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The joint production of the drawing of a family: an interactional story

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The interpretation of drawings made by school-age children is a classic study field in child psychology. Yet clinical psychologists and researchers in psychology have concentrated more on analysing the semiotic value of a drawing made by the child. The authors of this paper offer an original approach to this graphic realisation, which consists of simultaneously calling upon two siblings and filming this collaborated production of a drawing of the family. Through the example of the negotiation about the parents' sizes, the authors underline the relevance of the filming which enables them to grasp the story of the drawing as a dynamic production, in which the divergences in representations and the interactional process underlying this construction are revealed.

Keywords: drawing of the family; joint activity; intermediary object; interaction; gender

Introduction[1]

The interpretation of drawings made by children at school age is a classic study field in child psychology (Corman, 1967; Widlöcher, 1965). All the studies conducted in this field are more or less based on the fact that, while drawing, the child expresses (in every sense of this verb) a psychological mechanism, a mental state, an intellectual process. The drawing can be either spontaneous or done following more or less strict instructions: this graphic representation is the expression of *something* that is the product of the child's *vision* of his world. This is studied both as part of a diagnostic or therapeutic evaluation, and in a research framework.

As a clinician, the psychologist may use an investigation technique based on the mobilisation of the child's graphic representations. In the dual relationship he maintains with the child, he can indeed use the drawings to support his speech; he may also solicit the child by asking him to produce drawings (they can be of 'free choice', of human figure, of house, of family or other). In this context, the clinician will always have to determine which level of the child's personality the drawing will reveal; in other words, which is the part of a conscious expression and which is the part of unconscious tendencies. Morgenstein (1928) was the first to use the drawing (and the game) as a spontaneous production of young children undergoing psychoanalysis. It has since become common practice to consider the drawing (and more particularly the 'free choice' drawing as a projective test. 'A child's drawing expresses much more than its intelligence or its mental development level: a sort of projection of its own existence and the existence of others, or more likely

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of the way it feels itself and others to exist' (Boutonnier, 1953, p. 25). In the course of interaction, the clinician has access to the drawing child's activity; on one hand, he is indeed able to follow at leisure the drawing process, and, on the other hand, to have at his disposal the outcome of this process, the drawing in itself that can be saved as a trace of the activity. This drawing being finalised, it represents the condensation, the ongoing process of creation, of the dynamic of tracing–erasing that led to it.

As a researcher, the psychologist works at analysing the semiotic value of the drawing. This value is the result of a task of interpretation of the graphic representation being studied. Doubtless to say, this work depends on the production frame, on the conditions under which the drawing-object is being created and, of course, on the drawing-object itself. This drawing-object represents the whole of the graphite marks left on paper support by the child. In other words, and with few exceptions, the interpretation object is the graphic itself, the permanent configuration of marks left on paper by the subject.

We could add that, whether under therapeutic care or subject of theoretical research, the tradition consists in the study of a child's individual production.

Limiting ourselves to the research side of the drawing of the family, we herewith would like to offer a new approach to children's graphic realisations. The new approach relies on a particular construction mode (*vs*. collection) of empirical data on which we shall base our analysis. This proposal results from the differentiated research fields of both authors. One of us works on a regular base with situations of joint conception, by small groups of human subjects, of manufactured, digital, textual or graphic objects (Brassac & Grégori, 2001; Le Ber & Brassac, 2000, for example). The other researcher deals with the fact that siblings (including several pairs of twins), will not come out with the same graphical representation when asked to draw their family. Through his or her drawing, each child describes its own perception, its point of view about the ties that make up the family, the elective closeness and the omissions that reveal the child's specific position in the family network (Mietkiewicz & Schneider, 2005).

This dual origin leads us to the following proposal, expressed in a few words: why not ask siblings to draw their family together and why not film them during their activity? One of the goals of this article is to show the added value the study of a joint graphical production may obtain by taking into account its development. To analyse the process of interaction in the elaboration of a joint drawing of the family, could this be, for researchers in psychology, something new in the understanding of mental determinants of this mental activity? These are the types of questions for which we would like to bring some answers throughout this text.

We shall try to do so by first describing the methodology which we adopted, and the empirical material which we built to this effect. Second, we shall propose an analysis of the interaction of both children, producing jointly this drawing, to conclude finally with the results and discuss the accuracy of such an approach.

