

# Support Groups for Children of Drug-Addicted Parents

## The Use of Projective Techniques in Evaluation

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## The case

The welfare authorities conducted a nationwide program for children of drug-addicted parents.

The children participated in the program twice a week in peer groups, led by a child psychotherapist together with a social worker specialized in work with families in which one or both parents were drug addicted.

Children of drug-addicted parents:  
live in a labile and insecure  
environment. As a result, they are  
characterized by introverted behavior.  
Years of living with "a secret", of  
neglect, of role-reversal with their  
parents and of mistrust toward  
authorities make them a difficult  
population for treatment and research.

# The general goals:

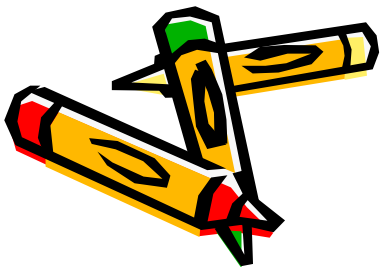
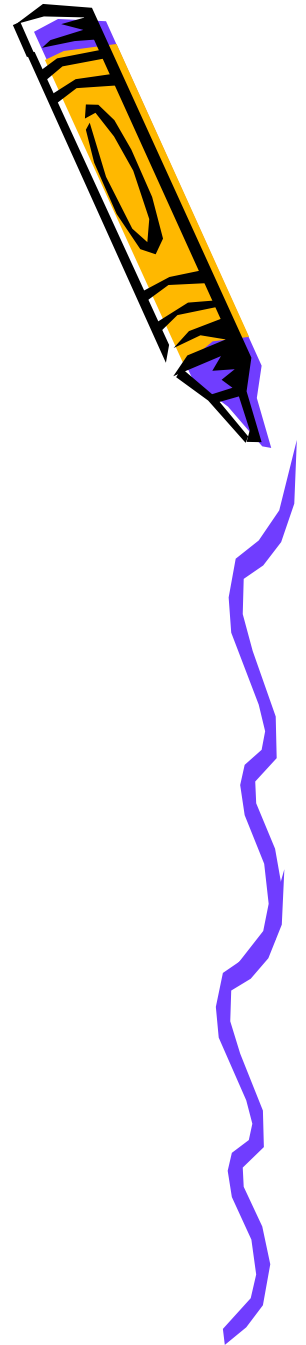
- To provide the children with a resource - a strengthening support group - and} to teach them to use resources for help.
- To provide the children with tools that would help them to deal with “the secret” and with the drug issue.
- To provide the children with tools to deal with the world and the family.
- To help the children become children again (within and outside the family).

# Research challenges

We confronted three main challenges:

- 1. A population that is very difficult to research:
  - a very diverse population (age, background)
  - young children
  - children of drug-addicted parents
- 2. We didn't have clear variables to look for. The program goals were phrased in a vague, general way.
- 3. We were afraid that changes, if they occurred, would be too faint to trace.

The solution we chose was to use a projective technique in order to reveal any internal changes that might have occurred.



# Projective Techniques

The rationale of projective techniques claims that deeply held attitudes and motivations are often not verbalized by respondents when questioned directly.

*Projective techniques* allow respondents to project their subjective or true opinions and beliefs onto other people or even objects.

Among the most commonly used  
are:

- ◆ • *Word association test*
- ◆ • *Sentence completion test*
- ◆ • *Thematic apperception test (TAT)*
- ◆ • *Third-person techniques*
- ◆ • *Rorschach*



# Projective personality tests

Are among the most controversial and misunderstood psychological tests: they have been attacked on a variety of scientific and statistical grounds.

# **Common Approach**

The common approach to projective techniques is as a tool for diagnosing the condition of the person being examined.

For their analysis, highly standardized methods and well-structured systems of administration, scoring, and interpretation are used.

## Our approach

- In our approach the focus is not on an individual but on a phenomenon.
- As opposed to the restrictive analysis usually used in projective techniques, our method is a hermeneutic that assumes interpretative relations between text (answers given by subjects), the reader (evaluator) and reality (the examined phenomenon).



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## Some problems

- The main methodological problem is the reliability of results.
  - Solution: interjudge reliability.
  - The main ethical problem is the manipulation of the population.
  - Partial solution: The focus of the research is not the individual, but the group results and the phenomenon. It is anonymous analysis.
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# Stories


## PRE:

Once there was a large family of bears in a cramped house. They had a lot of honey and the foxes bothered them all the time. Thus they moved to the second forest, but more foxes came to bully them. The family said, "We better ignore them." And then they continued living there and didn't pay attention to the foxes.

