

# [Thematic apperception test essay sample](https://assignbuster.com/thematic-apperception-test-essay-sample/)

Introduction

Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) is a projective psychological test used in evaluation of a person’s emotional responses, attitude and thoughts towards ambiguous test materials. (Geiser, et al 1999). Henry Murray regards it as a “ method of revealing to a trained interpreter some of the dominant drives, emotions, sentiments and conflicts of a personality.”

It refers to a technique used by psychologist to bring to the surface some of the hidden personality traits and attitudes that an individual is unwilling or unable to admit. It was developed in 1935 by Henry Murray and Christiana D. Morgan in the Harvard Psychological clinic.

The TAT consists of 31 provocative pictures portraying diverse social and interpersonal scenarios, of which the subject is asked to tell a story about the picture appearing on each card  . The subject is expected to describe the picture, comment on the likely developments triggering the events, give his thoughts, views and attitudes towards the people in the picture and finally predicting on the likely events that could happen later in the picture.

Originally, the 31 cards were divided into 3 categories, to be used exclusively on each gender and one category befitting both genders, but recent pictures indicate that TAT cards are used by both genders.

There are many ways of administering TAT, but the most commonly used is where the cards are divided into two groups. The pictures in the first group are of normal occurrences, e. g depicting normal people going about their daily activities, normal pictures of non-human beings etc.

The second group pictures are purposely more unusual and depicting more bizarre events than the first ones. The cards are kept in a pile facing downwards and the subject is given one card at a time. The subject’s descriptions of the cards picture as well non verbal reactions are recorded. They are advised to give as more detailed and dramatic stories as they can. The key intention of TAT is to evaluate a subject’s personality. It elicits hidden details about a person’s view of the world as well as his or her attitude towards self and others.

TAT has a variety of uses. It is used in psychotherapy, in employment recruitment and for forensic purposes. In psychotherapy, it is administered repeatedly to assess a person’s progress (Tuerlinck et al 2002).

Though TAT an evaluator is able to assess subject’s expectations and fears as well their relationship with the rest of the society. Their dreams, goals and aspirations can also be assessed. Original intended purpose of TAT was to bring to the surface inherent underlying characteristics and personal traits of an individual e. g drives, inspirations, motives and interests. Of late TAT is being used in addition to psychoanalysis, to help individuals understand themselves better and stimulate their personal growth. (Aronow et al 2001).

In the employment field, it’s used in assessing individuals required in highly engaging and high skilled careers, eg law enforcement, diplomatic services and millitary positions. These are jobs that require people with a superb ability to cope with people of diverse cultural and social background as well as an ability to cope with extremely stressing moments. TAT focuses on the human personality and behaviors, both conscious and unconscious. Eg, it can be used to evaluate the extent which people are involved emotionally with others, ability to control aggression and also personal actualization and identity. All these aid in assessment of an individuals personality.

For the interpretation of TAT to be objective they must be interpreted with regard to the respondent’s materials, social and demographic conditions. It’s important to put into consideration the subjects age, sex, level of education, personal history, racial or ethnic orientation. Other characteristics that may have an impact on the subject’s response should also be put into consideration. (Aribisi, et al 1998). Most researchers agree that there are three most important factors that have to be put into consideration in interpretation of the TAT results: culture, gender and class.

Karl Marx in his works attributed someone’s interpretations of ideas, thoughts, and belief to be as a result of ones material condition or his relations to the means of production. These factors then should be taken into account when determining whether someone’s response is usual or unusual. Men might respond in a particular manner to a certain picture, differing in a greater way from the women counterparts. What men might consider to be a sign of heroism might be regarded as aggression. This is in line with the dynamics of power play demonstrated in the society. The society today is diverse and complicated and it’s hard to classify something as being normal or unusual hence underscoring the importance of contextualization of results.

Interpretation of the subject’s responses focuses on the non-verbal behaviors such as facial expressions blushing and stammers. The story content presents the subjects view of the society, attributes and fantasies. More also can be analyzed from the tone of the respondents. It can tell more on the subjects general feelings towards something, optimism or pessimism.

There isn’t a normative scorning system for responses. The existing ones have been described as “ time consuming and unwieldy”. While others just focus on one or two variables and hence can’t be used to analyze multiple variables.

Recently, computer programs have been set up to evaluate responses, but they have a limitation because they cannot record non verbal cues which are very important in TAT. Due to lack of standardization, in the administration of TAT, the results are interpreted intuitively disregarding the scoring procedures.

Validity and Reliability of TAT.

The validity of TAT has been brought into question due to the conflicting nature of its results and interpretations. Scientists have termed it as a time wasting exercise because it fails in the basic test of consistence and replicability. These emanates from its inability to measure its results quantitatively as well as lacking a standardized interpretations of the subjects stories. It major proponents however, claim that if properly interpreted it can be used to assess unconscious details that otherwise cannot be assessed.        TAT is based on Freudian Theory of repression which has been vehemently criticised as an invalid theory in the analysis of human behavior. This, in the same breath, is the criticism leveled against TAT. Its ability also to be influenced by factors such as race, gender and social class of the participants puts its validity and reliability into question.

However, psychologists insist on the validity of these psychological assessments highlighting on the predictive powers and measureabliness of their outcomes. Psychological test validity should not be dismissed merely because it’s not a medical test [Jenifer daw, 2002]

Usage of TAT however, has been considered to be unsuitable to children under the age of four years. Students of medicine and psychology have also been advised to exercise caution when interpreting TAT results and should interpret the results from a health perspective rather than focusing on psychopathology.

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