



UTILIZING THE CIRCUS PHENOMENON AS A DRAWING THEME IN ART THERAPY

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Historical Overview

Due to the limited scope of this paper, as well as the vast number of drawing directives, I will provide only a brief outline of widely accepted drawing directives that have been incorporated into the individual evaluation of children and adults. For a more comprehensive overview refer to Buck (1964); Hammer (1967); Klepsch and Logie (1982); Oster and Gould (1987); Oster and Montgomery (1996); and Wohl and Kaufman (1985).

The use of human figure drawings as a means of measuring a child's cognitive maturation was first introduced by Florence Goodenough (1926) and later refined by Dale Harris (1963). Briefly, the directions for the Draw-A-Man test consist of drawing three figures—a man, a woman and a self-portrait. A scoring system gives credit for the inclusion of individual body parts, clothing details, proportion and perspective. Tables are provided in the test manual that convert raw scores to standard scores and percentile ranks (Harris, 1963).

Goodenough, along with other clinicians, realized that the Draw-A-Man test provided indicators of personality dynamics in addition to intellectual aptitude. Through her previous experience with Goodenough's technique, Machover (1952) devised the Draw-A-Person (D-A-P) test. The directions are simply to "draw a person." Upon completion of the initial drawing the individual is asked to draw a person of the opposite sex.

Machover (1952) hypothesized that certain graphic traits reflect specific personality characteristics. For example, she asserted that the head is essentially the center for intellectual power, social balance and the control of body impulses. The arms and hands are believed to be primarily symbolic of ego development and social adaptation. The figure's legs and feet bear the responsibility of supporting and balancing the body or moving the body about.

Machover also placed particular emphasis on certain aspects of a drawing, such as size of the figure, pencil pressure, line quality, the sequence in which parts are drawn, the use of background and whether the figure was drawn in profile or frontal view. In analysis, she considered the properties of each body part, the tendency toward incompleteness, areas of detail, areas of line reinforcement, erasures and line change, the degree of symmetry, the treatment of the midline, and the mood expressed in the face or posture of the figure (Klepsch & Logie, 1982).

A simple adaptation of the D-A-P is the Draw-A-Person-In-The-Rain technique. Hammer (1967) sighted Arnold Abrams and Abraham Amchin as possible innovators of the drawing task; however its origins remain unclear. The instructions are simply to "draw a person in the rain." The assumption in this technique is that the amount of rain represented in the picture symbolizes the amount of environmental stress experienced by the individual. The person's emotional defenses are represented by the means of protection against the rain (e.g., coat, boots, umbrella)

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(Hammer, 1967; Oster & Gould, 1987; Oster & Montgomery, 1996; and Verinis, Lichtenberg & Henrich, 1974).

In addition to the human figure, clinicians began testing other subject matter as possible drawing directives. The House-Tree-Person (H-T-P) technique was initiated by Buck (1948) to aid the clinician in obtaining data regarding the person's degree of personality integration, maturity and efficiency. The directions are simply to "draw a house, a tree, and a person." Each object is drawn on a separate sheet of paper. The order always remains the same because the sequence is experienced as becoming progressively more psychologically difficult (Oster & Montgomery, 1996). Buck emphasized these three objects due to their familiarity to very young children, their acceptance by people of all ages and their ability to elicit a wealth of associations in comparison to other subject matter (Hammer, 1967; Oster & Gould, 1987; Oster & Montgomery, 1996).

The house tends to evoke associations concerning home life and intrafamilial relationships. In children, it seems to access their attitude regarding the home situation and relationships toward parents and siblings. For married adults, the rendering of a house may represent the person's domestic situation in relationship to his or her spouse. The drawing of a tree may illustrate the person's deeper and more unconscious feelings about one's self (Hammer, 1967). The tree drawing is also related to the person's life role and abilities to obtain gratification from their environment (Oster & Gould, 1987). The person drawing conveys the individual's "closer to conscious" view of their self and their relationship to the environment (Hammer, 1967).

The Draw-A-Family (D-A-F) technique is another elaboration on using figure drawings as projective indicators of personality. It was initially developed by Appel (1931) and later elaborated upon by Wolff (1942). The directions are simply "draw a picture of your whole family." Once completed, the drawing tends to portray the individual's attitude toward family members and their perception of family roles (Oster & Gould, 1987). The directive reveals the person's feelings for spouses, parents and siblings, as well as the person's concept of their place in the family.

Adaptations to the H-T-P and D-A-F are the Kinetic-House-Tree-Person (K-H-T-P) (Burns, 1987) and the Kinetic-Family-Drawing (K-F-D) (Burns & Kaufman, 1970, 1972). The instructions are basically the same; however, the person is instructed to include

some kind of action in the picture. The kinetic component is used as a means of increasing the amount of information portrayed in projective drawings. The kinetic factor allows the figures and objects to interact with one another. Through these patterns of interaction there is the capacity to view the person's current ability to interact with forces and significant objects within their environment.

The Circus Phenomenon as a Preferred Drawing Theme

The circus motif is well-suited for a drawing task by reason of its familiarity and universal appeal with the general public. Truzzi (1979) pointed out that, in 1932 alone, about 20,000,000 Americans attended circus shows throughout the country. Since that time, attendance at circus shows has declined; however, the circus' total audience has grown substantially due to television and other types of mass media. For instance, CBS television broadcasts the annual special, *Circus of the Stars*, which portrays well-known television celebrities performing various circus acts. The general public has also come to know the circus through literature that has vividly depicted the circus and its performers. In his book, *Circus and Allied Arts: A World Bibliography*, Stoot (1971) catalogued over 16,000 books that give written testimony to the circus phenomenon.

The notability and popularity of the circus is demonstrated by its prominence in other cultures throughout the world. Sebeok (1976) concurred that for centuries the circus phenomenon has been a spectacle cross-culturally relevant to many societies. In virtually every continent, from Asia to Europe, the circus phenomenon has existed in one form or another (Pereira, 1988). Schoonbeck (1987) spoke of the circus' universal allure and alleged, "Anyone from any culture and in any language, understands and knows exactly what is going to happen in a circus act" (p. 34).

The circus phenomenon is, as well, a form of non-verbal expressiveness and a visual language. Engibarov (1988) suggested people go to the circus to watch a performance and not to hear one. The circus phenomenon is virtually wordless; yet, each performance contains an underlying text that communicates a specific meaning to the onlooker. Bouissac (1976) wrote of creating an analogy between the circus phenomenon and theoretical models of human communication; hence, viewing the circus as a "multimedia

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