CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Why the Rorschach?

Hermann Rorschach first published his carefully selected and artistically enhanced set of ten inkblots 90 years ago. The stimuli are complex and they are structured to provide multiple suggestive but incomplete or imperfect perceptual likenesses that form competing visual images. The task requires respondents to examine the stimuli, and to answer the question, "What might this be?" The answer to this question provides both a visual attribution to the stimulus, as well as a verbal explanation or elaboration. Based on this, the task provides a standardized, in vivo sample of problem-solving behavior that can be understood from multiple viewpoints, including: direct observation of task behavior; comparison of numerous dimensions of visual and verbal performance with normative expectations; and analysis of the content, imagery, and sequence of responses. Administering the Rorschach® task allows the examiner to observe and assess the behavioral performance of the respondent – to see what the person does, not what the person says he does. This performance assessment provides a demonstration of the respondent's solutions to the challenging visual, cognitive, and perceptual problems in the blot stimuli – what we call observing "the personality in action." The Rorschach task has been in continuous clinical use since it was published, in part because it is a reasonably brief, portable, behavioral experiment that can be readily administered in various clinical settings (e.g., a private office, hospital room, jail cell).

At its core, the Rorschach is a behavioral task that allows wide latitude for ideographically unique responses in which the enacted behaviors are an expression of one's personality features and processing style. As a behavioral assessment task, the best or most valid interpretations are those in which the coded behaviors observed in the microcosm of the task generalize to parallel mental, verbal, and perceptual behaviors in the external environment. Rorschach scores identify personality characteristics that are based on what people do, which is a complement to the characteristics they consciously recognize and willingly endorse on a self-report instrument. As such, the Rorschach is able to assess implicit characteristics that may not be recognized by the respondent him or herself. Because task performance and self-report are very different ways of assessing personality, it is not surprising that Rorschach results are, at best, modestly correlated with self-report data. Because of this, however, valid Rorschach scores provide unique information about the personality that can add incrementally and meaningfully to self-reported or introspectively-assessed information. As is true in general for implicitly assessed traits, the behavioral expressions of Rorschach assessed characteristics are most likely to emerge spontaneously over time and to be expressed in relatively unfamiliar and unstructured situations in which individuals must rely on themselves for direction.

The Rorschach offers both nomothetic and idiographic techniques for evaluating test takers' performance. Particular strengths of the Rorschach are its ability to permit standardized, in vivo observation and coding of perception and its conventionality (aka reality testing), problem-solving and coping style, information processing and thinking, and interpersonal behavior; its sensitivity to characteristic representations of self and others and schemas for their interactions; its sampling of salient concerns, meanings and preoccupations; and its capacity to yield rich, multi-faceted descriptions with considerable idiographic content.

Background and History

Hermann Rorschach's overall approach to understanding responses to the inkblots in 1921 is essentially the same as that used in the present day. However, many specific systems for administering, coding, and interpreting responses have come and gone. During the period in which the R-PAS was developed, the most widely used Rorschach system was the Comprehensive System (CS), developed by the late John Exner. Exner designed and introduced the CS in 1974 to incorporate the best and most valid aspects of the five major U.S systems available at that time. In 1997, he founded the Rorschach Research Council (RRC; Exner, 1997), whose mission was to advance and synthesize the research foundations for the CS, as a means to guide improvements in the system. Four of the five authors of this Manual served on the RRC, and many of the innovations that distinguish R-PAS were originally initiated or discussed by the RRC as possible modifications to the CS. However, at the time of Dr. Exner's death, there was no clear documentation to allow the CS to evolve with new research so as to make it more useful to future users. One might say that the developmental work accomplished from 2006 to 2011 for R-PAS was, in large part, a continuation of the efforts and projects inaugurated by the RRC.

Beginning around the same time the RRC was founded, several psychologists published a series of criticisms of the Rorschach, raising doubts about various aspects of its psychometric foundations. Many of their criticisms were unfounded and uninformed (e.g., suggesting that coding reliability may be no better than chance agreement), but some had research support and raised legitimate concerns that became more obvious over time as additional data accumulated. Based on our review of the existing evidence, surveys of experienced users and new learners, our own research, and our experience as teachers, clinicians, and researchers, we became particularly concerned with the following issues: variations across examiners and training sites in conventions followed for administration and coding; error variance introduced by differences in the respondent's degree of task engagement and in the number of responses given to the task; inconsistency between how a score is interpreted and its empirical evidence base and/or the psychological operations involved in producing the coded task behaviors (i.e., the response process); inaccurate and sometimes overpathologizing normative reference data; and overreliance on negative or clinically unhealthy interpretations of variables. We were also concerned about matters of parsimony and efficiency. Many clinical training programs and assessment professionals in the field considered the test too complex and time-consuming to learn and to use. Also, we believed it was important for Rorschach testing to stay abreast of current developments in assessment psychology, such as attention to international considerations and the increasing use of modern statistical techniques and data-processing methods. We concluded that the Rorschach was in need of a broad reformulation to reduce examiner variability, align it with its evidence base, and, where possible, to simplify its procedures and presentation of data.

