

Development of Components in Children's Rorschachs

A theoretical approach to the Rorschach human movement response.

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In an earlier paper (Overton, 2000), I proposed a relational-developmental framework for organizing and elaborating the Comprehensive System summarized findings. In that paper, I specifically discussed the FC:CF+C ratio. In continuing with a relational-developmental Rorschach interpretation, I'd like next to relate the movement concept to this color-form relationship, to create a color-movement-form tripartite relationship.

Rorschach (1921) briefly introduced this tripartite relationship in Psychodiagnostics, and, in so doing, I believe, he established the basis for a conceptual underpinning of the Rorschach.

He said that the color, human movement, and form determinants were the representatives of three essential human capacities:

- 1) Color as the capacity for emotional rapport;**
- 2) Movement as the capacity to turn inward and experience an inner life;
and**
- 3) Form as the capacity for disciplined thinking, and reality testing.**

Rorschach said further that the optimal goal of development would allow for the greatest growth possible for each of these capacities. But, at the same time, the growth of each should not suppress the development of the others. For example, the over-development of movement could arrest the disciplined thinking of form, as seen in dreamers. Thus there is a tension among the three developing capacities such that they somehow oppose each other. Rorschach saw these three capacities as inter-related and developing throughout childhood, and ultimately forming the basis for the adult personality. He was not alone in his thinking. Sullivan (1953), Ogden (1986, 1989), and Piaget (1952), among others, identify and elaborate these same capacities developmentally, and how they manifest in the adult personality.

In what follows, I discuss each of the three capacities as they emerge developmentally, and then focus on the movement-form relationship, as it is expressed in the human movement response, and manifests in the experience of the adult personality. Before discussing the capacities from a developmental framework, I would first direct your attention to figure 1, which is a graphic representation of the three capacities and their interrelationships. Rorschach spoke of these three capacities in their pure form—pure color, pure movement, and pure form. Determinants, however, represent relations among these elements. The abstract concepts of color, movement and form anchor the vertices of the triangle, and the determinants align along the legs, each representing the resolution of the tensions between the respective vertices. Thus, the FC:CF+C ratio represents the resolution of tensions between color and form; M between movement and form, and the EB between movement and color. The composite of each individual's resolutions of these tensions forms the basis of his personality organization, and generates the unity of his experience.

Emotional Rapport:

Development of Capacities Rorschach's capacity for emotional rapport, that is color, finds its basis in the biological reality that the human organism is embodied, that is, his existence is as a lived human body, with all its sensibilities and specific physiological capacities and constraints. It is the lived body, its sensibilities, reactions, and activity—that provides the capacity for emotion, and thus, emotional rapport. In the infant, this capacity to relate emotionally to one's world initially predominates over the comparatively less developed movement and form capacities, and it begins with sensations at his skin surface. As he functions in the Piagetian sensory-motor level of intelligence, the infant's diffuse emotions derive from the non-symbolic meanings he gives to his physical sensations— sight, sound, smell, and especially physical contacting and physical movement. For example, imagine gently rocking a baby in your arms, and then suddenly careening him around in a quick and jerky manner. This will quickly result in his constructing differential meaning based on bodily sensations. The jerking around is experienced as, but is not the conceptualization of, "unpleasure", and the gentle rocking is similarly experienced as "pleasure." Movement reflects the inner life as experienced. That is, movement reflects the unique human ability to not simply live life, but to re-present the living to one's self—in the form of mental symbols. This capacity gains prominence with the development of Piagetian preoperational thought, which signals the ability to form symbols, and to think, in a rudimentary way (Piaget, 1952). However, the young child's symbols, termed proto-symbols by Piaget, are not clearly differentiated from their reality referents, and his thought is not yet fully differentiated from behavioral actions. As a result of this lack of differentiation, Rorschach human movement responses are absent, and color responses reflect a degree of merger of color and movement capacities. Rorschach animal movement responses also represent this form of representation that is not fully differentiated from action, and thus are also

