

WPE WebPsychEmpiricist

Two interpretations of Jim Wood's specimen Rorschach protocol

4/4/04

Michael Karson
University of Denver

Christine Kline
Amherst, Massachusetts

Abstract

In *What's Wrong with the Rorschach* (Wood et al., 2003), Wood referred to his own Rorschach protocol and asserted that the Comprehensive System (CS) (Exner, 2003) over-pathologized him. We scored and interpreted his answers according to the CS and according to a non-CS method based largely on Mayman's (1970) interpretation of form quality. We found that the CS interpretation of Wood's protocol was indeed essentially pathological, while the non-CS interpretation was essentially not pathological. Idiographic approaches to Rorschach data are discussed.

Note: The authors are indebted to Jim Wood for providing us with his Rorschach protocol.

Please address correspondence to: Michael Karson, Graduate School of Professional Psychology, 26 South Prospect St. University of Denver, 2450 S. Vine St. Denver, CO 80208. Email: mkarson@du.edu

Two interpretations of Jim Wood's specimen Rorschach protocol

In *What's Wrong with the Rorschach* (Wood et al., 2003), Wood referred to his own Rorschach protocol and asserted that the Comprehensive System (CS) (Exner, 2003) over-pathologized him. This is merely a single example of the book's main point, but it may be of special interest to Rorschachers because, like Freud's (1900) seminal use of his own dream as the "specimen dream" in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Wood's use of his own Rorschach puts his personal psychological functioning on the line. Furthermore, many practicing clinicians may feel lost in the myriad of published studies that support or refute the CS. While we hold science unequivocally above the case method as a way of learning the truth about reality, we also have found that it is often difficult to tell when science is being practiced: many social science publications look to us like opinions dressed up with numbers and citations.

Let us be clear about the current paper, then: it is not science (except insofar as science demands observation and honesty). Wood, while taking the Rorschach, was not at all naïve to the purposes of the test, nor is our interpretation of the protocol blind as to the subject. Our own motivations can be made explicit: one of us endorses the CS, though with a healthy skepticism about how much can be gleaned from a Rorschach; the other, after years of initial embrace, has come to believe that the CS has serious flaws, namely, that it is too hard to employ accurately, that it focuses on too many variables, and that its rules for scoring the most salient variables are seriously flawed. For this paper, we obtained Wood's Rorschach protocol, scored it according to Exner's latest version of his system (Exner, 2003), and interpreted it according to his published guidelines.

Our purpose was either to endorse or infirm Wood's claim that the CS interpretation of his protocol pathologized him. All scoring was discussed mutually, with the pro-CS author having final say. Between us, we have taught the CS in three doctoral clinical programs, attended numerous workshops on it, and have employed it (though not religiously) many hundreds, even thousands, of times. All we know about Jim Wood is what we read in *What's Wrong with the Rorschach*; for all we know, he is an axe murderer with bodies in the basement, but it would certainly defeat the point he is trying to make about the Rorschach if substantial mental health problems were to surface, so we were not blind to his self-proclaimed mental health.

Next, we interpreted the protocol according to our non-CS methods. These methods rely on the Rorschach for only three things, which may be summarized as 1) a test of reality testing, 2) an ambiguous complex stimulus that can occasion pathological thinking, and 3) a projective device. In Rorschach terms, we examine form quality, deviant verbalizations, and content. These Rorschach variables have received some research support, even according to its detractors, and survive a logical analysis of the Rorschach situation, as described below.

The CS interpretation

The sequence of scores is printed in Table 1. Using Exner's (2003) recommended interpretive approach (p. 228), the relevant "key variable" in Wood's protocol is the finding that his D (which was 0) is lower than his adjusted D (which was +2). D is computed by comparing a person's human movement plus chromatic color answers on the one hand with his or her non-human movement plus shading and achromatic color answers on the other hand. Under these circumstances, Exner recommends examining the individual's "controls" cluster first, then the situational stress cluster. [In referring to CS inferences, we will use a shorthand within each interpretive cluster to refer to what Exner calls "steps" and "potential findings" so that others may follow our work. Step 1, potential finding 2, will be denoted as (1:2).]

