

Singularity in Rorschach's Test: 12 Years of Research in Spanish-speaking Countries – A Secondary Publication

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Abstract: To describe the place of singularity in scientific research with the Rorschach test, 85 studies from Spanish-speaking countries published between 2010-2021 are compiled, analyzed, and classified with the “subject approach mode” described by Meneses, and identified for longitudinal trends. The results indicate a growing number of studies using Rorschach in the region with the systematic and stable presence of subject approach considering their singularity. This paper discusses whether the trends represent significance in research with Rorschach in the Spanish-speaking world, compared to studies in the English-speaking world, giving subjects the possibility of being considered in their complexity. It also proposes that the region presents an opportunity to produce research and theoretical models that take advantage of the comprehensive possibilities granted by the Rorschach test as a projective method.

Keywords: Rorschach; Projective; Psychodiagnosis; Idiographic; Nomothetic; Singularity

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1. Introduction

The Rorschach Test, as a tool for exploring psychological aspects, currently has a long global history with 100 years of research and use. This trajectory has involved many scientific reflections on its validity, mode of use, modality of analysis, and areas of use, and it has come to be understood as the reference projective method of its kind. There are multiple meta-analysis studies documenting this process, which is usually performed in English.

Few studies perform an extended bibliographic review for Spanish-speaking countries regarding the Rorschach test. Meneses has reported on the current state of research using the Rorschach test as a tool for case studies in Spanish-speaking countries, identifying categories of analysis relevant to these investigations^[1]. One of the dimensions identified is the way of subject approach. This can be divided between an approach oriented to case-by-case analysis, where the singularity of the individuals case-by-case analysis, with emphasis on the singularity of the individuals (idiographic approach), and one that groups the subjects according to categories

that are more general to them (nomothetic approach), echoing a classical reference that in several disciplines differentiates the approach that is guided by general principles and laws, of the approach that is oriented to the particular case ^[2].

The present article seeks to review the type of approach of the subjects that performed Spanish-speaking research using the Rorschach test, covering a sample of 85 studies from the last 12 years. In doing so, it is expected to investigate whether this body of research gives rise to the singularity of the subjects, while also seeking to describe the results of the research conducted over the last 12 years.

2. Theoretical review

2.1. Singularity and the general: the idiographic-nomothetic axis in scientific research

The classic division that Bernstein makes between an idiographic approach, which is oriented to singularity, and a nomothetic approach, which seeks to group cases based on general categories, has been described as a methodological dualism that constitutes a methodological limitation relevant to general scientific research. Salas states that the nomothetic-idiographic axis is part of a more general methodological dualism, which has even been used to distinguish between the natural sciences and the social sciences through methodological distinction ^[3]. Specifically, Salas states that, although this dichotomy has had important support and justifications, the sharp division between the approach to the general (nomothetic) and the singular (idiographic) corresponds to a reductionism that affects research processes in various disciplines. In a similar vein, Cuadra considers that it is relevant to point out that the singular approach is necessarily supported by general principles and vice versa ^[4].

A discussion that is part of this same problem has arisen about the type of methodology for analyzing scientific information. The traditional division between qualitative methodology, usually associated with the singularity or idiographic approach, and quantitative methodology, usually associated with the nomothetic approach, has been the type of methodology used to analyze scientific information. Sandia states that it is relevant to distinguish between these two types of approaches, describing that they understand reality and the object of study differently ^[5]. On the other hand, some authors make a strong defense of the complementarity between types of approach, indicating that quantitative and qualitative methodologies are two sides of the same coin ^[6].

These considerations raise the relevance of the idiographic-nomothetic axis, which moves between the consideration of the most unique to the most general of the subjects, to discuss how Rorschach research approaches the cases. In this way, the present research is framed in the context of general scientific research, in the context of a problem relevant to the field.

3. In regards to a mixed approach

The visualization of an approach that splits the singular from the general, the idiographic from the nomothetic, seems to be in tension with those proposals that emphasize the importance of the mixing and the complementarity between both poles of the axis. This is why Sendin describes the mixture as an opportunity, but at the same time as a necessity ^[7]. Thus, he argues that the joint use of these types of approaches would make it possible to enrich the vision of the object of study, as well as to favor the processes of integration and synthesis of the material produced.

