

# 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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## 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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## 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

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