The Validity of Tarot as a Personality Inventory

Dimas Armand Santosa
Faculty of Psychology
Universitas Surabaya

Tarot is mainly known by the general population as a divination media while in reality, it is also usable to measure the personality of individuals by using the personality categories based on the Tarot major arcanes (Ouspensky, 1976; Levitt, 2003; Mathers, 2004). The goal of this research was to test the validity of Tarot as an alternative personality inventory by comparing it with the Big Five Personality score measured by using International Personality Item Pool (IPIP) on each personality category based on Tarot. The subjects of this research were 494 psychology students from the 2008-2011 generation. In order to determine the subjects' Tarot personality categories, the subjects' birth date were used, and in order to measure the Big Five Personality score, IPIP was used. Results show that there were no significant differences between the Big Five Personality aspects score on each Tarot personality categories. The scores of ANOVA and cross-tabbing between each Tarot personality categories do not show any significant differences, meaning that Tarot is not sufficient to be used as an alternative personality inventory.

Keywords: Tarot, major arcane, big five personality, difference test

Tarot lebih banyak dikenal oleh masyarakat umum sebagai media meramal. Sebenarnya *Tarot* juga dapat digunakan untuk mengukur kepribadian seseorang dengan menggunakan kategori kepribadian berdasarkan *major arcana Tarot* (Ouspensky 1976; Levitt, 2003, Mathers, 2004). Tujuan penelitian ini adalah menguji tingkat validitas *Tarot* sebagai alat pengukur kepribadian alternatif dengan membandingkan skor *Big Five Personality* yang didapat menggunakan International Personality Item Pool (IPIP) antar-kategori kepribadian berdasarkan *Tarot*. Subjek penelitian adalah 494 mahasiswa fakultas psikologi angkatan 2008-2011. Teknik pengukuran menggunakan tanggal lahir subjek untuk menentukan kategori kepribadian *Tarot* dan IPIP untuk mendapatkan skor *Big Five Personality*. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa tidak ada perbedaan skor aspek *Big Five Personality* antar-kategori kepribadian berdasarkan *Tarot*. Skor ANOVA dan *cross-tabbing* menunjukkan bahwa tidak ada perbedaan skor aspek *Big Five Personality* antar- kategori kepribadian berdasarkan *Tarot*. Hasil ini menunjukkan bahwa *Tarot* belum dapat digunakan sebagai alat pengukur kepribadian alternatif yang signifikan.

Kata kunci: Tarot, major arcana, big five personality, uji beda

Tarot was invented in Italy on the Renaissance era, the beginning of the 15th century. At first Tarot was a variation of the commonly used set of cards at that time, eventually developing into a divination media (Levitt, 2003). Tarot as a divination media consists of a set of 78 cards, generally being a symbolism of a human's life experience. The use of Tarot as the divination media is arguably the most commonly known use of Tarot by the general public, despite the fact that Tarot is also usable as a projection media in order to achieve enlightenment in life (Victor, 1999). Another use of the Tarot that is less known by the general public is as a measurement media for basic personalities, similar to the zodiac (Levitt, 2003).

Zodiac is the yearly cycle based on the moon phase change in astrology. Originated from the Latin word "zodiacus" which means cycle or the circle of animals, zodiac is affected by culture. The most commonly known zodiacs in Indonesia are the Greek Zodiac which consists of Capricorn, Aquarius, Pisces, Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, and Sagittarius; and the Chinese Zodiac which consists of rat, ox, tiger, hare, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, rooster, dog, and pig (Tierney, 2000; Wu, 2005). Zodiac is more commonly known by the

general public as a media that can be used to measure someone's basic personality, based on archetypes that is developed by Carl Jung in the Jungian Psychology, closely related to Transpersonal Psychology (Rudnick, 2003; Shamdasani, 2003).

Another commonly known concept is the concept of *wetonan* in the Javanese culture. In the concept of *wetonan*, someone's character is determined by the individual's birth date, based on the cycle of the traditional Javanese calendar. Someone's *weton* is the combination of the seven days of the week (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday) with the five days of the Javanese calendar (*Legi, Pahing, Pon, Wage, and Kliwon*), resulting in 35 possible categories of a person's characteristics or personality (Anonymus, 2006).

Transpersonal Psychology is one of the four main powers in psychology besides Classical Psychodynamic, Positivistic Behavioral, and Humanistic (Cowley, cited in Rudnick, 2003). The objects of study in Transpersonal Psychology are not just limited to religious spirituality, but also myths, dreams, and mythologies (Brooke, 2000; Rudnick, 2003). Transpersonal Psychology's object of study relates it closely with Jungian Psychology because of the objects of study in Jungian Psychology is about the archetype, meaning the model or prototype of someone, personality, or behavior (Brooke, 2000).

