY

PART I

NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN PROJECTIVE TECHNIQUES FOR CHILDREN

Chapter 1

A REVIEW OF PROJECTIVE TESTS FOR CHILDREN: RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

STEVEN TUBER, NORA GOUDSMIT, ALISON FERST, SIMON SHAGRIN, AND RACHEL WOLITZKY

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps the primary reason projective tests have been so useful in work with children is because they provide a standardized arena in which to capture a child's play and imagination. Play and imagination for children are valid equivalents to dreams for an adult in that they are where a child's conscious and unconscious mental phenomena come together, so that in play a child can be most mentally alive and present. "*By putting experiences and feelings into play rather than words, the child is creating structure* . . . Adults figure out how they feel by *talking* it through; very young children figure it out by *playing* about it" (Slade, 1994, original emphasis). Children use play and imagination to rehearse and repeat aspects of their experience they are coming to terms with, exploring, or working towards mastery in their development. Projective tests allow the imaginative and playful expression of children to be captured and transformed into a standardized format, rather than remain within the utterly idiographic domain of the playground or the clinician-patient relationship.

Children use play to process their experience, and through play they practice taking the perspectives of others, rehearse emotional experiences and situations, and consider multiple perspectives on reality. For Winnicott (1971) the capacity to play is a critical developmental achievement, and it is not only a sign of adaptation, it is an indicator of a capacity for attaining fully human status. Research on children's play has shown that fantasy play is a domain where cognitive and affective processes interact and develop (Russ, 1998). Seja and Russ (1999), for example, demonstrated that children who had the capacity to play and were able to organize their fantasy play around emotional themes were more adept at both describing emotional experiences and understanding the emotions of others, not accounted for by verbal ability. While this research does not make claims about causation, it highlights the importance of play as a medium through which one can observe and assess a child's cognitive and emotional life. Children's ability to "play" with projective measures thus takes the important step of placing their idiosyncratic expression and development in a standardized format for nomothetic comparison.

A good place to start a discussion of projective tests is with the difference between projective and nonprojective tests, and the question of why one should use projective tests at all. Rapaport (1950) addressed this distinction in a manner that is still pertinent and useful today. The "apparent" distinction between the two types of tests is due to whether the questions or tasks are "structured" (nonprojective) or "unstructured" (projective). Nonprojective tests consist of tasks that have a "unique and verifiable answer" whereas projective tests do not have an objective or a single correct answer (Rapaport, 1950, p. 347). The principle behind projective tests is that the subject's answers are determined by choices and principles that can be both intrapsychic

and external to the subject. Rapaport argued that the distinction between projective and nonprojective tests is arbitrary because each shares qualities of the other. Projective test stimuli have objective and verifiable features to them as evidenced by popular responses on the Rorschach or common themes in responses to TAT cards. Similarly, nonprojective tests elicit features of the subject's personality and internal life, evident in verbal responses, or the scatter of test scores on intelligence tests, that reveals the subject's unique development and personality organization in his/her array of aptitudes across different domains. Rapaport stated that the distinction between projective and nonprojective tests does not hold because a subject's answers are always determined by a combination of the external features of the test stimulus and the internal qualities of the subject. So the same diagnostic principle behind projective tests may be applied when analyzing either type of test results: "It is assumed that these behavior segments bear the imprint of the organization of the subject's personality, and therefore it is expected that the test performance will be revealing of that personality" (Rapaport, 1950, p. 340).

Projective tests are designed to present the subject with a lesser degree of external structure "in order to allow maximal expression of the structuring principles of the individual personality" (Rapaport, 1950, p. 342). Diagnostic testing is most clinically useful when a battery of tests is used, including both projective and nonprojective tests, in order to see how the subject's performance varies in the context of greater and lesser ambiguity. A discrepancy in performance on projective versus nonprojective methods can have important implications for both diagnosis and treatment. For instance, test results showing intact test performance on structured tasks compared to more regressed, low functioning responses on unstructured tasks have been found to be more typical of people with a borderline level of organization (Knight, 1953; Gunderson & Singer, 1975). Both projective and nonprojective tests are needed in order to assess a subject's response to greater and lesser degrees of external structure, which bears uniquely on personality organization and creativity.

