

Art and Human Development Case Study: Drawing with Pre-K and Kindergarten Children

Yisha Zhao

Maryland Institute College of Art

Part one: Establishing data

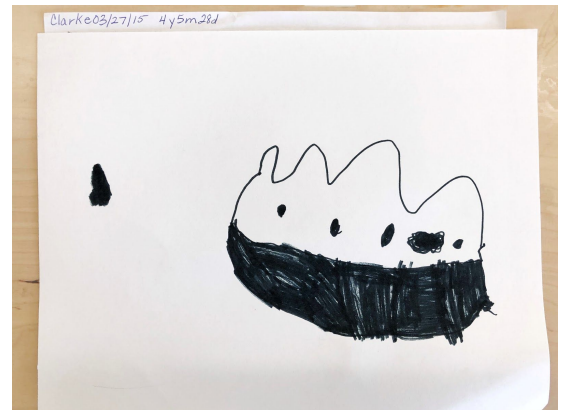
Child's First Name: Clark, **Grade:** Pre-K,

Age: 4 years 5 months and 28 days

Background: Clark had abilities to use and control the tool (marker) I gave him. He had a good concentration and could finish his task on time. He drew without thinking, and he amended his ideas through the drawing process by chatting and looking with us, so he was in the early stage of symbol development. He answered every question I asked, and he would talk more after, but he was not an active speaker. He preferred to draw forms like circles and wavy lines instead of specific objects like people. His schema was a typical figure drawing.

Task 1: Free Drawing

Identify: Clark's submarine is on the centre-right of the paper, and it divides upside and underneath. On the top surface of the submarine, there are curves presenting some features like telescopes. Clark drew some small windows on the top side. However, the lower side is a normal black cymbiform. He put a big black dot on the left side of the ocean, and I am not sure what it is.



Description: After I explained the prompt, he was the first one to begin drawing some lines, and he told me that they were waves. When another girl started drawing, and we started to chat, he colored all the waves and said to me, "It was the wave, but now it's not. It is a submarine underwater." During the process, I know he has a younger brother, and his mom gave him rain

balloon as a birthday present. He went to the nature center for Harley's birthday party. Also, he explained to me that five plus five is ten.

Task 2: Drawing of a person you know

Identify: There are two people on the paper. The left one is a big potato face human with facial features on it. The two horizontal line arms grow from the two sides of the face directly. There is no body part for the “potato man”, so legs are right under the face, and he drew two semicircles as feet.



There is a small man with a black head and body who has two horizontal line arms, long legs and big feet on the right hand side.

Description: He drew his baby brother first, and because the circle for his head was too small, there was no space for the nose. He said, "He doesn't have a nose because the nose is like over here, and like cover up the whole thing," so he scribbled the whole face. Harley was drawing her dad, so after he finished his brother, he drew his dad with a bigger face. When he drew the eyeballs, the marker was thick, so he colored eyes too. "Fingers are hard to draw," he said to me, so he did not draw fingers. Finally, he put feet for the right person first, it was too big, so he decreased the size for the left one. He laughed for a while for the big slippers.

Task 3: Drawing a person by dictation

Identify: Clark drew a person with a mohawk hairstyle and a big face containing two eyes, a backwards “L” for the nose, a smiling mouth, a tiny rectangle and two ears on the top of the face.

His wing-shape arms have five short vertical lines on the top of each arm. The short vertical lines present fingers. Legs and shoes are under the face.

Description: The task was to follow my dictation, but he drew a person very quickly, which is similar to the last person he drew. I still went through all organs. After I asked him to draw ears, Clark said, "He just got a haircut so that we can see the ears," while he was putting ears beside the hair. Then he said, "There is a lot of wax in the ears," he colored ears.



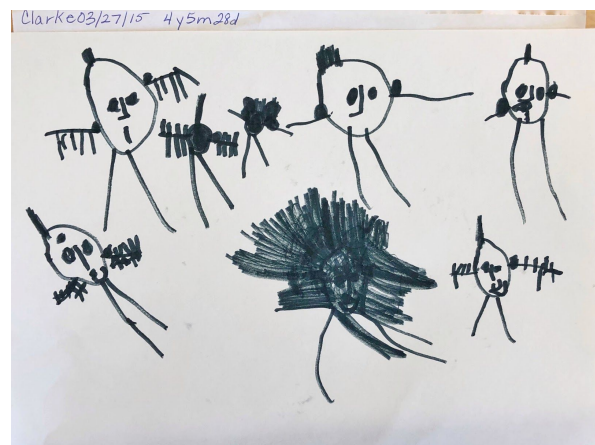
When I asked him to draw a neck, he drew a small rectangle at the bottom of the face as the neck.