Archetype is believed to have a significant effect on the determination of personality. At first studied on animals, believed to have the natural and genetic ability to determine their personality since birth. From the studies, the concept that humans also have a similar natural ability was developed (Shamdasani, 2003). Archetype is commonly pictured with symbols that are closely related to mythologies, like in zodiac and Tarot.

Transpersonal Psychology and Tarot is closely related. This is because both have the same goal, helping humans in reaching the condition of transcendence. Transcendence is the condition where an individual has found his meaning of life, able to feel that he is a part of the balanced universe (Miller, 2004). Both Transpersonal Psychology and Tarot can be used to achieve transcendence because Tarot was developed based on archetypes, containing symbols that can be used by humans as a projection media in order to help them achieve transcendence (Victor, 1999; Ouspensky, 1976).

Tarot also has another use, which is as a media to measure basic personalities. Using a concept similar to the zodiac, Tarot uses mathematical calculations of an individual's birth date to determine the individual's major arcane. Major arcanes symbolize archetypes, each containing a particular basic personality (Levitt, 2003). The major arcanes used as the basis of basic personality archetypes are The Magician (I), The High Priestess (II), The Empress (III), The Emperor (IV), The Hierophant (V), The Lovers (VI), The Chariot (VII), Justice (VIII), and The Hermit (IX).

There are earlier researches that used Tarot as the research theme, but most of those researches focused on the Tarot's validity as a divination media. Ivtzan and French (2004) researched the Tarot's validity by comparing divination results, the result that was paranormal in nature and the result that was random in nature. The research used two subject groups, one group consisted of believers of the paranormal and the other consisted of skeptics. The result of the research stated that there was no significant difference between the controlled divination result and the paranormal results on both subject groups. There was a weakness in the research, mainly the existence of bias from the group that consisted of believers of the paranormal, making them give higher scores to the paranormal divination results.

Another research was conducted by Semetsky (2006) who tested the Tarot divinations from the standpoint of projection hypothesis. Result of this research stated that Tarot divination was the result of projection of an individual's shadow, using Tarot as the media. The individual's interpretation of the divination result is considered to be the shadow, and by confronting that shadow, the subject receives enlightenment and therapeutic change.

There was one research that tested the validity of Tarot in the interpretation of personalities, similar to the projection test. The research was conducted by Blackmore (1983) by using the Celtic Cross arrangement, the arrangement for reading an individual's future by using ten cards, chosen at random by the subject. The interpretation of the cards was the result of the divination. Three research subjects were given the Celtic Cross arrangement and then asked to interpret what kind of personality did the characters pictured in the card had. The interpretation was then compared to the subjects' personality. The result of the research stated that out of three subjects, only one of them had significant scores, possibly because of an experimental design flaw, mainly the usage of the Celtic Cross arrangement and the minimum number of subjects used.

Based on the results of the earlier researches about Tarot, the researcher deemed that there is still the need to do more researches regarding Tarot.

Table 1

Cross-tabbing Between the Aspects of Big Five Personality with the Nine Tarot Personality Categories Results

No.	Variable	Pearson Chi-Square Significance	Interpretation
1	*Openness to Experience*	.980	Not Significant
2	*Conscientiousness*	.616	Not Significant
3	*Extraversion*	.470	Not Significant
4	*Agreeableness*	.888	Not Significant
5	*Neuroticism*	.035	Significant

Tarot is closely related to psychology and can be used as a media to help individuals achieve enlightenment and transcendence, improving their life quality. This research is different from the earlier researches because this research was testing the validity of Tarot as an alternative personality inventory by comparing it to an inventory that is already valid.

The inventory used in this research is the IPIP (International Personality Item Pool), an inventory used to measure the Big Five Personality (BFP) score. IPIP was developed by Goldberg and consists of 50 self-report items, used to measure an individual's five basic traits. The BFP concept was developed because of the need to be able to understand and measure individual's personality in a simpler and more practical manner, by studying the generally understood descriptions of personalities (Goldberg, 2006). IPIP was developed to solve the said problem, hoping that by using self-reports with descriptions of personalities that were already translated into the subjects' native language, subjects will have an easier time to choose the responses that is representative of the subjects' personalities.

IPIP is chosen because of the similar usage of the trait system or personality descriptions in IPIP and the major arcanes in Tarot. Each major arcanes in Tarot can be defined by using several particular traits. It was hoped that by using this similarity, there will be a connection between the traits in Tarot major arcanes with the traits in IPIP, tested by using cross-tabbing in the research. The results of the validity testing were analyzed to find the answer regarding Tarot's validity as an alternative personality inventory.

Method

Participants and Data Collection

The participants of this research were 494 psychology students of Universitas Surabaya of the 2008-2011 generation.

