

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Abstract approved

This research examined whether school psychologists Kansas are utilizing projective assessment as a part of their assessment for intervention practices when dealing with school-aged children. Ninety-seven certified Kansas school psychologists completed a questionnaire at the 2003 National Association for School Psychologists conference in Wichita, Kansas. The questionnaire focused on Thematic Apperception and Children's Apperception Test, Draw-A-Person, Rorschach, Incomplete Sentence Blank, and Bender-Gestalt. Results indicated a continued use of projective assessments by approximately 42% of school psychologists in the state of Kansas although use decreased across the past 20 years. However, the reason for usage is different from the original intention of projective assessment. The results indicate that participant use projective assessments because they build rapport, yield useful information, and increase assessment comprehensiveness.

THE PREVALENCE OF PROJECTIVE ASSESSMENT USAGE AMONG  
SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS AND SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN  
IN THE STATE OF KANSAS

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A Thesis

Presented to

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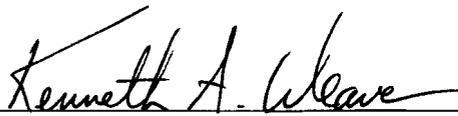
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by

Margaritta K. Fisher

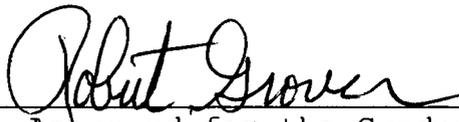
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....iii

TABLE OF CONTENTS.....iv

LIST OF TABLES.....vi

CHAPTER

1 INTRODUCTION.....1

    Research Question.....2

    Review of Literature.....3

        History of Projective Assessments.....3

        Frequently Used Projective Assessments.....7

        Validity and Reliability of Projective  
Assessment.....10

        Projective assessments and Children.....12

        State Laws School Psychology.....13

        Training Clinic and Assessment of School  
Psychologists.....14

        The Function and Training of School  
Psychologist.....15

        Current Practices in School Psychology....16

    Purpose of the Study.....19

2 METHOD.....21

    Participants.....21

    Instruments.....22

    Procedure.....23

3 RESULTS.....	24
Research Questions.....	24
Research Question 1.....	24
Research Question 2.....	24
Research Question 3.....	26
4 DISCUSSION.....	30
Research Question 1.....	30
Research Question 2.....	32
Research Question 3.....	34
Limitation and Directions for Future Study.....	38
Summary.....	39
REFERENCES.....	41
APPENDICES.....	44
Appendix A: Informed Consent Form.....	45
Appendix B: Survey Questionnaire.....	46

LIST OF TABLES

<u>TABLE</u>		<u>PAGE</u>
1	Percentage of Respondents Reporting Reasons for Using Specified Projective Assessments.....	25
2	Percentage of Respondents Reporting Reasons for Not Using Specified projective Assessments.....	28
3	Percentage of Times With Which Practitioners Used Specified Projective Assessments in Past Years....	29

## CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

The school psychologist is an important part of the school assessment system. The demand for school psychologists is rising and so is the scrutiny of their performance as scientist practitioners. With the work of school psychologists being evaluated by school superintendents, courts, and other important entities, selecting the proper projective assessment tools becomes vitally important.

Projective assessments have been prevalently used since the late 1800s (Reynolds & Gutkin, 1999) and now are at the forefront of determining intellectual wellness. Projective assessments such as the Thematic Appreciation Test (TAT), Rorschach, and the Bender-Gestalt are some of the most influential psychological assessment instruments in the field (Reynolds & Gutkin). Although these instruments are pivotal in determining the mental and intellectual stability of adults, their validity for school-based assessment is now debatable (Reynolds & Gutkin). Numerous resources outline the history and usage of projective assessments, but the resources offering practical advice to school psychologists on the prevalence of projective assessments are limited. Other research

(e.g., Fagan & Wise, 2000; Goh, Teslow, & Fuller, 1981; Prout, 1983) focused on regulation training requirements, the role and function of the school psychologist (what the job requires), and the selection of instruments used across the United States. Additionally, the participants were predominantly trainers, and the information was compiled from other disciplines such as clinical psychology.

### *Research Questions*

Based on past research and current trends among school psychologists in the state of Kansas the following questions were developed:

*Research Question 1:* What is the prevalence of specified projective assessment instruments among practicing school psychologists in the state of Kansas?

*Research Question 2:* What are the reasons given for using or not using projective assessment as a part of a comprehensive assessment battery?

*Research Question 3:* Is there a significant decrease in the use of projective assessments by practicing school psychologists across the past 20 years?

The historical past of school psychology is tied to projective assessments through the clinical psychology discipline. Many clinical psychology graduate training programs still require projective assessments as a part of

their curriculum. However, this is not the case for many school psychology graduate programs. The use of projective assessments and their effectiveness as an evaluative technique have been questioned in recent years. This current research study sought to discover whether Projective assessments were an influential factor in the assessment techniques of the school psychologists and how instrumental projective assessments were in the frequency of their daily practice. Therefore, the relevance of this research is determining the prevalence with which projective assessments are used among school psychologists and what impact has this use had across the past 20 years. With changes in school procedures emerging periodically and new assessment instruments becoming popular, school psychologists must remain current and consistent in their ability to select effective projective assessment instruments that are beneficial to their young clients. School psychologists will find these data productive when deciding which assessments to use in their daily practices.