Task 4: Drawing of your family

Identify: Clark's schema for a person is a potato face with eyes and a backwards "L" nose on it, antenna-shaped arms and two lines for legs. There are seven antenna-shaped people and a black cat which is a hair bulb with a smiling face in the center.

Description: The order of the family members he drew from first to last is the brother, mom, dad, himself, cat and "Gaga," his grandmother.

He drew his cat near the end. I asked him what the color of his cat is, and he said: "It's usually sometimes white and brown, but I can draw on black for now, and my cat has four legs. There is



all his hair; it's my kitty," he said while he was drawing short lines. When he counted his family members, he found he forgot his Gaga, so he added her at the last minute.

Task 5: Feeding a pet

Identify: Clark depicted a scene where he feeds the dog with doggie treats. The treats are in the bowl in the center of the paper, and the dog which has a white poker-face and black fur is above the treats. A black almond-shaped man who has arms like antennas and no feet is on the left of the dog.

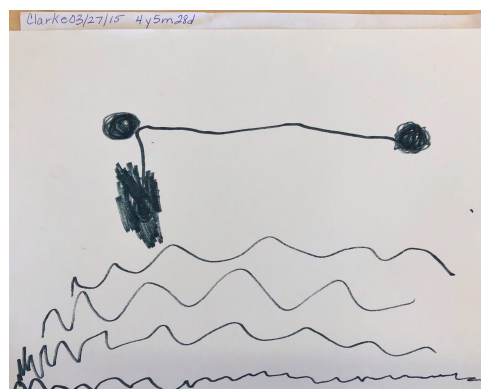
Description: Even though his pet is a cat, he wanted to draw a dog for now. After drawing so many people, he drew a figure like a spider as a person and used “coils” as doggie treats.



Task6: Free drawing

Identify: There are four wave lines on the bottom part of the paper, which is an ocean. Two black balls and a scribble are connected by a line.

Description: He drew the ocean first with the waves, and Dunk, which is the name of a fish who played ball with his friend. I think the reason he drew the ocean is he watched



the cartoon "Splash and Bubbles" and was really into it. "Dunk likes this song so much, because: 'I don't know what I am doing, I just do that...,'" he started singing.

Child's First Name: Isla, Grade: Kindergarten,

Age: 5 years 5 months

Background: Isla loves drawing, and she could well express things she wanted to draw. She was an independent thinker who had her ideas on art. Through her works, I could see that she practiced or drew a lot at home because she drew things proficiently. Her outcome schema was the beginning of the limbs are fused to bodied.

Task 1: Free Drawing

Identify: Isla depicts two girls at play in the yard. The girl who stands in the center has long hair and wears a crown. There are two bowknots bundled in her hair. She has a long neck and her short arms grow from two sides



of neck. There is a diamond and a number five on her dress. Another girl who stays in the right corner has a bowknot ponytail hair and wears a triangle-shaped dress with number six. She put three sunflowers between these two girls. There is a sun on the up-right corner and three butterflies in the sky.

Description: Isla drew her simple personal symbols like grass and sun at the beginning, and she asked me to join them. After I drew a princess, she wanted to copy my princess, so she drew two

girls in the picture. The girls she drew had different hairstyles, clothes, smiles and also eyelashes. In the end, she added some butterflies, and she tried to draw different orientations.

Task2: Drawing of a person you know

Identify: There is a three floor house with a chimney on the right with three smoke puffs

blowing sideways. The triangle attic has a bed and a dresser. There are two rooms on the second floor, the left side one is empty and the right side involves a bed, a dresser and two toys on the floor. On the first floor, a boy is sitting on the floor and playing with his doll on the left part. On the right, the girl with the bowknot ponytail is sitting on the chair and



watching the golden fish in the tank on the table. There are two windows and a door on the first floor two. Outside of the house, a car parks on the right corner and a crescent-shaped moon on the left sky.

Description: She told me that she was going to draw her brother, but she drew a house first. I think because she saw Logan who was the girl sitting next to her drew a house at the first task, so she wanted to have one too. "There is my brother's room, he always trashes his room, so I make his room messy," she said, when she drew some toys on the floor. She was enjoying drawing, and she drew many things which I did not ask. Even though we were supposed to draw only one

person, she began to draw herself after she finished her brother. The things she surprised me with is that she drew a lateral sitting girl.

