

Projective-Expressive Techniques Write Up

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Part I: Assessment Results

A House-Tree-Person is a projective test involving the subject drawing a house, tree, and person on a blank sheet of paper. When completed, the drawing is analyzed for dynamic information with regards to how the subject interacts with their environment and various personality variables (Groth-Marnat & Wright, 2016). This projective test was administered on JA, a 10 year old boy who was unfamiliar with this test. JA was directed to draw a house, tree, and person on the blank sheet of paper given to him. Along with the paper, JA was supplied with a pencil with an eraser and markers for coloring. Upon starting the test, JA requested a ruler, which was then supplied to him. JA began drawing the house first, which he described as a “modern” house he once researched. Using the ruler, JA constructed the walls of the house and passed over the same line a few times each. Included in the house section was a closed front door with a window, house number, door bell, mailbox affixed to the house, “House.” written above the door, a rooftop pool with beach umbrella and chair adjacent to it, a second story with four windows, and a garage door with seven equal windows and many small horizontal lines. The face of the house is decorated with large stone blocks, and the shape of the house in general is geometrical and has blunt edges. The house has shading in certain areas. JA expressed concern for the size of the front door relative to the size of the pool chair, “I just realized how big the door is compared to the chair. Let’s pretend the chair is far away,” using perspective drawing techniques to reason with why they are inappropriately sized. Following the drawing of the house, JA drew the tree. JA drew a palm tree with 10 leafy branches, four coconuts, and a trunk that tapered from wide at the top, to thin at the bottom. JA mentioned the bottom of the trunk was thinner so it looked “more realistic to an actual palm tree.” Additionally, JA noted “That is a

horrible tree” and drew it again. The palm tree was the only area of the paper that JA erased and fixed, besides the face of the person drawn. The setting of the picture includes grass (displayed with many little tick marks), bushes, a retaining wall, and the beginning of a driveway drawn by the garage. Additionally, JA drew a turtle by the front door. Last, JA drew himself standing by the front door, waving. There is minimal detail in the body, besides two dots for eyes, a dot for the nose, a smile, hair, a shirt with a pocket square, pants with pockets, hands (no fingers), and feet (no shoes). Additionally, the person is larger in comparison to the front door. Upon completing the drawing, JA said he did not want to use any colors.

During this projective test administration, JA was very silly and was talking to the administrator frequently. JA asked the administrator her favorite number (2), least favorite number (7), and if she liked addition or subtraction more (addition). He then made the house number 792 for this reason. JA was very interested in making this house to his liking and used a ruler to ensure straight lines. Additionally, to make the house look realistic, JA used shading and perspective techniques in his drawing. These contributions are likely linked to his desire to create a good picture, and recreate the one he researched.

Various elements of the HTP projective assessment can be related to various personality traits and the subject’s relationship to their environment (Haworth, 1993). The general size of the house drawn was large and took up most of the space on the paper. Taking up most of the paper suggests a view of the home as overly restrictive and controlling. The house is mostly closed off, but has many windows and a front door. There are numerous details throughout the house, including stone siding, lines and windows on the garage door, numerical details by the front door, a doorbell, and a rooftop pool with furniture surrounding it. The roof can represent a person’s fantasy life, and JA had many things on his roof, which can suggest a person who is

extremely involved with an inner world fantasy. JA's drawing of many windows and a door suggest a strong need for connection with others. Although a missing chimney can suggest passivity or a lack of psychological warmth in a person's home life, geography factors need to be considered. Given the palm tree, this is likely in a tropical setting where chimneys are not needed for warmth. The two pathways leading to the house are short but existent, which suggests JA is open, accessible, and direct. JA drew a retention wall or curb, which can be categorized as defensiveness. This does not seem to be the case, however, this may be another realistic factor that was copied from the original picture JA found. The tree drawn takes up little space on the page compared to the house. The tree has ten branches, which suggests JA has a strong connection with other people. Additionally, the branches are in an upward direction, suggesting JA is ambitious and "reaching" for opportunities. Another piece of realism in the picture is the trunk of the palm tree. Normally, a very thin trunk suggests a precarious level of adjustment, however, JA's trunk drawing merely suggests a strive for realism in the drawing. With regards to the drawing of the person, JA drew a moderately large person. This size of person suggests higher levels of self esteem and energy. Besides this note on the size of the person, all other details are relatively average.

JA revealed a few aspects of his personality and relationship to his environment in the HTP drawing. In the house portion of the drawing, it is suggested that JA lives in a restrictive household, is open to the outside world, has a strong sense of fantasy, has a strong need to connect with other people, and is accessible and direct in his life. With regards to the tree, JA's drawing suggests that he has strong connections with others, is ambitious, and is reaching for opportunities. The person drawing of the HTP assessment suggests that JA has high levels of self esteem and energy.

Part II: Personal Reflection

My experience with this exercise was a good one, and it was interesting to see the drawing happen in real time. As JA was drawing, I tried to predict what he would create. Some things were accurate, others were completely surprising. This test was the first test I've conducted with only a sentence of instructions. It was very open ended, but that is likely the point of the exercise. Determining the meaning behind various aspects of the drawing was somewhat time consuming. This taught me that even if the test is short, the analyzing or scoring of it can be lengthy. It is important to prepare for all aspects of the test, including the scoring, when carving out time to conduct it. This exercise also enlightened me on my impact on the outcome of the assessment. JA was very observant when I was looking at his drawing process. To avoid any anxiety over me looking, I made sure to discreetly take notes of things he mentioned or the method in which he was drawing. Lastly, this exercise taught me to keep an open mind when it comes to expectations. Before scoring, I expected some pieces of the drawing to be important and something I'd analyze later on. This was not always the case, however, and keeping an open mind would allow me to not be as surprised the next time I administer a new test or assessment.

These techniques will be used in practice primarily as a beginning step of a longer process. As mentioned by Haworth (1993), "The test can serve as a non-threatening "opener" before more formal testing and has usefulness with speech handicapped patients." Furthermore, this test is useful with speech handicapped patients which is helpful when trying to facilitate a transition to more verbal tasks. Additional to speech handicapped patients, this test is applicable to those with non-verbal subjects and those who are deaf (Haworth, 2023). In practice, there will be people of all different types with different needs and disabilities, so having this tool as a way

to work through those limitations regarding testing can prove very useful. Another group of people this can be used with is younger children. This test serves as a great rapport-building test for young children, and uses objects that they are familiar with from a young age (Lodha & De Sousa, 2023). As well as younger students, this test has shown useful with junior high school students, specifically to identify markers for depression (Guo et al., 2022) and the overall assessment of suicide in middle school students (Yan et al., 2013). Besides age factors, this test is beneficial with various cultures. Since all cultures have houses, trees, and people, for the most part, this test can be adjusted for accurate norms of the region, and then administered normally. Clinically, this test is useful given its ability to show changes in personality and emotional organization, shift in moods, and cognitive styles (Lodha & De Sousa, 2023). Lastly, this test is useful due to the potential it has to be standardized with its rating scales (item absence, bizarre or twisted, excessive details, and small or simplified) and create a theoretical reference for screenings in the future (Guo et al., 2023). As a future school psychologist, I can certainly see myself using this assessment as part of a larger battery in my future career given these considerations.

Image 1: JA's House-Tree-Person Drawing



**Subject's name was removed by the administrator for anonymity purposes. The subject did not make the black markings in the top left corner.*

References

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