Controls and stress tolerance: Wood's scores suggest that he has greater than average volitional control of his behavior (1:3), a finding that represents a valid and reliable capacity for control and stress tolerance (2:4) (3:1). Wood would seem to have unusual psychological complexity (4:2), but with sufficient resources to accommodate his own complexity and the (5:1) current distress. The distress is related to the internalization of feelings that are better expressed (5:4) and to harsh self-monitoring (5:5). The picture is of a man with extensive psychological resources successfully coping with extensive stress, the latter related to internalization and harsh self-monitoring.

Situationally related stress: Since Wood's adjusted D is higher than his D, the CS infers the presence of considerable (2:2) situational stress, impacting on both thinking and emotion (3:1); however, since the adjusted D is still zero (and not a minus number), there is no inference of overload or unusual impulsivity (p.263). This is a robust finding (1:2) and is further supported by Exner's (p.264) recommendation to check the psychosocial history before inferring overload or impulsivity. Wood's 3 vista responses raise the question of whether he had recently done something to feel guilty about; Exner (p. 267) recommends examining the history on this issue.

[We assume that, except for publishing so much material attacking the Rorschach, this is not the case.] The impact of the situational stress is modest (5:1), but has produced a substantial increase in psychological complexity (6:3). In sum, Wood's capacity for control and stress tolerance is usually extremely robust, but under the stress he experienced at the time of the testing, his resilience in this area was only average.

Affect: The order in which clusters are considered now depends on the next significant variable in the protocol. For Wood's Rorschach, this would be the finding that his score on the depression index (DEPI) was elevated at 5. This score is considered high enough to warrant careful consideration, but with no problems in coping (CDI = 1), the potential for affective disruption may not produce actual depressive states (1:2). Wood would be labeled "ambitent" (2:8), meaning that he is inconsistent in the role emotions play in his problem-solving and decision-making. He may become confused by emotions because of their varying role in his psychology (p. 289). Direct distress is expected (3:3), possibly with somatization or pronounced feelings of guilt. Tension and anxiety are also expected. However, these expectations are reduced by the presence of some positive findings; e.g., C' is high but not as high as C (5:1) and the affective ratio is in the average range (6:1). Wood relies on intellectualization as a defense (7:2), a "pseudo-intellectual" process (p.296) that reduces the impact of emotions but also keeps the person from dealing with emotions realistically and directly. He probably modulates his emotional discharges about as much as other people most of the time, but on occasion lapses occur (9:4). Wood's lapses into unmodulation are probably not primitive nor aggressive, but may center on his dependency needs (10:1). He has considerable, generalized, trait-like anger (11:5), of the smoldering rather than explosive variety, that is likely to compromise his ability to sustain meaningful relationships with others. [Wood denies this about himself, but Exner may have a different view.] Wood is more complex than expected, as the result of situational stress at the time of the testing (13:1), but this is not a liability given his wealth of psychological resources (12:3). His shading blend (16:1) signifies very painful emotions causing "a disruptive impact on most all of the psychological functioning of the person." One expects poor concentration and attention and bad judgment because of the "torment that is present." In sum, Wood seems to be a tormented man with depressive dynamics of harsh self-appraisal and internalized anger, possibly aggravated by life circumstances at the time of the testing. He copes by intellectualizing the torment he is in and by seeking to gratify his dependency needs in an

unmodulated manner, strategies that interfere with his interpersonal relationships. [He may be taking his inner anguish out on John Exner.]

Self-perception: Wood is involved with himself more than most people are, but only barely so, and without the intense narcissism that can lead to true neglect of others (3:1). However, his focus on himself is largely negative in tone and raises serious concerns about his self-esteem (4:3) (6:2). This self-image is based on experience rather than mere imagination (7a:1c).

