

Ch. 14: Projective Testing

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Projective Testing

- Review of test design patterns
- The Projective Hypothesis
- Projective Tests
 - Rorschach Inkblot Test
 - The TAT

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Certifiably Sane

- Psychologist: “The Rorschach is a projective psychological test that contains 10 cards with inkblots on them...The subject is shown each of the cards one at a time and [states] what the inkblot might be”
- Attorney: “You mean to say that you can tell whether a person is sane or insane by the way he or she interprets 10 black, gray and variously colored inkblots?”

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Design Theories

- Deductive (aka “Top Down” or “Theory-driven”)
 - Use reason, clinical experience and common sense to choose test items that are face-valid.
- Empirical (aka “Bottom-Up” or “Data-driven”)
 - Look for patterns in large groups of data
 - Data tells us what factors exist
 - Don’t assume face validity

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Stimuli vs. Response

- Objective vs. Subjective
 - stimuli
 - expected responses / response choices

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The Projective Hypothesis

- Given ambiguous stimuli, responses will reflect a subject's
 - needs
 - feelings
 - experiences
 - prior conditioning
 - thought processes
 - cognitive schemas
 - etc...

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Inkblot History

- Inkblots originally proposed for *Personality* assessment by Alfred Binet - Whipple (1910) created first test.
- Rorschach changed test to assess *Psychopathology* (mental illness)

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Rorschach 1



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Rorschach Inkblot Test

- 10 cards
- Two phases:
 - free association : "what might this be?"
 - inquiry: determine why subject saw that
- Tester gives as little feedback as possible: remains vague, neutral, ambiguous
- Test is atheoretical

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Rorschach History

- Hermann's death led to difficult history
- Five disciples each with different scoring system
- Studies in the 1950s and 1960s began to debunk the Rorschach in controlled double-blind studies
- Exner began to develop his system in response

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Barnum Effect

- Named after P.T. Barnum "We've got something for everyone"
 - "There's a sucker born every minute" - David Hannum, in criticism of Barnum.
- aka Forer Effect
- Forer, 1948:
 - Provide personality profile to students
 - Students rated accuracy
 - 0 - Very poor to 5 - Excellent
 - Results: 4.26 out of 5 (between *Very Good* and *Excellent* match)

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Rorschach Claims

- Expert examiners can make predictions of “miraculous” accuracy
- Predictions hard to test
- Explained by the Barnum or Forer Effect?

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Rorschach Scoring

- Exner’s Comprehensive system
- Responses scored on 5 dimensions:
 - Location
 - W(hole), D(etail), Dd(unusual detail)
 - Determinant
 - F(orm), M(ovement-human), FM(animal), m(inanimate), C(olor), T(shading)
 - Form quality : F+, F, F-
 - Content : H(uman), A(nimal), N(ature)
 - Frequency (popularity of response)

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Rorschach Theory vs. Data

- Determinant : cooperative movement
- Hypothesis : subjects giving these responses are fun, trustworthy
- Data: study of 20 sexual psychopathic murders, over 70% gave such answers

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Rorschach Controversy

- Test Remains controversial
- Administration not standardized
- Reliability coefficients not established
- Validity
 - lack of relationship to psychological diagnoses
 - 50% of above average IQ children diagnosed with social/cognitive impairments (Erard 2005)
 - lack of incremental validity (e.g. in addition to MMPI)

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Rorschach Controversy 2

- Test has not shown to be Reliable or Valid
- Still a widely used clinical test
- Wide range of opinions:
 - “Perhaps the most powerful psychometric instrument ever envisioned” (BPA, 1998)
 - “...bears a charming resemblance to a party game” (Wood et al, 2003)
 - “[should be] banned in clinical and forensic settings” (Garb, 1999)

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Rorschach Controversy 3

- Professionals suffering from overconfidence?
 - Similarity to Lie Detector Tests?
 - FBI hair analysis...

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TAT



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Thematic Apperception Test

- Similar to Rorschach in some ways
- Questions about reliability and validity
- Administration & Scoring is not well standardized
 - too many scoring systems
 - most clinicians use no scoring system at all!
- However, somewhat less controversial than Rorschach
 - made fewer claims
 - did not “oversell” its abilities
- Based on a theory (Murray’s 28 human needs)

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TAT : Lindzey’s assumptions 1

- Subject identifies with one “hero”
- Subject’s issues may be represented symbolically
- Not all stories are important
- Themes from stimuli less relevant than themes from subject
- Recurrent themes important
- Themes may be short or long term

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TAT : Lindzey’s assumptions 2

- Stories may represent third-hand material; but selection is important
- Stories may reflect sociocultural factors
- Disposition and Conflicts in stories may be unconscious

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Rorschach vs. TAT

Rorschach	TAT
Rejected by many scientists	more accepted
Atheoretical	Murray’s (1938) theory of needs
Oversold / extravagant claims	Humble claims
Claims to be diagnostic	not diagnostic
Clinical use	Clinical and non-clinical use

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Other Projective Tests

- Word Association Tests
“say the first word that comes to mind”
- Sentence Completion Task
I am _____
I enjoy _____
What annoys me _____
- Figure Drawing Test

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Projective Testing : Conclusions

- Projective tests are controversial yet widely used
- Objectively, have poor psychometrics: Reliability, Validity, Standardization & Norms
- Subjectively, they feel impressive
- Recommendations:
 - do not oversell results
 - use only to generate *hypotheses*
 - part of a larger assessment