

Intuition and Expertise

In Rorschach Interpretation

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Intuition is the apparent ability to acquire knowledge without inference or the use of reason. "The word 'intuition' comes from the Latin word 'intueri', which is often roughly translated as meaning 'to look inside' or 'to contemplate'." Intuition provides us with beliefs that we cannot necessarily justify. Intuitions occur spontaneously, without reflection or pause. Naturalistic decision making is the basis of the current practices in handwriting analysis (HWA). The task of any analysis and interpretation is to develop expertise by the use of those activities involving intuitive judgments by 'looking inside' the graphic features of a person's handwriting.

The chess grand master displays the unusual ability to appreciate the dynamics of complex positions and rapidly judge an approach to play as promising or fruitless. A repertoire of thousands and hundreds of thousands of complex patterns based upon pattern recognition are brought into play. They identify good moves when they recognize and execute an appropriate pattern of play without having to calculate all of the possible probabilities that are available. Decades of dedicated play are necessary to form the playing patterns contemplated and used. Intuition is thus defined as the recognition of patterns stored in memory.

Identifying the perceptual and experiential cues that personality analysts use to make their judgments is difficult for the expert analyst to articulate and teach others. Many of these cues and patterns upon which the judgments based require the identification of requisite personality test characteristics needed to develop rationales for their use. The process of identification are founded in real world experiences of the HW analysts with the persons whose HW they examine. The relationship between a person and the environment in which they live and work, i.e. the ecological, real world interactions, is the work involved in the analysis of a person's handwriting characteristics and the personality patterns which produce the judgments. These relations are complex and difficult to explain, define, or measure.

Research in the Rorschach is made more difficult by the absence of optimal criteria used to evaluate and judge or validate the analyst's findings. The criteria for judging expertise are based on a history of successful outcomes rather than on quantitative performances. This requires peer review procedures where known experts evaluate the studies presented by the analysts doing the research. The performance judgments

of different professionals define a consensus.

Expertise is considered to be a consensus reflecting successful performances that are looked upon as 'objective', repeatable, believable, and true. Shanteau (1992) said, "Experts are operationally defined as those who have been recognized within their profession as having the necessary skills and abilities to perform at the highest level" (p. 255). The performance of an expert employs an automatic, effortless process that brings promising solutions to mind and a deliberate activity in which the execution of the possible solutions are mentally simulated in a process of progressive deepening, extending, and anchoring of the meaning of a HW graphic perception associated with a particular emotion or motivational state, emotion, or behavior.

Intuitive judgments are automatic, effortless, coming to mind without the immediate critical scrutiny to justify a judgment originating from memory. They are associated with experience and manifest skills which explore the cues that guide such judgments and conditions for the acquisition of the skills. Skilled intuitions will develop where teachers of know expertise are available to the neonate with sufficient regularity needed to convey the knowledge of the relevant cues and their association to known judgments. There follows on the necessity for the person learning the Rorschach to have the opportunity to extensively practice these skills (Ericsson, et al, (2006).

Skilled judges are not always aware of the cues that guide them. True experts know when they do not know. The determination of whether or not a judgment is correct depends upon knowing the situation surrounding the Rorschach samples collection. Knowledge of the individuals' life circumstances and the ways the Rorschach graphically projects the facts of the person's life determines the correctness of the Rorschach judgments. The relations between the graphical cues and the behaviors of the person's are the sine qua non of HWA.

Good interpretive skills cannot be developed with poor and inaccurate knowledge of the situation out of which the Rorschach's responses arose. Accidentally correct judgments lead to over-confidence and the illusion of skills not present. The limits of true expertise is problematic, hard to determine, and often impossible to delimit. Good teachers are hard to find, no kidding.

The comments above are based upon a paper by David Kahneman and Gary Klein (2009). Conditions of Intuitive Expertise: A Failure to Disagree. American Psychologist, Vol. 64, No. 6, 5615-526.

Shanteau, J. (1992). Competence in experts: The role of task characteristics.

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