In the same direction, Sánchez identifies the idiographic-nomothetic axis as a continuum in which, in a linear or parallel, both poles of the axis act as a complement to each other ^[8]. For him, this also makes possible

a more extensive approach to the object of study, indicating that the idiographic could begin where the other pole has begun to end. Ugalde and Balbastre, on the other hand, indicate that mixed approaches contribute to both the understanding of the object of study, as well as to the review and validation of the assumptions based on comprehensive and explanatory theories, provided that both approaches can recognize their limitations^[9].

For Sánchez, taking charge of the mixture between singularity and the general that overcomes the split is a substantive challenge, considering it is a process in development^[8]. For this author, it is necessary to broaden the theoretical assumptions of the disciplines that wish to appropriate the mixture of singularity as a mode of approach, describing this process as a necessary epistemic deconstruction.

4. Singularity and the nomothetic approach in Rorschach test research

The Rorschach Test is a tool that over its 100 years of use has been used to approach subjects in a variety of ways. Regarding the approach that privileges singularity or generality, the Rorschach test, according to Rodríguez, is “between a nomothetic and an idiographic approach”^[10]. The Meneses assess the idiographic-nomothetic axis as a relevant category for Rorschach research in Spanish-speaking countries, reviewing 10 years of research with Rorschach in the Spanish-speaking world and exploratorily identifying that such research could be classified according to how they approached the subjects in four categories: nomothetic approach, mostly nomothetic, mostly idiographic and idiographic^[11].

Identifying that the nomothetic-idiographic axis is relevant to characterize the Rorschach studies in the region, allows us to describe how Hispanic research with Rorschach is positioned regarding the open problem between the singular approach and the general approach, on the one hand, and the open problem between a mixed approach (idiographic and nomothetic) and the other approach (idiographic or nomothetic).

It is relevant to consider that the Anglo-Saxon tradition has been moving more and more firmly towards an approach of an exclusively nomothetic, in regards to research using the Rorschach test. Thus, it can be seen how Mihura, following a long-standing line of work, advocates research with the Rorschach test that is exclusively quantitative, using a method of analysis that interprets the protocol independently of the uniqueness of the cases analyzed^[12]. Over the years, this paradigm in the interpretation of the Rorschach test protocol has gained enough popularity to influence a large proportion of Rorschach research in the English-speaking world. At the same time, in the international context, it would be the only paradigm that advocates an interpretation of the Rorschach test that is entrenched in an exclusively quantitative consideration of the protocol.

Despite the strength with which this line has proposed a nomothetic consideration of the subjects and their productions, there are still positions that advocate an integrated consideration of the protocol as mentioned, that is together with a nomothetic approach, they propose and investigate from the consideration of the singularity of the subjects, integrating an idiographic perspective that incorporates the characteristics of the case by case at least at some level. From Spain, Sendin considers that the Rorschach test allows the integration of statistical and quantitative analysis with interpretative dimensions of a qualitative nature, seeking a complementarity that enables the singularity of the cases that are organized around it^[7]. At the same time, Sendin establishes that the lack of work integrating the singular dimension of the cases implies a limitation of the analysis potential provided by the Rorschach test.

The reflections of Alessandro seem to follow a similar line, who, in contrast to the exclusively quantitative and nomothetic approach proposed by Anglo-Saxon research, seek to highlight aspects of the Rorschach protocol that can only be considered from a qualitative and idiographic perspective, advocating a mixture between both types of approaches that result in the uniqueness of the cases^[13].

The present research contributes to this debate by highlighting the characteristics of the corpus of research carried out in Spanish, which seems to give a place to singularity in the approach to the subjects and their Rorschach protocol, in a trend that goes against the Anglo-Saxon discipline towards the approach to the subjects and their Rorschach protocol towards exclusively nomothetic consideration of the subjects in the research with the test. As part of this more general problem, this research hopes to describe how scientific studies carried out in the Spanish-speaking world, are distributed along the idiographic-nomothetic axis, to specifically describe what place they give to the singularity of the cases, based on their designs. The objectives and research questions guiding this article will be reviewed in more detail below.

5. Research questions and objectives

The Rorschach test is a test that offers the potential to approach subjects with a mixed approach between singularity and guidance based on more general variables. As Anglo-Saxon research opts for an exclusively nomothetic approach, the present study seeks to describe how the research conducted in Spanish-speaking countries is distributed along the idiographic-nomothetic axis, and what place they give to singularity and the mixed approach in their research designs, and how this distribution can be described over the last 12 years of research with the Rorschach test. Specifically, this study raises the following questions regarding Rorschach research in Spanish-speaking countries:

5.1. On the amount of research

What trends over time can be identified by looking at the amount of Rorschach research performed in Spanish-speaking countries? The aim is to identify longitudinal trends in the frequency of Rorschach research conducted in the region.

