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Rorschach test: Italian calibration update about statistical frequencies of responses and location sheets

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Abstract: The remarkable importance of a calibration of a test lies in the formalization of useful statistical norms. In particular, the determination of these norms is of key importance for the Rorschach Test because of it allows objectifying the estimates of the interpretations' formal qualities, and help to characterize responses consistent with the common perception.
The aim of this work is to communicate the new results provided by a study conducted on Rorschach protocols related to a sample of "non-clinical" subjects.
The expert team in Psychodiagnostic of CIFRIC (Italian Center for training, research and clinic in medicine and psychology) has carried out the following work identifying the rate at which the details of each card are interpreted by normative sample. The data obtained are systematized in new Location sheets, which refers to the next edition of the "Updated Manual of Locations and Coding of Responses to Rorschach Test".
Considering the Rorschach Test one of the more effective means for the acquaintance of the personality, it appears therefore fundamental to provide the professional, who uses it, with the possibility of accessing updated statistical data that reflect the population of reference, in order to deduce from them reliable and objectively valid indications.

Keywords: Rorschach Test, Italian Calibration, Vulgar and Semivulgar Responses, Location Sheets, Coding

Introduction

This research was based on the application of Rorschach test having as main reference the author's technique, as well as the various contributions that followed.
The Rorschach inkblot test is a psychodiagnostic tool that allows to evaluate a wide range of personality features, including thought organization, perceptual accuracy, conventionality, self-image and relationships with others, psychological resources, patterns and dynamics.
The technique is based on the decoding of the responses. In other words, the aim is to translate what the subject has expressed verbally in a standard code in order to obtain an objective representation - of the personal characteristics shown in the articulation process of the responses - which is statistically comparable to the population used as reference.
In this way, the objective evaluation of the formal features of the interpretations, and, in the meantime, the identification of what can be considered to conform with the common perception are ensured. Hence, it is necessary to have constantly updated reference sample data, so that, in any moment, they can be considered up-to-date and representative of the characteristics of the reference population.
What discussed so far motivated this research, whose aim is to obtain a statistical update of locations and frequencies of responses on a representative sample of the Italian population, whose results are reported in this paper.
Therefore, these results strengthen the application of the test in various fields such as forensic psychology, clinical, scientific research, human resources, and, in general, in all those fields where it is essential a standard reference that allows the classification of personality traits in an objective way.

Theoretical and methodological assumption

All academics who have developed a different methodological approach (Bohm, Loosli-Usteri, Rizzo, Klopfer, Exner, Chabert and many others),

including those methods based on theoretical models with many differences among each other, stress the importance of strictly adhere to the method without betraying the original logic of the studies of Hermann Rorschach (1981). The key differences among the various theories are the complexity of the reading levels of the Rorschach report and the resulting higher or lower richness and depth of personality profile that can be drawn from it. The use of a method rather than another one does not imply a greater or lower reliability of Test, but the possibility of a more or less wide investigative range and a more refined differential diagnosis.

The method used by academics of C.I.F.RI.C. (*Italian Center for training, research and clinic in medicine and psychology*) integrates the psychometric perspective with the symbolic content; hence, our diagnostic approach is based on the study of codings, indexes and percentages (nomothetic approach), and it is completed by reading the qualitative aspects of specific responses provided by subject (ideographic approach).

The research methodology has strongly taken in account the need to comply with a standard related to the setting and to the various stages of conduction and coding of the test. Relative to the “setting” we have ensured a comfortable and quiet environment, free from distractions, with a good and constant illumination. Regarding the “position”, the test has always been conducted using a right angles approach, in agreement with other authors including Aronow (1984).

The instructions also met the following standard question: "*Now I show you different figures ... You must say everything You see ... There are no right answers and wrong answers ... take your time ... when you have done, You can return it*". Another point in our methodology was that the subject was not aware of the number of cards we would have shown to him; namely, the cards were not visible to the subject if not upon delivery of each single sheet. During this phase we faithfully transcribed every word the subject would have said on *ad hoc* forms.

After collecting responses, further "control" tests have been carried on, as well, along with an investigation to better understand the responses provided by the subject, indispensable for a proper encoding.

In particular, during the investigation phase, we have asked to the subject a series of questions aimed to clarify both the location and the determinants of engrams and whatever else was necessary to a correct understanding and accurate coding of responses.

