

Characteristics of Story on blank card of Thematic Apperception Test

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Abstract: This paper makes an effort to investigate the Imaginal Production and Press employed by the subjects in story on blank card of Thematic Apperception Test with respect to Familiarity of the subject in writing TAT story. The blank card has been chosen for research because the response in TAT (projection in form of story) is a function of structural stimulus but the response on blank card of TAT (projection in form of story) is not a function of the structural stimulus. In the blank card no situation or characters are provided in the stimulus, here subjects are free to imagine a situation and characters of their own choice. Hence on the blank card, a stimulus has to be imagined and produced in the form of story. The three variables imaginal production of the subjects, familiarity with the test and presses employed during production of story have been considered as independent variables to see an effect on the characteristic of stimulus (dependent variable) which triggered the unconscious, need, and story on blank card. The sample consists of 227 male adolescents from various parts of the country. The study revealed that fresher used more fantasy level of imaginal production and alpha press than repeater, while repeater used more realistic level of imaginal production and beta press. The results showed that there was a significant difference ($\chi^2=8.56:p<.01$) between *familiarity and imaginal production*, whereas differences between *familiarity and press* as well as *imaginal production and press* were found not significant. The results of the study will contribute in the development and selection of TAT stimulus.

Keywords: Thematic Apperception Test, Blank Card, Imaginal Production, Press, Familiarity.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Projective Techniques

Projective techniques which originated in Clinical settings are the indirect measures of Personality which use projection of respondents for inferring about underline motives, urges or intentions which cannot be secure through direct questioning as the respondent either resists to reveal them or is unable to figure out himself. The term Projective method is described a category of tests for studying personality with unstructured or semi-structured stimuli to which s/he responds through his or her *imagination*. A semi or unstructured stimulus means a *stimulus whose meaning and interpretation vary from individual to individual*. Such stimulus has no right or wrong answers and is capable of evoking fantasy material from the subjects. The most important assumption of projective techniques is that while responding to a semi or unstructured stimulus, *an individual projects his own feelings, needs, emotions, motives, etc.*, (which are mostly latent and unconscious) without being aware of doing so. Since the individual is not aware of these revelations, one doesn't resort to any defensive reactions. Thus in a projective test the individual has ample opportunity to project his own personality attributes that are mostly latent and unconscious in the interpretation of an unstructured stimulus. Such latent and concealed experiences are generally incapable of exposure by the questionnaire type of test.

Classification of Projective Techniques

The earliest classification of projective techniques was done by Frank (1939) into five as constitutive, constructive, interpretative, refractive and cathartic. The more convincing classifications of projective techniques were provided by Lindzey (1959), based on the responses, he has also divided projective techniques into following five categories: association, construction, completion, expressive, and ordering.

Thematic Apperception Test

Thematic Apperception Test is primarily image based associative and constructive projective assessment technique developed by Murray. The TAT consists of a set of ambiguous pictures depicting simple scenes and one blank picture. The person taking the test is asked to compose a story that describes the people and objects in the picture, including what might have led up to the situation and what the people are thinking and feeling. Morgan and Murray (1935) explain that "When a person attempts to interpret a complex situation he is apt to tell as much about himself as he is about the phenomenon which attention is focused". The mechanism that accounts for this is projection, which is assumed to be facilitated by the TAT procedure. It is assumed that the subject will project onto the stories their own needs, motives, expectancies, anxieties, and unconscious fantasies (Morgan & Murray, 1935). Murray derived the TAT from Freud's defense mechanism of projection. In projection, a person attributes or projects disturbing impulses onto someone else. The viewing an image and creating an image are two different ways that projection is used, the person projects those feelings onto the characters in the pictures and thereby reveals his or her troubling thoughts to the researcher or therapist. Thus, the TAT is a device for assessing unconscious thoughts, feelings, and fears.

The Thematic Apperception Test faces both strong critics and enthusiasts but all would agree it is a clinician's delight and a statistician's nightmare" (Vane, 1981). The test began with several hundred pictures and was narrowed down to twenty that was said by Morgan to elicit "good" stories. The main features of the cards are images or drawings that suggest critical situations which support development of fantasy in hopes the subject will identify with at least one character (Cramer, 1996). There is also a blank card within the series that is said to evoke more responsibility for the story that is created due to the need to gain back control and regulate affect that was stirred up during the earlier stimuli (Graves, 2008). "Experience with the test shows that of the twenty pictures, only four or five pictures in the group are significant in affording pertinent data" (Deabler, 1947). The TAT was the outcome of several years of work by Henry Murray (1893-1988). In 1935, Murray and his colleague Christiana Morgan reported on the use of a series of picture cards as a method of personality assessment (Morgan & Murray, 1935). The cards were based on photographs, magazine illustrations and paintings that suggested an important theme.