5.2. On the place of singularity in the approach to subjects

What is the place of singularity in the approach to subjects in Spanish-speaking research? What trends and future developments are identified based on how investigators define the singularity? The aim is to identify how many of the studies in the region incorporate singularity as a way of approaching subjects, compared to an exclusively nomothetic approach, and what future trends can be estimated for the uniqueness of Rorschach research.

5.3. On mixed or exclusive approach to the subjects

Do studies that combine an idiographic approach with a nomothetic approach (mixed) predominate over those that approach subjects using an exclusive approach? What trends can be described based on how these differences unfold over time?

These questions seek to identify whether the predominant approach to subjects is mixed, and how the differences between this approach and the exclusive approach unfold over the years studied.

5.4. On the type of approach to the subjects: complete description of the idiographic/nomothetic axis

What longitudinal trends can be identified by considering how Rorschach research is distributed across the idiographic/nomothetic axis? This question seeks to identify trends over time with a comparison of the different possibilities offered by the idiographic-nomothetic axis.

6. Methodology

The present research consists of a literature review with a targeted search for case studies that use the Rorschach test within the year 2010-2021 in scientific journals published in Spanish-speaking countries. For this purpose, search engines of indexed research were consulted for articles containing key terms, such as “Rorschach”, “Rorschach cases,” “Rorschach psychodiagnosis,” “Rorschach and case studies,” and “Rorschach research.”

On the other hand, to gather as much information as possible, the issues of biannual and/or annual publications of some of the main Rorschach journals in Latin America and Spain were consulted directly. Among these journals include the *Revista Asociación Española del Rorschach y Métodos Proyectivos*, the *Revista Asociación Argentina de Psicodiagnóstico de Rorschach* and the *Revista Humanidades Médicas*.

To proceed with the collection of information, the following inclusion criteria were selected: Time criterion (2010-2021), articles, and case studies in scientific journals that belong to a country or set of countries in the defined region.

After applying these criteria, the first stage was to read the title and summary of the article. If the research that meets the requirements belongs to a scientific journal and not a literature review or a transcription of a conference or congress, then the article is selected, downloaded, and included in the research database.

In the second stage, each study is reviewed in greater depth, with the main sections being the methodology, sample, and results. If any article does not effectively meet the selection criteria after review, it is separated from the database and not included in the sample.

Meneses explores and describes categories common to research with cases carried out in Spanish-speaking countries with Rorschach, establishing that all of the articles define Research Objectives ^[1]. In addition, the subcategory on how subjects are approached indicates that the research in the region can be classified on the nomothetic/idiographic axis. For the present study, each study and its design are classified along this axis as shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Subcategory approach to the subject and its classification criteria

| Subcategory | Classification criteria |
|--------------------|--|
| Nomothetic | They are grouped based on extrinsic and independent characteristics. |
| Mostly nomothetic | They are grouped based on extrinsic and independent characteristics, but singular characteristics of subjects are used to illustrate or elaborate. |
| Mostly idiographic | They are grouped based on characteristics that distinguish them but are incorporated secondarily with some reference to broader categories. |
| Idiographic | They are considered categories in themselves from characteristics that distinguish them. |

Thus, research is classified according to the place it occupies on the nomothetic/idiographic axis, in one of the four subcategories. This is taking into consideration that the Rorschach test has the potential to refer to both types of approaches to the subjects, which is why research with Rorschach allows for mixtures between them.

Next, to answer the research questions, the results of the total research sample are reviewed using a longitudinal analysis and frequency classification. In this way, we seek to describe how these results unfold along the nomothetic/idiographic axis of the subcategories as described by Meneses ^[1].

7. Results

The total reviewed research consists of 85 articles. **Figure 1** shows how they are distributed year by year.