Interpersonal perception and behavior: Because of his three food responses, Wood can be expected to manifest many more dependency behaviors than most people. He tends to rely on others for direction and support, and to be naïve interpersonally (4:1). Exner (p. 494) notes of a similar feature in a similarly successful individual that the low self-regard and intense dependency needs may be of recent origin (to account for the history of success), reflecting a need for reassurance about his cohesion; there may be considerable psychological disorganization. Other things being equal, Wood acknowledges and expresses needs for closeness as most people do, and he may be open to routine tactile exchanges as one way of sustaining relationships (5:1). Wood also seems to have a healthy interest in other people, based on an understanding of them that is grounded in reality (6:3). A different finding implies that he is somewhat likely to engage in maladaptive or ineffective forms of interpersonal relating (7:2). These apparently contradictory findings (neediness to the point of disorganization contrasted with a healthy interest in others and being comfortable with tactile exchanges) are repeated in his having so many cooperative and also aggressive images in his protocol. This unusual finding indicates serious conflict or confusion concerning the appropriate mode of interpersonal behavior. He does not understand others well and is inconsistent in his interpersonal routines (8:6).

Information processing: Wood put more effort than most people do into processing the inkblots (1:1), but was irregular in this effort (3:2). His focus on white spaces and unusual details is common among people in “significant emotional disarray” (2:2c.3). Wood is probably cautious about setting achievement objectives, as his aspirational ratio is low. [It is hard to reconcile cautious goal-setting with Wood's having written, “It's *unlikely* that I'll ever win the Nobel Prize” (2003, p. 5, emphasis added), rather than, say, I'll never win the Nobel Prize.] His scanning of his environment is overincorporative, in that he puts more effort into it than most

people do (6:3). This can help account for all the information available, but can produce unnecessary vacillation in decision-making (p. 348). The quality of his information processing is usually very good, however he sometimes slips into flawed and less mature processing, as is common in individuals in psychological disarray (7:4). In sum, the processing data reinforce other data in identifying him as a man with many strengths who is in significant psychological turmoil.

Cognitive mediation: His reality contact is generally appropriate in obvious situations, but becomes less appropriate in other circumstances (1:4). There is a moderate elevation in his mediational dysfunction, mitigated by the large percentage of his bad responses that involved small details or spaces (3:2), and the fact that none of his distortions were severe. His reality testing is likely to be reliable in clear-cut situations (4:1). His mediational approach may be lackadaisical or even impaired (5:1). He makes mediation decisions that disregard social demands and expectations more often than most people, producing unconventionality and individualism (6:3).

Ideation: His approach to decision-making vacillates unpredictably on the issue of the weight assigned to feelings, reducing his efficiency (1:5). His thinking is often marked by a pessimistic set to a moderate degree (4:3). Situational stress was causing, at the time of the testing, an increase in peripheral activity (5:4). Intellectualization is again noted, a defensive style that can founder on emotional experiences (7:2). Wood has a “serious thinking problem,” which produces faulty conceptualization [as when he believes the CS is invalid?] and faulty judgment [as when he publishes that opinion?] (8:4). It is “very likely that his thinking is peculiar or disturbed” (10:4).

CS Summary

It must be considered as a possibility that on July 1, 2001, Jim Wood took a Rorschach while in the midst of a personal crisis that taxed his usually efficient psychological resources and that further, though not overwhelming his behavioral control, undermined his executive functioning by crashing his intellectualization defenses and produced pathological thinking errors secondary to his smoldering hostility and excessive guilt feelings. That would seem to be a fair summary of the CS interpretation. Wood denies this, claiming to be the affable, clear-headed man he appears to be. But his denial may be self-serving; in fact, it is possible that he is

so energized about denouncing the CS precisely because it reveals his inner torment and challenges his denial.

The other possibility is that Wood is correct when he claims the CS over-pathologized him. He also claims to have a family and a job at a university in Texas. Heck, he may have obtained the protocol of a suicidal colleague and presented it as his own. However, we have no reason to suppose that this is anything other than what he says it is: a mistake. What we can say with some assurance is that his published representation of the CS interpretation of this protocol as pathological was not distorted or self-serving.

A Non-CS Interpretation

We use the Rorschach as part of a set of techniques for sampling the behavior of assessment subjects. In anticipating how subjects will behave in all kinds of complicated situations, direct analogies are often unavailable. In other words, to see how well someone will type under pressure, we can administer a typing test during the job interview and get a pretty good behavior sample with this one tool. Even for typists, however, it may not be possible to get a good read on how they will perform when they are *not* under pressure, since that unpressured environment is hard to replicate in a job interview, and a direct analogy is not available.

