

1950

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Citation Details

Dana, Richard H., "The Rorschach Test with Children from Two to Six Years Old" (1950). *Regional Research Institute*. 38.
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THE ROBSCHACH TEST WITH CHILDREN FROM TWO TO SIX YEARS OLD

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

JANUARY 1960

Unpublished M.S.S.

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INTRODUCTION

The development of the ink-blot as a psychological tool has taken a thousand years (35). The Rorschach, a formal clinical representative of this heritage, is a product of this "testing age" and has been extensively used with children. This has necessitated certain modifications of procedure and analysis which have been achieved by more or less intuitive, non-systematic methods. The most pertinent questions concerning the Rorschach test with adults also apply to children. These questions include the merry-go-round of scoring possibilities: "Clinical", intuitive (25); objective and in terms of formal categories (1, 16); psychometric, utilizing a vast number of rating scales (35).

"Rorschachers" do not even agree as to what sort of personality picture is provided on the basis of the test. Rorschach (25), Oberholzer and Beck (1), with a psychoanalytic orientations, employ the test as an instrument providing a dynamic equilibrium of the forces involved in personality. Klopfer (2, 16) insists that theories of personality form an undesirable basis for the test and prefers to think in terms of an equilibrium of personality functions.

The research which the Rorschach method has stimulated on young children has been especially handicapped by an almost complete lack of normative studies; lack of uniformity in administration, scoring, and analysis; and a mystical cult of devotees using the test as a final arbiter in personality study.

The purpose of this paper is to review the literature in order to organize what is known, and to discuss how this knowledge is used.

NECESSITY FOR USE WITH CHILDREN

Clinicians have used the Rorschach with young children because it is often "difficult to differentiate between mere environmental disturbances and the beginning of a personality deformation if one has to rely on observations of the behavior of young children. (17, p. 1). There are often

discrepancies between the seriousness of the behavior and the seriousness of the disturbance. The Rorschach has been found to tell what is operating in certain cases but not why or how (6). The fact that the Rorschach is used with children seems to be necessity enough and it is on this assumption of need for the test that this paper is based.

DEVELOPMENT IN CHILD OF ABILITY TO RESPOND TO TEST

The use of the Rorschach with preschool children is limited by developing verbal ability. There appears to be a sequential development of certain types of responses to the inkblots which are fairly uniform in our culture (S. G. M., 26). The earliest responses are alogical repetitions of a single word such as "cat", "tree", or "doggie" to the stimulus. This perseveration, or "magic repetition" (17) occurs from about two to four years of age. The word chosen for repetition may or may not have any relationship to the stimulus properties of the first card, and may be limited to as few as four cards. The very young child may also reject cards and this is considered a typical reaction pattern if three or more of the ten cards are rejected. In a comprehensive review of the literature Burks (11) finds that negative performance in certain situations is a normal reaction in children under four years of age. Confabulation and contamination are normal for children. It is quite obvious that when a child employs responses which are unrelated to the stimulus properties of the cards that scoring is impossible and analysis is inferential.

Between the ages of four and six there is an increase in the number of objects seen (6). The quality of the responses gradually improves from F- to F' (2), and the number of M and O increase (7). In general terms what happens is that from the initial prelogical color or object naming and perseveration the pattern slowly takes on characteristics which are more congruous to adult expectations. This has been confirmed by an 18 year longitudinal study by McFate and Orr (20).

AREAS OF STUDY: CRUCIAL AND DIFFICULT.

It is difficult to compare the data of different investigators for a variety of reasons which will be discussed separately. This necessitates criticism of individual studies to determine the value of each on its own merits.

1. Divergences in handling composite concepts (4): Some children mention several parts of the blot but really see the whole blot while other see the separate parts. Differentiation can only arise as a result of a careful inquiry. An example of this is on Card VIII, responses "animal climbing over rocks". This could be scored as one or two responses depending on the bias of the investigator. The resulting difference in number of responses makes comparison especially difficult with children whose responses are limited, ^{IN NUMBER} by maturation and verbal ability.

2. Movements: There is lack of clarity in determining what constitutes movement. Those who follow Beck (3), and Korschak (25) consider only human activity as movement while the equally numerous adherents of Kläpfer (16) find movement in statues and parts of the anatomy. This lack of uniformity causes records and studies scored by one set of criteria to become meaningless when scrutinized under the other. Some investigators assume there is no movement at all in records of children below a certain age (25), and apply the euphonious title of "dynamic form percept" to cover what would be labeled movement by another. One careful study with adolescents (7) exists as testimony to the paucity of results that can be gleaned from even the most diligent research on the problem.

3. Verbal deficiencies: The lack of spontaneous explanation by children of an unskilled inquiry can lead to difficulty in location of responses. This in turn creates differences in percentage of W, D, and Dd categories (22, 30). There is also the danger that a young child will misname an animal or object (2),

with the ensuing change in accuracy of form perception. The child's remarks are often valuable as Boshner and Halpern (2), at least, consider elaborate evasion an artifact of increasing age. However, there are differences in how much weight is put on the remarks and what sort of frame of reference is employed by the examiners.