Research using Rorschach per year (2010-2020)

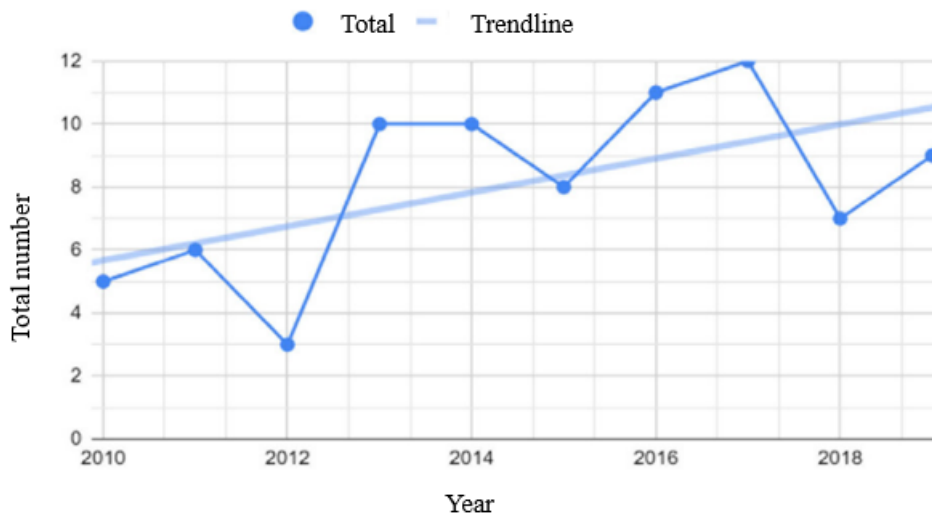


Figure 1. Distribution by year

This figure shows the frequency of publications from the region that use the Rorschach test as a research method between the years 2010-2019. An upward trend can be observed in the number of Rorschach test research studies in the region for the above time period.

This figure does not include research published in the years 2020 and 2021, given the low number of Rorschach studies in those years (2 studies each year, respectively). This significant decrease can be attributed to the fact that the International Rorschach Association explicitly recommended limiting the remote use of the Rorschach Test for exploratory purposes at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, due to the absence of sufficient studies proving the validity of the method by virtual means.

Figure 2 shows the comparison between the total number of two research groups: idiographic and mostly idiographic research versus nomothetic and mostly nomothetic research. This figure shows that both types of research are present in the region, predominantly with nomothetic and mostly nomothetic studies, with 25 more studies compared to idiographic and mostly idiographic research.

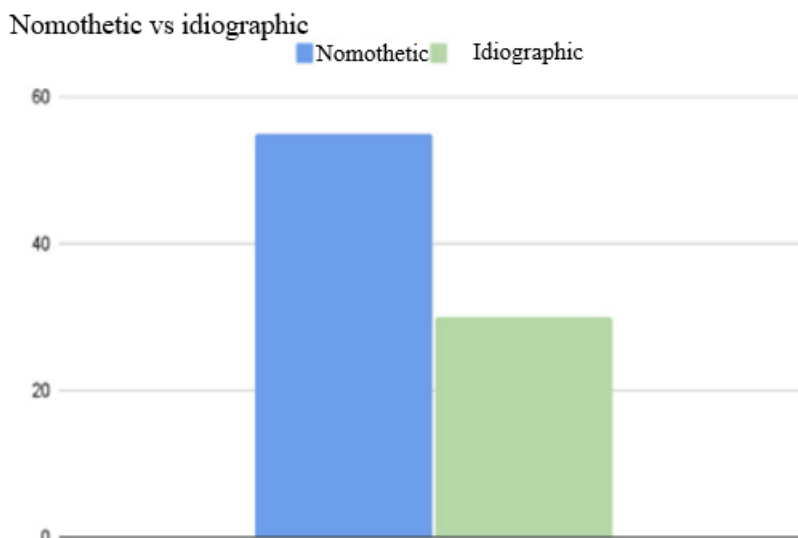


Figure 2. Frequency of articles, according to the predominant way of approaching the subjects

Figure 3 shows the distribution over time of the articles in the study, grouped according to the predominant way of approaching the subjects. The information is presented in percentage terms and grouped in trienniums to facilitate the identification of trends. This figure shows that the difference between the nomothetic approach and the idiographic approach tends to remain stable over time, with maximum variations of 10%.