Method and empirical material

A clinical approach to a collaborative activity

Traditionally, studies conducted in the interpretation of children's drawings are based on vast collections of drawings made by large groups of subjects. Therefore, it becomes possible to take measures, both qualitative and quantitative, which lead to strong statistical studies whose significance or non-significance will allow to confirm, or invalidate, hypotheses put forward *a priori*. Let us be very clear: our approach is not in line with this methodological paradigm.[2] This is easily understandable, considering the fact that the built-up empirical

material consists of one hour of film for a single couple. It is also easily understandable when one realises that this material is not a finished object but a process leading to a finished object. As stated by Wallon in his brief overview of the studies dedicated to the child's drawing, 'one can only wonder about the few publications referring to this method [of observing the dynamic of the drawing's execution]' (2001, p. 92). Indeed, the difficulty of observing, the little interest in the simultaneous linguistic production and the difficulty in analysing the process of the drawing activity explain that it is rather the statistical work on a high number of completed drawings (as opposed to drawings in the course of completion) that is generally being used. We shall adopt this method of empirical data analysis; it requires developing an observational and ethnographic approach of the activity (Brassac, 2003a). This means that we offer here a monograph of an activity located in time and space. It is the creation process that is of interest for us, the process in its uniqueness and its sustained relationship with the final drawing-object. The results outlook for scientific validation, which we shall obtain on this corpus are as follows: locating consistencies in a great number of situations of jointly created forms. The forms are here mainly graphic (traces left on the sheet) as well as verbal and of body language. You will not find in this article the collection of all the observations carried out, this being another task that we already started. You will rather find *one* study of *one* situation being considered in *its* singularity.

The categories of analysis that are going to be used to complete this study are twofold: the first ones are based not only on the analysis of the speech (the linguistic pragmatism), but also, in a broader sense, on the analysis of the interaction, seen as a modelling of verbal, gestural and artefactual forms (Brassac, 2003b). The first ones have their origin in pragmatic linguistics, the second ones in praxeology (Vernant, 1997). This extension to the mobilisation of bodies and artefacts (here pencil, eraser, sheet) relies on a vygotskian (Vygotski, 1934/1985) and meadian (Mead, 1934/1963) approach. In this sense, we shall bit-by-bit call upon the theory of language acts developed, for example, by Vanderveken (1988) and by ourselves (Brassac, 1992; Trognon & Brassac, 1992).

The theory of the intermediary objects will also help to provide valuable elements (Jeantet, 1998; Vinck, 1999; Vinck & Jeantet, 1995). The second categories of analysis refer to the already classic clinical approach of development, which allow for the understanding of the child's drawing as a creation revealing the choices, the preferences and the rejections of the drawing person. Regarding specifically the drawing of its family, it is customary to consider that the child will express (reveal?) its preferred identifications, through the care with which it will draw some people, or, by contrast, the carelessness with which it will draw others. The most valued figure is usually the one the child draws first, thus showing how this figure becomes obvious to the child, as a spontaneous response to the proposed instruction; the space taken on the sheet of paper being a pointer of the position in the family cluster, as seen through the child's eyes.

Establishing the protocol of the data acquisition

The need to create an adequate environment led us to fulfil specific requirements. The subjects had to be siblings; they had to be between 6 and 11 years old (in order for their graphic productions to be sufficiently sophisticated, especially in their capacity to show the generation and sex differences); they had to agree to be filmed and their parents had to agree too; they had to devote time coming to university premises. In the end, a brother and a sister were chosen as subjects. The eldest, whom we will name Emma, was eight years old; her brother, whom we will name Leo, was six years old. Emma was seated on Leo's left, they did not change place throughout the session. Two cameras were filming them; one facing them

filming in a broad angle, the other pointing at the shared workspace with a slight downward angle. Both wore a lapel-microphone. A PhD student well aware of these recording techniques handled the filming.[3] Both experimenters, two psychology students having written their dissertation about this project, prepared the setting-up.[4] They accompanied the children and stayed with them throughout the session, which lasted one and a half hours.

To give them some sense of the environment, we first asked the children to draw freely, each one on their own sheet. Leo represented two combatants confronting each other with swords. Emma drew a house, drawn almost completely with a ruler. At the completion of both drawings (10 min), they describe briefly what they have done; the experimenters show them the film to see the result on screen ('so you will be able to see yourselves'). After the viewing, the experimenters hand the children a single big sheet (DIN A1 format) along with the following instruction: 'On this sheet, you are going to draw together a picture of your family. Talk it over, come to an agreement in order to draw a single family amongst the two of you' – this instruction being succinctly discussed and written on a piece of paper which will remain in front of them throughout the session. The joint drawing may then begin.

Describing the global sequence of the 'co-drawing'

The empirical material that we built consists of the drawing itself (done with a pencil on a DIN A1 sheet) and of the session recording. This session can be broken down as shown in Figure 1.

