

Children's drawings: Do boys and girls draw differently?

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Globally people agree that there are differences in the drawings created by girls and boys. At Springfield College (located in Massachusetts, U.S.A.), Professor Simone Alter-Muri and a team of students have been collecting children's drawings to determine whether it's true: do boys and girls draw differently? Over the last five years we have collected and assessed over 300 drawings by children ages 6-11 from 14 countries. These countries include Chile, Mexico, the United States, France, Germany, Denmark, Switzerland, Sweden, Malawi, Somalia, Lithuania, Hungary, Italy and Japan.

Dr. Alter-Muri is creating an archive of "typical" drawings from children between the ages of 6 and 11. Most countries have information on what might be unusual in a child's drawing and might point to problems such as learning disabilities, trauma, etc. We are looking at what is "typical" and "normal" in what children draw. Do boys draw differently or include different content from girls, or just in some Western cultures? Is it typical that girls and boys show differences in their drawings through color, content and elements of art that extend beyond cultural boundaries? We are interested in what girls and boys include when drawing a person or persons in an environment. Prior studies indicated that girls draw more images of domestic scenes while boys draw scenes of external events including monsters, cartoon figures, and images from the media. Girls include details of people including makeup and clothing. They also draw more flowers, plants and rainbows.

The data we have collected indicates that some graphic indicators are culturally specific. These indicators include local flora and fauna. The color of the sun differs from Eastern and Western cultures. In Eastern cultures the sun is drawn in red. Girls from areas located by water seem to include images of local sporting activities including: swimming, and water skiing. Boys include vehicles of transportation, weapons, and tend to place figures standing on a ground line. They include cool colors like blue and green while girls tend to draw in warmer colors.

We want to collect additional artwork from other countries to give validity to our study, and to establish an international collection of children's artwork. This archive will

be utilized for assessment of art development, gender differences and multicultural awareness.

The contribution of additional children's drawings from all countries will be welcomed and appreciated. We hope that this collection will be an asset to educators, therapists and to individuals and institutions who interact with children.