Data were collected from the Faculty of Psychology of Universitas Surabaya's database ("Pangkalan Data," 2012) and from Database of Big Five Personality researches ("CL2 Database, 2012). The birth date data that was needed to calculate and determine the subjects' Tarot personality categories were collected from the Pangkalan Data, while the IPIP score data were collected from CL2.

Data Analysis

Hypothesis test was conducted in order to find out whether the starting hypothesis was accepted or rejected. This research used cross-tabbing of the Tarot personality categories with the IPIP BFP aspects score as the hypothesis test. If the Pearson Chi-Square significance score $< .05$, the hypothesis is accepted. Besides using cross-tabbing, the research also uses ANOVA for extra data. Both hypotheses tests were done using SPSS 13.0 for Windows.

Results

The results show that Tarot cannot be used as an alternative personality measuring inventory. Results were collected by cross-tabbing the Tarot personality categories with the aspects of BFP (Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism). The Pearson Chi-Square significance score from the cross-tabbing shows that there are no differences in the scores of BFP between the Tarot personality categories.

Table 1 shows that the Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, and Agreeableness aspects have significance score higher than .05. This means that there are no significant differences between the scores of those aspects between each Tarot personality categories. The only aspect that has the significant score higher lower than .05 is the Neuroticism aspect. This means that there is a

difference in the Neuroticism aspect score between each Tarot personality categories, but the difference is

results of the cross-tabbing show that there were no significant differences, further proven by the fact that the

Table 2

ANOVA of Tarot Personality Categories with Big Five Personality Aspects

No.	Variable	Significance Score	Interpretation
1	*Openness to Experience*	.946	Not Significant
2	*Conscientiousness*	.494	Not Significant
3	*Extraversion*	.537	Not Significant
4	*Agreeableness*	.532	Not Significant
5	*Neuroticism*	.984	Not Significant

just on the Neuroticism aspect.

For extra data, the researcher used ANOVA in the hypothesis test as well. ANOVA results showed that there are no differences in BFP aspect scores between each Tarot personality categories. The results of the ANOVA are similar to the results of the cross-tabbing, the only difference being the significance score of the Neuroticism aspect.

The Pearson Chi-Square scores show that there are no differences in four of the five aspects of BFP between each Tarot personality categories, while the ANOVA scores show that there were no differences in all five aspects of BFP between each Tarot personality categories. The difference between the Pearson Chi-Square score and the ANOVA score lies in the aspect of Neuroticism. Based on the Pearson Chi-Square score, there are differences in the Neuroticism aspect score between each Tarot personality categories, but only on the Neuroticism aspect. This is different from the results of the ANOVA that show that there are differences in the Neuroticism aspect score between each Tarot personality categories. After further analysis using the ANOVA Multiple Comparisons, there were no significant differences in the Neuroticism score between each Tarot personality categories, meaning that despite the score difference, the difference in scores is too low to be considered as significant.

Discussion

The significance score difference between the cross-tabbing and the ANOVA results may be caused by the effect of visual-banding on the scores used in the ANOVA. The scores are categorized into six categories based on the score levels, this can cause difference compared to the ANOVA score that uses raw data. The

ANOVA score and Multiple Comparisons ANOVA show that there are no significant difference as well.

The lack of significant difference may be caused by the dissimilarities of the traits used in the personality categories in both BFP and Tarot. Even though the traits seemingly connect with each other because of the similarities, the traits in Tarot are not tested in validity yet, while the traits in BFP were already valid.

Results also show that there is a chance that the BFP aspect scores between each Tarot personality categories are overlapping with each other. This is caused by the fact that the Tarot personality categories have not been tested yet for reliability and validity, opening the chance for each Tarot personality category to have similar scores in the aspects of BFP.

Another reason for the non-significant score is the data distribution. The data distribution was not normal, meaning that the IPIP score of the subjects are similar with one another. This is further supported by the fact that the subjects were from the same institution, making them not universal enough to be used as subjects in a validity test.

An individual's personality is affected by many factors. According to Transpersonal Psychology, personality is affected by three aspects, archetype being one of them. The results may be caused by the fact that even though archetype has a big contribution in the development of an individual's personality, there are other contributing factors as well. Personality is not just determined by archetype, causing Tarot to have non-significant scores because Tarot uses only archetype to determine personality.

Conclusion, Suggestions and Recommendations

The starting hypothesis used in this research was that Tarot can be used as an alternative personality

inventory. The hypothesis was supported by the relation between archetypes that were used in the developing of Tarot's major arcane with the archetype that was used in Transpersonal Psychology, giving Tarot the potential as an alternative inventory.

The results of this research show that Tarot is unable to be used as an alternative personality inventory due to the dissimilarities between the traits on Tarot's major arcane and the traits of BFP. The Tarot personality categories based on the major arcane have not been tested for reliability and validity yet, opening the possibility that the nine personality categories are actually invalid.