The two children start effectively to draw, 50 seconds after the filming begins. These initial moments are busy with a discussion between the experimenters and the children about the instruction. The effective drawing activity lasts 10 minutes. At the end of the session, the children have drawn their father, their mother, the two children (themselves) and a female cat (Minette). One or the other has mentioned the possibility of representing *grandma and grandpa*, as well as *uncle and auntie*, but this was not done. The two children devote the remaining time to writing down the names of each character (above each of them) and signing the picture.

Here is the order in which the characters appear. Emma and Leo begin simultaneously. Emma draws the cat (Minette) and Leo draws his father. While Emma quickly gives up and erases the sketch she drew of Minette, Leo goes on with his task. When it appears to be completed (we shall consider this point later), Emma starts the drawing of her mother (2 min 25 s) and finishes it in 2 minutes (4 min 30 s). A discussion ensues concerning the size of both figures. When this point is settled (5 min 30 s), Leo draws himself (between 5 min 30 s and 7 min 30 s) and Emma does the same (between 7 min 30 s and 8 min 30 s). Emma puts an end to the activity by drawing the cat; she finishes at 10 min 36 s. A brief discussion about having the grandparents and uncle and aunt on the sheet is interrupted abruptly by Emma as she declares, 'we are done' (10 min 47 s).

Instruction		Drawing of the family					Naming and signatures
0 min 00 s	0 min 50 s					10 min 47 s	14 min 02 s
		↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	
.		father	mother	son	daughter	cat	

Figure 1.   The appearance order of the characters.

It is interesting to notice that both children practically never draw at the same time (when one is drawing, the other watches carefully, sometimes by making comments out loud, sometimes by remaining silent). Transitions from one stage to the next are most of the time stated by Emma, in an authoritative tone: 'so you draw yourself now' (5 min 30 s), 'so afterwards we will draw Minette' (8 min 31 s), 'we are done' (10 min 47 s). One will notice that both children represent the figures the same sex as theirs. The interaction story is extremely rich. It sometimes concerns facts that seem very important for the family itself. Thus, if Leo starts representing his father as he wishes to do, his sister asks him quite specifically to draw the father's right arm in such a way as to make him extend his hand towards the mother, not yet drawn but certainly already in Emma's imagination: 'Put your arms extended like this, that way mom can hold hands' (1 min 49 s). Leo will follow this strong advice by completing his drawing with the detail of this right hand at the end of the arm. Another important question, concerning the character's size, persists throughout the major part of the interaction. In fact, this question will deal first with the relation between the sizes of father and mother, and second, with those of both children in relation to the parents. We will examine this question very closely by limiting ourselves to the negotiation of both parents' sizes. The whole of this takes place between 0 min 50 s and 4 min 30 s, when Leo starts drawing the father and when Emma finishes drawing the mother.

Analysing the size representation of father and mother

Figures prior to the erasing

Leo represents *Dad* in front of him, starting the drawing with the feet. After a fruitless attempt, he completely erases what he drew then starts the work again and finishes it by tracing precisely the hand's five fingers. He then informs his sister that he is through, without any oral statement but looking at her laughingly. It is at this moment that Emma starts drawing *Mom's* representation, 'so mom (…) I will draw mom' (2 min 26 s). Her brother watches her attentively, saying: 'hey look at her, isn't she skinny mom you should've put on a skirt, she looks like a little girl (laughs) mom looks like a little girl doesn't she do them bigger her feet (3 seconds) er put her some earrings on' (from 3 min 59 s to 4 min 14 s). At this stage, both parents are drawn; they are side by side and hold each other's hand. After one last graphic precision about her mother's character (the ears), Emma concludes verbally 'that's it' and initiates the next step with an 'ok your turn' addressed to her brother. One could expect both children to start something else, for example their own representation. It is at this very moment that Emma notices the size difference between the two adults they just represented.

Any researcher having access to the final draft, as it is at the end of the session, will notice that some lines have been erased. He will not know however when it has been done. He cannot guess that it was first the father who had been *shortened* and that the mother had an opposite fate; he cannot guess who did the erasing. He can only speculate about these events. It is not impossible however that this may be of great importance for the interpretation of the sibling's graphic production. The method we adopted to build data provides us with a precious edge: we have the drawing's history.

Transcript of the conversation extract

What follows is the transcript of the negotiation between both children regarding their parent's respective size. The fact that we have filmed provides us with precious observations: the gestures and tracings. They are marked with brackets. It is however impossible

to transcribe entirely these elements. This is due to the gestures being continuous (how does one split the pointing of part of the picture, by the one actor not drawing but merely pointing, vaguely with his finger, the route the brother's or sister's pencil takes?). We shall only take notice of those gestures that appeared to us to be the most relevant in the interaction we captured. Furthermore, we have chosen not to transcribe the punctuation for theoretical reasons widely debated in the conversation analysis field, on which we shall not work here (Cosnier & Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1987; Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1990; Levinson, 1983).