#### Review of the Literature

##### *The History of Projective Assessments*

Projective assessments evolved from four influential dimensions within psychology, the French clinical traditions, German nomothetic approach, British idiographic

approach, and American applied orientation (Domino, 2000). Alfred Binet was a French psychologist who was instrumental in creating the first intelligence test for children. In 1905, the first standardized version of the Binet-Simon Intelligence Scale was published to identify and place children based on adequate learning capabilities. Subsequently, this test has undergone many revisions, most significantly in 1908 and 1911. It eventually grew into what is today the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale (Allison, Blatt, & Zimet, 1968; Domino 2000; Sattler; 1982).

The Germans produced the first documented numerical scale relevant to psychological variables in 1962. Almost a century earlier, Wilhelm Wundt introduced the experimental method to psychology with a strong emphasis on sensory/perceptual functions. This emphasis transitioned psychology from philosophy into empirical research based on quantification. In addition, Wundt's emphasis on pure experimentation catalyzed standardization methods of testing in psychology (Goodwin, 1999).

The British, who were interested in evolution and natural selection, gave rise to Charles Darwin and his cousin Sir Francis Galton. Galton became famous for his idea of the inheritance of intellectual genius. Ultimately,

his goal was to improve the intellectual level of the human race through selective breeding (Domino, 2000; Sattler, 1982).

The American psychological force was steadily growing within the applied orientation. James McKeen Cattell coined the term "mental test." Lightner Witmer established the first psychological clinic in the United States. Horace Mann took the first major steps towards standardized testing (introduced uniformed examinations). Edward Lee Thorndike published the first textbook on educational measurement (Domino, 2000; Goodwin, 1999; Sattler, 1982). The contribution of these individuals pioneered a new era of theoretical concepts for psychology from which eventually emerged projective assessment.

With a growing interest and some ambivalence, these psychologists helped popularize standardized intelligence testing in America. Henry Goddard, Director of Research at the Vineland Training School (New Jersey institution for the training of the mentally defective) translated the Binet-Simon scale into English (Domino, 2000; Goodwin, 1999). His outspoken belief that intelligence was mainly hereditary fueled the argument that society would be better off without the intellectually inferior (poor and mentally retarded). Consequently, Lewis Terman revised the Binet-

Simon scale, which is now known as the Stanford Binet Test (Domino).

Historically, projective assessments emerged from an array of theoretical input. The most influential theoretical orientation was that of Sigmund Freud, who introduced the term 'projection' (Rabin, 1968). The fundamental meaning was the client's ability to externalize unacceptable inner feelings to avoid the experience of guilt or anxiety (Rabin). This term has substantiated itself in the field of psychology, and the use of projective assessments has become widespread.

School children were soon assessed in a variety of ways to determine their preparedness for school (Cutts, 1958). In 1921, Florence Goodenough published her "draw-a-man" intelligence test for children. The first Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) was introduced in 1926, and controversial studies were fueling the debate about the viability of intelligence testing and administration of those tests (Koppitz, 1968). These important innovations were viable reasons for beginning school psychologists to use projective assessments. Given the emerging controversial developments of projective assessment, why are projective assessments still used?

### *Frequently Used Projective Assessments*

In 1935, The Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) by Morgan and Murray was published. The TAT consists of a series of 29 pictures and 1 blank card. These pictures can be administered in a variety of ways including individual, self, and group. When administering, the subjects can be seated or laying down depending on their comfort level. Once comfortable subjects are instructed that this is a storytelling test and they should tell any story they want based on the pictures. They then tell what is happening before and currently, how they are feeling, and how the story will end. According to Tomkins (1947), the TAT has proven useful in the exploration of social attitudes and sentiments, culture and personality assessment of military personnel, and child development.

Likewise, the Children Apperception Test (CAT), which is similar to the TAT, was designed specifically for studying children's individual differences experienced through their perception of external stimuli (Bellak, 1971). Administration is relatively simple if approached in the form of a game; the administrator ensures that the child is comfortable by encouraging a positive atmosphere (Bellak).

The Human-Figure-Drawing (HFD) is perhaps the most widely used projective assessment among school psychologists working with school-aged children (Koppitz, 1968). Although, Manchover is the leading expert on the HFD, she offers no controlled research data or scoring system to substantiate the psychometrics of her initial introduction to the HFD (Koppitz). The HFD can be administered individually or in a group. It requires that the child draw "a whole person" at the request of the examiner. When taking the test, the child should be seated comfortably in an unobtrusive area with a number two pencil with an eraser. The examiner then tells the child there is a time limit to the test. Additionally, the test requires behavioral observations to ensure testing accuracy (Koppitz).

As with all other projective drawings, the Draw-A-Person (DAP) originated with the Goodenough (1926) concept of measuring intelligence through drawings. However, Knoff (1986) credits Barne's 1892 method as the first to classify children based on the details of their drawings. Administration of the DAP requires a blank sheet of paper and a number two lead pencil with an eraser. With the paper positioned vertically and the table cleared of all obstruction, the child is instructed to draw a person

(Knoff). The child then illustrates a person, which was analyzed based on the child's developmental ability.

In 1961, the Bender-Gestalt was rated fourth in usage among 185 hospitals and agencies who participated in the practice of psychological testing. As the Bender-Gestalt became popular, the need for objective scoring became evident (Koppitz, 1963). Likewise, the first scoring system, as with many others since, proved inadequate for children. According to Koppitz the Bender-Gestalt's popularity results from screening children for a variety of reasons including but not limited to children preparedness for school, predicting school achievement, evaluating emotional difficulties, determining the need for psychotherapy, and studying mental retardation. In addition, the Bender-Gestalt has been used as an intelligence test for school-aged children. Administration of the Bender-Gestalt for children requires the administrator to seat the child comfortably at an uncluttered table with two pieces of paper and a number two pencil with an eraser. Once rapport is established, the examiner shows the child the stack of cards with varying designs and gives instructions to complete them (Koppitz).