For future researches, it is advised to develop a valid Big Five Personality score chart for each Tarot personality categories. This can be done by exploring the relation between the traits of Tarot and the traits in Big Five Personality. There is a need for the development of the OCEAN profile for each Tarot personality categories. For example, the Justice major arcane should have the tendency to have high scores in the Conscientiousness and Neuroticism aspects. The development of the OCEAN profile is deemed to be necessary so future researchers to have a more solid theory base regarding the Tarot personality categories, making it easier to test the internal structure of Tarot personality categories.

From the results, it is shown that the Neuroticism aspect has slightly significant differences between each Tarot personality categories. This means that Tarot still has the potential as an alternative personality inventory, but that potential was not explored completely because of the limitations of this research.

Another recommendation is regarding the usage of Tarot as a reflection media. In the research done by Blackmore (1983), research subjects were asked to interpret the meaning of the cards shown to them and later compared to the research subjects' personalities. This process of interpretation can be used in Tarot for a media in counseling. By interpreting the meaning behind the cards that the subjects chose, they can reflect on their life experience and achieve insight that is important to them. Researches about Tarot as a reflection media are still scarce; having potential for future researches.

Other than the concept of Big Five Personality, there is another concept that can be used to test the validity of Tarot. That concept is the DISC concept, where personality is categorized into four main categories: Dominant, Inspiring, Supportive, and Cautious (DISC), based on the individual's behavioral tendencies. Those tendencies are outgoing, reserved,

task-oriented, and people-oriented, which can combine with one another to determine the individual's personality category (Rohm, 2010). DISC can be used as the alternative second variable because DISC also uses the trait concept to determine personality, making it closely related to the Big Five Personality concept.

References

Alwisol (2009). *Psikologi kepribadian.* Malang: UMM Press.

Anonymous (2012). *Hitung weton.* Retrieved July 17, 2012, from http://www.indospiritual.com/?p=59

Anonymous (2012). *Weton.* Retrieved July 17, 2012, from http://www.primbon.com/ramalan_weton.htm

Blackmore, S. J. (1983). Divination with Tarot cards: An empirical study. *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research, 52,* 97-99.

Brooke, R. (2000). *Pathways to the jungian world: Phenomenology and analytical psychology.* New York: Routledge.

CL2 (Center for Lifelong Learning). (2012). Database of Big Five Personality research. Surabaya: Author

Fakultas Psikologi UBAYA (2005). *Modul praktikum metode riset kuantitatif.* Surabaya: Writer.

Feist, J., & Feist, G. J. (2008). *Theories of personality* (7th ed.). New York: The McGraw-Hill.

Goldberg, et al. (2006). The international personality item pool and the future of public-domain personality measures. *Journal of Research in Personality, 40,* 84-96.

Hall, C. S., & Lindsey, G. (1985). *Introduction to theories of personality.* Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Inscape Publishing, Inc. (1996). *DiSC classic and models of personality: Research report.* Orlando: Author.

Ivtzan, I., & French, C. C. (2004). *Testing the validity of Tarot cards: Can we distinguish between a real and a control reading?* London: University of London.

John, O. P., & Srivastava, S. (1999). *The big five trait taxonomy: History, measurements, and theoretical perspectives.* New York: Guilford.

Levitt, S. (2003). *Introduction to Tarot.* Stamford: U.S. Games Systems Inc.

Mathers, S. L. M. (2004). *The Tarot.* Whitefish: Kessinger Publishing.

Miller, J. C. (2004). *The transcendent function.* New York: State University of New York Press.

Ouspensky, P. D. (1976). *The symbolism of the Tarot*. Mineola: Dover Publications.

Pangkalan data fakultas psikologi Ubaya (2012). Data

Rohm, R. A. (2010). *A powerful way to understand people: An introduction to the DISC concept*. Atlanta: Personality Insights Inc.

Rudnick, H. (2003). *Chapter 5: Transpersonal psychology*. Retrieved September 13, 2008, from http://etd.rau.ac.za/theses/available/etd-05052004-113647/restricted/chap5transpersonal.pdf

Semetsky, I. (2006). *Tarot as a projective technique*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Shamdasani, S. (2003). *Jung and the making of modern psychology: The dream of a science*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Tierney, B. (2000). *All around the zodiac: Exploring astrology's twelve signs*. Woodbury: Llewellyn Worldwide.

Victor, C. (1999). *A self-guided tour to the state of happiness*. South Bend: Mossberg & Company Inc.

Weiten, W. (2010). *Psychology themes & variations* (8th ed.). California: Wadsworth.

Wu, S. (2005). *Chinese astrology: Exploring the eastern zodiac*. North Bergen: Book-mart Press.