

## Why the Statement “The Rorschach is Invalid” is Invalid

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It is not uncommon to hear academics, clinicians, students, and even people with no psychology training confidently assert that “The Rorschach is invalid.” But even the staunchest professionals who describe themselves as ‘the Rorschach critics’ do not say the test is invalid. As these critics stated in 2005, “Even psychologists who are critical of the test generally agree that some scores from various Rorschach systems can be helpful for detecting thought disorder, diagnosing mental disorders characterized by thought disorder, measuring dependency, and predicting treatment outcome” (p. 105).<sup>1</sup>

In fact, for the past 30 years, systematic research has consistently supported the overall validity of formal scores derived from the Rorschach task as equivalent to those derived from the most popular self-report personality test, the MMPI.<sup>2</sup> In 1999<sup>3</sup> and 2001<sup>4</sup> the critics argued for a moratorium on the use of the Rorschach until each individual scale had conclusive meta-analytic evidence for its validity. In 2015, based primarily on the systematic reviews and meta-analyses of 65 Rorschach variables published in the premier scientific review journal in psychology<sup>5</sup>, the critics lifted their call for an all-out moratorium on the use of the Rorschach in clinical and forensic settings.<sup>6</sup>

The Rorschach now has more scales with meta-analytic construct validity support than any other test. As of 2018, systematic reviews of the validity literature have been conducted for 71 Rorschach scales, including 57 meta-analyses.<sup>5,7,8,9,10,11,12,13</sup> Counting all versions of the most popular self-report test (i.e., MMPI, MMPI-2, MMPI-A, MMPI-2-RF, MMPI-A-RF), only *four* of its several hundred clinical scales have construct validity meta-analyses.<sup>14</sup> Even further, the goal of the newest Rorschach system—the Rorschach Performance Assessment System (R-PAS)<sup>15</sup>—was to remedy previous problems with Rorschach methodology and to place it on a firmer psychometric foundation. Research<sup>15,16,17,18,19</sup> indicates that R-PAS has achieved this goal by reducing variability in the number of responses, providing accurate norms, and basing its selection of test variables on the recent meta-analytic reviews.

So why do inaccurate claims about the Rorschach’s validity persist? Many factors are probably at play. For example, publications of the recent Rorschach meta-analyses, R-PAS itself, and research supporting R-PAS improvements may be too recent to be common knowledge. Another potential reason for inaccurate beliefs about the Rorschach’s validity might be inaccurate portrayals of how the test works. A quick internet search for the terms “Rorschach” and “cartoon” shows that many people equate ‘what’ ones sees with whether one is ‘crazy’ or not. On the contrary, the scoring of Rorschach scales that assess psychosis are based on disordered thought processes and perceptual distortions—the very substance of psychosis itself. In fact, numerous findings show that the Rorschach is a highly valid test of psychosis, even above and beyond popular self-report tests like the MMPI-2, and that R-PAS has even stronger measures than previous systems.<sup>5,18,19,20,21</sup> Rorschach-based interpretations have also received empirical validation using neuroscientific techniques such as EEG, fMRI, and rTMS.<sup>22,23,24,25</sup>

So, the next time you hear someone make the claim that “The Rorschach is invalid,” you can tell them, “Actually, that’s a pop psychology myth. Current research shows it is highly valid for assessing many characteristics, especially when using the most recent version—R-PAS.”

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