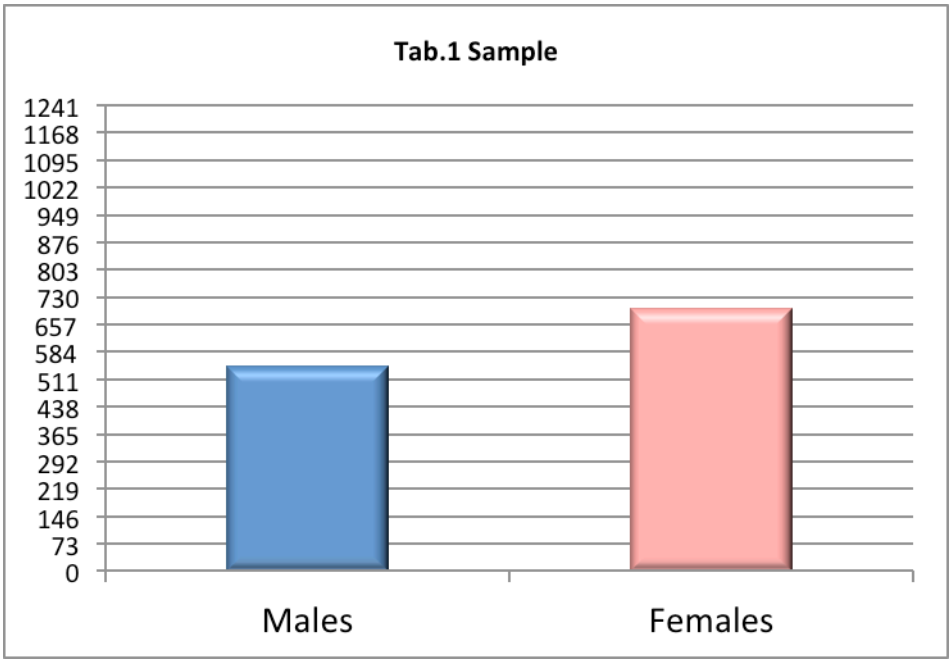
After collecting all these essential information, the coding phase has been conducted in the absence of the subject, i.e. this phase comprised the translation of each individual response in codes, grouped and distinguished

for six different categories: Locations, Determinants, Contents, Frequencies, Unusual Manifestations and Adaptation Formal.
All the responses to the Rorschach test recovered from our sample (about 25000) were then classified and reported in the next edition of the *"Updated Manual of Locations and Coding of Responses to Rorschach Test"*.