In 1921, the first series of Rorschach inkblot tests was published, and the test was ranked as the second most

popular projective assessment among school psychologists (Wood, Nezworski, Lilienfeld, & Garb, 2003). The major proponents of the Rorschach were school administrators and judges who used it because of its effectiveness in custody cases and school assessment. Administration procedures for the Rorschach must be adhered to in a strict manner. Exner (1993) found that "factors such as the seating, instructions, recording responses, and inquiry all become vital to generating the data bank from which many conclusions will be reached" (p. 65). When introducing the Rorschach, no specific instructions are necessary. However, the interviewer is responsible for briefing the subject of the procedures in the assessment process (Exner). Given that other projective assessments (e.g., The Personality Inventory for Children PIC) are more difficult to administer, how influential is the ease of use when deciding to use an assessment?

#### *Validity and Reliability of Projective Assessments*

According to Knoff (1986), in the 1980s, projective drawings were the most frequently used psychological instrument in the school setting. However, several authors have stated that projective techniques are not to be considered tests, and are therefore not to be subjected to the constraints usually applied to psychometric devices

(Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1990). An understanding of the reliability and validity of these instruments is necessary to grasp the controversy. Is it psychometrically sound? Does it measure what it said it would measure with consistency? According to Reynolds and Kamphaus (1990), the validity of projective assessments is contingent on the formulated hypothesis (based on the client's history of family and interpersonal relationships) of the administrator. The magnitude of information given by individuals to the test administrators varies even within test-retest. Therefore, validity allows for examining whether or not projective assessments are adequately identifying stable personality traits, or if they are more sensitive to situational variables. It is important for school psychologists to examine the purpose for the assessment. Given the expected convergence of multiple projective assessments and the trust that individual test takers place in test administrators, the practitioner must ensure the validity of projective assessments.

Validity reflects reliability; if a test is not reliable, then it must be invalid. According to Knoff (1986), psychoeducational placement of a referred child should not be based on an unreliable projective assessment. The psychometrics of reliability are achieved in several

ways: the test-retest, the split-half, and the interjudge agreement. The interjudge agreement appears to be the most prevalent. This system requires some standardized scoring procedure; however, it is not without problems. Some possible obstacles that hinder the development of a scoring system are a lack of standardized procedures for administering some techniques, along with variations between different examiners (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1990). These differences across tests increase the variability, of response, reducing reliability and compromising the quality of projective assessment.

#### *Projective Assessments and Children*

*Original Stanford-Binet.* In 1911, Goddard published his modified children's version of the 1908 Stanford-Binet scale for use with children in the United States. However, unqualified teaching personnel with little or no psychological training and understanding of the variations and limitations of projective assessments were administering the test (Cutts, 1958). This misuse did not discourage the use of projective assessments with children, but stricter guidelines were implemented. Additionally, in 1852 Massachusetts was the first state to implement compulsory school attendance for all children. From increased enrollments emerged a need for specialized school

services for special educational needs. The Stanford-Binet and the Wechsler Scales were at the forefront of the testing movement and utilized extensively during the early decades of the twentieth century (Fagan & Wise, 2000). Furthermore, the HFD was considered one of the most valuable testing tools for evaluating children (Koppitz, 1968).

*Common technique.* The most commonly used intelligent tests in the United States are the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised (WISC-R); Wechsler Primary Preschool Scale of Intelligence-Revised (WPPSI-R); Stanford-Binet, Form L-M; and Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children (KABC) (Rabin, 1986). According to Reynolds and Kamphaus (1990), the major projective techniques used with children are creative drawings, TAT, and the Rorschach. Accordingly, the two most frequently used drawings are the HTP and the Draw-A-Family (DAF) also known as the Kinetic Family Drawing (KFD). These instruments were the most influential, integrating projective assessment in the practice of school psychologists (Reynolds & Kamphaus).

*State Laws and School Psychology*

According to Knoff (1986), school-aged children are perhaps the most tested group of individuals in this society. With assessment comes accountability, and school

psychologists must account for their evaluations. Knoff reveals that federal and state statutory protection laws usually hold school psychologists accountable. State licensing laws such as privileged communication, release of confidential information, and invasion of privacy are some of the laws that usually hinder school psychologists.

#### *Training Clinic and Assessment of School Psychologists*

According to MaGray (1967), Lightner Witmer started the first school psychology training program at the University of Pennsylvania in 1896. Since this inception, school psychology has become an integral part of the educational system. Consequently, G. Stanley Hall, founder of the American Psychological Association (APA) in 1892, was also the founder of the child study movement. In 1899, he established the first clinic facility operated within the Chicago public schools, the Department of Scientific Pedagogy and Child Study. While not exclusive, these systems have progressed from idiographic clinical psychology and nomothetic educational psychology to a school psychology that is very much in demand. With increased demand for school psychological service came a greater need for effective assessments for intervention.

Assessment must be defined for school psychologists

-depth evaluative process that involves careful

observation and evaluation of a client. For school psychologists, the assessment of children is an integral part of the testing process. Effectively assessing a child or adolescent includes observation in that student's home and social environments. Some presenting problems that a child may face are drugs, family violence, divorce, social isolation, and peer pressure. Careful assessment and selection of tests is necessary to avoid errors in interpreting a projective assessment (Fagan & Wise, 2000).