Task3: Drawing a person by dictation

Identify: Isla drew a key-shaped car. A girl sits in the driver's room, and her two hands manipulate the wheel. A bike is on the left side and a scooter is on the right side of the car. One cloud and one black circle on the sky.

Description: She drew a person driving a car. I highlighted the topic, but she did not want to draw only a



person, and she said: "I need to draw clouds, street, cars and scooters," and continued to draw an electric bike and scooter. She said, "I am not just drawing a scooter, it's electric, so it can go back by itself."

Task4: Drawing of your family

Identify: There is a house on the paper. The triangle roof with chimney on the right sideways with five smoke puffs. In the house, there are four people, including a woman, two girls and a man. The house has a door and two windows on each side. There are two cats, one is on the roof and another is on the ground. A sun wearing sunglasses on the upper right sky.



Description: She counted her family, including her grandma and great-grandma. The house appeared again. During the process, she tried to draw and think the main feature of their family members like her dad wears glasses, so she wanted to use features to describe it. “Oh, wait, I forgot to draw the sun,” she said, so she added the sun at the end.

Part two: Compare and Contrast

Analysis

Art is a window for people to get to know each other. We can know people from their artwork. In the first field visit, I worked only 30 minutes with each of two children, but I felt I knew them for a long time because of art. Clark was a 4 year and 5 month old preschool kid and Isla was a 5 year and 5 month old kindergartener. They all loved to draw and make marks on paper. The symbols/marks they made are the transmitters revealing themselves. As the educator Kerlavage states that, “Symbols are profound expressions of human nature” (Kerlavage, 1998, p.30). In other words, the artwork can reveal people’s feelings, knowledge and experiences naturally (Burton, 1980; Golomb, 2004; Kerlavage, 1998; Wood, 2015). For example, on task four, drawing your family (*see figure 1*), I knew Clark lived with his little brother, his mom, dad and his cat together, also, he calls his grandma “Gaga”, and he told me he loved his little brother, so he drew his brother first. We know

Clark’s family through these symbols in the picture. Isla drew an electrical scooter in task three, drawing a person by dictation (*see figure 2*). In Baltimore, electrical scooters are



Figure 1. Clark's Family



Figure 2. Isla's person by dictation

popular, and we can see them everywhere. Isla picked an element from her experiences to show her life. In addition, children express happiness, excitement, and tiredness by selecting certain kinds of lines and shapes and organizing them (Burton, 1980). From the “feeding a pet” task (see figure 3), we can see the person on the left is different from what he drew before (see figure 1, 2).

Clark was tired to draw people, so he simplified the face to a black circle and hand like an antenna. He seemed to send a signal, telling me he did not want to draw human figures. The interesting thing was that he did not draw any human figures after task six (see figure 4), but only some wavy lines and big dots on his paper. I saw this as an example of how children like Clark express themselves directly, which Burton says “it means that children have in their possession a language with which they can begin to express and communicate to others what they feel and think” (Burton, 1980, p. 8).

The children I met followed the human development process. According to Kerlavage, for language development, four year old children can participate in give-and-take discussion in which they are able to talk about their drawings including complex meaning with others (Kerlavage, 1998)(see figure 9). For example, in Clark’s task six, free drawing (see figure 4), we only can see some lines and balls on the paper, but it became lively after his description. He told



Figure 3. Clark's feeding pet

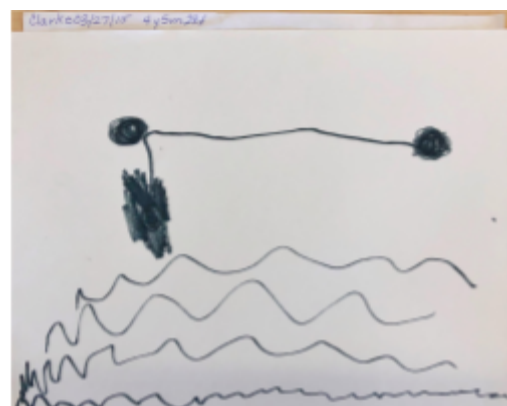


Figure 4. Clark's free drawing

me he drew a Dunk, which is the name of a fish that played ball with his friend in the ocean. This

was seen in the animation "Splash and Bubbles," which he was really into. For the physical/perceptual development, Kerlavage considers four year old children still have limited ability in organizing visual space (Kerlavage, 1998). It is so clear that in the Clark's family (see figure 1), the people are floating on the paper. He did not have enough concept to organize space. However, Isla's pictures are more organized than his. For example, in her family drawing (see figure 5), she divided the house into two parts, roof and room. She drew all the people inside the house and cats outside the house.

