

## Thematic Apperception Test

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Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) is a projective test consisting of a series of pictures in which the examinee is requested to create a story about the picture. It is a method of revealing to the trained interpreter some of the dominant drives, emotions, sentiments, complexes and conflicts of personality. It was conceptualized by Henry Murray and Christina Morgan on 1935 but more fully elaborated in 1938 and 1943. It was believed that material derived from the test could serve as the X-ray of personality. The test is still not considered to have achieved degree of comparable degree of standardization. No clear agreed on scoring and interpretation system. Varying methods of administration regarding number, sequence and types of cards that are given. Yet it ranks as 6<sup>th</sup> most frequently used test by clinical psychologists. Researchers were dissatisfied because it was not applicable for all populations like children, the elderly and minorities. Several TAT-type tests have been designed to study specific problem areas.

### Murray's Theory of Personality:

- How individuals react with their environment.
- How they are affected by their external forces.
- How their attitudes, needs and values influence their reaction to world.
- Murray developed a list of 28 needs and 24 possible forces in person's environment named as press.
- He gave the concept of thema "a pattern of related needs and press" derived from early infantile experiences.

### General Conditions:

- To be administered in an interpersonal setting.
- TAT materials consist of 20 cards on which ambiguous pictures are presented.
- M for males, F for females, B for boys, G for girls, BM for boys/males, GF for girls/females.

- The selection of cards may be idiosyncratic to the patient's presenting problem.

### Sequential Numbering System (SNS)

- Administered to females and males in exact order:  
1,2,3BM,4,6BM,7GF,8BM,9GF,10,13MF
- Administered to any males: 1,2,3BM,4,6BM,7BM,9GF,11,13MF
- Administered to any females: 1,2,3,3BM,4,6GF,7GF,9GF,11,13GF
- Keiser and Prather(1990) specified Murray's frequent cards – 10 most frequent cards:  
1,2,3BM,3GF,4,5,6BM,6GF,8BM and 8GF.
- During administration, the subject should be seated beside the examiner with his or her chair turned away.

### Instructions:

- **The researcher will show** some pictures one at a time, and the respondent/observer will be making up as dramatic a story as he/she can for each picture card. 50 minutes for 10 pictures. The following story structure must be obtained:
  - a) **Current situation:** What is happening at the moment?
  - b) **Thoughts and feelings of the character(s):** What the characters are feeling and thinking?
  - c) **Preceding events:** What has led up to the event shown in the picture?
  - d) **Outcome:** What was the outcome?

### PROCEDURES:

1. **Time:** time measured should begin when the picture is first presented and end when the observer begins his or her story.
2. **Recording:** observers complete responses should be recorded, along with any noteworthy behavioral observations i.e., exclamation, pauses, blushing, degree of involvement, and change in voice inflection.
3. **Questioning and Inquiry:** to produce an unhampered and free-flow of the observers fantasy material.
4. **Order of Presentation:** usually cards should be administered according to their sequential numbering system.

### Scoring:

#### 1. The Psychological Corporation

For each of the scoring categories, practitioners should abbreviate their observation about the person. In some sections, practitioners are asked to indicate the levels of importance or strength by putting one check (mere presence of characteristics), two checks (moderate) or three checks (strong). The entire scoring and interpretation procedure typically takes a half-hour.

**2. H. A. Murray, 1943** scoring the TAT involves evaluating the following five different aspects of the stories:

- **The Hero:** scoring for the hero involves identifying who is central character in the story.
- **Need of the Hero:** For Murray, it was also critical to identify the needs, motives and desire of the hero.
- **Identifying the presses:** A press refer to any important environmental factor that may influence or interfere with the need of the hero. Example: (parents or boss), (the lock on the door is broken).
- **Scoring for themes:** Scoring for themes in TAT stories involves noting the nature of the interplay and conflict between the needs and presses, the types of emotion elicited by this conflict, and the way the conflict is resolved.
- **Scoring for outcome:** Scoring for the outcome of the story involves analyzing how the stories end by noting a happy versus unhappy ending and assessing the extent to which the ending is controlled by the strengths of the hero and forces in the environment.

### **Interpretation:**

1. **Nomothetic Interpretation:** refers to the practice of establishing norms for answer from observer in specific age, gender, racial, or educational level groups and then measuring a given observers responses against those norms.
  2. **Idiographic Interpretation:** refers to evaluating the unique features of the observers view of the world and relationships. Most psychologists would classify the TAT is better suited to idiographic than nomothetic interpretations.
- In interpreting the responses of the TAT, the examiners typically focus their attention on one of the three (3) areas:
- The content of the stories that the subject tells;

- The feeling or the tone of the stories;
  - The observers behavior apart from responses. These behavior may include: Verbal Remarks ( e.g. comments about feeling stressed by situation or not being good story teller) as well as Nonverbal Action or Signs ( e.g. difficulties making an eye contact with the examiner, etc.)
- The 3 levels of Interpretations suggest by Bellak& Abram, 1997 are:
- **Descriptive Level:** it is the mere repeat of the story.
  - **Interpretative Level:** it extends the descriptive level by an alteration of it (if one does the X, then the outcome will be Y.)
  - **Diagnostic Level:** it is the further extension than an interference is made about the client.
  - The results of the TAT must be interpreted in the context of the observers personal history, age, sex, level of education, occupation, racial or ethnic identification first language, and other characteristics that may be important.
  - The results of the Thematic Apperception Test are difficult to generalize. The results are often subjective and do not use any formal type of scoring system. However, a close analysis of the stories told by the subject normally gives the tester a decent idea of the traits mentioned above (personality, emotional control, and attitudes towards aspects of everyday life).

### Reliability

The TAT involve complex, meaningful verbal material. Because of the complexity of this material, exact quantitative analysis is difficult. This issue is further complicated because there are so many different scoring systems. Reliability (and validity) for one system may not mean that adequate reliability will be present for another system. Interscorer reliability across different scoring systems has generally been found to be good, ranging between .37 and .90, with most reports .85 or higher.

### Validity:

Reviews of the TAT's validity have shown wide variability. One reviewer might be impressed by a correlation of 0.25 while another sees it as highly deficient. Research done on it likewise allows readers to project their biases, needs, and expectations onto the TAT.



**References:**

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