The Rorschach Performance Assessment System

To address these issues and to allow Rorschach-based assessment to evolve with emerging research, we developed the Rorschach Performance Assessment System[TM] (R-PAS) as an evidence-focused, internationally-oriented approach to using the inkblot task based on the latest available research. Conceptual and empirical rigor is especially needed within health-care and academic environments that are increasingly evidence-based. The system seeks to take advantage of the Rorschach's unique strengths as a highly portable complex behavioral task that provides a means of systematically observing and measuring personality in action. Our focus is on enhancing the psychometric and international foundation of the test, while allowing examiners to interpret the rich communication,

imagery, and interpersonal behavior within that strong psychometric foundation. Specifically, R-PAS^{TM} is designed to enhance the utility of Rorschach-based inkblot assessment by:

1) Selecting and highlighting those variables with the strongest empirical, clinical, and response process/behavioral representational support, while eliminating those with insufficient support.
2) Comparing test takers' scores to a large international reference sample, using a graphic array of percentiles and standard score equivalents.
3) Providing a simplified, uniform, and logical system of terminology, symbols, calculations, and data presentation, in order to reduce redundancy and increase parsimony.
4) Describing the empirical basis and psychological rationale for each score that is to be interpreted.
5) Providing a statistical procedure to adjust for the overall complexity of the record and a graphical illustration of its impact on each variable.
6) Optimizing the number of responses given to the task in order to ensure an interpretable and meaningful protocol, while drastically reducing both the number of times the task needs to be re-administered because of too few responses and the likelihood of inordinately long and taxing administrations because of too many responses.
7) Developing new and revised indices by applying contemporary statistical and computational approaches.
8) Offering access to a scoring program on a secure, encrypted web-platform from any device that can interface with the Internet (e.g., PC, Notebook, smart phone, iPad).

Using the Manual

This Manual is intended as a comprehensive resource, providing all the information needed to administer, code, and interpret the Rorschach task. The manual is supplemented by our online scoring program that calculates the summary scores and plots them using standard scores. Naturally, as with any assessment or therapy method, in order to develop proficiency in the use of the system, some additional instruction and supervised practice is desirable. In order to minimize examiner variability in administration, coding, and interpretation, the Manual offers detailed and specific guidance. New users may find this level of detail difficult to assimilate on first acquaintance, but by referring to it frequently as a reference in teaching or applied practice, it should gradually be internalized and become increasingly useful.

The Manual is divided into four main sections. The Examiner's Manual contains two sections, Administration and Response Level Coding (*Chapters 2-7*), and Protocol Level Scores and Interpretation (*Chapters 8-11*). The Technical Manual is its own section (*Chapters 12-16*), and it is followed by the Appendices in the final section. *Chapter 2 Administration* provides a description of how to administer the test and document the respondent's communication. Mastering this chapter and the basic coding procedures found in *Chapter 3 Basic Coding* should allow both new learners and experienced Rorschach users to practice administration. Chapter 3 also provides information about how to use the online scoring program found at www.r-pas.org in order to enter coded response information. *Chapter 4 Advanced Coding* is a more detailed and sophisticated treatment of coding that also functions as a reference guide to help resolve coding ambiguities. *Chapter 5 Advanced Clarification* is an extended, systematic treatment of the complexities and subtleties of reliable and effective response clarification. *Chapter 6 Form Quality Tables* presents tables of response objects by card and location that are classified by a combination of the two key elements of perceptual accuracy: fit and frequency. *Chapter 7 Coding Practice* provides Rorschach responses to use for coding practice.

The responses are accompanied by our rationale for the proper coding. *Chapter 8 Response-Level to Protocol-Level Conversion* delineates the calculations and transformations needed to prepare the quantitative data and codes for interpretation. In other words, it specifies the terms, symbols, and calculations for the protocol-level variables that are interpreted in the system. It also provides additional information about using the online scoring program. *Chapter 9 Normative Reference Data* provides descriptive statistics for the R-PAS reference samples, using protocols that are either modeled to reflect an R-PAS administration. Both sets of reference data are used in the online program and can also be used if one calculates summary scores by hand. *Chapter 10 Recommendations for Interpretation* provides the rationale, background, and principles and procedures for producing meaningful inferences for using the test in practice. *Chapter 11 Clinical Case Illustration* applies these principles and procedures to the case of a young man struggling with his sexual identity. The Technical Manual (*Chapters 12-16*) presents technical and statistical information about the psychometric and normative foundations of the test and an overview of the evidence concerning the reliability and validity of its variables. *Appendix A* provides a general R-PAS *Glossary*. *Appendices B, C,* and *D* are intended to help former CS users learn R-PAS. They compare R-PAS administration procedures, codes, and terminology. Appendix F provides a list of the many judges from various countries who participated in the Form Accuracy project that was used to help refine Form Quality classifications. Finally, Appendix G is a guide to using the R-PAS online scoring program.