Obviously, Isla is one year bigger than Clark, so her perceptual development was better than his. Furthermore,



Figure 5. Isla's family



Figure 6. Clark's drawing a person you know

Burton describes one step which occurred with Clark, as "early symbol making involves naming *in the process of making*" (Burton, 1980, p.13). In other words, the name or story of children's configurations often change during the artmaking process. For instance, in the free drawing (see figure 4), Clark said he drew waves at the beginning, but he later turned it into a submarine.

On the whole, the human development researchers clarify behaviors by age, which helps educators better understand their students and make their classes more efficient.

Different aged kids have different features indicating that they are on a distinct stage. In Teaching children to draw Wilson & Wilson discuss this concept in the context of art and figure drawing. They say that "the first humans are characterized by the head, with features, atop a pair



Figure 7. Isla's drawing a person you know

of legs consisting of two parallel lines, with sometimes two other straight lines protruding horizontally from either side of the head, and known as the “Tadpole” person”(Wilson, 1982, p.59). Furthermore, the limbs are fused to bodies is that “a child is able to show the more extreme human actions”(Wilson, 1982, p.59). From contrary of the schema for a person, Clark’s was a typical figure drawing and Isla was the limbs are fused to bodied. In the concept level, the big slippers story (*see figure 6*) shows Clark had *relational concepts*, which Burton describes as “children construct such relationships of order and comparison and also carry these over into the construction of primitive spatial relationships”(Burton, 1980, p. 8). We can see this in Clark’s pictures (*see figure 6*). Specifically, he felt the right person’s face he drew first was too small, so he created a bigger one on the left; the slippers he put on the right were so big, so he decreased the slippers’ size for the left person. By contrast, Isla had *expressive concepts*, which Burton describes as, “no more than a direct and instantaneous connection of children’s own immediate feelings with products of their actions, it is nonetheless a prelude to something more momentous” (Burton, 1980, p. 8). Indeed, looking at Isla’s picture is more like reading a story book. In drawing a person you know (*see figure 7*), she described a house containing different rooms which had different characteristics; for instance, her brother’s room was messier than hers, so there were many toys scattered on the floor, which demonstrates that Isla had expressive concepts.

Whichever stage/level a child is on, we should understand and respect them and their artwork.

Summary



Figure 8. Children chatting

Art is a natural way to depict, express, reveal people's thoughts, feelings and life, through the drawing experience and outcomes with these two children can be seen. Burton confirms this idea that "visual concepts are constructed from acts of looking and seeing, acts which lead to the grasping of outstanding features in the visual world of objects, events and materials" (Burton, 1980, p.6). Nowadays, many kindergarten-age children spend a lot of free time watching animation, so their favorite characters or stories may become the acts of looking and seeing. Clark really liked "Splash and Bubbles" at that time, so he drew ocean themes when he was in free drawing which he could draw everything he wanted. In the drawing process, these two children did more chatting and exploring than they did drawing techniques, which includes drawing straight lines or proper circles. As Burton says about in the early drawing, children are doing more on the mind engagements of the rudiments of the visual language than the skills (Burton, 1980). Thus, the aim of teaching art for this stage (Kindergarten) is not to train them to be realistic artists, but to encourage them to use art as an interdisciplinary subject to engage thinking and doing in order to develop their motor and sensory functions. The products are not only for validating their thoughts and actions, but for making them reflect on themselves (Burton, 1980).

We, as educators, should accept the unlikely between children and respect their outcomes. Even though some human development stages are divided by age, there are aesthetic differences between each child in the same age. Kerlavage claims this idea in the book that, "Aesthetic development is defined more by the changes that occur in understanding and by experiences with works of art than by age" (Kerlavage, 1998, p.30). My analysis does not have

this vertical comparison, but it shows that the understanding and expressing of subjects are different based on how Clark and Isla have different developments and experiences.

All in all, this field visit is valuable for me in many ways. First, I directly experienced kindergarten's art class. I realized that art is not only for adults to depict life, but also for children, and they even feel more free to express in front of a stranger than adults. Second, I understand more about human development. Every improvement is based on children's own development and understanding, so we cannot blame them if they are not on the stage they are supposed to be. Finally, it gains experiences for myself. I used the knowledge we studied in the class on the real practicals.

Reference

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