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## **MARITAL ATTITUDES EVALUATION**

*William Schutz. Palo Alto, California: Consulting Psychologists  
Press, Inc.*

### **Introduction**

Over the years there have been dramatic changes in the institution of marriage. Until recently marriage was characterized as lacking in communication and companionship, seen as an economic necessity, and structured in its expectations for sex-role behaviors (Caplow, Bahr, Chadwick, Hill, & Williamson, 1982/1985). The wife involved herself with the children and the home while the husband participated in work and occasional meetings with his male companions. "In many marriages, they shared a house, each other's bodies, and little else" (Caplow et al., 1982/1985, p. 280).

The 1960s brought about some fairly significant changes in demographics, which had implications for marriages. After 1960, there was a progressive increase of American women between the ages 20-24 and an increase in men and women aged 25-29 who never married (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983/1985a; Davis, 1985a). Twenty-eight percent of American women between the ages 20 to 24 were single in 1960, as compared to 49% in 1979 and 52% in 1981 (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983/1985a).

Today "a weakening of marriage is certainly occurring, at least in the sense that matrimony is rapidly becoming less prevalent" (Davis, 1985a, p. 32). Blumstein and Schwartz (1983/1985b) report that the current divorce rate is almost three times what it was in the 1960s (p. 464). As fewer marriages are occurring, the more traditional institution of marriage is encountering revisions. As an alternative, it seems that many people are turning toward cohabitation and companionship as an option to marriage (Davis, 1985a).

The survival of most societies has been linked to the maintenance of family relations and the institution of marriage (Henslin, 1985). According to Davis (1985b), "if no satisfactory substitute for marriage emerges, industrial societies will not survive" (p. 20). Families and marriages play a vital role in the socialization

and organization of the American society. In fact, "to assure continuity over time, each society needs to exercise control over its members. This is the basic fact of social existence" (Henslin, 1985, p. 8). The institutions of marriage and family are avenues for instilling social conformity. If people can better understand their attitudes toward marital relationships, perhaps they can better ensure a union of similar attitudes and values, thus decreasing the risk for later separations and further decline of the marital institution.

One method for helping people clarify their attitudes toward marital relationships involves the use of questionnaires or self-report inventories. There are several instruments available for assisting people in understanding their attitudes toward marriage, but many of the inventories and questionnaires used for assessing marital relationships and attitudes were developed in the 1960s and 1970s. *The Ninth Mental Measurements Yearbook* (Mitchell, 1985) and *Tests in Print III* (Mitchell, 1983) provide a listing of these psychological instruments. One unreviewed inventory is the Marital Attitudes Evaluation (MATE; Schutz, 1978).

The MATE was developed by Will Schutz, Ph.D. and is one of seven scales in the Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation (FIRO) Awareness Scales. The FIRO scales originally were developed to assess the hypotheses presented in *FIRO: A Three-Dimensional Theory of Interpersonal Behavior* (Schutz, 1958); the book is now entitled *The Interpersonal Underworld* (Schutz, 1966). The MATE was designed to measure the amount of satisfaction that respondents feel toward their mates and the amount of satisfaction that they in turn perceive their mates feel toward them (Schutz, 1978, p. 32). The scale is not designed to evaluate, but simply to help a person know more about his or her self-perception. The six other scales are designed to evaluate other interpersonal relationships.

The MATE was published originally in 1967 and was revised in 1976. Prior to 1976, the instrument was utilized only with a husband and wife, and each were given different forms. The revisions included redefining mate to be "one of a pair"; at present, the instrument purportedly can be used with any two people who have close contact, such as husband and wife, parent and child, a couple living together, lovers, friends, or business partners. The pair may be heterosexual or homosexual.

The 40-page MATE manual is divided into two parts. In the first section, Schutz (1978) provides a brief overview of each of the FIRO scales and an outline for the administration of the instrument. A separate listing and detailed description is provided for each of the scales. The second section in the manual contains a listing of research and empirical applications for all of the FIRO scales. The author also provides a rather extensive bibliography at the end of the manual.

The three-page test booklet has eight demographic questions, a scoring box on the front of the booklet, and 90 test items. The demographic questions include name, age, and sex of examinee and mate, as well as length and type of relationship shared. The 90-item questionnaire is divided into two parts of 45 questions each. Items in the first part are prefaced with "I want you to . . ." and in the second section, with "I feel you want me to . . ." Respondents are asked to rate their attitudes on all 90 test items using a 6-point scale that ranges from definitely not true (1) to especially true (6). The responses are recorded directly on the test booklet and require the respondent to write the number that most closely corresponds to their response to the item.