To assess how competent someone will be as a parent, by contrast, is vastly more complicated. There are many sources of data, but none of them is perfect. We would like to read reports about the person's conduct with respect to children, but such reports are often inaccurate, curiously motivated, or are themselves affected by confirmation bias (see below). We may want to observe the parent with the children in question, but such observations are often affected in unknown ways by the fact that we are watching. We may want to interview the parent, but such interviews are predictable and are often more affected by the parent's social skills with the interviewer than by his or her parenting skills. We may administer a personality inventory, but results may be affected by the type of task (sitting and reading, constricted responding, verbal engagement), and such results also can *imply* problematic behavior, but no inventory scale score *constitutes* problematic conduct.

So each sample of behavior has its advantages and disadvantages, and we think it is often advisable to include among the tasks set to assessment subjects one or two that invite response variability, that are not easy in the sense of anticipating what is expected, and that involve stimuli that are novel to the subject but well-known to us. In our view, the Rorschach fits this bill. In

many ways, the controversies around it could be finessed by using ten new inkblots, but the problem with doing that is that it takes so long to come to agreement about what the inkblots look like (i.e., what they “demand” versus what the subject has produced because of a unique learning history).

Reality testing: Our approach to reality testing on the Rorschach is essentially that of Mayman (1970), which is in turn based on Rapaport's approach to ego functioning and the Rorschach (Rapaport, Gill, and Schafer, 1946). Each answer is coded for the degree to which it does justice to the stimulus. However, it is not the codes that matter so much as the justice that is done to the stimulus. The codes are merely a shorthand for keeping track of a large number of responses. What really matters is the extent to which the perceptions of the subject accurately account for the stimulus. The theory holds that while healthy psychological functioning is generally subject to the demands of reality, psychopathological functioning is much less so. Pathological functioning disrupts the perceptual process by allowing personal concerns to affect perceptions well beyond the point of merely coloring them and sometimes to the extent of distorting them. The consequences of such distortions are not insignificant; the greater the perceptual distortion the greater the risk of impaired judgment and functioning.

Some people with psychopathology are able to put aside their pathology, at least temporarily, and perceive reality accurately; others without much pathology will provide some answers that are not entirely accurate, since after all the Rorschach is not a life-or-death situation and the consequences of letting the imagination run loose during a Rorschach are not dire. Still, on balance, we expect distortions of the inkblots to be associated with pathological functioning. The more that is at stake for the subject in responding to the Rorschach (i.e., the more it is a “fake-good” type of situation), the fewer distortions we expect to see.

The main difference between our coding of form quality and the CS's can be found in the CS requirements that a non-minus score must have been seen by at least two percent of their subject pool or must be seeable “quickly and easily” by the psychologist. That subject pool included 7500 people of whom 2500 were non-psychotic outpatients and 2500 were non-psychotic inpatients. Why the opinion of inpatients would be solicited in determining what constitutes accurate reality testing is beyond us. As for whether the psychologist can see the percept “quickly and easily,” we can not find, nor can we think of, any logical reason why a perception, to be considered appropriate to the stimulus that occasioned it, must be seen “quickly

and easily.” Many percepts require explanation and effort. Examples abound, but a good one may be the Magic Eye drawings so popular not too long ago, in which exposure to the stimulus for upwards of minutes was often necessary before the three-dimensional image emerged. Such percepts were not only accurate, they were the whole point of the drawing. To label them as inaccurate because they require effort, we believe, entirely misconstrues what is meant by the accurate perception of reality.

More or less following Mayman (1970), we code each response for form quality using the following symbols. (Exner originally considered this system for the CS, but decided that reliabilities were too low, after a 90-minute training session, to justify it.)

- F + : An answer that does look like the blot area in question.
- Fo : An otherwise F+ answer that is very obvious.
- Fw+ : Weak plus; an adequate answer.
- Fv : Vague, same as DQv in the CS.
- F(v) : Vague, but with color or shading dominant.
- Fw- : Weak minus; an inadequate answer but not egregious.
- Fs : Spoiled; an F- response that at first sounded like an Fo or F+. (Popular humans, but with the legs where the arms are supposed to be, for example.)
- F- : An instance of very poor reality testing.