#### *The Function and Training of School Psychologists*

*The function.* According to Cutts (1958), a survey of school superintendents identified the role of the school psychologist as assisting teachers by providing the performance ability of the child through testing. Additionally, as a part of their function, school psychologists must give accountability for the way they assess children. In 1950, members of the division of school psychologists ranked testing as their primary function. By 1954, only 10 institutions offered programs specifically for school psychologists, and one of the requirements was administering and interpreting intelligence tests (Fagan & Wise, 2000).

*First training program.* Admittance into a school psychology program meant students must have had some

teaching training. This requirement was integral to provide the school psychologists insight into the population they will be working with. In 1929, New York University established the first training program designed for school psychology, the program requirements centered on projective assessment (Reynolds & Gutkin, 1999). Although this training is no longer an integral part of the school psychology curriculum, projective assessments are still used in assessment practices. Thus, the reason for this study to determine how often projective assessments are used and why they are used.

#### *Current Practices in School Psychology*

In a nationwide study, Goh et al. (1981) reported testing was considered a primary responsibility among school psychologists. In addition, they revealed that 54% of participants had been working as a school psychologist for less than 5 years. Thus, in the late 1970s there was still a significant number of newer school psychologists using projective assessment as a major part of their assessment. Furthermore, the top seven most used instruments were in order from the top the Bender-Gestalt, sentence completion, HTP, TAT, DAP, CAT, and the Rorschach (Goh et al.).

Accordingly, in a report on school psychologists and trainers, Prout (1983) indicated that 73% of practitioners used projective assessments in their evaluation of school-aged children referred for social and economic problems. Projective assessments also were listed as the third most frequently used form of evaluation. At the time of this report (Prout, 1983), 64% of training program directors indicated that they offered a projective assessments course. The report also indicated that though projective assessments were still offered in most programs, there is an actual shift from using projective assessment towards behaviorally-oriented approaches (Shapiro & Kratochwill, 1988).

Currently, *Best Practices in School Psychology* (Thomas & Grimes, 2002) has no listings for projective assessments such as the DAP. In addition, it strongly recommends a thorough review of projective assessments by school psychologists before use. According to Reynolds and Gutkin (1999), many authors (school and clinical psychologists) have stated projective assessments are not to be considered viable tests and should not be subject to the constraints normally applied to psychometric devices. Accordingly, the authors believe that projective assessments are not psychometrically effective enough to be used with children.

Moreover, Reynolds and Gutkin (1999) indicated that 50% of a school psychologist's time spent in assessment usually leads to placements in empirically untested programs. Fundamentally, projective assessments are not to be used with children because of their inaccurate results and the potential to label a child incorrectly. Furthermore, projective assessments can be psychometrically ineffective and the formal training of school psychologist to use projective assessments has decreased.

In an effort to understand the current training requirements for school psychologists nationally, an online random selection search among National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) accredited programs was conducted. This search indicated that most (85%) NASP accredited training programs currently do not require projective assessment as a part of their curriculum. Although techniques such as the Stanford-Binet and Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised (WISC-R) are required, projective assessment is neither a requirement or elective. In addition, this search indicated an emphasis towards assessment for intervention in school psychology programs. Given these results, why do school psychologists utilize projective assessments as a part of their assessment for intervention purposes?

### *Purposes of the Study*

One purpose of the study was to determine how frequently projective assessments were used in the current practices of school psychologists in Kansas. Another purpose was to determine why projective assessments were among the current practice of school psychologists in the state of Kansas and finally, to determine whether there was a significant decrease in the use of projective assessments by school psychologists across the past twenty years in the state of Kansas.

*Research Question 1:* What is the prevalence of specified projective assessment instruments among practicing school psychologists in the state of Kansas?

*Research Question 2:* What are the reasons given for using or not using projective assessments as a part of a comprehensive assessment battery?

*Research Question 3:* Is there a significant decrease in the use of projective assessments by practicing school psychologists across the past 20 years?

Answers to these questions are instrumental in determining the frequency with which projective assessments are used. Whether easier-to-administer projective assessments are being utilized and why they are being utilized, this study was intended to understand current and

future practices of the school psychologists in Kansas. It provides practical information that should be considered in assessment situations. Having this knowledge allows trainers the ability to teach their students the pros and cons of utilizing such instruments in an effort to maximize their daily practice. Additionally, school psychologist will exercise greater confidence when opting to use projective assessment because they have a greater understanding of how and why they are being used. Furthermore, there will be less effort to label a child based on an unreliable test.

## CHAPTER 2

## METHOD

*Participants*

School psychologists are the necessary participants required to assess the prevalence of projective assessments among school psychologists and school-aged children. I surveyed 150 school psychologists with Master's, EdS, EdD, PsyD, and PhD degrees practicing in Kansas. Participants were gathered at the 2003 Kansas Association of School Psychologists (KASP) Conference in Wichita, Kansas. They were grouped in four major categories including type of degree earned, years of certified experience, type of school setting worked in, and core curriculum training. One hundred and two surveys were returned, and 97 were usable. This gave a response rate of 64.7%. The majority of the respondents were education specialists, 67.0%. Master's level school psychologists represented 18.60%, EdD or PhD respondent were 10.4% of the sample, and another 3.0% were PsyD or other. Collectively the participants had an average of 15 years experience. However, 34.0% had up to 5 years of experience, 26.80% had 6 to 10 years of experience, and 37.11% had 11 to 20 years experience. Furthermore, almost all participants (90.7%) worked in an educational setting and all participants worked in more than one area of the

educational system. The data revealed that most participants (83.5%) worked in the elementary school setting. The others were equally dispersed among preschool, middle school, and high school. Additionally, 70.1% reported projective assessment as a part of their university training, but 29.9% had no training in projective assessments. The percent of respondents reported receiving training on the TAT and CAT was 61.9%, while 37.1% reported having no training on these instruments. Also 64.9% received formal training in DAP but 33.0% did not. While 38.1% received, training in Rorschach, but 60.8% did not. In addition, 48.5% received formal training in Incomplete Sentence Blank (ISB) but 50.5% did not. While 80.4% received training in the Bender-Gestalt, 17.5% did not.