Method

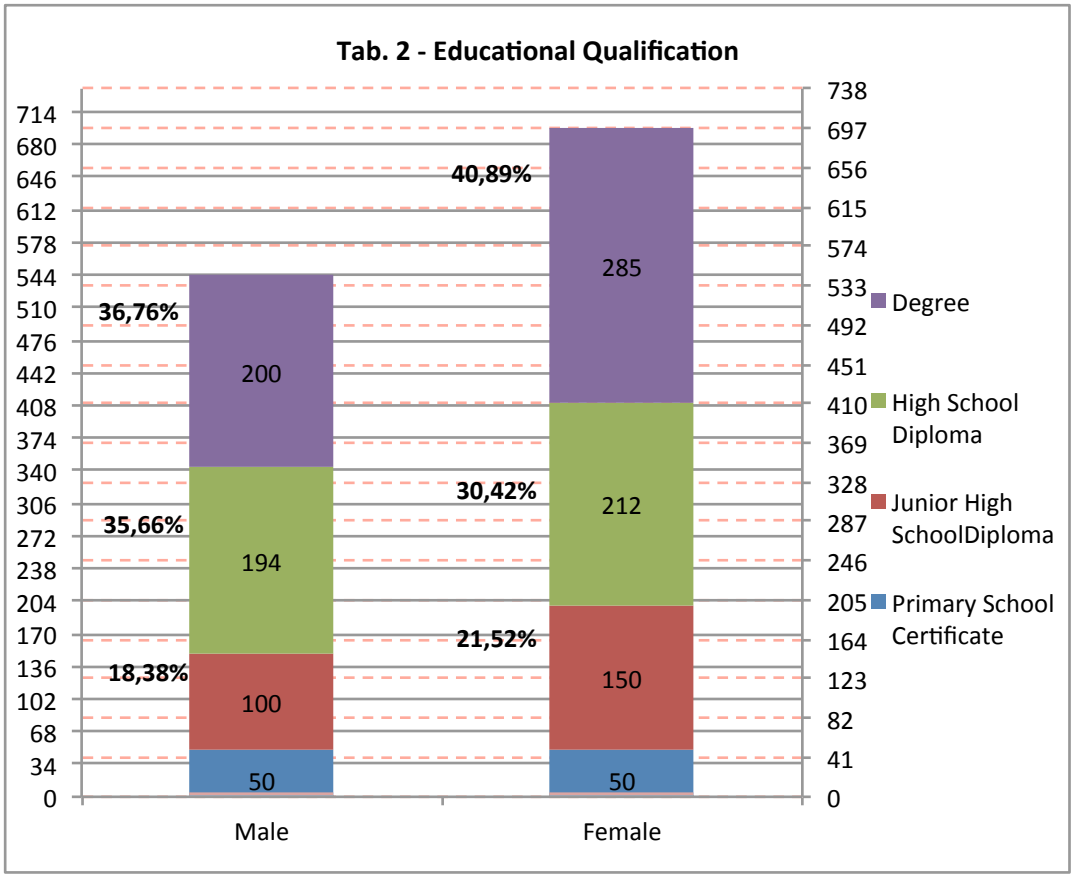
The normative sample

The study has been conducted on Rorschach protocols related to a sample of 1241 "non-clinical" subjects (Tab. 1), divided into 697 females (56,16%) and 544 males (43,84%), having an aged between 18 and 75 years. Through a random sampling, the subjects chosen were over-18 and without significant physical disabilities.

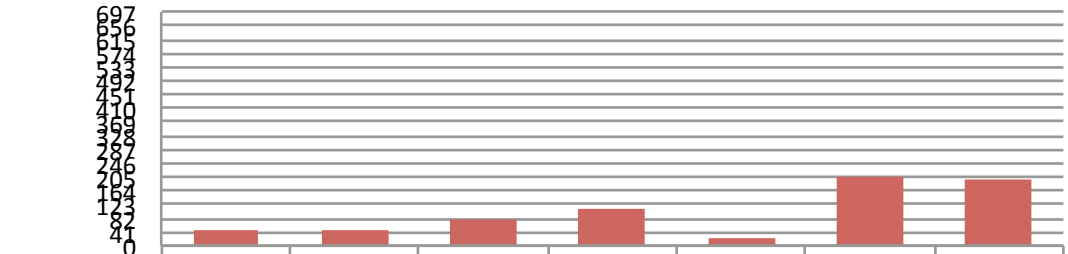


After explaining the reason for the administration, only some biographical data on school attendance and the profession of all subjects were collected, in order to ensure their anonymity. The school attendance (Tab. 2) was recorded according to 4 categories: primary school certificate, junior high

school diploma, high school diploma and degree. In accordance with the adopted encoding by ISTAT (1991), the professions are divided in 7 categories (Tab. 3 e 4): unemployed, retiree, worker, freelance professional, manager, employee, labor. The analysis of the data found that the variables of schooling and profession are distributed in a balanced way in all of the sample and in the two groups of males and females.

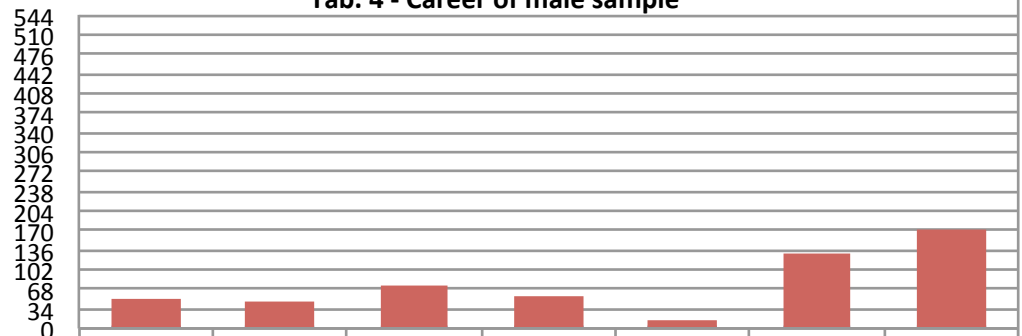


Tab. 3 - Career of female sample



	Unemployeds	Retirees	Workers	Freelance professionals	Managers	Employees	Labors
Conteggio	46	50	75	107	20	203	196
Percentuale	6,60%	7,17%	10,76%	15,35%	2,87%	29,12%	28,12%