These codes can be reduced for most purposes to three categories. Good form quality (F+, Fo, Fw+) is assigned to answers that the psychologist thinks are adequate, and poor form quality (Fw-, Fs, F-) is assigned to answers that the psychologist thinks are inadequate. Vague form quality (Fv, F(v)) is assigned to answers where the subject finessed the task by giving answers that could look like anything (clouds and fireworks, for example).

Psychologists regularly make judgments about the adequacy of other people's responses without normative data. A boy picks invisible Martian worms off his clothing and flicks them into the trashcan; we rely on our personal perceptual system to describe his perception as inaccurate. A woman screams at the clinic receptionist and is labeled seriously disturbed by one observer and merely angry by another. They can resolve their discrepant judgments by pointing to details of the response (were there threats, did she enter the receptionist's personal space, was she provoked, and so on). Rorschachers need norms, but there is nothing wrong and certainly

nothing unusual about making judgments about other people's functioning without them. Even if Rorschach norms were available, the need for clinical judgment is indispensable. For example, a large percentage of people think the black figures on Card III look like people in profile, and "human figure" is a Popular response. One subject may see these figures as people, but instead of seeing an arm where most people see an arm, she sees a second leg. Our judgment, not the table of norms, tells us that this is not what most people meant when they said it looks like a human figure, so an accurate coding of this inaccurate response would have to override the table of norms.

Wood's form quality scores are presented in Table 2. The purpose of displaying them in this manner is to draw attention to the location of bad answers and how they might be usefully interpreted. For example, if someone offers only bad answers to a card, and feels they have done justice to it, it is not a good sign. A weak-minus answer following one or more good answers would be a good sign that the former was an afterthought, or that the reality of the card was initially managed appropriately before the subject let his or her imagination run more freely. A poor answer followed by acceptable answers would suggest a positive sign in that the subject felt more was needed to do justice to the card.

Rather than revealing a defensive or constricted approach to the Rorschach, Wood's protocol contains a large number of responses that, along with the breadth of content, indicates to us a genuine and open engagement with the task. (In this context, "content" may refer not only to categories of percepts but also to the subject's responsiveness to various aspects of the inkblots, including color, shading, and features that suggest movement.) We thought only one answer was a distortion of the stimulus, and it was not the only answer to its card. We would conclude from this prodigious output that his reality testing is excellent with an appropriate balance manifested between his interest in the reality of the inkblots and a recognition that they are only inkblots (i.e., there are plenty of responses that are merely adequate). Had his reality testing been excellent but the range of answers more constricted, we would not know if his functioning was adequate only because of the constriction.

While evidence of reality contact will come from a variety of sources, we think it makes sense to include at least one source of information on this vital topic that allows us to inspect the reality-being-tested at our leisure. We need not rely on any other witness to make up our minds about the extent to which he has done justice to the stimuli presented to him, but we could call in

a colleague if we wanted to, because the stimuli do not change. As noted above, psychologists are often in the business of judging the appropriateness-to-the-situation of other people's behaviors; with the Rorschach, this can be done at the psychologist's pace, rather than on the fly.

Deviant verbalizations: The Rorschach is a relatively confusing task, in the sense that it is not obvious how to respond to it. Further, it is confusing because the subject is asked to treat inkblots as drawings. This can lead to lapses in which the subject acts as if they were in fact drawings by assuming that proximities and arrangements on the card have some intrinsic meaning. The confusion can lead subjects to produce statements that reveal disordered thinking or some difficulties managing self-other boundaries. In other words, responding to the inkblots requires the subject to manage a gradient between concreteness (they are only inkblots) and abstraction (they really do look like some things), a gradient that is hard to manage, we believe, for certain types of disturbed individuals. Such difficulties are often expressed in deviant verbalizations that reflect illogicality or problems with too much or too little concreteness.

The main difference between our coding of deviant verbalizations and that of the CS is that in the CS, the verbalization is coded according to certain formal rules, and then serious pathology is inferred. In our method, serious pathology is recognized if it has been expressed, and then it can be coded as a reminder that it was witnessed. Indeed, one of our main complaints about the way many assessment instruments are used is that too often they are used to replace the psychologist's expertise in the matter being assessed. Psychologists should be trained to recognize pathognomonic verbalizations in any situation, not trained to code Rorschach responses.