#### *Instrument*

This study utilized the survey method with a questionnaire developed for this research. The questionnaire (see Appendix A) consisted of 11 questions and an additional space for other unlisted instruments experienced. Each question was designed to examine specific factors that determine the prevalence of projective assessments used in Kansas (i.e., what are the reasons for using a specific projective assessment, is there is a

decrease in your use of projective assessment across the past 20 years). The directions for the questionnaire instructed the participants to detach the front page of the questionnaire to acknowledge their consent to participate in the research (see Appendix B).

#### *Procedure*

The author of this thesis staffed a table situated in the reception area of the NASP conference in October 2003. Participants stopped at the table and were instructed to fill out the questionnaire and return it to the reception desk. The samples were collected anonymously to protect the participants' privacy and were completed voluntarily. Participants were asked to place the completed questionnaire in a designated collection bin. The data were collected over a period of two days.

## CHAPTER 3

## RESULTS

*Research Question 1*

The reported prevalent use of projective assessments by school psychologists indicates that more than half of the respondents reported the most frequently used projective assessment was the Bender-Gestalt (69.1%). The next most popular projective assessment was the DAP at 67.0%, then the ISB (60.8%). In addition, the HTP was reported as the most popular projective assessment in the other instrument category and the overwhelming reason for use was that it yields useful information. Additionally, the data also revealed that at least 12% of the participants used the ISB without formal training.

*Research Question 2*

Overall, the participants overwhelmingly agreed these instruments help build rapport (83.5%), yield useful information (90.7%), and increase assessment comprehensiveness (94.9%) (see Table 1). When school psychologists use projective assessments for intervention, they use it because it increases the complete assessment picture (19.6%). Additionally, this use was more popular among school psychologist trained more than 20 years ago.

Table 1

*Percentage of Respondents Reporting Reasons for Using  
Specified Projective Assessments*

Used because	TAT/CAT	DAP	ROR	ISB	BDG	OTH
Local policy	1.0	1.0	0	1.0	3.1	1.0
Builds rapport	9.3	37.1	1.0	26.8	19.6	4.1
Yields useful information	15.5	23.7	3.1	33.0	34.0	8.2
Comprehensive assessment	19.6	29.9	10.3	28.9	36.1	5.2
Mentor used it	2.1	4.1	1.0	3.1	12.4	2.1
Other	3.1	2.1	2.1	0	2.1	0

Note. TAT = Thematic Apperception Test; CAT = Children Apperception Test; DAP = Draw-A-Person; ROR = Rorschach; ISB = Incomplete Sentence Blank; BDG = Bender-Gestalt; OTH = Other. The value represents percentage of use or nonuse of projective assessment.

The reported reasons for not using projective assessments by school psychologists indicate that respondents endorsed lack of training, and findings not useful or relevant a greater percentage of the time (see Table 2). Only a small percent (5.1%) of the participants endorsed difficult to administer as a reason for not using specified projective assessments. This research also indicated that although 61.9% are receiving formal training in the TAT/CAT, less than 38% of participants are using it on a consistent basis. The data also revealed that the Rorschach was the least used projective assessment (74.2%), followed by the TAT/CAT at 61.9%.

### *Research Question 3*

I computed a Pearson  $r$  correlation between years of experience and percent of cases using projective assessment. The data revealed a significant positive correlation of .33,  $p < .05$ . This indicated a decreasing likelihood of projective assessment use as psychologists' years of experience decreases. In fact, no school psychologists with less than five years experience reported using projective assessment instruments in their evaluations.

Additionally, the data revealed a decrease in the use of projective assessments among school psychologists

currently, when compared to 20 years ago (see Table 3). Twenty years ago, the TAT/CAT was used 13.92% of the time; one year ago, it was being used less than half as much (i.e., 6.73%). The DAP was used 66.80% of the time and currently its usage has been more than halved to 29.10% of the time. The ISB was used 28.44% of the time and is currently being used 23.13% of the time. The Bender-Gestalt was used 66.23% of the time and is currently being used 37.98% of the time. The Rorschach was used 5.64% of the time 20 years ago, increased to 23.50% of the time 10 years ago, and then decreased to 6.67% of the time last year. Overall, those who endorsed the Rorschach have an average of 30 years experience in contrast to those who did not endorse the Rorschach and had an average of 5 years experience. The data also revealed a consistent downward trend with other projective assessments from 53.57% to 24.6%.

Table 2

*Percentage of Respondents Reporting Reasons for Not Using Specified Projective Assessments*

Never used because	TAT/CAT	DAP	ROR	ISB	BDG
Lack of Training	29.9	15.5	51.5	21.6	12.4
Difficult to administer	0	0	4.1	0	1.0
Not Valid	7.2	8.2	10.3	7.2	4.1
Findings not useful/relevant	18.6	11.3	14.1	7.2	7.2
Local policy	5.2	1.0	6.2	2.1	2.1
Time-consuming	5.2	1.0	8.2	2.1	2.1
Other	9.3	1.0	7.2	2.0	7.2

Note. TAT = Thematic Apperception Test; CAT = Children Apperception Test; DAP = Draw-A-Person; ROR = Rorschach; ISB = Incomplete Sentence Blank; BDG = Bender-Gestalt; OTH = Other. The value represents percentage of use or nonuse of projective assessment.