Tab. 4 - Career of male sample



	Unemployeds	Retirees	Workers	Freelance professionals	Managers	Employees	Labors
Conteggio	50	45	75	56	13	132	173
Percentuale	9,19%	8,27%	13,79%	10,29%	2,39%	24,26%	31,80%

Instrument and procedures

The research project involves a series of precise and sequential steps.
The first phase involved the recruitment of experts on psychodiagnostic then instructed to maintain a standard setting of administration.
The second phase was to collect a **considerable number of protocols** in order to have an appropriate sample on which to conduct the study. According to the specifications of the methodology presented above, the administration of the Rorschach test is made in individual settings controlled by experts of the CIFRIC research group.
All protocols collected were subjected to careful analysis to identify those eligible for next phase; protocols with an insufficient number of replies and those that occurred more than a rejection were deleted.
The third stage was made by marking all the interpretations that constitute the final sample; the responses have been "translated" into a conventional code that allows to synthesize all the information contained in the productions of the subjects. Only engrams products during the phase of administration were used, therefore are not indented in analysis of stages all the answers that we define as "additional", i.e. the answers given at a different time from the initial collection of spontaneous interpretations that are free of inevitable knowledge that comes from the cards resubmit at various stages.
At this stage, CIFRIC experts discussed to ensure a more objective and correct attribution of the encodings, especially in the assessment of the original answers not found in old manuals. The judgment on the quality of each formal reply was considered converged when over 70% of the experts expressed the same assessment.
Finally, the data obtained from the coding phase were placed in a specially calculation program; accounting operations and statistical calculation revealed the following results.

Results

The analysis of the data of our study revealed the following results:

- *Update of Ways of Understanding.*
- *Update of the Detail Frequencies.*
- *Update of Location Sheets.*

- *Update of the current "interpretations" with higher statistic frequency.*
- *Update of the current "interpretations" that may be considered Vulgar and Semivulgar Responses.*

Update of Ways of Understanding and Details Frequencies.

In accordance with the way in which the sample has perceived the Cards, the study was referred to the following basic ways of understanding; through comparison with other authors, equalities meanings have emerged, despite the symbolism is different in some cases (Tab. 5), as you can see in the comparison with H. Rorschach (Ror.), E. Bohm, Chabert (Chab.), D. Passi Tognazzo (Pa.T.) and C. Rizzo (Riz.).

1. **G *Global Interpretation*** the entire inkblot is part of the perceptual act, nothing is excluded for processing the response.
2. **D *Great and Frequents Details*:** blot portions >3 cm^2, and frequently subject to interpretation.
3. **Dd *Small Details***: areas that despite their small size < 3 cm^2 are interpreted with a significant frequency.
4. **Dbi *White Details***: whitespace processing as a reversal of the usual figure-ground relationship that covers areas of > 0.5 cm^2 size interpreted with a frequency > 0.09%.
5. **Ddbi *Small white details***: interpretations of whitespace that affect very small areas of size < 0.5 cm^2 interpreted with a frequency > 0.09%.
6. **Da *Non-specific Details***: size details > 3 cm^2 but not common interpretation, reaching a statistical frequency is not enough to be considered D but not much rare to be original, i.e. 0.09% >
7. **Di *Inhibitors Details***: interpretations of a single part of an engram which frequently (vulgar or semivulgar response) is interpreted in its entirety.

Tab. 5 – Comparison between C.I.F.RI.C codings and other authors.

