

This Week's Citation Classic

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Harris D B. *Children's drawings as measures of intellectual maturity: a revision and extension of the Goodenough draw-a-man test.* New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963. 367 p. [Pennsylvania State Univ., University Park, PA]

Reviews the extensive literature on children's drawings from the inception of research to date of publication, offers scales for assessing intellectual maturity of children aged three to 16 years, based on their human figure drawings, presents the standardization and norms for these scales, and discusses the psychology of children's drawings. [The Science Citation Index® (SCI®) and the Social Sciences Citation Index® (SSCI™) indicate that this book has been cited over 330 times since 1963.]

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"The Goodenough-Harris drawing test, a revision and extension of Florence Goodenough's Draw-a-Man test, was begun while I was at the University of Minnesota's Institute of Child Development and completed after I moved to Pennsylvania State University. The work was supported by small sums from the graduate schools of both universities. I did all the developmental work personally and used clerks only to assist in statistical work. In projects such as this, which represent the cut-and-try approach of the older measurement tradition, it is important that the researcher be completely immersed in the raw data, as many unexpected leads develop in the selection and tryout of items. Such a procedure is tedious, as all items and trial scales must be cross-validated on independently drawn samples of new material.

"Although the new scales were developed by more rigorous and psychometrically defensible procedures than Goodenough's original criteria, and indeed give finer gradations than that scale, I discovered renewed admiration for her original idea and the effectiveness of her quite simple analyses when tapping a powerful

psychologic variable. The continued popularity of the test probably rests on its simplicity and inherent appeal to young children, its painstaking standardization, and its demonstrated utility.

"I came away from the project with several additional impressions: The effectiveness of stratification of samples by parental occupational status in controlling the distribution of intellectual ability in samples of children. The strong empirical evidence for common developmental features; yet, the infinite variety of ways in which children can express their ideas in drawings. The high correlation of this brief exercise with individual tests taking an hour or more (a finding repeatedly confirmed in subsequent research); yet, the hazard of using a single drawing in any serious assessment of ability. The dubious character of projective analyses based on single drawings of the human figure (see various critical reviews under my authorship in *Mental Measurements Yearbook*^{1,2}); yet, the unquestionable fact that children do portray idiosyncratic personal features in their drawings. Here is a field rich in serendipity for the researcher open to discovery!

"Current research on children's drawings favors fine-grained analysis of the drawing act conducted under rigorous experimental controls, and usually ignores the interpretations and intentions of the child subjects as irrelevant. Yet anyone who has observed children draw and talked with them during or afterwards, must be convinced of the importance of intention. Child drawing is a form of communication, and invariably reflects a 'meaning!' The feature of my work which I most regret is that the data were necessarily gathered in groups, which precluded discussion of each child's work with its author. Intensive and fruitful research on children's drawings, I am convinced, in addition to simple tasks, should include more complex themes than the human figure (complex as that is!) and must include discussion of the products with their authors."

1. **Buros O K, ed.** *The seventh mental measurements yearbook.* Highland Park, NJ: Gryphon Press, 1972. 2 vols.
2. **Buros O K, ed.** *The eighth mental measurements yearbook.* Highland Park, NJ: Gryphon Press, 1978. 2 vols.