fused with color, and reflect the tendency to impulsive action. At this level the individual gives form responses, but, as Halpern (1953) says, "it is questionable if the form response of the young child is the purely intellectual, nonemotional reaction that it is for adults. Rather, there is a fusion of emotional and formal factors which is not clearly reflected in the scoring (p. 25)." The preoperational thought associated with the movement capacity initially consists of "islands of logic" amid a sea of thinking that is unsystematic, inconsistent and sometimes disorganized (Flavell, 1963). Connections between events are made on the basis of perceptual spatial, temporal, and material similarity and what Piaget (1952) termed transductive logic, that is, reasoning in an arbitrary fashion from particular to particular. This form of "illogic", I believe is responsible for the large number of Special Scores in 5 to 7 year old children. As well, the child's thought has a tendency to center on a single, striking feature of an object, to the neglect of other important aspects, and thus is unable to take into account features which could balance and compensate for the distorting, biasing effects of the single centration. Later, he engages in dichotomous centration, with the same results. Here, thought is concrete in the sense that objects and events are judged to be what they appear to be in immediate, egocentric perception. The internal world and external reality, are but minimally differentiated and, thus, reality is not understood as a convergence of multiple perspectives, but as a direct perception. Thus the individual experiences his viewpoint as the only possible reality. Similarly, play and reality are not conceived as "different cognitive realms possessing distinct and different 'ground rules'" (Flavell, 1963, p.161). As Samuel Beck said "...children may cease at about age seven to live in fantasy as if it were reality" (Beck, 1960, pp. 20-21). The child's first symbols are highly personal and intimately related to his actions (Ginsburg & Opper, 1979). Along with his ongoing actions, the affective-kinesthetic meanings that the infant made non-symbolically in the predominantly color mode, are now given symbolic expression as the movement mode gains prominence. Thus the sensations of the infant's body and those originating from its interactions with the environment, along with the meaning he gave to these experiences and the emotions he felt, all become part of the symbolic representational world. These embodied schemas, or object relations, form the foundation on which a symbolic sense of self emerges. They will continue to develop and be elaborated and modified during subsequent experiences as they are "metaphorically projected" into higher levels of functioning that develop" (Santostefano, 1998). Although Ogden (1986) sees symbols emerging earlier than Piaget does, he has some interesting comments on the infant's experience at the onset of this period. He says that the infant utilizes splitting as a way of ordering experience into categories of pleasure and unpleasure, danger and safety, hunger and satiation, and so on. This makes for discontinuity of experience, and little sense of continuity of the self. Also, early in this period, the infant's subjectivity or sense of "I-ness" is limited: he is not the self as creator and interpreter of his thoughts, feelings, or perception-they simply happen. Rather than living his

experience, the infant is lived by his immediate experience. As the infant and then child develop during this period, the quality of thinking improves markedly, but it is not until the emergence of concrete operational thought, at about ages 6 or 7, that his thinking can be said to be truly logical. School experience, increased cultural interaction, and the onset of concrete operational thought expands form's capacity for reality testing and disciplined thinking. Within the late preoperational period into the concrete operational period, there is increasing development of form's consensually validated reality testing, such that color and movement become more highly differentiated. That is, the child gradually recognizes that his ideas about another person (movement) are not necessarily a veridical part of the entity he senses as being external to himself (color). Thus, proto-symbols become true symbols, as they separate from their reality referents, and the symbolic self and other differentiate. Ogden (1986, 1989) says that as the symbol and the symbolized differentiate, a sense of "I-ness" develops, such that the young child becomes capable of experiencing himself as the interpreter of his perceptions. He now lives his experience, rather than being lived by his experience. He experiences himself as a subject, that is, as a person thinking his thoughts and feeling his feelings independently of others. He begins to think of himself as the same person over time, and also conceptualizes others as maintaining a similar continuity over time. Thus, the child begins to develop a sense of history. During the late preoperational period, this sense of "I-ness" is at first limited, as it exists within the context of his expanding "islands of logic." With concrete operations, however, his sense of "I-ness" is firmly established, such that he can reflect upon himself in a coherent and systematic way. Thought is now operational in a Piagetian sense, that is, it is logical, separated from action, and "two-sided", in that the child can now hold one characteristic of a situation in mind, while comparing it with another. With logical thought, Rorschach Special Scores decline. At about 6 years old, the human movement response appears regularly within Rorschach protocols, signaling movement's differentiation from color, and its growing relationship with form. Finally, within this period, the child acquires an expanding vocabulary of signs (Piaget, 1952). These signs of pure form carry culturally defined meanings, and they are learned, for example, as is language, as opposed to the symbols of movement, which are created by the child and carry personalized meaning. Later, at about ages 11 to 12, the onset of formal operations moves thought further from action, in that the older child becomes capable of logically (that is, coherently and consistently) reflecting on the logical thought that developed in the concrete operational state. That form was present from birth is seen in that the infant is born with "a powerful predisposition to organize and make sense of experience along specific lines" (Ogden, 1986). But it is within the concrete operational period that the form capacity gains prominence, especially in relation to the movement capacity. It is the integration of movement's symbols and form's reality testing and self-other differentiation that makes possible the regular appearance of the human movement response, with each human movement