Table 3

*Percentage of Times with Which Practitioners Used Specified Projective Assessments in Past Years*

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Years of mean use %	TAT/CAT	DAP	ROR	ISB	BDG	OTH
Mean % use past 20 year	13.9	66.8	5.64	28.4	66.2	53.5
Mean % use past 10 year	9.84	51.8	23.6	23.6	52.2	34.6
Mean % use past 5 year	6.67	35.9	1.01	17.0	41.8	25.8
Mean % use past year	6.73	29.1	6.67	23.1	37.9	24.6

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Note. TAT = Thematic Apperception Test; CAT = Children Apperception Test; DAP = Draw-A-Person; ROR = Rorschach; ISB = Incomplete Sentence Blank; BDG = Bender-Gestalt; OTH = Other.

CHAPTER 4  
DISCUSSION

*Research Question 1*

This question looked at the prevalent use of specified projective assessment instruments. Projective assessments continue to be a factor in the assessment process of the school psychologist in Kansas. Some projective assessments were used on a consistent basis, while others were not in use. On average, more than half of the respondents currently use projective assessment as a part of their assessment practices. One explanation for this could be that veteran school psychologists were utilizing specified projective assessment more often than recently trained school psychologists were. As the data indicated, respondents trained more than 20 years ago were the major participants and are more likely to use specified projective assessments. Furthermore, newer less trained school psychologists tend not to use projective assessment because of their lack of experience with the instrument.

Additionally, the data suggest that specified projective assessments were more often used at the elementary school level. Most elementary students are referred for potential reading, behavior, and attention problems, which mean they may be easily frustrated and

distractible. Ultimately, students at this grade level may possess a shorter attention span and administering a projective assessment in a structured testing environment can be difficult. Having knowledge of the high level of distractibility for this age group, the reason mentioned (rapport building) by school psychologists for using specified projective assessments is justifiable because it does allow for students to become comfortable, and offers a unique opportunity to interact with students. Similarly, since projective assessments do not appear to be used for interpretation it is not a factor when used by school psychologists. Furthermore, instruments such as the Rorschach that are not currently prevalent among school psychologists would be useless if used as a rapport builder because younger students may consider them outdated and boring. Additionally, projective assessments such as the ISB may be considered more relaxing for younger users because of their ability to complete a sentence without pressure. It is therefore safe to conclude that both veteran and newer school psychologists who advocate using projective assessment to build rapport recognize the effectiveness of using specified projective assessments for reasons other than interpretation or intervention.

### *Research Question 2*

This question looked at the reason for use or lack of use of specified projective assessment instruments. The data revealed that the participants' responses for their reasons for using were mixed. As indicated, specified projective assessments were still used, and purposes of use for projective assessment have shifted during the past two decades. This research revealed that most participants use specified projective assessments because they help build rapport, yield useful information, and increase assessment comprehensiveness. In previous research by Goh et al. (1981), projective assessments were instrumental in assessing behavior and making diagnostic conclusions. The current data indicate that building rapport with the children contributes to a comprehensive evaluative framework. Using projective assessment as a rapport builder helps the school psychologists to collect their overall evaluative picture.

Additionally, almost none of the participants endorse the response "difficult to administer" as a reason for not using specified projective assessment. One possible explanation for this could be that specified projective assessments are simple enough to administer that they save time. If rapport building is the main reason for use, then

ease of administration is a necessary requirement. The utilization of specified projective assessments is far different from its original intention of assessment for intervention. Both veterans and newer school psychologists in Kansas endorse rapport building as a potential new reason for use.

Currently, projective assessment is not a requirement in many school psychology training programs. However, 70% of participants were trained in projective assessments. Projective assessments still appear to be viable in the intervention process. This research also revealed that most participants were trained more than 15 years ago, indicating that previous training rather than recent training was the basis for this representative sample. Most of the participants with formal training were trained at least 15 to 25 years. In essence, participants who were more recently educated are not receiving formal training in projective assessments. This does not indicate a direct relationship to years of experience; however, it does indicate that persons trained in a program that was not predominantly school psychology related may still adhere to that training as a measure of familiarity. For example, past training for school psychologists had a clinical psychology emphasis (see Fagan & Wise, 2000). Persons

taught 15 years ago might still have an educational experience that reinforces a clinical emphasis. This represents a limitation in this study. Future research should focus on more recently trained participants.

Furthermore, respondents utilized the ISB without any formal training. Given the relative ease of administration, this ideation could strongly reiterate the proposed reason found for use of specified projective assessments. In addition, more participants reported having formal training in the TAT/CAT. Yet more than half of those with training were not using specified projective assessments on a consistent basis. This indicates that participants recognize the ineffectiveness of this projective assessment and are open to using other forms of assessments when working with children.

### *Research Question 3*

This question explores the decrease in the use of projective assessments by school psychologists across the past 20 years. As anticipated, the data revealed an overall decline of 48% in the frequency of use of projective assessment across the past 20 years. This is a strong indication that school psychologists have decreased their use of projective assessments as a part of their comprehensive evaluation. One explanation for this could be

that over time veteran school psychologists in Kansas recognized that specified projective assessments were no longer a psychometrically viable measure of assessment for intervention, and their needs were no longer met when using these projective assessments. Specified projective assessments were time consuming and lacked significant validity. Therefore, school psychologists have begun using these projective assessments in a direction other than its original intention, that of assisting in their assessment for intervention.