The Role of Imaginative Production

A Literature Based Study by Pfeiffer (2002) showed that creating an image tends to elicit a more emotional response than viewing an image and therefore, may provide more detailed information regarding the client. In assuming there is a purpose to the selection of images for projective assessment techniques, the rationale is unclear how often an image is used when assessing an individual or what importance that image has on the assessment itself. There is currently a lack of information on why exactly certain images go with specific tests.

The word "image" is conventionally applied to configurations presented to the eye-photos, paintings, engravings, TV displays, shadows, reflections, and projections (Miller, 1990). While traditionally applied as literary images in writings that served as a moral mechanism for development and preservation of social, cultural, and religious customs.

In the field of psychology, an image-related term is imagination. Roewecklein (2004) describes imagination as the "recombination of memories of past experiences and previously formed images into novel constructions". It also applies to the production of mental pictures, or images when there is no stimulation of the sense receptors. It can be used in two different ways: imitative versus creative. Imitative imagination refers to illusions, hallucinations, and after-images where creative imagination refers to daydreaming, creativity tests and stages, fantasy, and projection (Roewecklein, 2004)

Murstein & Pryer (1959) note the importance of the function of projection during the use of a projective test. "Projection is the manifestation of behavior by an individual which indicates some emotional value or need of the individual" (Murstein & Pryer, 1959). According to Murstein & Pryer (1959) there are four types of projection: classical, attributive, autistic, and rationalized. Classical projection refers to a situation where the ego may feel threatened and results in the refusal to acknowledge the attribution of the trait to the outside world. Attributive projection is the way a person assigns his motivations, feelings and behavior to others. In autistic projection, the person's perceptions are influenced by the needs of another. Lastly, rationalized projection is where the person projecting is consciously aware of his behavior and tries to justify it by rationalizing.

Interactions between two or more people can include a projection from the subject, an introjection on the part of the other who receives and internalizes the content, a counterprojection from the other onto the original subject, and introjections on the part of the subject of what has been projected onto him (Meissner, 1987). "It is through these processes that we understand that the qualities of the subject's inner world are internalized due to the real qualities of the object and those that are attributed to it" (Meissner, 1987).

Imagery

The construct of the image has never been operationalized well enough to satisfy most psychologists. It is not surprising then that imagery has disappeared periodically from mainstream psychology (Kosslyn & Pomerantz, 1977). There are many images to be found via the psyche; those from dreams, daydreams, imagination, free-association images, and after-images (Ahsen, 1999). Art through imagery is a form of symbolic speech and has played a major role in both the conscious and unconscious cultural expression of man throughout the ages (Naumberg, 1955). "Through the exploration of anthropology and archaeology we have come to know more about man's symbolic art. The kind of symbolism chosen by man in his visual projections from prehistory to the present has similar elements" (Naumberg, 1955).

More present day studies have confirmed that images tend to elicit more emotional responses while print messages tend to elicit more analytic responses. This occurs because "representational images tend to prompt emotional reactions and once the emotions are excited, irrational responses surface" (Hill, 2004). Boyatzis & Varghese (1994) confirm that specific colors elicit particular images and emotions especially for children and have a profound effect on their lives. Another point of view is that imagery is seen as a part of creative problem solving. Insights that emerge seem to be supported by reinterpretations of images and new ways of seeing images which is said to occur in the "mind's eye" (Purcell & Gero, 1998). This phenomenon may also be known through eidetic imagery. The eidetic imagery is said to be seen in a literal sense inside the mind which is accompanied by certain body events. It also has a special feeling or meaning for some individuals but is not a common experience for the majority (Ahsen, 1999).

The Need-Press Method

The original technique used by Murray and his co-workers depended on an analysis of the stories by the need-press method. Every sentence was analyzed as the needs to the individuals and the environmental forces (press) to which is exposed. To choose a very simple example, he (the individual) loves her, but she hates him: need (for) love met by (press) hate.

Every story was analyzed thus according to all needs and press, and each need and press received a weighted score. A rank-order system of the needs and presses could then be tabulated. At the same time the hierarchical relationship of the needs to each other was investigated, with such concepts of Murray's as need-conflict, need-subsidiation, and need-fusion. Nearly dozen possible schemes of categories were developed by Murray and Bellak in 1941 at the Harvard Psychological Clinic.