4. Color and shading: Again interpretative disagreements over scoring categories render a particular shading response or a C or CF suspect of arbitrary criteria although the results in description of personality are very significant (2, 6).

5. Sex differences: This problem has been intensively investigated (6, 14, 22, 24, 30). The most recent and detailed study (6) is diametrically opposed in results to earlier studies. The confusion is over quantity of responses, and the age at which various signs tend to appear. This is probably one of the most thoroughly investigated areas and the results demonstrate that no one knows in Rorschach terms which sex matures most rapidly or functions intellectually at the earliest age.

6. Mental procedure: The mental procedure of six year old children has been investigated (8). This is one of the few studies using an adequate population of 242 children and establishing norms. Children of this age approach problems in everyday life on the basis of overall, undifferentiated qualities with a marked lack of appreciation of the reality aspects of the situation. These children seem to have uncritical, unanalytical views of the world in which details cause no concern. Piaget's (29) "syneretism", a subjective acceptance of relationships among events that is not warranted by facts seems to substantiate this study. No substantiating studies exist.

7. Content: In this area only results appear uniform. A% and H% hold for different investigators (4, 5, 6).

Although these areas are not all sources of difficulty they appear to be crucial in use of the Rorschach with children.

THE "NORMAL" RECORD

The problem arises as to what constitutes a "normal" and what a "pathological" picture for this age group. This is further augmented by the lack of norms. Paulsen (22, p. 29) recognizes this when she says:

"The response at this age (6) is qualitatively so different from that of a 10 year old (probably even 8 year old) children that the usual criteria for differentiating between pathological and normal cannot be taken too literally."

In terms of adult norms children under seven give many "pseudo-psychotic" responses (12), contamination and perseveration (17), F% of 65 and many CF and C responses (2) are usual. There is little M, few P, and many DW (2). Clearly, as Heitzman and Margulies point out (9) there are more "neurotic signs" in a younger group and these must be interpreted in terms of developmental patterns. Therefore, norms must be established for children, preferably for each half year. But there are no norms, and it can be concluded that it is difficult to describe a "normal" record. There remains only the unsystematized impressions of clinicians (2, 15, 26) waving their magic wands, and incanting over hapless patients.

ILLUSTRATIVE STUDIES

These clinicians differ, however, in how seriously they take themselves and their art. Schachtel (26) believes that even the earliest responses, the "magic repetition" of a two-year old can be effectively analysed. She feels that "with a child not yet accustomed to cataloging objects, with no verbal cliches or pattern to rely on, every act or recognition is also a significant discovery" (26, p. 1). These responses have an inventive, subjective meaning and although fewer are more uncompromising, more personally

significant, and more revealing. As an example of her method she uses a record in which a child saw mountains of different colors on each card, a typical case of perseveration of "magic repetition". The record is analysed in terms of dynamic trends, occult theories, and subjective revelations and yields a so-called personality picture of the child. Beck (1A) considers this to be impressionistic, a product of free associations using fallacious global comparisons.

Richards (24) assumes the Rorschach provides a sensitive reflection of the adjustment process and on the basis of two cases says there is a dynamically changing picture in which the constitutional characteristics are highly variable. This leaves much to the imagination and little to the Rorschach. This approach is similar to that of Suarez (31) who states that the test penetrates into the affective capacity, inner life, and content of thought. No examples of just how this is done with children are included and the reader is left to wonder on the nature of the data, and precise methods used.

Krugman (18) is more careful in her claims but insists that the following uses are important: a) as a screening device; b) as an aid to differential diagnosis; c) as an aid to determine intellectual status when psychometric findings are in doubt; d) to determine treatability of child; e) to determine the status of child under therapy; f) to provide a personality picture. This sort of catalog of clinical uses is merely the breakdown into refined terminology^{of} the supposed functions of the test. It is a catalog of inferences from clinical experience without any statistical treatment of how well these purposes are served, and how often. One success warrants inclusion, and none can determine failures. It is to Krugman's credit that she states in her conclusion that care must be exercised in making judgments and that the Rorschach should be used only as a basis for leads. As no records are included in this statement one

must assume that the article is a fortuitous combination of agile penmanship and results obtained from inferential procedures.

Schachter and Cotte (27) and Kerr (13) both use actual cases with Rorschach records of the individuals. Although Kerr's group was seven and older, the method used can be illustrated by an example:

Case History: A 9½ year old boy tried to strangle his sister. He had temper tantrums, walked in his sleep, and stammered. His temperament was aggressive, vain, pugnacious, solitary, antisocial. I.Q. 76

Rorschachi "Very emotionally unstable and excitable. He shows strong opposition to the external world, is defiant and contractive, and exceedingly aggressive...little evidence of being capable of affective adaptation. He is active with a strong desire for importance. He probably does some hypochondriacal brooding...extraneous with some resemblance to a mania type...he appears cheerful. His intelligence is probably low" (13, p.).