Goh et al. (1981) indicate participants who endorse projective assessments had less than 5 years of experience. The Bender-Gestalt was the most mentioned instrument, while the Rorschach was the most frequently endorsed instrument. This result was primarily accounted for by factors such as psychometric establishment of these instruments, ease with which they are used, and time economic measures (Goh et al.). Given the popularity of previous projective assessments, all indications reflected that the strengths of their original purpose should still be an influential factor. However, this does not appear to be the case for recently trained school psychologists in this study, who received training in a different era without a strong emphasis on clinical psychology.

The results of this study revealed that the Bender-Gestalt is currently the most popular projective assessment instrument among both veterans and newer school psychologists; this result is consistent with previous research published 24 years ago (Goh et al.1981). Additionally, the DAP is the second most frequently used projective assessment among school psychologists in Kansas followed by the ISB, which was previously the second most popular projective assessment. Currently the Rorschach is the least used projective assessment by school psychologists in Kansas.

According to the findings of this research, a decrease in use does not necessarily indicate a lack of use. One reason for this is the reported usefulness of specified projective assessments that builds on what the school psychologist knows from their use of other instruments. This indicates that most school psychologists in Kansas, at the time of this study, used specified projective assessment instruments to incorporate their practicing trends.

Another possible reason for this finding is the idea that school psychologists in Kansas have discovered the usefulness of using an instrument that is not time consuming, given the fact that they are not utilizing these

projective assessment as a measure of intervention. It is rational for the school psychologist to utilize the projective assessment saving the most time but also adding credibility to their interpretive strategies.

Veteran and newer school psychologists find specified projective assessments most useful when used with other projective assessments. In addition, there are other projective assessment instruments being used by school psychologists in Kansas to complete a comprehensive assessment for intervention, thus understanding the usefulness of other projective assessments mentioned and exploring innovative intervention measures is a possible future area for research.

*Best Practices* (Thomas & Grimes, 2002) cautions against using the Draw-A-Person; however, it is currently the second most frequently used projective assessment. Most participants believe using the DAP helps to affirm the complete framework of their assessment when conducting assessment for intervention. This revelation strengthens the idea that projective assessments are being used for reasons other than intended use. Despite cautions, projective assessments are being utilized constructively. The decrease in use of projective assessments by school psychologists for intervention purposes is popular;

however, an increase in use for building rapport when conducting assessment may be emerging. An area for future research is whether there will be a further decline in specified projective assessments or an increase due to innovative reasons for use.

#### *Limitations and Directions for Future Study*

*Limitation.* This study focused on a broad range of school psychologists predominantly trained 20 years ago. One focus might be to look just at psychologists trained in the past 5 years. Only a small percentage (10%) of school psychologists in Kansas participated in the study. Another limitation is the environment in which the data was gathered. Participants were continuously busy and may not have paid close attention to their answer choices. One assumption is that those who attended the annual NASP conference are representative of school psychologists throughout Kansas. Another assumption is that they answered the questions with a relatively low level of distractibility.

*Future direction.* A sample from all credentialed school psychologists and training programs in Kansas would be most beneficial for maximum results. A less distracting environment would be more beneficial when answering questions that are more comprehensive. Additionally, more

research is recommended to discover the usefulness of other projective assessments mentioned and their contribution to assessment comprehensiveness. Further study would also be instrumental in discovering if there will be an increase in the use of specified projective assessments due to new reasons.

### *Summary*

In summary, school psychologists in Kansas are still using projective assessments as a part of their assessment techniques. However, the purpose is currently different, indicating that the use of projective assessments has shifted and Kansas school psychologists no longer use projective assessment as an intervening measure of assessment. In addition, the most popular projective assessment (DAP) in previous research is still popular among veterans and new school psychologists. Furthermore, the DAP is also the projective assessment previous research (see Gutkin 1999; Thomas & Grimes 2002) cautioned against using. The differences among school psychologists are related to years of certification but do not indicate a causal effect. Veteran school psychologists were using projective assessments more than newer school psychologists. In addition, they were both currently using them for similar reasons. Obviously more research is needed

in Kansas as well as nation wide to understand fully the ramifications of usage. A replication of this study with a larger, more recently trained population would confirm these results.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

## INFORMED CONSENT

The Division of Psychology and Special Education at Emporia State University support the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research and related activities. The following information is provided so that you can decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time, and that if you do withdraw from the study, you will not be subjected to reprimand or any other form of reproach.

The purpose of this research is to examine the frequency with which projective assessment techniques are used in the state of Kansas among school psychologists. The results will be used in understanding the assessment practices and training needs of the Kansas school psychologist community.

### **This survey requires about 5-10 minutes of your time**

Participants in this study maintain their anonymity. Data that is collected will not be scrutinized individually, but instead this information will be analyzed as group data.

There are no anticipated risks or danger to the participants in this study. If you are unable to complete questionnaire today, you may do so later and return it by mail to: Margaritta K. Fisher Campus Box 4031, Emporia, KS 66801. Questions about this research may be directed to me 620-342-5794 or by calling advisor Dr. James Persinger at 620-341-5428.

The anticipated completion date of this thesis is December 12, 2003. Should you desire a copy of the results upon completion you may do so by emailing me at [fmargaritta@hotmail.com](mailto:fmargaritta@hotmail.com) or view the URL at <http://www.emporia.edu/~persingj/kansasprojectives.htm> as of that date.