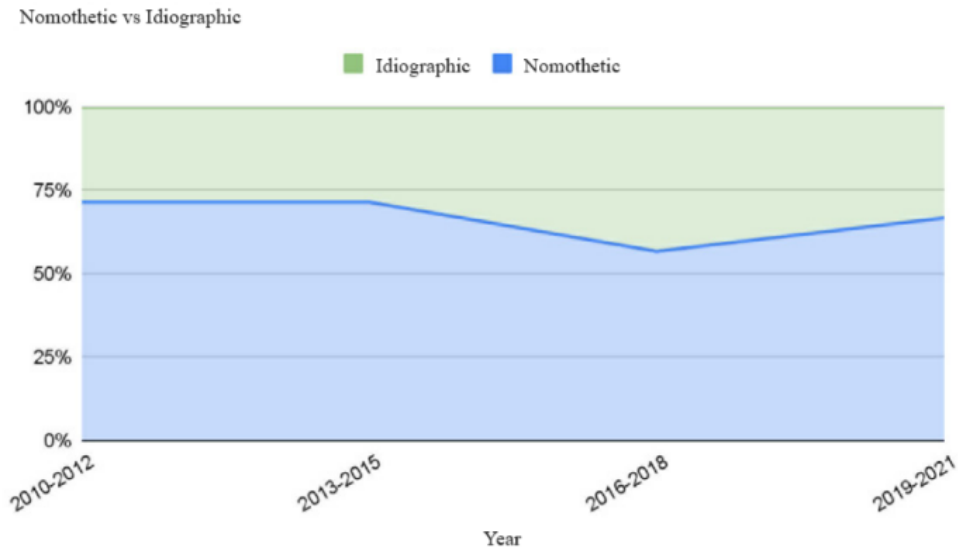


Figure 3. Longitudinal percentage of articles, according to the predominant form of approach to the subjects

Figure 4 shows a comparison between the total number of two groups of research two groups of research, exclusive research, and mixed research. Exclusive research is limited to using only one approach to the subjects (either nomothetic or idiographic), while mixed research approaches the subjects by combining both forms of approach (nomothetic and ideographic).

This figure shows that there are researchers who approach the subjects from an exclusive perspective, as well as researchers who approach the subjects by integrating both nomothetic and idiographic perspectives. Although there is a difference showing that exclusive research is more favored, there is also a significant frequency of research that takes advantage of the mixed approach that the Rorschach test allows.



Figure 4. Frequency of articles, according to exclusive or mixed approach of subjects

Figure 5 shows the distribution of research over time, grouped according to whether the predominant form of subject approach is exclusive or mixed. The information is presented in percentage terms and grouped in trienniums to facilitate the identification of trends. The figure shows that the differences between the two types of approach remain stable over time, with variations of less than 25%.

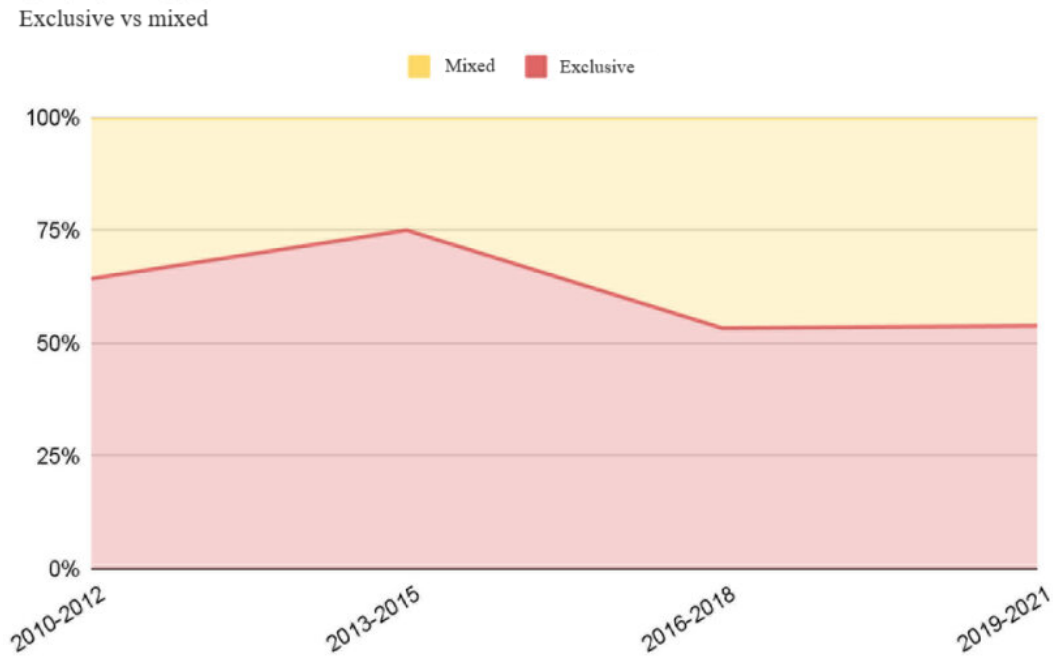


Figure 5. Percentage of longitudinal articles, according to exclusive or mixed approach of subjects

Figure 6 shows the distribution over time of the investigations in the study, grouped according to the specific way in which they approach the subjects, among the four types identified (idiographic, mostly idiographic, mostly nomothetic, nomothetic). The information is presented in percentage terms and grouped into trienniums to facilitate the identification of trends.