A stylized silhouette of a mountain range in shades of teal, located in the bottom right corner of the slide.


## PRE 2:

There was a family that was destroyed because every day one member of the family died. Only one kid survived. He went to a foster family and he lived happily ever after.

A stylized silhouette of a mountain range in a darker shade of teal, located in the bottom right corner of the slide.


## POST:

There was a family that lived near the forest where there was a wolf lurking for prey. One day the little girl went out and the wolf devoured her. The father went out to help her and it ate him, too, and the mother.... One after another they died.

A stylized silhouette of a mountain range in shades of teal, located in the bottom right corner of the slide.

## POST 2:

There was a family that went for a walk and they got lost and it was dark and they saw an animal and cried and cried for help...

A stylized silhouette of a mountain range in a darker shade of teal, located in the bottom right corner of the slide.



Partial findings concerning children who participated in “groups for children of drug users” (From interviews only):

Interviewed: pre - 47 children in 8 groups (out of 28 groups)

post - 28 children in 6 groups

The interview was an open, voluntary, anonymous interview, which included two very open questions:

Tell me about a group....

Tell me a story about a family....

Selected findings from the distribution of answers  
to the request "tell me a story..."

<b>Characterization</b>	<b>Pre</b>	<b>Post</b>
<b>Imagined</b> (a forest, witches) - <b>real</b>		
<b>Imagined</b>	<b>55.3%</b>	<b>35.7%</b>
<b>Combination of imagined and real</b>	<b>23.4%</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Real</b>	<b>21.3%</b>	<b>39.3%</b>

<b>Fairytale like</b> (fairytale images or animals) - <b>human</b>		
<b>Fairytale like</b>	<b>12.7%</b>	<b>21.4%</b>
<b>Combined</b>	<b>74.4%</b>	<b>3.6%</b>
<b>Human</b>	<b>12.9%</b>	<b>75%</b>

## Distribution of answers (continue)

<b>Characterization</b>	<b>Pre</b>	<b>Post</b>
<b>Amount and sort of feelings in the story</b>		
<b>There is emotional expression</b>	<b>27.6%</b>	<b>14.2%</b>
<b>Positive feelings</b>	<b>12.8%</b>	<b>17.8%</b>
<b>Negative feelings</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>28.5%</b>
<b>Mixed or unclear</b>	<b>70.2%</b>	<b>53.7%</b>
<b>The object of interaction in the story</b>		
<b>Parents, siblings, family</b>	<b>61.7%</b>	<b>82%</b>
<b>Other human images</b>	<b>53.1%</b>	<b>39.4%</b>

Distribution of answers  
(continue)

<b>Characterization</b>	<b>Pre</b>	<b>Post</b>	
<b>Characterization of the interaction</b>			
<b>Positive</b>	<b>19.2%</b>	<b>21.45</b>	
<b>Negative</b>	<b>61.7%</b>	<b>25%</b>	
<b>Mixed</b>	<b>19.1%</b>	<b>53.6%</b>	
<b>Coping and problem solving in the story</b>			
	<b>Pre</b>	<b>post</b>	
<b>Successful</b>	<b>57.4%</b>	<b>46.4%</b>	
<b>Unsuccessful</b>	<b>25.5%</b>	<b>28.5%</b>	

## Distribution of answers (continue)

Characterization	Pre	Post
Direction of the story		
Optimistic	46.8%	35.7%
Pessimistic	12.8%	28.5%
The complexity of the story		
Low	25.5%	21.3%
Medium	42.5%	32.1%
High	32%	46.6%

## Distribution of answers (continue)

<b>Characterization</b>	<b>Pre</b>	<b>Post</b>	
<b>Presence of drugs in the story</b>			
<b>Exist</b>	<b>12.1%</b>	<b>14.2%</b>	
<b>Do not exist</b>	<b>87.9%</b>	<b>85.7%</b>	
<b>Presence of the child in the story</b>			
<b>Exists and active</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>18%</b>	
<b>Exists but is passive</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>46%</b>	

# Main findings

The main finding is the awareness of difficulties.

- The stories at the end of the year are much gloomier and indicate more distress.
- There is an increase in pessimism, of passive characteristics, of failure. There is less denial of harsh reality and less escapism to fantasy and happy endings.
- The loneliness and isolation didn't change.
- Drugs are absent before and after.

# Conclusions

Much less escapism

More forces to face reality



Thank you