**By detaching this form and completing the questionnaire, I am indicating that I have read the above statements and agree to participate in this research.**

## APPENDIX B

**Instructions:** Please answer by checking the appropriate response. Check as many as apply to any given question.

1. My highest degree earned is:  B.A.  M.A.  M.S.  
 Ed. S.  Ed. D.  Psy. D  Ph.D.  Other Specify\_\_\_\_\_
2. I have been a certified school psychologist for these many years \_\_\_\_\_
3. In what year did you become a certified school psychologist? (e.g., 1995) \_\_\_\_\_
4. I currently work in a setting other than an educational agency  Yes  No  
(If yes, please specify situation \_\_\_\_\_)
5. I primarily work with the following age group(s)  
(check off one or more as needed)  
 Preschool  Elementary School  Middle School  
 High School
6. In the university training you received to become a school psychologist, was projective assessment a required part of that curriculum?  Yes  No

**Instructions:** Five specific instruments are now listed. Check off as many boxes as apply for each question for each instrument named.

**Thematic Apperception or Children's Apperception Test**

I have received formal training on this instrument

no  yes

I have never used this because

Lack of training  Difficult to administer

Not valid  findings not useful/relevant

Local policy  too time-consuming

Other \_\_\_\_\_

*(If you have never used this instrument, move on to the next instrument)*

I use this because:

Local policy

warm up/builds rapport

Yields useful/valid information

Increases assessment comprehensiveness

My mentor used it

other \_\_\_\_\_

The percent of cases with which I have used this instrument as part of assessment (if not a school psychologist at the time, write "n/a.")

The past year \_\_\_\_\_%

5 years ago \_\_\_\_\_%

10 years ago \_\_\_\_\_%

20 years ago \_\_\_\_\_%

**Draw a Person**

I have received formal training on this instrument

no  yes

I have never used this because

- Lack of training
- Difficult to administer
- Not valid
- findings not useful/relevant
- Local policy
- too time-consuming
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

*(If you have never used this instrument, move on to the next instrument)*

I use this because:

- Local policy
- warm up/builds rapport
- Yields useful/valid information
- Increases assessment comprehensiveness
- My mentor used it
- other \_\_\_\_\_

The percent of cases with which I have used this instrument as part of assessment (if not a school psychologist at the time, write "n/a.")

The past year	_____ %	5 years ago	_____ %
10 years ago	_____ %	20 years ago	_____ %

## Rorschach

I have received formal training on this instrument

no  yes

I have never used this because

- Lack of training     Difficult to administer  
 Not valid             findings not useful/relevant  
 Local policy         too time-consuming  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

*(If you have never used this instrument, move on to the next instrument)*

I use this because:

- Local policy  
 warm up/builds rapport  
 Yields useful/valid information  
 Increases assessment comprehensiveness  
 My mentor used it  
 other \_\_\_\_\_

The percent of cases with which I have used this instrument as part of assessment (if not a school psychologist at the time, write "n/a.")

The past year	_____ %	5 years ago	_____ %
10 years ago	_____ %	20 years ago	_____ %

### Incomplete Sentence Blank

I have received formal training on this instrument

no  yes

I have never used this because

- Lack of training
- Difficult to administer
- Not valid
- findings not useful/relevant
- Local policy
- too time-consuming
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

*(If you have never used this instrument, move on to the next instrument)*

I use this because:

- Local policy
- warm up/builds rapport
- Yields useful/valid information
- Increases assessment comprehensiveness
- My mentor used it
- other \_\_\_\_\_

The percent of cases with which I have used this instrument as part of assessment (if not a school psychologist at the time, write "n/a.")

The past year	_____ %	5 years ago	_____ %
10 years ago	_____ %	20 years ago	_____ %

## Bender Gestalt

I have received formal training on this instrument

no  yes

I have never used this because

- Lack of training     Difficult to administer  
 Not valid             findings not useful/relevant  
 Local policy         too time-consuming  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

*(If you have never used this instrument, move on to the next instrument)*

I use this because:

- Local policy  
 warm up/builds rapport  
 Yields useful/valid information  
 Increases assessment comprehensiveness  
 My mentor used it  
 other \_\_\_\_\_

The percent of cases with which I have used this instrument as part of assessment (if not a school psychologist at the time, write "n/a.")

The past year	_____ %	5 years ago	_____ %
10 years ago	_____ %	20 years ago	_____ %

**Other projective instruments with which I have experience: Specify \_\_\_\_\_**

I have received formal training on this instrument

no  yes

I have never used this because

- Lack of training     Difficult to administer
- Not valid             findings not useful/relevant
- Local policy          too time-consuming
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

*(If you have never used this instrument, move on to the next instrument)*

I use this because:

- Local policy
- warm up/builds rapport
- Yields useful/valid information
- Increases assessment comprehensiveness
- My mentor used it
- other \_\_\_\_\_

The percent of cases with which I have used this instrument as part of assessment (if not a school psychologist at the time, write "n/a.")

The past year	_____ %	5 years ago	_____ %
10 years ago	_____ %	20 years ago	_____ %

I, Margaritta Karen Fisher, hereby submit this thesis to Emporia State University as partial fulfillment for the requirements for an advanced degree. I agree that the Library of the University may make it available for use in accordance with its regulations governing materials of this type. I further agree that quoting, photocopying, or other reproduction of this document is allowed for private study, scholarship (including teaching) and research purposes of a nonprofit nature. No copying which involves potential financial gain will be allowed without written permission of the author.

M. Fisher  
Signature of Author

7.23.05  
Date

The Prevalence of Projective Assessments  
Usage Among School Psychologists and  
School-Aged Children in the State of Kansas

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title of Thesis

Long Cooper  
Signature of Graduate Office Staff Member

7.21.05  
Date Received

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