Each of the two sections of the instrument includes five scales that are the same for each section. There are nine test items for each of the five scales, and each part contains the same nine items. The scales are as follows: Inclusion behavior (I,b); Inclusion feelings (I,f); Control behavior (C,b); Control feelings (C,f); and Affection (A). The content of the scales concerns doing things with the mate and showing him or her attention (inclusion behavior); feeling that the mate is a significant part of one's life and being willing to take part in his or her areas of interest (inclusion feelings); giving the mate autonomy (control behavior); feeling confident and respectful of the mate (control feelings); and feeling and demonstrating warmth and love for the mate (affection).

The scoring box on the manual is a  $3 \times 2$  matrix located at the bottom right corner of the booklet. There are five cells in the box, with each cell divided in half. The different cells of the box are abbreviated with I (inclusion), C (control), A (affection), b (behavior), and f (feelings). The upper right corner of a cell is for the score obtained on the first 45 items; the lower left corner is for the second section of the test.

In terms of scoring, each scale has a separate template and 1 point is given whenever the respondent's score corresponds to any of the responses listed for a test question. For example, a score of 4, 5, or 6 may be listed as a scorable item to question #15, so a response of 4, 5, or 6 is considered 1 point on item #15. The same template is used for Parts I and II of the assessment. The total score for a scale equals the sum of the individual item scores on the scale. A score on a scale ranges from 0 to 9. The final score on a scale is entered in the appropriate scoring cell and the scoring procedure is repeated for Parts I and II and all five scales; there are 10 scores in all. The scores can then be used for comparison to the scale and/or scores obtained by the other member of the dyad.

There are several methods for interpreting results from the MATE. Comparisons can be made between the obtained score and the level of agreement with the scale summary, and scores between mates. When making comparisons to the scales, scores are evaluated as high acceptance (7-9), rejection (0-2), or moderate acceptance (3-6) with the statement about the scale. It is important to note, however, that the MATE does not purport to evaluate marital satisfaction compared to any societal norm. The examiner needs to review the interpretive procedures outlined in the manual when making comparisons between respondents. The best interpretive procedure for the MATE involves the comparison of scores between mates.

Schutz (1978) does not establish specific requirements for the setting in which the instrument is used. The only materials that are necessary when using the MATE are a writing utensil, a test booklet, and the scoring templates.

#### **Practical Applications/Uses**

According to Schutz (1978), the effectiveness of the MATE lies in its ability to open up discussion in a close relationship. The test form states that the instrument is designed to "explore the relation between two people who have close contact" and to aid a person in attaining greater insight into a specific dyadic relationship.

Although not stated explicitly, the MATE would appeal most strongly to mental health counselors, especially those working with couples.

Marriage counselors might use the MATE as a mechanism for highlighting potential problem areas. A couple who has presented for counseling and is having difficulty expressing or understanding their relationship problems might find the MATE helpful in illuminating possible areas of concern. Because the instrument contains five different scales and a measure for each mate's perceived satisfaction, the inventory might help the counselor identify the area of difficulty more rapidly.

The MATE could be administered to both members of a dyad or just an individual member. During a joint administration, the members could make comparisons between scores and the scale summary. During an individual administration, a person could complete the test with a particular individual in mind and gain some awareness into his or her expectations for the relationship as well as perceived expectations from the other member.

Schutz indicates on the test form that the MATE also might be used with a parent and child. It is conceivable that the instrument could be used by counselors working with a single parent and an adolescent/child who find it difficult to identify problem areas in their relationship. Although a couple of the items do not seem applicable in this context, most speak to a greater sense of autonomy, respect, and trust, factors that are very important during childhood and adolescence. If used for this purpose, the administration of the MATE would need to be revised. The adolescent would complete only Part I and the parent only Part II. The results could provide some information about the extent to which the parent does in fact understand the adolescent/child's need for inclusion, affection, and control in the dyadic relationship. However, the reverse could not be evaluated with the use of all of the items on the MATE.

It is not feasible for a parent to complete the items on Part I and the child/adolescent to complete Part II because of the hierarchical difference within the parent-child structure. The use of the MATE implies "one of a pair," with the idea that the members maintain relatively equal status. Children/adolescents are not in a position to give their parents more autonomy and greater confidence. If completed by a parent, several of the items on Part I would suggest that the child/adolescent has the power to grant his or her parent greater freedom. Some of the items on the instrument are applicable, but the time required for revising the scales and the limited information provided from the interpretation makes this process potentially nonproductive.