response representing a particular movement-form resolution. With increasing interpenetration of movement and form capacities, the child's articulation of his inner world of symbols, that is, the articulation of his lived experience, becomes more communicable and reality-oriented, and is expressed in his human movement responses.

The adult personality When all goes well throughout development, the child receives "good-enough" parenting, and is given the opportunity to create his own relational and cultural experiences (Winnicott, 1971). As a result, as an adult, his inner world is varied and rich with affect and his own personal meaning, has been informed by cultural reality, and is a direct reflection of who he is and how he relates to his world. That is, his past lived experience, now internalized, contributes to and help shape his current experience, such that his understanding of the world, his actions in the world, and his relationships with the world are endowed with both personal meaning and an appreciation of cultural reality. He lives creatively, in Winnicott's sense, and has the ability to reflect upon himself. He looks out and sees a personally meaningful, and thus affectively stimulating world, and because he participates in creating the objects and events he finds in the world, he cares about them- one way or the other. We would expect his Rorschach protocol to include good human movement responses, which give evidence of this optimal relationship between movement and form capacities. By good M responses, I mean responses of good but sometimes unusual form quality, without special scores, and seen with full human figures in action or interaction. The humans seen would be pure H, or moderately personalized non-pure H. I also believe the human movement responses most indicative of this experience are those that are "felt," in Rorschach's original sense, despite the difficulty in their scoring. Just as the individual personally invests in these responses, making them personally meaningful, he personally invests in his world, making it personally meaningful also. We would not expect to see only good human movement on the healthy, normal Rorschach, however. In their day-to-day functioning, adults oscillate between the movement and form modes of experience. Actually, no matter how "well-developed" the individual, he retains the capacity to function through the modalities of all earlier developmental levels. If it were not so, then the individual achieving formal operational thought could only think about thinking, and would not experience his body at all. Thus, when in a hurry we repeatedly push the elevator button, we have abandoned the logic of form, and are engaging in the preoperational magical thinking of movement. In an emergency, when we have to make a snap judgment, we are using preoperational dichotomous "good for me", "bad for me" thinking. When adults engage in "mental play" they relax the logic of form and allow the mind to wander, just as the child's mind wanders in transductive logic-creating novel combinations illogically. In playing with ideas, the healthy adult utilizes movement's ability and inclination to transcend the constraints of reality and logic. When adults are living their

