PICTURE DRAWING TECHNIQUES

It is widely believed that creative works (especially in the fine arts, and drawing and painting in particular) reflect the personality of the artist. It should be noted that a demonstration of the validity of this assumption for trained artist would not necessarily establish its validity for people with little or no formal artistic training. It is, however, this latter assumption underlies the use of picture drawing techniques in the assessment of personality characteristics.

The use of drawings in psychological evaluation was first popularized by Goodenough (1926), who developed a standardized procedure for evaluating the intelligence of children from their drawings of a man. As a result of a growing interest in interpreting the qualitative aspects of such drawings, two techniques have become widely used. One of these is Buck’s house-tree-person or H-T-P technique, in which the respondent is required to draw first a house, then a tree, and finally a person, each on a separate sheet of paper. In the second, Machover’s (1949) Draw- a –person test (DAP) test, the respondent first draws a person of either sex, and then is asked to draw a person of the opposite sex.

In administering the DAP, the respondent is given a pencil and an 8and half by 11 inch sheet of blank paper, on which he is instructed to “draw a person”. The examiner inconspicuously observes the individual, noting such behaviour as the total time involved, the sequence in which the drawing is completed, any spontaneous comments, and so on. When this drawing is completed the individual is given a fresh sheet of paper and told to “now draw a man (woman).” Machover recommends reassuring him, if necessary, that the test has nothing to do with his drawing skills, and also persuading him to draw any parts he appears to have omitted. It is also recommended that the individual be asked a series of questions to encourage his free associations to the drawings, such as “how old is the person drawn” and “is he married”

The major portion of Machover’s book is devoted to rules of interpretation involving the qualitative aspects of the drawings. These rules were apparently derived from the author’s clinical experience as well as a variety of rational considerations, most of which reflect a psychoanalytic orientation. The rules provide for a description of the personality characteristics of the respondent with a strong emphasis on his psychopathology. They include the following sets of categories: head, parts of the face, facial expression, neck, contact features (arms, hands, legs, feet, fingers, toes), other body features, clothing, structural and formal aspects, conflict indicators (erasures, shading) and differential treatment of the male and female figures.

One of the rules that can be regarded as representative of rational considerations involves the interpretation of the manner in which the shoulders are drawn. “The width and massiveness of the shoulders are considered the most common graphic expression of physical power and perfection of physique” (p 71). The rationale underlying some interpretations is more difficult to comprehend; for example, “the Adam’s apple” has been seen mostly in the drawing of young males as an expression of strong virility or masculine drive. Special interest in Adam’s apple has been restricted to the sexually weak individual who shows little differentiation between male and female characteristics and is uncertain about his own role.”

Disclaimer- The content displayed in this file has been taken from a book source. The study material has been created for the academic benefits of the students alone and I do not seek any personal advantage out of it.