Schutz also suggests on the test form that the MATE can be used with people who work closely with each other. Although there are several items on each of the scales that could be related to an employee relationship, 55% of the items on the Inclusion scale and 44% of the items on the Affection scale do not seem applicable to a work-related relationship. The questions relate to displays of love, affection, and negotiations for spending time together (i.e., recreational, leisure, and domestic time). In addition, Parts I and II are not necessarily useful in this type of situation. Using both parts for both people implies an equality in the relationship. In situations where an employee and employer complete the scale, the employer would complete Part II, and the employee Part I. Unless individual scales on the MATE are administered to a dyad and modifications made in the administration of

the two parts, the instrument is not likely to prove beneficial to people who only work together.

It is interesting to note that although various changes are necessary for the application of the MATE to these different populations and settings, the author does not make any explicit suggestions regarding the use of the instrument with modifications. It appears that administrators are left to their own devices when altering the MATE to apply to situations that the author himself recommends. Unless an administrator is well acquainted with the instrument, the necessary revisions make the utility of the MATE rather cumbersome and less informative than probably intended by Schutz.

In terms of the utility of the MATE in other situations, although Schutz (1978) indicates the seven FIRO scales have many advantages for research in personality and interpersonal behavior, he does not suggest how the MATE might be advantageous in these situations. It is possible that the MATE could be used in a pre- and posttest analysis of a particular intervention (Uhlmann, cited in Schutz, 1978) or in studies where the MATE is used as the dependent variable.

No special training is required of the administrator and no explicit suggestions are offered regarding any necessary educational qualifications. It is likely that the MATE can be administered by counselors, psychologists, marriage and family therapists, and other mental health care providers who are working with a couple. As the publisher lists the test as "available to any purchaser," there is nothing to preclude the use of clerical staff, proctors, guidance counselors, or aides in the administration.

Schutz (1978) reports that "the [FIRO] scales have been used primarily with college students and with adults" (p. 4), and that most of the FIRO scales can be administered to individuals in high school. However, a specific age range for the MATE is not included in the manual. It seems probable that the items are comprehensible on the eighth-grade reading level, but there is nothing to substantiate this. Individual and group administrations are possible with the MATE; the directions are essentially the same. Because the instructions are printed on the front page of the test booklet, self-administration is possible. Although Schutz does not indicate the preferred setting for administering the MATE, it is possible that the instrument can be utilized in marital psychotherapy, couples counseling, laboratories for human relations training, consultations with a third party, or situations where team building becomes necessary (Pfeiffer & Heslin, 1973, p. 191).

The MATE might be used in laboratories for human relations training in much the same manner as it is in counseling situations. In order to use the instrument, some revisions in scoring and interpretation are necessary, but as long as the participants present as a couple, the instrument possibly could facilitate some discussion and awareness of problems that exist in the relationship. However, there are no statistical data or research studies to substantiate the idea that the MATE actually facilitates either greater awareness or discussion of relationships in this setting.

After the scale has been distributed to each member of a dyad, a note of caution is made: "Although you may experience a sense of repetitiveness of items in the instrument, each item is different and is to be answered independently" (Schutz, 1978, p. 5). Because the scale is untimed, each person must be given every oppor-

tunity to complete the questionnaire and, during a group administration, people should be encouraged to remain seated quietly until everyone has finished. Schutz (1978) recommends that the FIRO theory be explained briefly to the respondents on completion.

As most administrators of the MATE are not likely to have read *The Interpersonal Underworld* (Schutz, 1958/1966), a very brief overview of the major theoretical idea is stated in the manual. All human interactions involve issues of inclusion, control, and affection, and the development of a group follows a cyclical pattern of inclusion to control to affection and back again to inclusion.

The manual then recommends that respondents predict how they will score in the different categories on the scales. It is unclear from the manual, however, whether respondents need to be encouraged to predict their scores on the MATE or whether the prediction process applies only to the FIRO-B. Because the prediction process has no stated relevance to the scoring and interpretation of the MATE, score predictions are not necessary. If the examiner wants the respondents to predict their score on the different scales, the 9-point scoring system used in the instrument seems most appropriate. Respondents can predict the extent to which their attitude, or their mate's attitude, highly relates (score of 9) or does not relate (score of 0) to the scale, and prediction scores then can be noted. After the scoring has been completed, the prediction scores can be used for comparison between individuals.

Under normal conditions, the MATE takes approximately 15 minutes to complete. The author provides no time frame for scoring the MATE, but suggests that the scoring for most of the FIRO scales should not exceed 6-8 minutes. The manual indicates that there are several methods for scoring the instrument, including self-scoring. There is nothing in the manual to suggest that any of the noted scoring procedures affects the score. As computer scoring is not yet available, template scoring is the preferred method.

