

The RD Starburst Move

Notice of Discovery for a New Cognitive Move in Systems Thinking

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ABSTRACT: Finding a new cognitive Move in systems thinking is comparable to formulating a new axiom in geometry or adding a previously unknown element to the periodic table: it brings to light a foundational, transferable pattern of thought that transcends subject matter and can be applied broadly across disciplines. The RD Starburst Move, proposed by Heather K. Coffman, is such a discovery—the 203rd Move identified in the canon. It extends the familiar relational logic of the RD Barbell into a starburst-like structure, radiating a single distinguished relationship (RD) outward to multiple pairs of identities simultaneously. This multidirectional propagation reveals the complex, non-linear nature of relationships, enhancing systems literacy, cross-domain transfer, and creative reasoning. This paper describes the RD Starburst Move, detailing its structure and emphasizing its significance for cognition and practice.

KEYWORDS: systems thinking | cognitive moves | discovery | cognitive universals | cognitive tools | RD Starburst Move

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Background: DSRP and Relational Thinking

According to DSRP theory—Distinctions, Systems, Relationships, and Perspectives—every act of thinking is organized through four fundamental patterns¹.

Several Moves in the canon already leverage relational structure, including Is/Is Not, RDS Barbell, and Perspective Circle. These Moves reveal that cognition depends not only on the presence of relationships, but on their structural variation².

The RD Starburst Move expands this repertoire by showing that a single distinguished relationship is rarely limited to a dyad; rather, it radiates outward across multiple identities, forming a hub-and-spoke, three dimensional, starburst pattern.

Discovery of the RD Starburst Move

Heather Coffman discovered the RD Starburst Move in September 2025 while practicing RDS moves during a CrossFit workout. Observing a J-hook on a rig, she recognized that it simultaneously related multiple objects, not just a single pair. This realization crystallized into the image of a starburst—a multidirectional expansion of a relational Move.

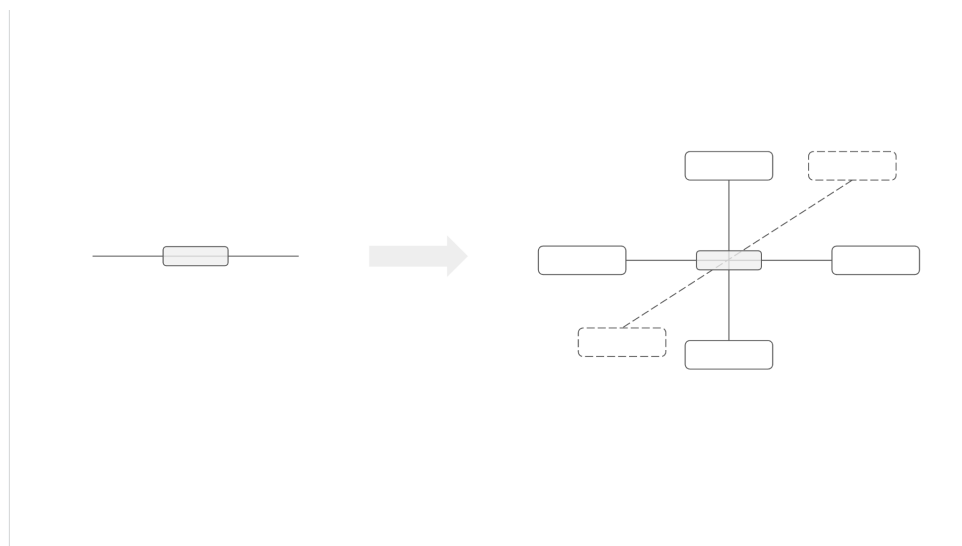
Definition

The RD Starburst Move is the intentional act of taking a distinguished relationship (RD) and extending it simultaneously to multiple identity pairs, forming a radiating starburst of linked pairs.

The RD Starburst Move is molecular, formally rooted in multiple DSRP patterns:

- Distinction (D): Identities are differentiated as multiple paired nodes.
- Relationship (R): A single distinguished relationship radiates outward.
- Identity (i): Each pair retains identity integrity while connected by the same relationship.

It is assigned an Atomic Number of 2/4, with an Organization Required (O_r) Number of 9, and is fully information-agnostic.



Moves Library Entry for RD Starburst

Unique ID: B-M-2S-12

Move Name: RD Starburst

Belongs to Set: Second Set

Explicit DSRP No. (Atomic No.): 2/4

Explicit Patterns: Distinction (D), Relationship (R), Identity (i)

Information Agnosticism Ratio (I/O): 1.00

Required Informational Content: None

Description: The RD Starburst Move begins with a single distinguished relationship (RD) and systematically radiates that relationship to multiple identity pairs, creating a hub-and-spoke, three dimensional, starburst structure.

Map: See Official Visualization Map v2.0 RD Starburst Visualization Map.

Articles/Resources: Coffman, H.K. (2025). RD Starburst Move Application to the Universal Cognitive Move Registry.

Illustrative Examples

In each of the following examples a distinguished relationship (RD) links multiple distinction pairs (D) simultaneously.

