

+Rorschach and Dyslexia by David Ranks

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RE: [Rorschach_List] Re: Rorschach and dyslexia

Norman Geschwind, and his student Albert Galaburda, both well recognized neurologists, have done some nice work on dyslexia. Albert Galaburda's autopsy studies found scattered lesions through the left hemisphere, of a type that occur between the 3rd and 5th month of gestation. He has interpreted that to reflect excess testosterone in the foetus, leading to failure to prune right hemisphere neurons to make room for the left; he has also demonstrated this process in animal studies. Norman Geschwind, as I recall, noted especial problems with the left angular gyrus – which is critical to communicating information across different senses (hearing to vision or vision to language, for example). Galaburda also found that the excess of neurons in the right hemisphere led to connecting the fibers of tracts like the corpus callosum to the wrong layers of the brain, thus interfering with their function. Appropriate educational remediation can correct this. One of Geschwind's last articles was "Terry Orton Was Right," validating Orton's concepts on dyslexia. Specific genetic markers have also been found, suggesting that it is not just a catch-all diagnosis. Geschwind also documented a significant association with autoimmune disorders, including MS, type I diabetes, allergies, asthma etc. For years half of my practice was in the neurocognitive assessment and remediation of dyslexics, and I certainly saw his findings validated.

Neurocognitive testing with dyslexics routinely shows some aphasic deficits, construction dyspraxia, scattered sensory and motor deficits, and some deficits in higher cognitive function. I would suggest that dyslexia is complex and variable, but does involve these scattered left brain lesions and inter-hemispheric connection problems.

In the dyslexics I have tested, emotional problems in response to the social and educational sequella are common. Depression, low self-esteem, feelings of failure and hopelessness – at levels quite appropriate for having consistent failure experiences at school, struggling with teachers who blame the students but do not really know how to educate them, teasing by peers, etc. A major social problem is that when there is damage to the brain, as there is with dyslexia, the person's ability fluctuates. Broca and Wernicke noted this in the 1800s when they researched aphasic syndromes: this morning they can do it, this afternoon they can't; today they can do it, tomorrow they can't; this week they can do it, next week they can't. Teachers, without a background in neurology and language, assume that if a student does it once then they have the ability and their job is to motivate them to be consistent. When that doesn't work they often enlist the parents. The students are left wondering if they are dumb, and will often say they were unmotivated. That reflects what others have said about them – but good neuropsychological testing shows that it is a neurological problem, not a motivation problem.

A relatively simple screen is to use the Gray Oral Reading test. Dyslexics will slaughter the phonetic pronunciation of the paragraphs, but do well on the content questions. People with developmental aphasia can read the paragraphs quite fluently, but do terribly on the content questions. It thus helps clarify two major causes of reading problems.

On the Rorschach I would expect to see the effects of these social-emotional experiences. Where the social-emotional experiences have been intense that would certainly have significant effect on personality, including patterns that may be similar to that in attachment disorders.

Those are my thoughts, FWIW

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