For example, an assessment subject says, "Where are you hiding the cameras?" The psychologist must decide whether to ignore this statement (because it does not strike her as noteworthy or because she is only interested in interpreting test scores). If she does not ignore it, she must then decide if it is a joke, if it was said out of ignorance, or if it had some pathological function. The psychologist inquires: "I'm curious where you got the idea I have cameras." The subject may respond that his lawyer told him that the psychologist always videotapes her sessions; or he may respond that Tom Brokaw is in love with him and has an NBC news crew following him. The same process unfolds when a deviant verbalization is uttered in response to a Rorschach card; that is, the psychologist inquires to achieve a better understanding as to whether pathological thinking produced the verbalization. As noted, we think inkblots are

peculiarly good at evoking such responses, but they still must be distinguished from joking, play, and ignorance.

As an aside, but one that is relevant to Wood's protocol, the CS makes the same mistake coding morbid responses (MOR). Formal characteristics of the response are used to code MOR, and then depression, problems with self-esteem, and pessimism are inferred from the scores. Instead, it should be the other way around: a response that indicates depression should be coded as MOR, and then the code merely helps us keep track of it. In the CS, the same code is used for Wood's "rug being torn" as for another recent subject's "people die and rot away because the cartilage gets eaten by maggots." Exner does recommend distinguishing the two later, but why even code the former as MOR when it is not a depressive image?

Does this really make a difference? Yes, at least in Wood's case. The CS interpretation emphasized his supposed thinking problems because of an elevated WSum6 that was based on three special scores that included two "Level 2" (i.e., serious) scores. Those two "serious" deviant verbalizations included a fox mask with a wicked smile and crocodiles laughing. If there is doubt about coding these as "Level 2" verbalizations, Exner gives the example, almost directly on point, of a dog laughing out loud as a Level-2 incongruous combination (2001, p.68). Wood's other special score was a fabulized combination: two crabs doing a tango. Our point is that none of these three scores strikes either of us as even remotely pathognomonic, thought-disordered, boundary-less, or unhealthy. Indeed, all three seem rather playful. (We do not believe that it is even immature, much less disordered, to be playful.) By coding the formal qualities of the responses (animals engaged in movement not appropriate to their species) rather than reviewing them for pathological thinking per se, the CS ends up adding three non-pathological responses and getting a pathological score. In our view, three zeroes is just zero.

Indeed, the main differences between our approach and the CS may be summed up by considering Wood's answer, "Two blue crabs doing a tango." In the CS, this is a distortion of reality, because it is not seen quickly and easily by psychologists, and an example of disordered thinking, because real blue crabs do not tango (everybody knows that real crabs do the samba). In Mayman's short, unpublished form level scoring manual, he mentions as a response to the same blot area: "Two insect ballet dancers, one carrying the other." Mayman gives this response a + score, a healthy response indicating a successful integration of the individual's psychology with reality, even though it cannot be seen quickly and easily.

Content: In saying that we use content analysis to understand the Rorschach as a projective device, we are not saying anything particularly controversial (though, of course, it may be construed as such). Rather, as with our focus on verbalizations, we generally place no more emphasis on unusual content obtained in a Rorschach than that obtained in response to any other stimulus. Consider this: one of Wood et al.'s (2003, p.47) major criticisms of Rorschach research is the influence of what is called confirmation bias, which means that people, including Rorschach researchers in their estimation, see what they expect to see. As a matter of fact, they describe Hermann Rorschach's own confirmation bias by noting that he "sometimes saw patterns in the data that weren't there, much as one of his patients might see a ballerina or a bear in the ambiguous contours of an inkblot." Presumably, they mean that some patients expected to see bears and some expected to see ballerinas.

