

Rorschach Test

Dr. Indu Kumari

Assistant Professor

PG Department of Psychology

Maharaja college ,Ara

PG- Semester- 2

CC – 09

Rorschach Test (Part – 2)

Controversy

Some skeptics consider the Rorschach inkblot test pseudoscience, as several studies suggested that conclusions reached by test administrators since the 1950s were akin to cold reading. In the 1959 edition of Mental Measurement Yearbook, Lee Cronbach (former President of the Psychometric Society and American Psychological Association) is quoted in a review: "The test has repeatedly failed as a prediction of practical criteria. There is nothing in the literature to encourage reliance on Rorschach interpretations." In addition, major reviewer Raymond J. McCall writes (p. 154): "Though tens of thousands of Rorschach tests have been administered by hundreds of trained professionals since that time (of a previous review), and while many relationships to personality dynamics and behavior have been hypothesized, the vast majority of these relationships have never been validated empirically, despite the appearance of more

than 2,000 publications about the test." A moratorium on its use was called for in 1999.

A 2003 report by Wood and colleagues had more mixed views: "More than 50 years of research have confirmed Lee J. Cronbach's (1970) final verdict: that some Rorschach scores, though falling woefully short of the claims made by proponents, nevertheless possess 'validity greater than chance' (p. 636). [...] Its value as a measure of thought disorder in schizophrenia research is well accepted. It is also used regularly in research on dependency, and, less often, in studies on hostility and anxiety. Furthermore, substantial evidence justifies the use of the Rorschach as a clinical measure of intelligence and thought disorder."

Test materials

The basic premise of the test is that objective meaning can be extracted from responses to blots of ink which are supposedly meaningless. Supporters of the Rorschach inkblot test believe that the subject's response to an ambiguous and meaningless stimulus can provide insight into their thought processes, but it is not clear how this occurs. Also, recent research shows that the blots are not entirely meaningless, and that a patient typically responds to meaningful as well as ambiguous aspects of the blots. Reber (1985) describes the blots as merely "... the vehicle for the interaction ..." between client and therapist, concluding: "... the usefulness of the Rorschach will depend upon the sensitivity, empathy and insightfulness of the tester totally independently of the Rorschach itself. An intense dialogue about the wallpaper or the rug would do as well provided that both parties believe."

Illusory and invisible correlations

In the 1960s, research by psychologists Loren and Jean Chapman, at the University of Wisconsin, published in the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, showed that at least some of the apparent validity of the Rorschach was due to an illusion. At that time, the five signs most often interpreted as diagnostic of homosexuality were 1) buttocks

and anuses; 2) feminine clothing; 3) male or female sex organs; 4) human figures without male or female features; and 5) human figures with both male and female features. The Chapmans surveyed 32 experienced testers about their use of the Rorschach to diagnose homosexuality. At this time homosexuality was regarded as a psychopathology, and the Rorschach was the most popular projective test. The testers reported that homosexual men had shown the five signs more frequently than heterosexual men. Despite these beliefs, analysis of the results showed that heterosexual men were just as likely to report these signs, which were therefore totally ineffective for determining homosexuality. The five signs did, however, match the guesses students made about which imagery would be associated with homosexuality.

The Chapmans investigated the source of the testers' false confidence. In one experiment, students read through a stack of cards, each with a Rorschach blot, a sign and a pair of "conditions" (which might include homosexuality). The information on the cards was fictional, although subjects were told it came from case studies of real patients. The students reported that the five invalid signs were associated with homosexuality, even though the cards had been constructed so there was no association at all. The Chapmans repeated this experiment with another set of cards, in which the association was negative; the five signs were never reported by homosexuals. The students still reported seeing a strong positive correlation. These experiments showed that the testers' prejudices could result in them "seeing" non-existent relationships in the data. The Chapmans called this phenomenon "illusory correlation" and it has since been demonstrated in many other contexts.