The need-press scheme of interpretation still has many advantages for use in experiments in which detail is most important and time is no object. It is not easy to master the need concept, and it takes four or five hours on the average to interpret 20 stories with this system. Therefore a great number of attempts to interpret the T.A.T have been developed. The press is perceptual process of need-relevant aspects of the environment, it can be defined as, " what it can do the subject or for the subject – the power that it has to effect the well being of the subject in one way or another." It is categorised into two as alpha and beta or congenial or uncongenial press, the alpha press represent the objective reality while beta press represent the perceived reality or fantasy in the stories. The alpha presses reflected in story on blank card were press of fun, friendliness, sympathy, respect, dependent, and love. The beta presses reflected were press of deprivation, press of an empty, alien, or rejecting environment, press of coercion and restraint, press of a hostile aggressive environment, and press of danger, injury, or death.

Rationale of the study:

1. To find out the characteristic of TAT stimuli that can trigger the unconscious most.
2. To streamline the process of development and selection of the TAT stimuli.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To find the difference between Test Familiarity (Fresher or Repeater) and Imaginal Production (Fantasy or Realistic) in stories on blank card.
2. To find the difference between Test Familiarity (Fresher or Repeater) and Press (Alpha or Beta) in stories on blank card.
3. To find the difference between Imaginal Production (Fantasy or Realistic) and Press (Alpha or Beta) in stories on blank card.

Null Hypotheses:

1. There will be no significant difference in Imaginal Production (Fantasy or Realistic) of Fresher and Repeater (Test Familiarity) in stories on blank card.
2. There will be no significant difference in Press (Alpha or Beta) of Fresher and Repeater (Test Familiarity) in stories on blank card.
3. There will be no significant difference in Imaginal Production (Fantasy or Realistic) with respect to Press (Alpha or Beta) in stories on blank card.

II. METHODOLOGY

Sample

Sample consisted of 227 male job applicants who were highly motivated and reported voluntarily at Selection Centre Central, Bhopal for their selection as an officer in the Armed Force. The sample was pooled through purposive sampling and was matched with respect to adolescent age group ranging from 16 year and 6 months to 19 years, and Education standards ranging from higher secondary to first year of graduation. The sample was further bifurcated on the basis of familiarity to the test. Out of these, 105 were fresher who were attempting Thematic Apperception Test for the first time, and remaining 122 were repeater subjects who had attempted the test not more than twice at different Selection Centres spread all over India for selection of candidates as an officer in Indian Armed Force.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The subjects were asked to disclose the information of coaching and practise effect of the test for the inclusion and exclusion criteria of familiarity aspect. The subjects who have gone through coaching have been included in repeater category as they have undergone and practised the test earlier, even though appearing for the first time at services selection board.

Tool Used : The Thematic Apperception Test

Procedure

The subjects had undergone to the battery of projective tests comprising Thematic Apperception Test that attempts to evaluate and determine an individual's suitability for the Armed Forces. The subjects were assessed in the context of an unconscious mind which is influenced to considerable physical and mental stress in real life. The subject's behaviour manifestations have been analysed and evaluated in respect of an individual's need, conflicts, defence mechanisms, social and dynamic effectiveness. The subjects were briefed about the tests they were to undergo. The test was scheduled in morning session that lasted for three hours.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION:

Table 1 portrays descriptive statistics which reveals that there were more repeaters (122) than fresher (105) in the sample, the imaginal production displayed was primarily realistic in nature (121) than fantasy (106), and the presses alpha (113) and beta (114) were employed equally in the total sample of 227 subjects.

Dimensions		N	Mean	SEm	S.D.	Variance
Familiarity	Fresher	105	0.99	.009	.097	.009
	Repeaters	122	1.00	0	0	0
Imaginal Production	Fantasy	106	0.99	.009	.096	.009
	Realistic	121	0.97	.014	.16	.026
Press	Alpha	113	1.00	0	0	0
	Beta	114	0.98	.013	.14	.020

Table 2 and bar chart 2.1 reveal that there was a significant difference between familiarity and imaginal production, $\chi^2(1)=8.56, p<0.01$. This seems to represent the fact that there is significant difference with respect to fresher subjects who used more fantasy imaginal production ($f_o=60$) than repeaters ($f_o=45$) and repeaters who used more realistic imaginal production ($f_o=77$) than fresher ($f_o=45$). Hence, the null hypothesis that there will be no significant difference between Test Familiarity (Fresher or Repeater) with Imaginal Production (Fantasy or Realistic) in stories on blank card was *rejected*.