Schutz considers the discussion of the concepts underlying each of the scales to be the interpretive value of the MATE. Generally speaking, interpretation is handled in two stages: (a) the interpretation of the scores, and (b) dyadic interpretations between respondents. Schutz (1978) outlines a five-step interpretive process that gradually becomes rather cumbersome, complicated, and confusing. In the first step, a high score (7-9) on one of the five scales indicates a high level of agreement with the scale/category. A medium score (3-6) indicates only a moderate level of agreement, and a low score (0-2) indicates a low level of agreement. This process is completed for all five of the scales on Parts I and II.

The next interpretive step is more complicated. Comparisons can be made between the scores of two people. One person's Part I scores can be compared to the other's Part II scores, and vice versa. The comparisons can offer assumptions regarding the levels of satisfaction for each person on each of the five scales. For example, Schutz (1978) states: "comparison may be made between how I perceive your dissatisfactions with me (my Part II) and how you state these dissatisfactions (your Part I). If your score is higher, you are more dissatisfied with me than I think you are" (p. 21). Because of the absence of norms, the practitioner is encouraged to exercise caution when interpreting scores between mates.

Another procedure outlined in the manual for making dyadic interpretations

involves an even more complicated procedure. "Comparison may be made between my dissatisfaction with you (my Part I), my perception of your dissatisfaction with me (my Part II) [and your response on the same item on Part I]" (Schutz, 1978, p. 21). The idea is for the administrator to examine the data for evidence of projection.

In general, the utility of the MATE in many situations is questionable. The author does not indicate the setting in which the instrument is likely to prove most beneficial, and the suggested applications require revisions and modifications that make the MATE a troublesome instrument. Furthermore, because of the absence of norms, considerable caution should be exercised when making comparisons between scores.

### Technical Aspects

There are no validity or reliability studies that have been performed on the MATE. The author does not attempt to make comparative statements for the level of marital satisfaction compared to societal norms. Instead, he has provided a scale that promotes discussion within dyadic relationships.

Schutz (1978) indicates that he used 113 white married couples in his sample. He does not provide information about age, length of marriage, offspring, religion, geographic location, educational status, or marital status (e.g., previous divorce). These factors are likely to have a profound effect on marital attitude. He also indicates that, "prior to 1977, MATE was phrased for application to 'husbands' and 'wives,' and all data reported in [the manual] are based on marriage couples" (p. 20). As the earlier version utilized separate forms for husbands and wives and the current test only requires one form for each sex, several of the items—20%—needed to be revised. However, Schutz (1978) suggests that the earlier data can be used with the current test. The 20% statistic tells the test user nothing about the distribution of revisions; perhaps most of the items on the Inclusion behavior scale needed to be revised. The author does not indicate which of the scales have been most affected by the revisions.

Schutz (1978) used the Guttman scaling technique when he developed the MATE, which involves ordering variables in such a way that higher scores include all the properties of the lower scores, plus one additional characteristic (Reckase, 1984). The assumption underlying the scale is that all of the items included on the scale follow along a single dimension (Aiken, 1979). In order to evaluate the agreement between a scaled variable and a natural variable, Guttman makes use of a coefficient of reproducibility. The coefficient of reproducibility is a measure of internal consistency (Nunnally, 1978). According to Reckase (1984), Guttman suggests that in order to obtain a reasonable scaling, a reproducibility coefficient of .90 or better must be obtained. The reproducibility coefficients from the 1967 data range from .91 to .95, well within the recommended range.

Schutz includes a percentage listing for each of the nine scores. The information indicates that approximately 25% of the sample population obtained scores between 7 to 9, and another 25% between 0 to 2. The remaining 50% obtained scores between 3 to 6. The results suggest that the 3 to 6 range represents the most common range of responses in the sample population.

Schutz (1978) addresses the intercorrelation among the MATE scales but does not provide the detailed results from the factor analyses. Instead, he states:

For about a fourth of the married respondents tested, all areas of their relationship with each other are satisfactory and for about a fourth no areas are satisfactory. The remaining 50% of respondents have a pattern of satisfaction that varies depending on the interpersonal area. (1978, p. 21)

### Critique

Although test reviewers have access to a "technical guide" when evaluating psychological and educational instruments, few reviewers make use of the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* (American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, & National Council on Measurement in Education, 1985). However, Creighton, Killian, and Katell (1990) utilize some of the *Standards* in their review, and the same procedure is employed here.