As the analysis alone is included without the actual record of responses, the report is of very little value. It represents a rhash of the Case History and adds nothing to it. If the Rorschach is to be effective with children merely telling what the facts are when these facts are already known is not enough. Schachter and Cotte (27) working ten years later produce the same kind of article, and find cases to support specific contentions. They conclude that "the Rorschach test is not the oracle of D^hmi which knows all and tells all" (27, p. 182) but in the next breath continue: "If there is a discrepancy in results the Rorschach may not be deceived but the psychologist is more likely to be" (27, p. 183).

Locali-Usteri (19) presents case histories, Rorschach records, and her analyses of them. She is also guided by "intuition" but the reader can at least follow what she is doing as she includes criteria used in scoring and analysis. Her work is qualified by the statement that the test is best used with children over nine years old.

Schafer and Leitch (28) in an exploratory study using a battery of tests on 22 3-5 year old children make statements concerning use of color and perseveration that are contrary to those of other investigators (2, 6, 17). Their "signs" of severe maladjustment become, in a different population, quite normal. Arbitrary color responses such as "pink lions", color naming, perseveration, and rejections of cards are the "signs". Ford's statistics (6) from a population of 123 ^{normal} children indicate that 48% of 3 year olds, 83% of four year olds, and 85% of five year olds used color naming completely. Her conclusion was that arbitrary color responses are usually things with which the normal child of this age is concerned, "ice cream", "hair ribbon", and in fantasy "pink lions". Klopfer and Margulies (17) and Bohner and Halpern (2) ~~also~~ find perseveration and rejections part of the normal developmental pattern for this age group.

Two Iowa studies by Swift (32, 33) point up the more real issues involved. The reliability of Rorschach categories on preschool children (32) were found to be highly variable. On test-retest with thirty day interval the reliabilities were from .15 to .83. On test-retest with the Behn Rorschach interposed the reliabilities were from .59 to .84. On test-retest with the Behn the reliabilities were from -.06 to .84, and on test-retest after ten months the reliabilities were from .18 to .53. Thus on the fundamentals of Rorschach scoring with children the reliabilities are inconsistent. This arises as a result of some individuals being very consistent while others show extreme fluctuations in performance from test to retest. The Rorschach, however, is tapping the unformed, developmental aspects of personality and even these results indicate that when one individual is doing the scoring reliabilities can be expected. Swift (33) also compared teacher's descriptions with Rorschach analyses by Klopfer. She discovered that 14 out of 80 could be matched correctly. This was considered significant by Chi-square technique. "The Chi-square is only valid on very large groups. Critical Ratio

would have been a preferred statistic. It is not stated whether Yates' correction for continuity was used. The records were matched in six groups of five each making chance agreement more probably than if all thirty had been done in one group.

Young and Higginbotham (34) discovered that Rorschach comparisons with behavior were difficult to make. They were able to determine intellectual functioning and psychotic trends (one subject), but could not distinguish emotional factors, neurotic tendencies, and generalized anxiety.

Siegel (29), a cautious investigator, found that the Rorschach was useful in confirming or contradicting an equivocal psychiatric diagnosis. However, this fact means very little as any test, examination, impression, case history, etc., would provide equivalent information.

If in addition to this, Hunter's (10) conclusions are considered a fairly accurate indication of the practical value of the Rorschach results. She finds the test useful as a check on other tests in estimating intelligence, and that it gives the general functioning level better than the Binet or Porteus. It can unearth emotional conflict not observed in behavior during the examination but often verified by teachers. With this as a basis most expert Rorschachers would agree (1, 2, 35) and continue from there with individual preferences.

Some substantiation is offered by Ford (6) to these clinical observations on Rorschach utility. She finds that four determinants, M, F%, O%, and C sum equal Binet scores, the M: sum C ratio of extratension/introversion correlates with the Thurston scale .6, and that emotional adjustment, as determined by C, correlates .5 with the Olson Behavior Rating scale. These are, however, only comparisons with other relatively unvalidated techniques and as such the evidence is merely complimentary.

CONCLUSIONS

From the crude attempts of Parsons (21) in 1917 to classify associations

to a series of black blots to the systematic researches of Ford (6) in 1946, the use of the Rorschach with children has become both extensive and intensive. The same problems which faced the Rorschach pioneers face their descendants today. The outstanding need is for a systematic normative study. Validity substantiation and modification of interpretative principles are also needed. However, these problems would probably have been negotiated long ago had it not been for the warring factions of Rorschach experts who caused different systems of scoring and interpretation to arise. This led to the confused and inaccurate studies reviewed in this paper. As long as the Rorschach is regarded as a panacea and defended by fanatical followers, research will lag far behind the enthusiasm invested in it. Even the most fanatical, however, sometimes let fall very honest statements. An example by Klopfer (14, p. 95) is that "up to seven years the age pattern overshadows the personality development" and that because of this fact the Rorschach test with children has a "supplementary value" only.

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