

ROPER POLL

SEE *Pollsters*.

RORSCHACH, HERMAN

SEE *Rorschach Test*.

RORSCHACH TEST

The Rorschach inkblot test is one of several inkblot-based personality assessment instruments, though it is by far the most well known, commonly used, and frequently researched. Its name is derived from its developer, Hermann Rorschach (1884–1922), a Swiss physician and artist. Rorschach experimented with forty or more inkblots between 1917 and 1920, largely with the goal of understanding the syndrome of schizophrenia (*dementia praecox*) that had recently been identified and described by his mentor, the Swiss psychiatrist Eugen Bleuler (1857–1939). Contrary to popular perception, these were not simply blots of ink placed on a piece of paper that was folded in half and opened again. Instead, Rorschach used his artistic skills to refine and enhance his final inkblots so that each contained some contours that would suggest objects or images to most people. His interests were in the perceptual operations that contributed to what people saw more than in the content of those perceptions. Ultimately he selected twelve inkblots as most optimal for eliciting and identifying personality characteristics. However, reproducing them was expensive, and Rorschach had to omit two in order to publish the final set of ten in 1921.

Each inkblot appears on a white background. Five are black and gray; two are black, gray, and red; and three are various pastel colors without any black. As the inkblots were prepared for publication, imperfections in the printing process accentuated gradations in saturation that were not obvious before. Rorschach initially was concerned about this but ultimately realized the shading gradations provided another set of perceptual processes that could influence how people perceived the stimuli.

HISTORY

Rorschach died in 1922, less than a year after his work was published. In the late 1920s his test was introduced in the United States, and by the late 1960s five distinct approaches to its use had been developed by the psychologists Samuel Beck, Marguerite Hertz, Bruno Klopfer, Zygmunt Piotrowski, and David Rapaport. Each practitioner had a different approach to administration, scoring, and interpretation of the Rorschach test, which created

disorganization in the research literature because there was no single “test” per se. In the late 1960s the American psychologist John Exner (1928–2006) reviewed the similarities and differences between these systems and then in 1974 published the first edition of what he called the Comprehensive System, which synthesized the most logically and empirically defensible elements of the earlier approaches. Fairly quickly the Comprehensive System became the dominant approach to administering, scoring, and interpreting the test in the United States and in other parts of the world. Although not specific to the Comprehensive System, the International Rorschach Society promotes research and clinical practice with the instrument and has twenty-seven member organizations worldwide.

TERMINOLOGY

In the late 1930s the Rorschach was classified as a “projective” test. This term was applied to a range of different kinds of tasks that could be used for personality assessment, such as having people tell imaginative stories that go along with certain pictures or generate pencil drawings of people. The idea was that these tasks required people to project or put forward distinctive aspects of their personality when spontaneously completing an activity without much external guidance. Projective tests were also contrasted with “objective” personality tests, which referred to self-rating questionnaires, where people indicate whether verbal descriptions are characteristic of them, using a fixed set of response options, such as true or false. Although the terms *projective* and *objective* are still used, they have misleading connotations and do not do a good job of describing the methods that psychologists can use to assess personality; so increasingly the Rorschach is called a performance task or implicit measure of personality.

ADMINISTRATION, SCORING, AND INTERPRETATION

Regardless of the label, the Rorschach provides a standard set of inkblot stimuli that are used with children, adolescents, and adults in a wide range of settings where questions of personality and problem solving are relevant, including psychiatric, medical, criminal, or legal settings, as well as when assessing normal personality functioning. Using the Comprehensive System’s guidelines for standardized administration and scoring, normative reference data are available for children, adolescents, and adults. On average it takes about an hour and a half to administer and score the test. During administration the examiner sits next to the test taker, presents the cards sequentially, saying, “What might this be?” and then records all responses verbatim. On average people give about twenty-two or twenty-three responses, and a minimum of fourteen is

required. To facilitate accurate scoring, the examiner reviews each response a second time and strives to see it through the test taker's eyes by clarifying the content of what is seen, where it is located in the inkblot, and the perceptual features of the ink that contribute to the response. Each response is then coded on dimensions that include location (e.g., the whole inkblot versus an unusual detail), developmental quality (e.g., vague versus defined object), determinants (e.g., movement, color, shading), form quality (e.g., how typical it is to see an object in a particular location based on an extensive table derived from more than 200,000 responses), content (e.g., human, landscape), organizational synthesis, and a series of special coding categories, many of which indicate disruptions in logic and thought processes. The codes are then summed across all responses to form what is known as the structural summary, which contains about seventy ratios, percentages, and derived scores that are considered important for interpretation. In addition to formal scores, Rorschach interpretation is also based on behaviors expressed during the testing, patterns of scores across responses, unique or consistent themes in the responses, and unique or idiosyncratic perceptions.

Unlike interview-based measures or self-report questionnaires, the Rorschach does not have people describe what they are like but has them show what they are like via the sample of behavior provided in each response. By relying on an actual sample of behavior collected under standardized conditions rather than a self-description, the Rorschach can provide information about personality that may reside outside of a person's conscious awareness.

ISSUES AND EVIDENCE CONCERNING THE RORSCHACH

The Rorschach has frequently been criticized for lacking reliability and validity. Like most personality inventories, it needs more systematically organized data evaluating the focused validity for each of its scales. In addition, based on emerging findings from around the world, the normative expectations for certain scores probably will need to be adjusted, particularly for children. Nonetheless systematically gathered statistical summaries of the research evidence show that its scores can be reliably coded and they are reasonably stable over time. Globally, across all scores that have been researched, the Rorschach is as valid as other commonly used and widely regarded personality tests. Even the most ardent contemporary critics acknowledge that its scores can validly evaluate disorders of thinking, the accuracy and conventionality of perceptions, psychotic disturbances (such as schizophrenia), dependent personality traits, cognitive complexity, anxiousness, hostility, and the ability to predict who will benefit from psychotherapy. Replicated evidence also shows that the

Rorschach can quantify improvement from therapy as validly as other tests, assess the maturity with which other people are perceived, and predict suicidal self-harming behavior.

SEE ALSO *Personality; Psychoanalytic Theory; Psychometrics; Psychotherapy; Reliability, Statistical; Validity, Statistical*

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*Gregory J. Meyer
Joni L. Mihura
James B. Hoelzle*

RORTY, RICHARD 1931–2007

Richard Rorty was at his death a professor of comparative literature and philosophy at Stanford University and one of the most influential and controversial American philosophers of the twentieth century. He crafted a unique version of pragmatism from a blend of Anglo-American analytic philosophy with the Continental tradition, and his impact was felt across a broad range of the humanities and social sciences, including philosophy, literature, political science, and the fine arts.

Rorty was the grandson of Walter Rauschenbusch (1861–1918), a founder of the Social Gospel movement. Though he began his career in academic philosophy, Rorty later emerged as a social critic and political theorist of the first rank, connecting his earlier interest in epistemology with a critique of the foundations of twentieth-