Such expectations may tell us something about the learning history of the individuals involved. B.F. Skinner (1953, p. 215) used the same hypothesis in developing his "verbal summator," a projective device that presented the subject with slurred speech and asked him or her to decode what was being said. Skinner noted that the clinical use of the material is based upon the assumption that the variables that produced the responses to the verbal summator "are probably important in interpreting other behavior of the individual." We do agree wholeheartedly with Hermann Rorschach, as quoted by Wood et al., that content analysis of Rorschach responses produces interesting results much less frequently than analysis of early memories or dreams, probably because the latter are narrative, and narrative material is generally more interesting and interpretable than static material. Also, early memories and certainly dreams are less constricted by the demand characteristics of the situations that created them, which means the subject has a freer rein with early memories and dreams than with Rorschach answers. Freer rein means the elements within them are likely to reflect on the subject, whereas Rorschach answers are constrained by what the blots look like. When Jim Wood says he sees a "dervish" in the inkblots, it is hard to know whether this was a durable latent response with enough strength to be stimulated by the figures on the card, which would lead us to reflect on its meaning to him (possibly by asking him) and to look for similar images elsewhere in the assessment; whether he was recently exposed to dervishes in some other context; or whether the term merely represents an educated integration of the form, color, and perceived motion of the inkblot.

Generally, we like to base all interpretation either on data that is striking or on large clusters of non-striking data. Striking data, in the context of content analysis, is data that is unexpected, affectively charged, or dynamically revealing. It is data that snags the well-prepared psychologist. We also like to inspect closely contents associated with poor form quality, under the working assumption that the content of the response was partly or even largely responsible for the subject's decision to report it despite the lack of support from the environment.

Here is an example of what we do not do. Wood reported seeing a Georgia O'Keefe cow skull. The image is one of using art (intellectualization) and a context of prettiness to cover up an image of desolation and morbidity. The image stands for an underlying depression, managed by intellect and Pollyanna-type denial. The reason this is what we do not do is that even though the analysis of the image is viable, the image itself is not striking. One needs to multiply, as it were, the insight derived from an image by the visceral (or, if available, statistical) sense of its importance. Normative data should help shape what seems striking; an answer that seems striking but is actually normal tells us more about the psychologist than about the answer (Dana, Bolton, and West, 1983). The same dynamic might have been expressed in an image of, say, a "decaying aardvark corpse painted gray to hide the smell." To us, that image would demand explication; the Georgia O'Keefe image does not.

Part of what makes an image striking is its context. Wood's protocol contains so many varied and rich percepts that most of the images seem to be more a function of his education and the breadth of his vocabulary than a function of his personality dynamics. The exception is his one answer of poor form quality, largely because, as noted above, we pay extra attention to percepts of poor form quality, under the working hypothesis that the content displaced reality. Wood said to Card IX, "Two dwarfs that are spraying some water or other liquid at each other." Later, on inquiry, this statement was presumably read back to him, and he said, "Orange parts. They're plump on the bottom and have pointed hats and here's their noses [Dd26]. Somehow the white part here [S just below Dd26] made me think they're laughing with big crazy smiles. In here, coming up from their fingers, makes me think because it's lighter that it's water or something and they're spraying it having a good time."

Our interpretation of this answer must be understood in the context of an overall assessment of this Rorschach as psychologically healthy (because of the good reality testing maintained across a broad and rich record with no instances of pathognomonic verbalizations

and no serious distortions). Everyone has complexes. In our view, this was originally an aggressive response (although Wood received two other AG scores in the CS system, one was for a “threatening” make-believe creature, and the other was for a rug being torn, neither of which is all that aggressive). Even during the initial perception, he minimized the aggression he was seeing by attributing it to dwarfs and by seeing the aggressive missiles as mere water. On inquiry, it may have still sounded too aggressive to him, so he added that the dwarfs were “plump,” gave them smiles and laughter, and added that they were having “a good time.” Indeed, it was the addition of the smile that in our estimation gave this response poor form quality. Thus, we would consider the possibility that he can get into a complex about acting aggressively, where his desire to be polite and playful can be so strong that it can transiently interfere with his functioning efficiency when he feels an urge to anger.

How does this formulation do on the visceral scale? We would say fair to middling; it is not an idea to be dismissed out of hand, but neither is it so pressing as to feel conclusive. In a real assessment, we might explore his ways of expressing aggression, whether he finds them truly satisfying, and whether it really serves him to keep a smiling face on his anger (if he does). Ironically, one of us first contacted Wood to compliment him on his consistently trying to bring a reasoned tone to the Rorschach debate. If the described complex does appear in Wood's functioning, he undoubtedly receives much social reinforcement for putting a smiling face on his aggression, but there may be hidden costs that he could avoid by approaching his aggression differently.

