

mentor's introduction

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Some investigators, such as Kellogg (1970), have argued that there is a universal pattern of development in children's drawings and art. Others, such as Alland (1983), have maintained that such claims are exaggerated, and Deregowski (1980) has suggested that the drawing of children reared away from Western influences may develop in quite different ways.

Thomas & Silk, 1990, p.39.

Interest in, and questions about, universal or relative explanations of children's drawings have been bandied about in art education writings for many decades. Obviously, this is an unsettled question with some very strong opinions being offered on both sides of the issue, along with all degrees of "in-between-ness." Research reports from other cultures have tended to be ambiguous, or clearly one-sided, about the argument.

Ms. Li-Tsu Chen came to graduate study in art education directly from Taiwan and her immersion in the experiencing of those two cultures offer her a unique point of view about the universal/relativist controversy. Ms. Chen has become interested in the universalist/relativist controversy through a series of experiences and readings introduced during her graduate study at IU. She has looked at hundreds of children's drawings, as work samples executed to the same instructions, from both the United States and Taiwan; she also had taught drawing to children in both cultures. She also has reviewed the extensive literature about children's drawings that either avoids or confronts various universalist/relativist arguments.

The research reported here is a beginning point for a forthcoming dissertation. Do children develop universally in their drawing patterns across all cultures or are there relative differences among children's drawings that reflect the various cultures in which they grow up? Are international communications, such as television and advertising, erasing cultural differences? Are children in either Taiwan or the midwestern United States likely to share more differences or similarities in their drawings? Answers to questions like these are purely speculative at this time. I look forward to completion of the proposed research and Ms. Li-Tsu Chen's answers.

References

- Thomas, G.V., & Silk, A.M.J. (1990). **An Introduction to the Psychology of Children's Drawings**. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf