

SEQ CHAPTER \h\r 1 Family drawings are a familiar task used by psychologists to understand children's perceptions of their family. A central problem in using them is the subjective nature of their interpretation. In the application suggested here, problems in family relationships are highlighted by having the child participate in another assessment of attachment immediately prior to being asked to draw his or her family. This 'primes' the child to have strong thoughts and feelings about their family relationships. The drawing is made without the attachment figure(s) being present.

Unlike other assessments of attachment that tap enacted (e.g. PAA) or verbal (e.g., SAA) representation, family drawings tap imaged representations. Consequently, they may add something to our understanding of a child's perception of his or her family.

The interpretation of the drawings is based on simple criteria: proportionate size (by age and parent versus child roles), color or its absence, presence of a context in the drawing, style, spacing on the page, completeness of the figures, coherence of the picture, affect (positive, extreme positive, blank, sad, bizarre), personal features of the individual figures, and gender differentiation. The specification of these permits different viewers to derive similar conclusions regarding the child's (a) feelings toward his or her family and (b) understanding of how family members are connected.

On the other hand, there are no published studies using this procedure. There has been one conference presentation (Claussen & Crittenden, 1991) and several pilot studies in the UK, but these are insufficient to provide evidence of validity at this point.

References

Carr-Hopkins, R., De Burca, C., & Aldridge, F. A. (2017). Assessing attachment in school-aged children: do the SAA and Family Drawings work together as complementary tools? *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 22, 402 – 420. DOI: 10.1177/1359104517714589

Claussen, A.H. & Crittenden, P.M. Representations of the self: An approach using family drawings. Paper presented at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Seattle, WA., March, 1991.