immediate experience, the form capacity is more relaxed, but when they reflect upon their lived experiences, or think realistically about their ideas, or submit their ideas to empirical test, the form capacity becomes more pronounced. When adults ignore their personal concerns, abstract out the essentials of an object or event, and respond according to these essentials, alone, they are operating in the form mode. When the young adult jumps into a mosh pit, he gives himself up to the sensory-motor affective experience of color. However, when the healthy adult functions in earlier developmental modes, his experience is not the same as the infant's or the child's. Thus the young adult in the mosh pit is experiencing within the background context of higher modes of development, knows what's going on, and is not terrified. If one threw an infant into a mosh pit, he would be terrified. Similarly, when adults engage in "mental play" they utilize movement's preoperational logic to manipulate ideas that were formed in later developmental stages (Schachtel, 1953). Thus, the tension or relation between form and movement varies, dependent upon the cognitive developmental level achieved, and the oscillations between levels that occur within a given personality. The range of human movement responses in any given Rorschach protocol reflects both the highest developmental level, and the personality's characteristic oscillation between levels. Figure 2 represents a suggested range of Rorschach responses aligned along the movement-form continuum. Toward the center are found the good human movement responses, as defined earlier. I would say further that good M responses describe movement as distinctly human in attitude, motivation, or intention. That is, the person giving these responses goes beyond surface qualities to infer attitude, motivation, or intent, not given by, but consistent with perceptual cues. We would expect the healthy adult to have a preponderance, but not a totality, of these responses in his protocol. Toward the movement end of the continuum are found those responses more influenced by the movement than the form capacity. These include the formless M responses, M- responses, what I call "story M", and those M with Special Scores. They all represent a coloring or distortion of form's cultural reality by the movement capacity, that is, by one's internal world. Almost identical with the pure movement capacity, the formless M response, according to Exner, represents "instances in which ideation becomes fluid, and internal preoccupations become superimposed on or replace reality" (Exner, Vol I, 4th edit, p. 421). The M- response reflects an inner, false belief so strong that it continues to be held in the face of disconfirming reality. Story M responses usually receive Special Scores, and are those responses in which a scene is described, in which human-like characters or animals are engaged in some human activity. The movement projected onto the blot, however, is a product of the inner world that does not find congruence with the bodily configurations of the figures seen. The creatures, themselves may be of good form, but the internal ideation projected onto them, which is the movement itself is not integrated with the form of the creatures. Thus, they represent internally generated ideas about others that are not necessarily congruent with the reality of others,

who may or may not be otherwise accurately perceived. Of course, when the form quality of these responses is poor, the internally generated distortion of others is greater. Lastly, those M responses with Special Scores suggest that, in giving these responses, the person is operating at the level of preoperational thought.

Movement:

Movement responses at the movement end of the continuum, suggest that the person's inner world is rich with his own personal meaning, but that his past experiences generating this meaning have not occurred within the context of "good enough parenting" that would have facilitated the integration of his experience with cultural reality. With less than adequate reality integration, his resulting inner world leads him to distorted thinking and to an over-personalized understanding of his world, and his experiences. His behavior, especially his interpersonal behavior, often reflects this dominance of movement over form, especially under conditions of stress and heightened emotionality. Using different terminology, Ogden (1986) describes adult pathological functioning in this mode as the collapse of form into movement. He says that the pathological functioning of the borderline personality disorder reflects a repeated tendency to oscillate into or to collapse into the early movement mode of functioning. Thus the borderline's splitting reflects the defensive use of movement's tendency for dichotomous centering and the generation of discontinuous experience. According to McFarlane & Yehuda "The characteristic BPD defense of splitting can be understood as the persistence of preoperational thinking in which the same objects cannot have different qualities at the same time. Thus, under stress, these patients fall back on the stage of cognitive development in which children are as yet **incapable of ambivalence**" (1996, pp. 203-204). Because the early movement capacity reflects the inability to distinguish between symbol and symbolized, or between one's viewpoint and reality, the borderline patient functioning in this mode does not distinguish between the percept and his thoughts and feelings about that which he is perceiving. Thus, one of Ogden's patients told him "you can't tell me I don't see what I see" (Ogden, 1989, pp. 20-21). Because the early movement capacity lacks a sense of "I-ness" or subjectivity, the borderline patient functioning in this mode experiences his thoughts and feelings not as "personal creations but as facts, 'things-in-themselves' that simply exist. Perception and interpretation are experienced as one and the same." (Ogden, 1989, p.21) Thus, the borderline patient is trapped in the manifest or the concrete, since surface and depth are the same, and the therapist's interpretation is experienced as an attempt to twist the facts. Movement's lack of a sense of "I-ness" is also reflected in the borderline's sense that his thoughts and feelings simply happen, and seem to bombard him, rather than being authored by himself. Depression is another form of pathology reflecting the tendency to oscillate into the movement mode of functioning, although I believe depressives tend