A related phenomenon called "invisible correlation" applies when people fail to see a strong association between two events because it does not match their expectations. This was also found in clinicians' interpretations of the Rorschach. Homosexual men are more likely to see a monster on Card IV or a part-animal, part-human figure in Card

V. Almost all of the experienced clinicians in the Chapmans' survey missed these valid signs. The Chapmans ran an experiment with fake Rorschach responses in which these valid signs were always associated with homosexuality. The subjects missed these perfect associations and instead reported that invalid signs, such as buttocks or feminine clothing, were better indicators.

In 1992, the psychologist Stuart Sutherland argued that these artificial experiments are easier than the real-world use of the Rorschach, and hence they probably underestimated the errors that testers were susceptible to. He described the continuing popularity of the Rorschach after the Chapmans' research as a "glaring example of irrationality among psychologists".

Tester projection

Some critics argue that the testing psychologist must also project onto the patterns. A possible example sometimes attributed to the psychologist's subjective judgement is that responses are coded (among many other things), for "Form Quality": in essence, whether the subject's response fits with how the blot actually looks. Superficially this might be considered a subjective judgment, depending on how the examiner has internalized the categories involved. But with the Exner system of scoring, much of the subjectivity is eliminated or reduced by use of frequency tables that indicate how often a particular response is given by the population in general.^[7] Another example is that the response "bra" was considered a "sex" response by male psychologists, but a "clothing" response by females. In Exner's system, however, such a response is always coded as "clothing" unless there is a clear sexual reference in the response.

Third parties could be used to avoid this problem, but the Rorschach's inter-rater reliability has been questioned. That is, in some studies the scores obtained by two independent scorers do not match with great consistency. This conclusion was challenged in studies using large samples reported in 2002.

Validity

When interpreted as a projective test, results are poorly verifiable. The Exner system of scoring (also known as the "Comprehensive System") is meant to address this, and has all but displaced many earlier (and less consistent) scoring systems. It makes heavy use of what factor (shading, color, outline, etc.) of the inkblot leads to each of the tested person's comments. Disagreements about test validity remain: while Exner proposed a rigorous scoring system, latitude remained in the actual interpretation, and the clinician's write-up of the test record is still partly subjective. Reber (1985) comments "... there is essentially no evidence whatsoever that the test has even a shred of validity."

Nevertheless, there is substantial research indicating the utility of the measure for a few scores. Several scores correlate well with general intelligence. One such scale is R, the total number of responses; this reveals the questionable side-effect that more intelligent people tend to be elevated on many pathology scales, since many scales do not correct for high R: if a subject gives twice as many responses overall, it is more likely that some of these will seem "pathological". Also correlated with intelligence are the scales for Organizational Activity, Complexity, Form Quality, and Human Figure responses. The same source reports that validity has also been shown for detecting such conditions as schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders; thought disorders; and personality disorders (including borderline personality disorder). There is some evidence that the Deviant Verbalizations scale relates to bipolar disorder. The authors conclude that "Otherwise, the Comprehensive System doesn't appear to bear a consistent relationship to psychological disorders or symptoms, personality characteristics, potential for violence, or such health problems as cancer". (Cancer is mentioned because a small minority of Rorschach enthusiasts have claimed the test can predict cancer.)

Reliability

It is also thought that the test's reliability can depend substantially on details of the testing procedure, such as where the tester and subject are seated, any introductory words, verbal and nonverbal responses to subjects' questions or comments, and how responses are recorded. Exner has published detailed instructions, but Wood et al. cite many court cases where these had not been followed. Similarly, the procedures for coding responses are fairly well specified but extremely time-consuming leaving them very subject to the author's style and the publisher to the quality of the instructions (such as was noted with one of Bohm's textbooks in the 1950s as well as clinic workers (which would include examiners) being encouraged to cut corners.