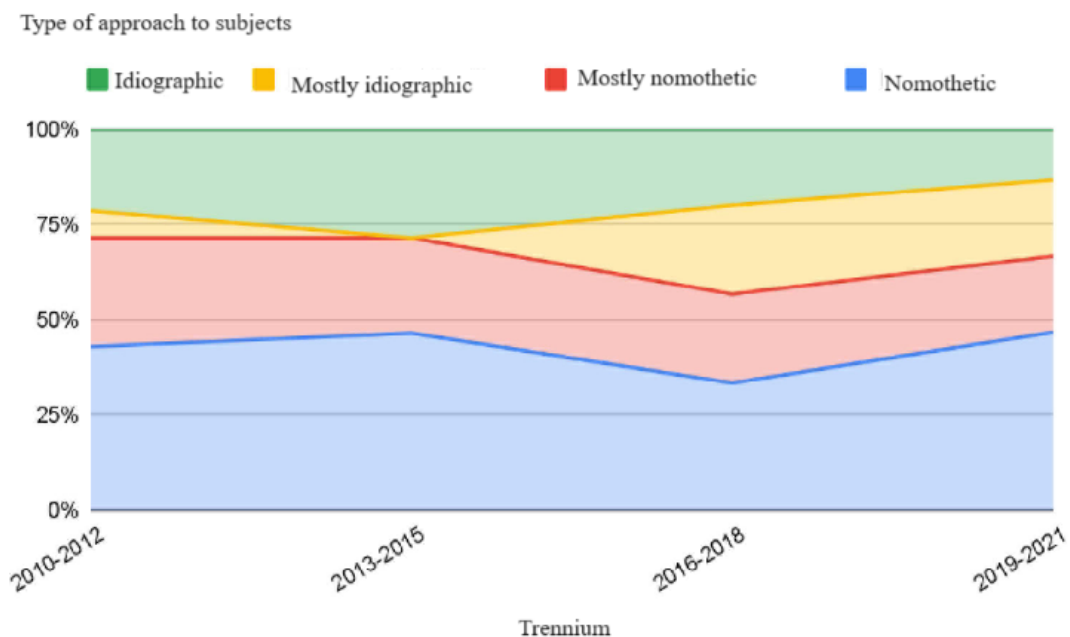


Figure 6. Longitudinal percentage of articles, according to the specific type of approach to the subjects

It should be noted that, except for studies with a largely idiographic approach, all types of approaches remain stable in the body of research. In recent years, there has been a downward trend in the exclusively idiographic approach, with an upward trend of the mostly idiographic approach, slightly surpassing the mostly nomothetic approach in the last triennium. On the other hand, although there seems to have been an upward trend in nomothetic research in the last triennium, this corrects a decrease in this type of approach in the previous triennium, showing the lack of a change in the trend over time for this type of approach.

Finally, based on the “idiographic,” “mostly idiographic” and “mostly nomothetic” subcategories, the studies that incorporate this research singularity remain stably above 50% of the total. This indicates that more than half of the Rorschach studies conducted in Spanish incorporate singularity as part of their approach to the subjects.

8. Discussion and conclusions

In the light of the bibliography and the results obtained, it is possible to discuss various aspects of the place of singularity in Rorschach case studies in Spanish-speaking countries, in the context of the description of how these studies are distributed along a nomothetic-idiographic axis.

The results described above show that there is an upward trend in the number of investigations of cases that integrate the Rorschach test in the region, for the period between 2010 and 2020. This trend indicates the relevance of the Rorschach test in the field of scientific research and discussion in the region, with a growing interest in using this tool to generate scientific evidence in specialized journals.

The fact that Rorschach publications have declined drastically as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, exposes the vulnerability of the research processes involving face-to-face work with individuals. It is hoped that given the trend identified, Rorschach research in the region can recover strongly in the future.