The *Standards* state that evidence of validity should be presented for the major types of inferences for which the use of a test is recommended, and a rationale should be provided to support the particular mix of evidence presented for the intended uses (AERA, APA, & NCME, 1985, p. 13). The MATE fails this standard in two ways. It does not establish itself as a valid instrument for inferring attitudes toward inclusion, control, and affection in intimate relationships. In addition, while Schutz (1976) suggests that the instrument is applicable not only to marital relationships but to a variety of relationships, he fails to provide evidence supporting his claim. Furthermore, no clear rationale for the intended uses of the MATE is provided in the test manual.

Further, the *Standards* state that "if a test is likely to be used incorrectly for certain kinds of decisions, specific warnings against such use should be given" (p. 13). The MATE manual does not offer any cautions for interpreting the test. Instead, Schutz suggests that the instrument is useful with a variety of people, even though the instrument was only developed from a limited sample population of 113 white married couples.

When an instrument reportedly measures a construct, evidence must be provided to support the validity of the inferences developed from a scale (AERA, APA, & NCME, 1985). Schutz (1978) does not establish clearly the represented universe of the variables being assessed in the instrument, and clear definitions for inclusion, control, and affection are not provided in the MATE manual. According to the *Standards*, tests and testing programs should be developed on a sound scientific basis (p. 25). However, Schutz does not provide such information for the development of the MATE (i.e., its scientific basis, etc.), which seems vital for understanding its context.

Neither administrative procedures nor examiner qualifications are provided in the manual. The *Standards* indicate that the directions for administration should be clear and approximate the conditions under which the test was developed, and qualifications for the administrator should identify any specific training, certification, or experience needed (p. 36). The MATE is not in compliance with either of these primary standards.



The *Standards* indicate that "promotional material for a test should be accurate. Publishers should avoid using advertising techniques that suggest that a test can accomplish more than is supported by its research base" (AERA, APA, & NCME, 1985, p. 36); the Consulting Psychologists Press complies with this standard. (For a more detailed description of the MATE's compliance with the established standards, see Creighton, 1989.)

The five scales and the two parts provide the examiner and respondents with a variety of alternatives for the instrument. However, this versatility has both positive and negative features. Because the MATE does not yield one composite score, it is not necessary for the administrator to use all of the scales. Depending on the purpose and setting of the test, either section or different scales can be given during an administration. However, the necessary revisions often make the test more difficult and time-consuming to administer. Unless all of the items are administered on a scale, the interpretive value of the scale is lost. The author does not make allowances for omitted items, and in order for the test to be utilized in a variety of settings and/or with a variety of populations, revisions are often necessary.

The author provides no information about altering the instrument during an administration. He neither condemns nor condones the act of modifying his instrument, and this omission leaves the administrator with some decisions to make about appropriate application. The paucity of validity and reliability studies naturally limits the author's ability to provide definitive information about the areas of application of the MATE, but cautions around potential misuse could be noted. The manual needs to state clearly for whom the test is intended and the setting for which the MATE is most likely appropriate.

Another characteristic of the MATE's versatility involves the use of nonsexist pronouns in the test and the use of unisex test forms. The instrument therefore can be used by homosexual and heterosexual couples. It is titled, however, the *Marital Attitudes Evaluation*, which, by implication, places the test in a very different category. The MATE is not strictly a marital attitude instrument and is probably best viewed as a couple's relationship inventory. The acronym MATE is certainly appropriate, but the words from which it is derived should be revised or the acronym dropped and the instrument retitled.

Although the MATE provides information about feelings and behaviors, which can assist a couple in separating their emotions from their actions, it does not provide these distinctions for the Affection scale. As noted by Pfeiffer and Heslin (1973), showing affection and feeling affection are different, and it is unclear why Schutz did not make the distinction on the Affection scale.

The inventory was developed initially in 1967, and the manual indicates that it was revised in 1977. (However, since the revised publication of the MATE is dated 1976, the exact date of revision is confusing.) It is important that the data for the MATE be updated. Blumstein and Schwartz (1983/1985a, 1983/1985b), Caplow et al. (1982/1985), and Davis (1985a, 1985b) suggest that many changes have occurred in marital relationships since the 1970s, and many people in our society have altered their attitudes toward marriages in the very recent past.

In summary, the *Marital Attitudes Evaluation* is a self-report questionnaire that requires minimal effort on the part of the respondent and can be used with couples who are married, engaged, or living together. The instrument can help a

counselor explore a dyadic relationship with specific focus around needs for inclusion, control, and/or affection. The value of the instrument lies in its reported ability to promote discussions of marriage relationships. Schutz (1978) intimates that the instrument has greater application than is probably realistic, and in order to utilize the instrument in the various settings for which the author suggests, the administrator must make numerous alterations. The MATE fails to comply with many of the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* and compares unfavorably to some of the other instruments available for facilitating the exploration of marital attitudes and relationships.

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