United States courts have challenged the Rorschach as well. Jones v Apfel (1997) stated (quoting from Attorney's Textbook of Medicine) that Rorschach "results do not meet the requirements of standardization, reliability, or validity of clinical diagnostic tests, and interpretation thus is often controversial". In State ex rel H.H. (1999) where under cross-examination Bogacki stated under oath "many psychologists do not believe much in the validity or effectiveness of the Rorschach test" and US v Battle (2001) ruled that the Rorschach "does not have an objective scoring system."

Population norms

Another controversial aspect of the test is its statistical norms. Exner's system was thought to possess normative scores for various populations. But, beginning in the mid-1990s others began to try to replicate or update these norms and failed. In particular, discrepancies seemed to focus on indices measuring narcissism, disordered thinking, and discomfort in close relationships. Lilienfeld and colleagues, who are critical of the Rorschach, have stated that this proves that the Rorschach tends to "overpathologise normals". Although Rorschach proponents, such as Hibbard, suggest that high rates of pathology detected by the Rorschach accurately reflect increasing psychopathology in society, the Rorschach also

identifies half of all test-takers as possessing "distorted thinking", a false positive rate unexplained by current research.

The accusation of "over-pathologising" has also been considered by Meyer et al. (2007). They presented an international collaborative study of 4704 Rorschach protocols, obtained in 21 different samples, across 17 countries, with only 2% showing significant elevations on the index of perceptual and thinking disorder, 12% elevated on indices of depression and hyper-vigilance and 13% elevated on persistent stress overload—all in line with expected frequencies among non-patient populations.

Applications

The test is also controversial because of its common use in court-ordered evaluations. This controversy stems, in part, from the limitations of the Rorschach, with no additional data, in making official diagnoses from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV). Irving B. Weiner (co-developer with John Exner of the Comprehensive system) has stated that the Rorschach "is a measure of personality functioning, and it provides information concerning aspects of personality structure and dynamics that make people the kind of people they are. Sometimes such information about personality characteristics is helpful in arriving at a differential diagnosis, if the alternative diagnoses being considered have been well conceptualized with respect to specific or defining personality characteristics". In the vast majority of cases, anyway, the Rorschach test was not singled out but used as one of several in a battery of tests, and despite the criticism of usage of the Rorschach in the courts, out of 8,000 cases in which forensic psychologists used Rorschach-based testimony, the appropriateness of the instrument was challenged only six times, and the testimony was ruled inadmissible in only one of those cases. One study has found that use of the test in courts has increased by three times in the decade between 1996 and 2005, compared to the previous fifty years. Others however have found that its usage by forensic psychologists has decreased.

Exner and others have claimed that the Rorschach test is capable of detecting suicidality.

Protection of test items and ethics

Psychologists object to the publication of psychological test material out of concerns that a patient's test responses will be influenced ("primed") by previous exposure. The Canadian Psychological Association takes the position that, "Publishing the questions and answers to any psychological test compromises its usefulness" and calls for "keeping psychological tests out of the public domain." The same statement quotes their president as saying, "The CPA's concern is not with the publication of the cards and responses to the Rorschach test per se, for which there is some controversy in the psychological literature and disagreement among experts, but with the larger issue of the publication and dissemination of psychological test content".

From a legal standpoint, the Rorschach test images have been in the public domain for many years in most countries, particularly those with a copyright term of up to 70 years post mortem auctoris. They have been in the public domain in Hermann Rorschach's native Switzerland since 1992 (70 years after the author's death, or 50 years after the cut-off date of 1942), according to Swiss copyright law. They are also in the public domain under United States copyright law where all works published before 1923 are considered to be in the public domain. This means that the Rorschach images may be used by anyone for any purpose. William Poundstone was, perhaps, first to make them public in his 1983 book *Big Secrets*, where he also described the method of administering the test