Chi-Square Statistics Familiarity and Imaginal Production Cross tabulation			Imaginal Production		Total	Chi-Square Value	Level of Significance	Result
			Fantasy	Realistic				
Familiarity	Fresher	Observed	60	45	105	8.56 df 1 (.05 level = 3.84 and .01 level = 6.63)	Significant at .01 level	Ho rejected
		Expected	52.5	52.5				
	Repeater	Observed	45	77	122			
		Expected	61	61				
		Total	105	122	227			

Bar chart 2.1

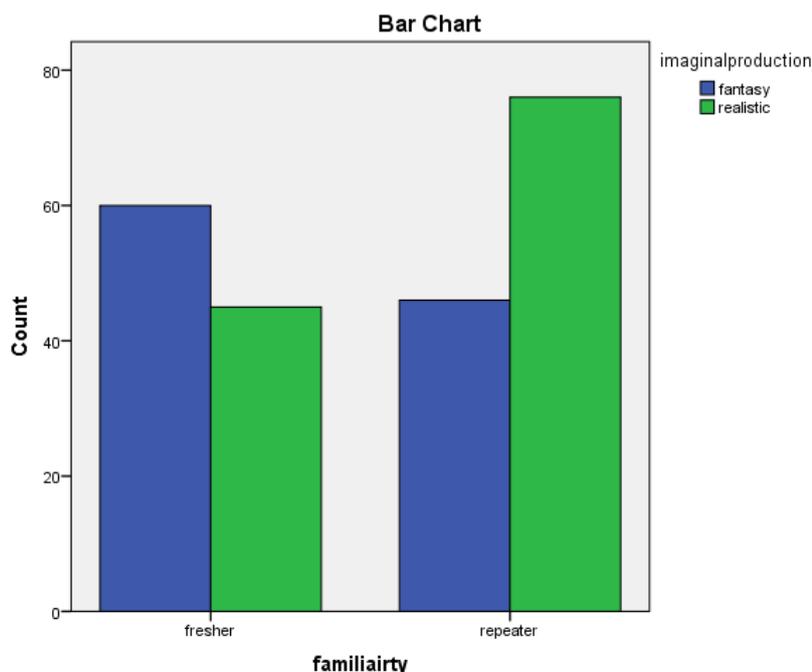


Table 3 and bar chart 3.1 reveal that there was a no significant difference between familiarity and press, $\chi^2(1)=0.53, p>0.05$. This seems to represent the fact that there is no significant difference with respect to repeaters subjects who employed more alpha press ($f_o=58$) than freshers ($f_o=55$) and repeater who used more beta press ($f_o=64$) than fresher ($f_o=50$). Hence, the null hypothesis that there will be no significant difference between Test Familiarity (Fresher or Repeater) with Press (Alpha or Beta) in stories on blank card was *accepted*.

Table 3 Chi-Square Statistics Familiarity and Press Cross tabulation			Press		Total	Chi-Square Value	Level of Significance	Result
			Alpha	Beta				
Familiarity	Fresher	Observed	55	50	105	0.53 df 1 (.05 level = 3.84 and .01 level = 6.63)	Not Significant at .05 level	Ho accepted
		Expected	52.5	52.5				
	Repeater	Observed	58	64	122			
		Expected	61	61				
		Total	113	114	227			

Bar Chart 3.1

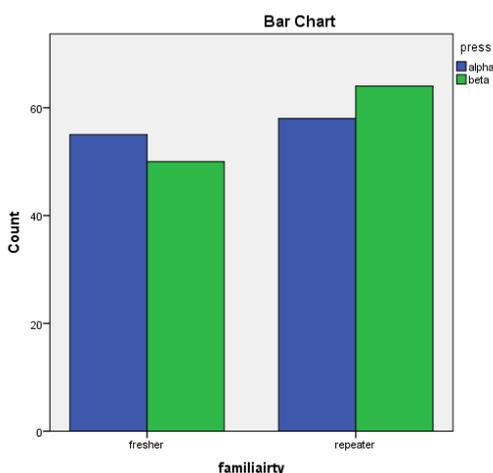
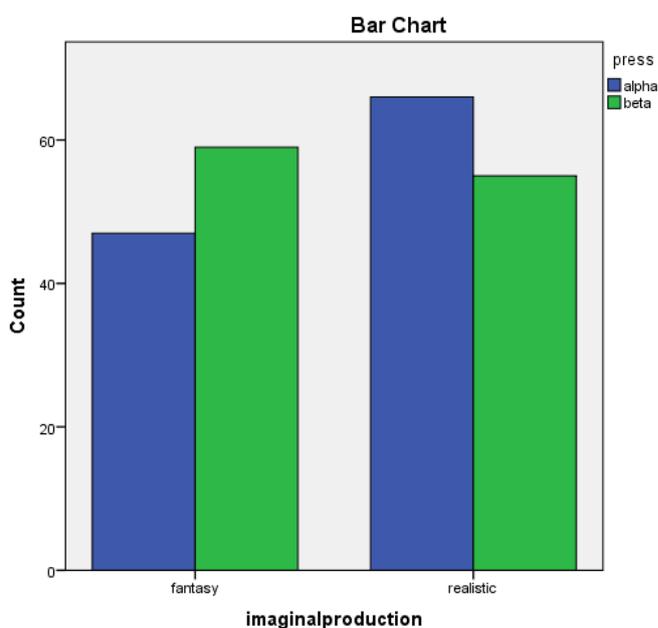