Natural Sciences:

- Physics: The (RD) “Newton’s Second Law” is the relationship between (D-pairs): force–acceleration, mass–velocity, and resistance–motion.
- Biology: The (RD) “Predator–prey” is the relationship between (D-pairs): lion–zebra, owl–mouse, shark–seal.
- Earth Science: The (RD) “Erosion” is the relationship between (D-pairs): river–bank, wind–sand, glacier–valley.

Social Sciences:

- Sociology: (RD) “Socialization” links (D) parent–child, teacher–student, peer–peer.
- Economics: (RD) “Exchange” links (D) buyer–seller, employer–employee, investor–company, country–country.

Everyday Life:

- Literature: (RD) “Resonance” links (D) character–plot, theme–symbol, setting–mood, reader–story.
- Knitting: (RD) “Complementary stitches” relate (D) knit–purl, k2tog–ssk, yo–k2tog.

Cognitive Significance

The RD Starburst Move provides several benefits:

- Complexity Awareness: Reveals that relationships are rarely linear, but multi-relational.
- Cross-Domain Thinking: Extends analogs across disciplines, aids creativity, innovation, and facilitates far transfer.
- Systemic Foresight: Enables assessment of how altering one relationship propagates across many.
- Metaphor-Building: Encourages layered, analogical reasoning that fuels cross-disciplinary insight.
- Relational Reframing: Reveals how shifting a single relationship (e.g., fear to safety) transforms systemic meaning and highlights intervention points.

Practice Guidelines

To apply the RD Starburst Move:

1. Select a distinguished relationship (RD).
2. Identify multiple identity pairs to which the same relationship applies.
3. Map the relationship radiating outward in a starburst pattern.
4. Analyze insights gained by seeing the relationship across pairs.

Significance of Move Discovery

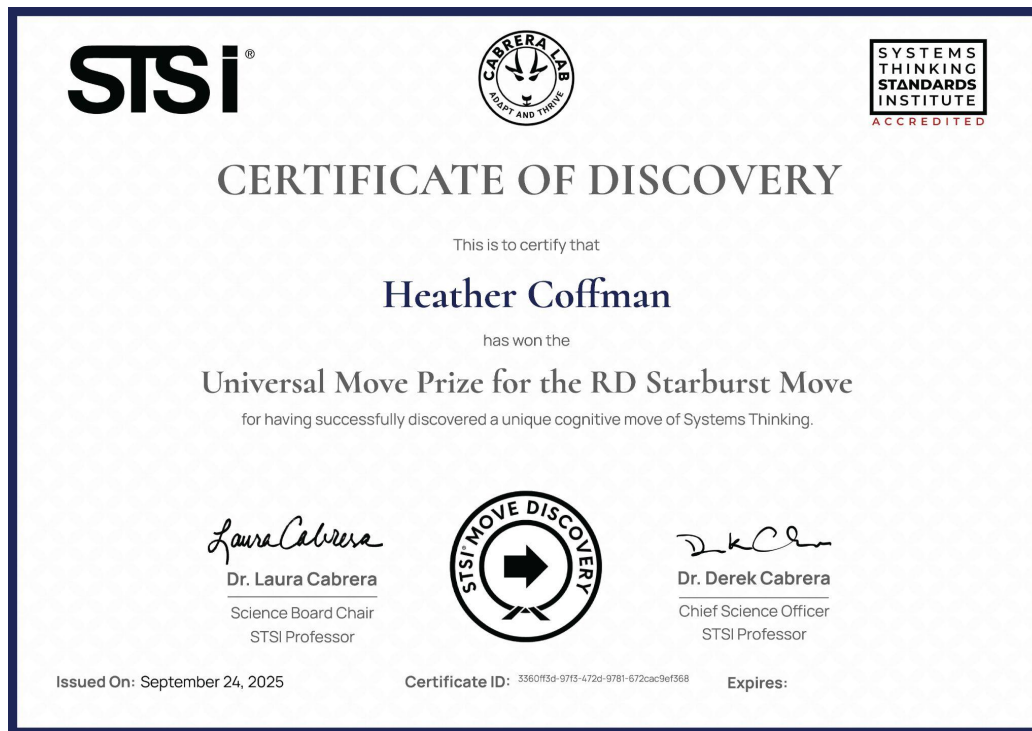
The formal identification of the RD Starburst Move is a structural innovation. RD Starburst makes explicit a ubiquitous but previously unnamed operation of thought. It joins the DSRP canon as the 203rd Move, expanding the relational toolkit of systems thinkers³.

Conclusion

The RD Starburst Move adds a radiating dimension to relational cognition. By recognizing that one relationship can extend simultaneously across many pairs, it reveals the fractal, multi-relational structure of both thought and reality. This insight enhances systems literacy, expands creativity, and deepens the structural grammar of cognition.

Recognition by the STSI New Moves Committee

After formal submission and evaluation, the RD Starburst Move received unanimous approval from the STSI Science Board's New Moves Committee, making it an official entry in the Table of Known Moves.



The award was formally conferred and added to the Moves Library on September 24, 2025, affirming its place in the systems thinking canon.

References

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