

Kinetic Family Drawing: Mapping Your Inner Family World

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Figure drawings are projective diagnostic techniques in which an individual is instructed to draw a person, an object, or a situation so that cognitive, interpersonal, or psychological functioning can be assessed. The Kinetic Family Drawing, developed in 1970 by Burns and Kaufman, requires the test taker to draw a picture of his or her entire family. Children are asked to draw a picture of their family, including themselves, "doing something." This picture is meant to elicit the child's attitudes toward his or her family and the overall family dynamics. The KFD is some times interpreted as part of an evaluation of child abuse.

Interpretations of all projective tests should be made with caution, and the limitations of projective tests should be considered. It is generally a good idea to use projective tests as part of an overall test battery. There is little professional support for the use of figure drawing, so the examples that follow should be interpreted with caution. In particular, in forensic situations, the use of the KFD and other projective tests may be unethical or illegal depending on the jurisdiction.

The Method: Despite the flexibility in administration and interpretation of figure drawings, these tests require skilled and trained administrators familiar with both the theory behind the tests and the structure of the tests themselves. The KFD involves the examiner instructing the child to draw a picture of themselves, and everyone in his or her family, doing something. The examiner may then ask the child questions about the drawing, such as what is happening and who is in the picture. Certain characteristics of the drawing are noted upon analysis, such as the placement of family members; the absence of any members; whether the figures are relatively consistent with reality or altered by the child; the absence of particular body parts; erasures; elevated figures; and so on.

The KFD was created as an extension of the Family Drawing Test (Burns & Kaufman, 1972). The kinetic aspect refers to the instructions given to the child to draw his or her family members doing something.

The KFD is similar to other psychometric projective techniques such as the Draw-A-Person Test (D-A-P) developed by Machover, and the House-Tree-Person (HTP) technique developed by Buck.