Table 4 and bar chart 4.1 reveal that there was a no significant difference between imaginal production and press, $\chi^2(1)=2.35, p>0.05$. This seems to represent the fact that there is no significant difference with respect to realistic level of imaginal production which employed more alpha press ($f_o=66$) than fantasy ($f_o=47$) and fantasy level of imaginal production which employed used more beta press ($f_o=58$) than realistic ($f_o=56$). Hence, the null hypothesis that there will be no significant difference between Imaginal Production (Fantasy or Realistic) with Press (Alpha or Beta) in stories on blank card was *accepted*.

Table 4 Chi-Square Statistics Imaginal Production and Press Cross tabulation			Press		Total	Chi-Square Value	Level of Significance	Result
			Alpha	Beta				
Imaginal Production	Fantasy	Observed	47	58	105	2.35 df 1 (.05 level = 3.84 and .01 level = 6.63)	Not Significant at .05 level	Ho accepted
		Expected	52.5	52.5				
	Realistic	Observed	66	56	122			
		Expected	61	61				
		Total	113	114	227			

Bar Chart 4.1



IV. CONCLUSION:

There were very few studies available that examined how an image is perceived or construed in the mind of subject while writing the story on blank card of TAT. Since the responses (projection in the form of story) in TAT is a function of the structural stimulus shown to the subjects. Therefore, a pertinent question arises that, in what way a stimulus to be developed to portray the unconscious stimuli so that it can stimulate unconscious process underlying in it? While the response (projection in the form of story) in blank card of TAT is not a function of the structural stimulus characteristics, it is independent of any structural stimulus. It has to be thought, created and expressed the way subject wants to be. The story or need reflected on blank card may differ individual to individual based on three aspects which are imaginal production, familiarity of the test, and the press employed by the subjects.

The results of the study reveal that there was a significant difference between familiarity and imaginal production, $\chi^2(1)=8.56, p<0.01$. This seems to represent the fact that there is significant difference with respect to fresher subjects who used more fantasy imaginal production ($f_o=60$) than repeaters ($f_o=45$) and repeaters who used more realistic imaginal production ($f_o=77$) than fresher ($f_o=45$). Hence, the null hypothesis that there will be no significant difference between Test Familiarity (Fresher or Repeater) with Imaginal Production (Fantasy or Realistic) in stories on blank card was *rejected*. Also there was a no significant difference between familiarity and press, $\chi^2(1)=0.53, p>0.05$. This seems to represent the fact that there is no significant difference with respect to repeaters subjects who employed more alpha press ($f_o=58$) than freshers ($f_o=55$) and repeater who used more

beta press ($f_o = 64$) than fresher ($f_o = 50$). Hence, the null hypothesis that there will be no significant difference between Test Familiarity (Fresher or Repeater) with Press (Alpha or Beta) in stories on blank card was *accepted*. Finally study reveals that there was a no significant difference between imaginal production and press, $\chi^2(1) = 2.35, p > 0.05$. This seems to represent the fact that there is no significant difference with respect to realistic level of imaginal production which employed more alpha press ($f_o = 66$) than fantasy ($f_o = 47$) and fantasy level of imaginal production which employed used more beta press ($f_o = 58$) than realistic ($f_o = 56$). Hence, the null hypothesis that there will be no significant difference between Imaginal Production (Fantasy or Realistic) with Press (Alpha or Beta) in stories on blank card was *accepted*.

Limitation of the Study

The Thematic Apperception Test employed as tool was used for recruitment and selection purpose, the sample were job applicants only who may show some coaching and practise effect while writing stories on blank card.

Future directions

From above results it can be concluded that familiarity plays a significant role in imaginal production of the stories but hardly contribute to employment of press by the subjects. Press employed by the subjects was found independent of familiarity and imaginal production. Press basically emerged as subjective depends on the subject's time and space. Hence the themes on which TAT stimuli to be developed should focus on variables such as novelty of the stimulus.

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