CIFRIC	**Ror.**	**Bohm**	**Chab.**	**Pa.T.**	**Riz.**
G	G	G	G	G	G
D	D	D	D	D	D
Dd	Dd	Dd		Dd	Dd
Dbi	Dzw	Dzw	Dbl	Dbi	Dim
Ddbi		Ddzw	Ddbi	Ddbi	Ddim
Di	Do	Do		Do	Di
g			G	Γ	g
DG	DG	DG	DG	DG	DG
DdG	DdG	DdG		DdG	DdG
biG				DbiG	ImG

In addition, our work has allowed us to introduce new ways of understanding, never emerged in previous studies (Tab 7), for which the following acronyms were coined (Tab. 6):

8. **DO *Original Details*** *:* inkblot areas > 3 cm^2 that occur with a statistic frequency < 0.09%
9. **DdO *Small Original Detail***: rare interpretations of small areas of inkblot < 3 cm^2 often interpreted < 0.09%
10. **DbiO *Great white Original Details***: interpretations of large white areas inside the inkblot >0.5 cm^2 interpreted with a frequency <0.09%
11. **DdbiO *Small Original white Details***: interpretations of small white areas within the inkblot <0.5 cm^2 interpreted with a frequency < 0.09%

Tab. 6 - New Ways of Understanding.

Sign	Description	Area	Freq
Da	***Non-specific details***	**> 3 cm^2**	**>0.09%**
DO	***Original Details***	**> 3 cm^2**	**<0.09%**
DdO	***Small original detail***	**< 3 cm^2**	**<0.09%**
DbiO	***Great white original details***	**> 0.5 cm^2**	**<0.09%**
DdbiO	***Small original White detail***	**< 0.5 cm^2**	**<0.09%**

Tab. 7 – Comparison of New Ways of Understanding.

CIFRIC	Ror.	Bohm	Chab.	Pa.T.	Riz.
Da	-	-	-	-	-
DO	-	-	-	-	-
DdO	-	-	-	-	-
DbiO	-	-	-	-	-
DdbiO	-	-	-	-	-

Another objective of our study was to measure the rate at which each detail is interpreted; therefore, the details of each Card are sorted in ascending order according to their frequency, starting with the most frequently portrayed detail, which was given the number 1, and so on.
With regard to Card V, Table 8 shows the classification and description of details with the corresponding statistical frequency percentage.

Tab. 8 - List and frequency of details in Card V.

AREA	DESCRIPTION (FREQUENCY)
1 D	Lateral appendages (4.70%)
2 D	Lower central appendages (2.64%)
3 D	Great side notes (2.51%)
4 D	Side parts (2.03%)
5 D	Central detail (1.72%)
6 D	All inkblot except the upper and lower appendages (1.67%)
7 D	Upper central detail (1.23%)
8 Dd	Small appendages (1.06%)
9 Dd	Upper lateral appendages (0.80%)
10 Dd	Bumps under the wings (0.53%)
11 Dd	Small side lower appendages (0.35%)
12 Dd	Appendix upper central excluding 8 Dd (0.35%)
13 Da	Half card (0.35%)
14 Dbi	White areas lower (0.26%)
15 Dd	Upper lateral protrusions (0.26%)
16 Dd	All the jagged lower of 3 (0.22%)
17 Ddbi	Small white area between the lower appendages (0.18%)
18 DdO	Central axis (0.09%)
19 DdO	Small humps upper (0.09%)
20 DdbiO	The white area between the lateral appendages (0.09%)
21 DdO	Small final parts of lower appendages (0.09%)
22 DdbiO	Small white area between the upper appendices (0.09%)
23 DdO	Small lateral and upper protrusion (0.02%)

It was possible to compare the frequencies of details obtained with the values reported by some other authors as Bohm and Rizzo; the following table 9 shows comparisons between the numbers of details of Card V.

Tab. 9 – Comparison of numbering and frequency with other authors (Card V).

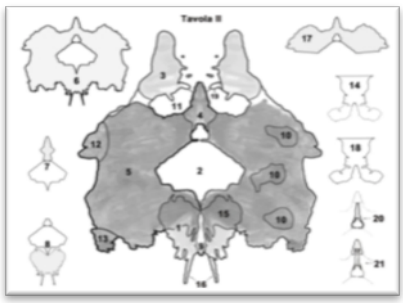
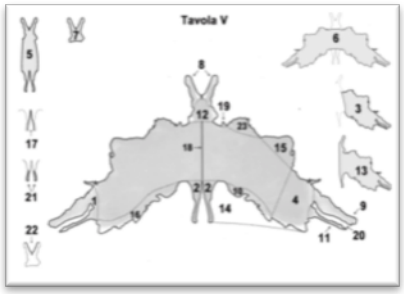
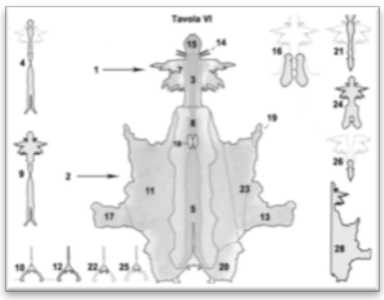
CIFRIC	Bohm	Rizzo/SRR
1 D	1	1
2 D	2	2 Dd
3 D	7	7
4 D	13	13
5 D	3	3
6 D	8	8 Da
7 D	5	5
8 Dd	6	6
9 Dd	4 D	4
10 Dd	10	10
11 Dd	9	9
12 Dd	22	22
13 Da	17 D	17
14 Dbi	15 Dbi	15 Dbi
15 Dd	23	23
16 Dd	12	12
17 Ddbi	14 Ddbi	14 Ddbi
18 DdO	11 Dd	11 Dd
19 DdO	16 Dd	16 Dd
20 DdbiO	19 Ddbi	19 Ddbi
21 DdO	20 Dd	20 Dd
22 DdbiO	21 Ddbi	21 Ddbi
23 DdO	18 Dd	18 Dd