The American Psychological Association (APA) has a code of ethics that supports "freedom of inquiry and expression" and helping "the public in developing informed judgments". It claims that its goals include "the welfare and protection of the individuals and groups with whom psychologists work", and it requires that psychologists "make reasonable efforts to maintain the integrity and security of

test materials". The APA has also raised concerns that the dissemination of test materials might impose "very concrete harm to the general public". It has not taken a position on publication of the Rorschach plates but noted "there are a limited number of standardized psychological tests considered appropriate for a given purpose". A public statement by the British Psychological Society expresses similar concerns about psychological tests (without mentioning any test by name) and considers the "release of [test] materials to unqualified individuals" to be misuse if it is against the wishes of the test publisher. In his 1998 book *Ethics in Psychology*, Gerald Koocher notes that some believe "reprinting copies of the Rorschach plates ... and listing common responses represents a serious unethical act" for psychologists and is indicative of "questionable professional judgment". Another association, the Associazione Italiana di Psicoterapia Strategica Integrata (literally: Italian Association of Strategic Psychotherapy), recommend that even information about the purpose of the test or any detail of its administration should be kept from the public, even though "cheating" the test is held to be practically impossible.

On September 9, 2008, Hogrefe attempted to claim copyright over the Rorschach ink blots during filings of a complaint with the World Intellectual Property Organization against the Brazilian psychologist Ney Limonge. These complaints were denied. Further complaints were sent to two other websites that contained information similar to the Rorschach test in May 2009 by legal firm Schlupe and Degen of Switzerland.

Psychologists have sometimes refused to disclose tests and test data to courts when asked to do so by the parties, citing ethical reasons; it is argued that such refusals may hinder full understanding of the process by the attorneys, and impede cross-examination of the experts. APA ethical standard 1.23(b) states that the psychologist has a responsibility to document processes in detail and of adequate quality to allow reasonable scrutiny by the court.

Controversy ensued in the psychological community in 2009 when the original Rorschach plates and research results on interpretations were published in the "Rorschach test" article on Wikipedia. Hogrefe & Huber Publishing, a German company that sells editions of the plates, called the publication "unbelievably reckless and even cynical of Wikipedia" and said it was investigating the possibility of legal action. Due to this controversy an edit filter was temporarily established on Wikipedia to prevent the removal of the plates.

James Heilman, an emergency room physician involved in the debate, compared it to the publication of the eye test chart: though people are likewise free to memorize the eye chart before an eye test, its general usefulness as a diagnostic tool for eyesight has not diminished. For those opposed to exposure, publication of the inkblots is described as a "particularly painful development", given the tens of thousands of research papers which have, over many years, "tried to link a patient's responses to certain psychological conditions." Controversy over Wikipedia's publication of the inkblots has resulted in the blots being published in other locations, such as The Guardian and The Globe and Mail. Later that year, in August 2009, two psychologists filed a complaint against Heilman with the Saskatchewan medical licensing board, arguing that his uploading of the images constituted unprofessional behavior. In 2012, two articles were published showing consequences of the publication of the images in Wikipedia. The first one studied negative attitudes towards the test generated during the Wikipedia-Rorschach debate, while the second suggested that reading the Wikipedia article could help to fake "good" results in the test.

Publication of the Rorschach images is also welcomed by critics who consider the test to be pseudoscience. Benjamin Radford, editor of Skeptical Inquirer magazine, stated that the Rorschach "has remained in use more out of tradition than good evidence" and was hopeful that publication of the test might finally hasten its demise.

Conclusion

We must clarify that the Rorschach test, while intriguing, is not a magical sense of insight into an individual's personality.

It is an empirically sound project testing measure backed by four decades of modern and past research, on top of the already existing four decades since the test's initial publication by Hermann Rorschach in 1921.

By asking people to express what they view in a simple yet unique set of ten inkblots, individuals can often express a little bit more of themselves than their conscious selves might intend.

While the Rorschach test could be considered a relic by modern psychologists today and may not be the perfect tool, it continues to be used widely, particularly for identifying and diagnosing schizophrenia – which was Hermann Rorschach's true intention for this test.

The Rorschach inkblot test is very much still used in various settings, including hospitals, schools, and courtrooms. And it still leads to better insights into the underlying motivations of the person's current behaviors and issues.