to function in the later preoperational stage of movement. Among many others (e.g., Breslow & Cowan, 1984; Cowan, 1978; Gordon, 1988; Nannis, 1988; Noam, 1988) Aaron Beck (1979), the creator of cognitive therapy, and James McCullough (2000), the creator of the Cognitive Behavioral Analysis System of Psychotherapy, believe, respectively, that the depressed and the chronically depressed are functioning at a preoperational level of cognitive processing. McCullough (2000) has identified six analogous features of the preoperational patterns of normal children and chronically depressed adults. He states (1) both groups use global and prelogical thinking; (2) their thought processes are not influenced by the reasoning and logic of others; (3) both groups are pervasively egocentric in their views of self and other; (4) verbal communication is largely conducted in monologue form; (5) authentic interpersonal empathy is beyond the capacity of both groups; and (6) both groups exhibit poor affective control under stress. Toward the form end of the continuum are found those responses more influenced by the form than the movement capacity. These include what I call impoverished M, and pure form responses. When there is a preponderance of impoverished M in a Rorschach protocol, along with a high number of pure form responses, the suggestion is that the person's inner world consists of personally meaningless and affectively neutral "signs," rather than personally enriched symbols. Or, it suggests the person's need to isolate from and defend against the experience of an over-personalized and disturbing inner world. In Ogden's words, reality is being used as a defense against fantasy, that is, the inner world. In either case, this person looks out and sees a personally meaningless and affectively barren world. By contrast, when these responses appear within the context of a greater number of good M, they indicate the ability, when necessary, to take a neutral, objective perspective on others. Ted Bundy had three human movement responses in his Rorschach protocol, all of which I would characterize as impoverished M. For example, his response to Card III "Two women holding handbags (inquiry: They're standing there. Here's the arms, legs, and these could be handbags)" This response does not go beyond surface perception, and the movement seen is not distinctly human in attitude, motivation, or intention. Thus, the impoverished M response reflects more a stringing together of learned signs, than a personally created object relation. In Ted Bundy's case, it seems as though his hard-wiring went seriously awry. For whatever reason, his movement capacity did not develop, such that his early color sensory-motor-affective experiences were never integrated into personally meaningful symbols of self and others to be cared about. Instead, people became mere tools for the achievement of sensation itself. Frequently, though, when the inner world is impoverished, it reflects back on the quality of parenting. With good enough parenting, what happens in cultural experience is that the parents introduce cultural items, rituals, games, conventions, and so on, while allowing the infant to simultaneously invent or create these same items, rituals, games, and conventions. This parental engagement with the infant is what allows the child to live his experience and to create symbols that are rich with human meaning. But in the absence of this engagement,

and instead, when the child is shown or told, the child's experience is impoverished and his symbols are little more than culturally given signs. His cultural knowledge is objective and without embodiment, kinesthesia, or sensory-motor experience. In the case of psychopaths similar to Ted Bundy, in the case of an impoverished inner world, and in the case of defense against an over-personalized and disturbing inner world, very little personal meaning will be invested into Rorschach responses. Instead, in the response process, the form capacity predominates over the movement capacity, such that the person sees only culturally given signs of reality as possible labels or matches to the blot. Rickers-Ovsiankina says that, in giving a form response, and I would suggest also when giving an impoverished M response, one's reactions are controlled and guided by objective features of the blot—they are stimulus-bound. For the truly impoverished, the concrete level of meaning resulting is the only meaning available, and for the defensive, a focus on the concrete level of meaning helps to exclude, modify, or diminish the psychological level of personal meaning and significance. Finally, I would like to add that when a person's preponderance of M responses cluster at one or the other end of the continuum, his experience will be one-dimensional, that is, there will be no layering of experience, and thus no ability to reflect upon oneself. At the extreme movement end, one's distorted interpretation is taken as cultural reality, and at the extreme form end, only cultural reality exists, as interpretation is not acknowledged. Those with movement-dominated responses are saying with their M responses, "it is." Those with form-dominated responses are saying with their M responses, "I know that it is." By contrast, the person with a preponderance of good M responses, whose experience is layered, is saying with his M response: "I am aware I believe that it is." Only these last individuals can enter into Winnicott's potential space.

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