Update of Location Sheets.

The differences in the numbering of details compared to previous research led to the development of updated Location Sheets.

Some figures of **updated Location Sheets** are given below:

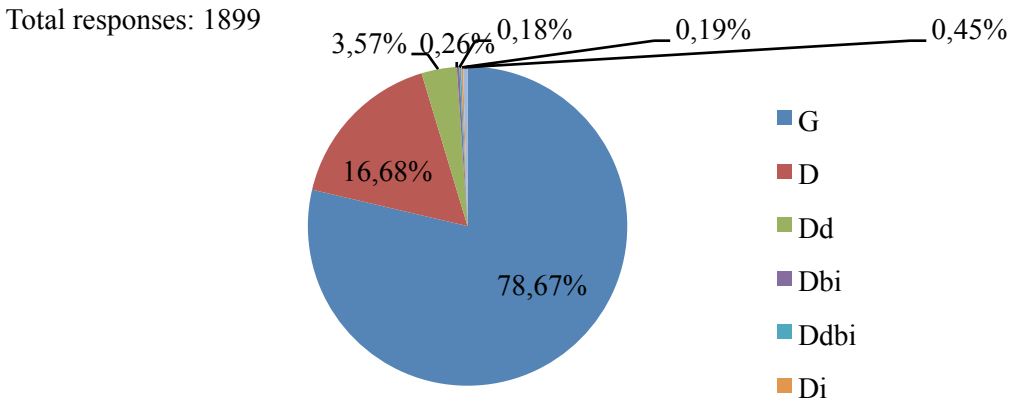
Fig. 1 - Card II **Fig. 2 - Card V**
Fig. 3 - Card VI

Update of the current "interpretations" that have higher statistical frequency (R +) and the current "interpretations" that may be considered Vulgar and Semivulgar Responses.

H. Rorschach had already realized the need to identify statistical criteria for the assignment of formal qualities to ensure the objectivity of interpretation. Several authors have assessed as the minimum threshold from which that of the 2.5% or 2%; in this case we decided to consider as statistically good quality responses those that exceed the threshold of 2%. The study has identified a total of 140 responses that exceed this percentage.
The following tables show the percentages of locations interpreted in Card V (Tab.10) and responses, with relative frequency, to which it attaches a statistical R+ (Tab.11).

Tab. 10 - Distribution percentages of sample responses in Card V



Tab. 11 – List of statistical R+ in Card V

Location	Interpretation	%	Frequency
G	Butterfly↑↓	49.39	V
	Bat↑↓	45.21	V
	Bird↑↓	4.59	
	Winged human figure	2.97	
1D, 4D, 9Dd	Crocodile mouths	6.48	

To develop our list of Vulgar and Semivulgar Responses, instead, we followed the policy of M.R. Hertz (1951) and M. Loosli-Usteri (1969). In fact we have considered Vulgar - V - those answers from identical or similar content provided for the same area of inkblot by a person out on six, i.e. by at least 17% of the sample; and Semivulgar - (V) – those interpretations whose rate stands between 14% and 17%.
Based on these assumptions, the search returned the following list (Tab. 12), in which Vulgar responses are marked with V and Semivulgar responses are indicated with (V).