Summary

We checked Wood's assertion that the CS pathologized his Rorschach protocol and we agree with him. We have no reason to doubt his claim that this pathologizing is an overstatement. Our own approach to the Rorschach would label this protocol as healthy, but it was not a blind interpretation.

References

Dana, R., Bolton, B., & West, V. (1983). Validation of eisegesis concepts in assessment reports using the 16PF: A training method with examples. *Proceedings of the Third International Conference on the 16PF*, 20-29. Champaign, IL: Institute for Personality and Ability Testing, Inc.

Exner, J. (2001). *A Rorschach workbook for the Comprehensive System*, 5th ed. Asheville, NC: Rorschach Workshops.

Exner, J. (2003). *The Rorschach: A comprehensive system*, 4th ed. NY: Wiley.

Freud, S. (1900). *The interpretation of dreams*. In J. Strachey (Ed., 1953), *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud*. Vol. IV, pp. 1-338 and Vol. V, pp. 339-622. London: Hogarth.

Mayman, M. (1970). Reality contact, defense effectiveness, and psychopathology in Rorschach form-level scores. In Klopfer, B., Meyer, M., and Brawer, F. (Eds.), *Developments in the Rorschach Technique. III: Aspects of personality structure*. NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Rapaport, D., Gill, M., and Schafer, R. (1946). *Diagnostic psychological testing*. Chicago: Yearbook.

Skinner, B.F. (1953). *Science and human behavior*. New York: The Free Press.

Wood, J., Nezworski, M.T., Lilienfeld, S., and Garb, H. (2003). *What's wrong with the Rorschach? Science confronts the controversial inkblot test*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Table 1. Wood's Sequence of Scores according to the Comprehensive System

I.	1. WSo	M ^p o		(Ad), Cg		3.5	INC2, PHR
	2. D+	M ^a .FDo	(2)	H, Cg, Ay		4.0	COP, GHR
	3. Ddo	F-	(2)	Musical note			
	4. DdSo	FY-		A		3.5	
II.	5. Do	FCo		A			
	6. DS+	m ^a .CFo		Sc, Fi		4.5	
	7. Ddo	M ^p u	(2)	(Hd), Art			GHR
	8. W+	M ^a .FCo	(2)	H, Cg, Ay		4.5	COP, GHR
III.	9. D+	M ^a .FC'o	(2)	H, Hh	P	3.0	COP, GHR
	10. Do	Fo		A			
	11. Do	FCo		Cg			
IV.	12. Do	M ^p .FD.FC'o		(H)	P		GHR
	13. Dd+	M ^p .FY.FV-	(2)	Hd, Cg, Ay		4.0	PHR
V.	14. Wo	FC'o		A	P	1.0	
	15. Do	M ^a o	(2)	Ad			PHR, INC2
VI.	16. Do	FTo		Ad	P		
	17. Do	F-		H, Ay, Art			PHR
	18. Ddo	FV-		H			PHR
	19. DSv/+	m ^p .VFo		Ge		2.5	
VII.	20. D+	Fo	(2)	(Hd), Cg	P	1.0	GHR
	21. DdSo	m ^a .FYu		Ex, Cl		4.0	
	22. Do	M ^a u	(2)	(H)			MOR, PHR
VIII.	23. W+	FM ^a .FCo	(2)	A, Ls	P	4.5	
	24. Dv	C		Fd			
	25. DSv/+	m ^a .CFo		Hh		4.0	MOR, AG
	26. Do	FC'-		Art, Ad			MOR
IX.	27. DS+	M ^a .YFo	(2)	(H), Cg, Na	P	5.0	AG, GHR
	28. Dd+	FD.FM ^p u		(Ad), Ls		2.5	AG, PHR
	29. Ddo	Fo	(2)	Claw scratches			
	30. Dv	FD.CFu		Fd			
X.	31. Do	FC'o		Sc, Ay			
	32. DS+	M ^a .FC-	(2)	A		6.0	FAB, COP, PHR
	33. Do	FCu	(2)	A			
	34. Do	m ^p .CFu	(2)	Fd			
	35. D+	FM ^a .FCo	(2)	A, obj		4.0	