As described by Mihura, there is a shown tendency in Anglo-Saxon research to investigate with Rorschach using an exclusively nomothetic approach ^[12]. On the other hand, the results of the present research suggest that Rorschach research in Spanish-speaking countries incorporates systematically and stably over time, showing a mixed approach to the subjects that combines the nomothetic and the ideographic approach. This finding allows us to discuss several aspects below.

A relevant aspect of this result is that this usage of the idiographic approach is systematic and stable over time, incorporating a significant proportion of studies that place singularity as a priority element in the design of the investigation. It is also clear that this tendency to combine nomothetic and idiographic approaches has increased in the studies in recent years.

These findings suggest there is full potential use of the Rorschach test in the region when approaching subjects, which is understood as the method “somewhere between an idiographic and nomothetic approach” ^[10]. Considering the richness of the Rorschach protocol, the corpus of Hispanic American research in the years studied seems to have noticed that there is greater value in a more integrated and broader understanding of what emerges from the Rorschach test than in the simplification of the answers for the consideration of partial and quantifiable aspects of the subjects. A partial consideration of the subject’s responses is likely the most direct antecedent of an equally fragmented consideration of the subject himself.

This aspect appears to be of particular relevance for the transfer of knowledge and reflections from scientific research with Rorschach towards the professional use in areas such as, for example, clinical psychology. The use of a mixed perspective when approaching the Rorschach allows a deeper and systematic assessment of the complexity of the subject in distress, while a perspective focused exclusively on the

quantitative and nomothetic consideration of the protocol would seem to be limited to the psychopathological consideration of said subjects, such as the classification of their discomfort in terms of their similarities with the discomfort of other subjects, with the consequent opportunity cost of allowing for the singularity of the case. Since the Rorschach often intervenes in the process before the establishment of a psychological treatment, it is possible that a professional use inspired by the Rorschach could be psychological treatment, it is conceivable that a professional use inspired by an exclusively quantitative and nomothetic consideration of the protocol would lead to a treatment of the subject that does not give sufficient room for the subject's singularity. Thus, in areas such as clinical psychology, the protocol approach has the potential to have a significant impact on the characteristics of the intervention that follows the method of exploring the subjectivity of the Rorschach test.

Furthermore, the fact that Hispanic Rorschach research gives a significant place to singularity, as it may indicate that the research processes and interventions in the region that predate this method, there is also a more general valuation of the singularity. Why else would uniqueness be valued in a diagnostic method if not precisely because it is functional for a later intervention?

The fact that the region incorporates a mixed approach to subjects in the Rorschach research, offers the possibility that it is possible to further advance the mixture between a nomothetic and idiographic approach in Spanish-speaking countries, taking on a more general recommendation to take advantage of the characteristics of both approaches in scientific research within the discipline which is in line what was proposed by Sendin and Passalacqua ^[7,13]. Thus, there is an opportunity here for the region to build robust theoretical models that account for the complexity of the Rorschach protocol. It is hoped that an approach that recognizes the value of the complexity of the protocol would also recognize the value of the complexity of the subjects.

Further studies may explore aspects that will expand on the findings of this research. In this way, it will be relevant to continue recording the frequency of Rorschach research in the region for the coming years, to identify whether the interruption of the upward trend is confined to the period of the Covid-19 pandemic and its effects on the research involving encounter between people, and whether if it can be corrected with time. Along with this, it will be relevant to continue researching the type of subject approach over the next few years in the region, to identify whether the trends identified around the systematic and stable presence of studies that incorporate singularity, would continue to remain stable despite the strong Anglo-Saxon tendency towards the high valuation of Rorschach research that is conducted exclusively from a nomothetic approach.

In opening up the possibilities, it may be interesting to investigate whether or not the tendencies identified regarding the approach of the subjects are replicated in contexts other than those circumscribed for this research, such as research with cases presented at congresses and the use of the Rorschach test in professional settings. This may inform whether the formative criteria scientific publication has any effect on the proportion of research with Rorschach that allows the singularity in their research designs.

Finally, considering that the Rorschach test is considered a reference among projective methods, it may be relevant to explore the place of singularity in the

research done in the region that uses other projective tests. For example, it could be possible to establish whether the mixed approach that characterizes Hispanic research with Rorschach gains strength in thematic projective methods such as the Object Relations Test (ORT) or the Children's Apperception Test (CAT).

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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