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Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) Projective test at it's best

Abstract

This research paper describes the use of TAT and the purposes for its administration.

Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) Projective test at it's best

The Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) is a projective personality test that was designed at Harvard in the 1930s by Christiana D. Morgan and Henry A. Murray. Along with the MMPI and the Rorschach, the TAT is one of the most widely used psychological tests. A projective test is one in which a person's patterns of thought, attitudes, observational capacity, and emotional responses are evaluated on the basis of responses to ambiguous test materials. The TAT consists of 31 pictures that depict a variety of social and interpersonal situations. The subject is asked to tell a story about each picture to the examiner. Of the 31 pictures, 10 are gender-specific while 21 others can be used with adults of either sex and with children. As of 2001, Harcourt Brace Educational Measurement distributes the TAT.

<http://web.utk.edu/~wmorgan/tat/tattxt.htm>

TAT can be used in a variety of ways, from eliciting qualities associated with different products to perceptions about the kind of people that might use certain products or services. The data from the TAT can be scored according to a variety of existing quantitative systems. However, more commonly in clinical use the stories are interpreted in accord with general principles of inference derived from psychodynamic theory.

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<http://www.quincyweb.net/quincy/psychology.html>

The TAT is recommended as a projective method of personality assessment.

Psychological tests are written, visual, or verbal evaluations administered to assess the cognitive and emotional functioning of children and adults.

Psychological tests are used to assess a variety of mental abilities and attributes, including achievement and ability, personality, and neurological functioning. Personality tests are administered for a wide variety of reasons, from diagnosing psychopathology (e. g., personality disorder, depressive disorder) to screening job candidates. They may be used in an educational or vocational setting to determine personality strengths and weaknesses, or in the legal system to evaluate parolees.

The original purpose of the TAT was to reveal the underlying dynamics of the subject's personality, such as internal conflicts, dominant drives and interests, motives, etc. The specific motives that the TAT assesses include the need for achievement, need for power, the need for intimacy, and problem-solving abilities. After World War II, however, psychoanalysts and clinicians from other schools of thought to evaluate emotionally disturbed patients used the TAT. Another shift took place in the 1970s, when the influence of the human potential movement led many psychologists to emphasize the usefulness of the TAT in assessment services-that is, using the test to help clients understand themselves better and stimulate their personal growth.

<http://mentalhelp.net/psyhelp/chap15/chap15o.htm>

The TAT is widely used to research certain topics in psychology, such as

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dreams and fantasies, mate selection, the factors that motivate people's choice of occupations, and similar subjects. It is sometimes used in psychiatric evaluations to assess disordered thinking and in forensic examinations to evaluate crime suspects, even though it is not a diagnostic test. As mentioned earlier, the TAT can be used to help people understand their own personality in greater depth and build on that knowledge in making important life decisions. Lastly, it is sometimes used as a screener in psychological evaluations of candidates for high-stress occupations (law enforcement, the military, religious ministry, etc.).

<http://www.quincyweb.net/quincy/psychology.html>

More overly the TAT has been criticized for its lack of a standardized method of administration as well as the lack of standard norms for interpretation. Studies of the interactions between examiners and test subjects have found that the race, sex, and social class of both participants influence both the stories that are told and the way the stories are interpreted by the examiner. Attempts have been made to design sets of TAT cards for African American and for elderly test subjects, but the results have not been encouraging. In addition, the 31 standard pictures have been criticized for being too gloomy or depressing, and therefore limiting the range of personality characteristics that the test can assess. There is no standardized procedure or set of cards for administering the TAT, except that it is a one-on-one test. It cannot be administered to groups. In one common method of administration, the examiner shows the subject only 10 of the 31 cards at each of two sessions. The sessions are not timed, but average about an hour in length.

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Additionally there is no specific preparation necessary before taking the TAT, although most examiners prefer to schedule sessions (if there is more than one) over two days. The chief risks involved in taking the TAT are a bad " fit" between the examiner and the test subject, and misuse of the results. So I hope neither party is having a bad day, because if so this may alter results slightly.

In conclusion since the TAT is used primarily for personality assessment rather than diagnosis of mental disorders, it does not yield a " score" in the usual sense. The process is to understand through linkage with previous experience. A movement in psychotherapy that began in the 1960s and emphasized maximizing the potential of each participant through such techniques as group therapy and sensitivity training. A type of psychological test that assesses a person's thinking patterns, observational ability, feelings, and attitudes on the basis of responses to ambiguous test materials. It is not intended to diagnose psychiatric

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