In a recent paper, Meyer and Kurtz (2006) argue that the opposing terms "projective" and "objective" used to describe measures of personality assessment are misleading and inaccurate for a number of reasons. The authors argue that "objective" tests, referring to "patient-rated questionnaires," (inventories with true vs. false or Likert-scale answers) place the burden of objectivity and expertise on the subject filling out the questionnaire rather than the examiner, in addition to suggesting that the well-documented presence of response styles and biases does affect the "objectivity" of the results. The term "projective" is also misleading, the authors suggest, because the mechanism guiding the subject's responses may not always be "projection" in the classic Freudian sense of the term, meaning attributing distressing internal phenomena to the external world. Projective tests do not merely capture the private world of the subject irregardless of the test stimuli; rather the nature of the projective task does impact responses. The authors argue that individual tests should be named or referred to more specifically, rather than lumping different assessment measures and techniques into abstract, misrepresentative categories. Nevertheless, the term "projective test" will still be used in this chapter and throughout this book, acknowledging that a subject's responses to a projective test are always a product of the interaction between the subject's personality and the test stimulus as no method of observation captures the subject without some alteration in his/her state. "Projective tests," as we use the term, merely refer to a test with a relatively smaller degree of external structure, and a task that does not have a single answer or prescribed options from which the subject chooses.

Projective tests have proved to be particularly useful when viewed through a psychodynamic lens because they operationalize and provide a database for many of the theoretical concepts underlying different psychodynamic schools of thought. Common to all psychodynamic schools, or models, is the conception of the mind and present behavior as being determined by both conscious and unconscious

thoughts, affects, wishes and representations. This common conception of personality and mental life having both conscious and unconscious aspects that interact has both commonalities and differences across the three major paradigms of psychodynamic thought. The models of drive, ego psychology and self-object representations are different yet overlapping in the way they frame this interaction between conscious and unconscious components of mental life within the individual.

The "drive" model is based on the view that people are motivated by biologically-based urges or "drives," and each person varies in their ability to manage, comprehend and transform them at each stage in their development (Freud, 1923). It is therefore normative for all children to experience certain wishes and desires as unacceptable to some extent, and the internal conflict that results is often related to the tasks and preoccupations of particular (psychosexual) stages of development. The ego psychological model looks at the person's ability to adapt to the demands of reality in the external world, to manage their internal urges, wishes and emotions, and their capacity to psychologically self-regulate (e.g., a focus on the capacity for reality-testing and the quality of defense mechanisms) (Anna Freud, 1936; Hartmann, 1939; Mahler, Pine, & Bergman 1975). From the ego psychological perspective, ego capacities, both strengths and deficits, are developed slowly over the course of development, through both conscious and unconscious learning. Last, the self/object representational model focuses on a person's internal representations of self and others, based on conscious and unconscious memories of childhood experiences (Klein, 1932; Fairbairn, 1952; Winnicott; 1958; Kernberg, 1976). These representations significantly contribute to the person's experience of self and others, and psychopathology may be seen as the extent to which the present is incapable of being perceived and experienced as separate from internal representations from the past.

These different models encompass various theoretical perspectives on personality organization, in addition to methods of treatment. Projective techniques, in turn, provide an empirical format for concepts from these different psychodynamic models to be used in research. An example of research informed by the drive model is Sprohge, Handler, Plant and Wicker's (2002) examination of oral dependence in alcoholics and depressives using the Rorschach. Two examples of research from the ego psychological perspective include Russ and Grossman-McKee's (1990) look at the relationship between primary process thinking on the Rorschach and affect expressed in fantasy play and divergent thinking, and Smith's (1981) look at the relationship between children's Whole responses on the Rorschach and Piagetian stages of cognitive development. A prime example of research from a combination of the ego psychological and object relational perspectives is Lerner's (1990) review of research using the Lerner and Lerner (1980) scale for assessing primitive defenses on the Rorschach. These studies identified patterns of defenses used by specific clinical populations (e.g., anorexics, gender disturbed children) and patients with different levels of psychopathology (neurotic, borderline, schizophrenia). Examples of research using projective tests from an object relational perspective can be found in two literature reviews: Tuber (1992) reviewed studies using the Mutual Autonomy Scale applied to the Rorschach to assess the quality of children's object relations, and Stricker and Healey (1990) reviewed empirical literature assessing object relations with various projective techniques, including the Rorschach, TAT, dream-based measures, early memories and others. The rise of object relations theory over the past 30 years has led to relatively more object-representational-based uses of projective tests. This mirrors the notion that as theoretical paradigms have changed over time, so too have the ways projective tests been interpreted and utilized to predict aspects of psychodynamic assessment and treatment (Lerner, 1998).

The usefulness of psychodynamic theoretical concepts lies in large part in their application to the process of psychodynamic treatment. Projective tests provide a snapshot at a given time of central aspects of a person's personality organization. By