Tab.12 - Updated List of Vulgar and Semi-Vulgar Answers

TAV. I	**G**	A	**Bat**	25.64	**V**
	G	A	**Butterfly**	21.32	**V**
	Gbi/biG	Masch	**Mask**	14.04	**(V)**
TAV. II	**G**	H	**Human figures**	19.84	**V**
	5 D	A	**Butterfly**	15.92	**(V)**
TAV. III	**G, g**	H	**Human figures**	75.84	**V**
	1 D	Obj	**Papillon, bow**	26.18	**V**
	9 DDbi/DbiD	Hd/Vest	**Bust or tails with papillon**	2.29	**(V)**[1]
TAV. IV	**G, g**	H, A	**Human or anthropomorphic figure**	33.20	**V**
	G	A/Mos	**Monster**	14.30	**(V)**
TAV. V	**G**	A	**Butterfly**	49.39	**V**
	G	A	**Bat**	45.21	**V**
TAV. VI	**G**	Ads, Obj	**Animal skin, skin rug**	17.00	**V**
	2 D	Ads, Obj	**Animal skin, skin rug**	9.45	**(V)**[2]
TAV. VII	**G, 1 D**	H	**Human figures**	45.75	**V**
	2 D	Hd	**Human heads**	17.00	**V**
TAV. VIII	**G, 1 D**	A	**Bears, dogs, mice, animals**	73.85	**V**

[1] (V) shall be considered to attend the papillon in the 1.

[2] "Animal skin" and "localized" skin rug in 2 D (9.45) are still marked (V), despite not reaching the expected percentage, as no inclusion of 1 D is not determinant for the purposes of the genesis of

[2] "Animal skin" and "localized" skin rug in 2 D (9.45) are still marked (V), despite not reaching the expected percentage, as no inclusion of 1 D is not determinant for the purposes of the genesis of these interpretations.

TAV. IX			**-**	-	**-**
TAV. X	**1 D**	A	**Spider, crab**	26.18	**V**
	7 D	A	**Spider, crab**	14.04	**(V)**

Discussions

The strongest and most difficult to debate critique to Rorschach researchers it about the low objectivity in the evaluations of interpretations. We want to stress that the Rorschach technique is based on a "projection" mechanism, which comprises the assignment to the outside of feelings and wishes "rejected" by the subject, that belong to his in-conscious, though. However, it is mainly a psychometric tool based on numerical and statistical supports; for this reason, we consider providing who conducts the test with updated statistical data of key importance: in our opinion, this will minimize the risk of a subjective reading of the protocols.

Therefore, the necessity of calibrate the various data regarding one of the most influential and worldwide known psychological test has been the ultimate aim of this research. On these premises, our work has been outlined to its main goal: updating the old standard and the normative values of the Italian population. Thus, the updated data can be used as reference to interpret in an object way the signs of a Rorschach protocol.

The Rorschach technique used, as well as the formal interpretations, is based on the indication and premised established by Hermann Rorschach. We believe this is the most important starting point for whoever decides to approach this "precious" tool.

First, in line with the objectives of the present study, we proceeded to the selection of experts with certain requirements and specifically trained.

Through a random sampling, the sample of "non-clinical" subjects was balanced for sex, age, education and profession.

The various stages of response encoding have identified important differences with previous studies. In particular, the differences have focused on ways of understanding; this resulted in the need to introduce new acronyms for locations, those we defined "originals".

In addition, the frequency with which each inkblot was interpreted allowed us to redefine the order of details, different from that published by other authors.

Therefore, it became necessary to build updated Location Sheets to facilitate a *rorschachista* in the identification of the area interpreted.

Conclusions

The continuation of work involves in designing software that will allow, in addition to the calculation of data, the constant updating of data on the Italian sample. In this way, the changes affecting the sample will be identified faster.
Other differences are the responses that occur with a frequency greater than 2%: our list of 140 responses R+ only partially overlaps with that of other authors as the *Scuola Romana Rorschach*.
Finally, the differences affecting vulgar and semivolgari responses are also important, as indicative of a social change. For example, it is significant that the answer "mask" in the Card I has reached a frequency of a Semivulgar response.
The introduction of new locations, the new numerical designation of details and update of frequent responses and vulgar response provide a reference updated that allows objective framing of Rorschach Protocol. However, despite having updated calibration or the help of a software, a diagnosis was strongly influenced by the preparation, the skills and knowledge of the clinical.

Acknowledgment
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