4 min 27 s

E	1	ok your turn er mom she [draws an imaginary line between the mother's and the father's feet with the stump of her pencil] is a bit small [drops the pencil, takes Leo's eraser]
L	2	ah ah ah ah [laughs]
E	3	[takes her brother's eraser] you have to shorten your dad here [starts a gesture to erase the father's feet]
L	4	no [pushes back his sister's hand]
E	5	no but look he's too tall
L	6	but who cares dad is
E	7	but no then I would have to change the arms change wait look [erases dad's legs] you know dad you see he is not that tall hey don't move the sheet too much [brushes off the scraps of the eraser with the back of her hand](.) you see [picks her pencil up again and points it at the very spot she just erased] the size of mommy
L	8	[pushes back his sister's hand] mom [laughs] [draws feet at the empty space left by his sister, at the bottom of dad's new shorter legs]
E	9	Yeah dad's taller
L	10	Yeah yeah
E	11	There [puts down Leo's eraser] except that [takes back the eraser and removes mom's legs]
L	12	(inaudible) ah ah ah ah [laughs]
E	13	stop it stop it stop it
L	14	wait I'll take away my things here [brushes off the scraps of the eraser]
E	15	don't move the sheet don't move the sheet
L	16	I'm taking away my things here
E	17	you moved the sheet [draws again mom's legs, taller, as well as feet]
L	18	why are her feet glued together?
E	19	so (.) you you draw yourself here

5 min 30 s

The negotiation about sizes

At the beginning of this sequence both parents are drawn, entirely. The representation of the mother that Emma, being at the left of her brother, realised in front of her, is therefore located at the left of the father (*cf*. Figure 2). The mother's representation just got finished under the watchful eyes of a prescribing Leo: 'mom looks like a little girl doesn't she do them bigger her feet (3 seconds) er put her some earrings on'. From the observation relative to the mother's size, Leo suggests two things: make the feet bigger and put earrings on. These are two ways to render more adult the mother's representation. The syntactic

forms of these two statements indicate that they potentially are directives (Vanderveken, 1988). Emma satisfies only one of them. She puts the finishing touches to the details of her mother's face under the close scrutiny of the boy. She ignores the other suggestion (to grow the mother), therewith leaving her brother likely to be dissatisfied. It is the close look on the drawing-object, which will trigger this request from Leo, ignored by Emma. Indeed, immediately after having finished the detail of the face, while starting to enjoin her brother to go on ('ok your turn'), she hesitates ('er') when noticing the difference in size, which clearly appears on the sheet. Let us point out that, had she *listened* to her brother asking her to 'make her feet bigger', this difference would not have been so clear! In other words, because of its availability to the vision of both children, the drawing-object compensates for the ineffectiveness of her brother's speech on this point, reactivating the question of the size. The ongoing hesitation is in this respect very *eloquent*. Emma states, 'mom she is a bit small' (E1) while joining with the stump of her pencil both ends of the parent's representations. This virtual line clearly goes from left to right and from top to bottom. The mother is really too small! One could interpret Leo's laughs as a sign of *victory* (I told you so!) but we lack some observations to be able to confirm it. In any case, Emma cannot be satisfied with this difference. Rather than doing what her brother was asking (enlarging her mother) she drastically and without consultation applied herself to *shortening* the father: she takes her brother's eraser, puts it next to the father's feet and gets ready to erase while saying 'you have to shorten your dad here' (E3). We notice here a very interesting way of using the two personal pronouns *your* and *you*. Let us consider *your* first. Obviously, it is not just about Leo's father, it is also Emma's father. However, the idea is not to shorten the father, but the representation Leo made of him. Thus, the 'your father' designates the drawing. This, of course, is obvious, but underlines the fact that Emma gives her brother a sense of responsibility.[5] Now, let us consider the *you*. Through this 'you have to', she firmly asks her brother to reduce the size of *Dad*. By doing so, she blames him for having drawn *Dad* too tall. This is of course very interesting, considering the boy's investment
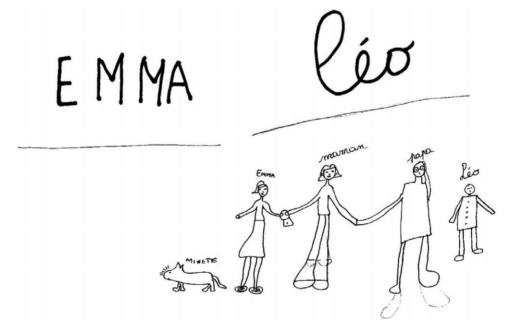

Figure 2.   The family drawn by the two children.

towards his father, but this is also interesting considering the interaction process. Indeed, Emma does not feel responsible for the shortness of her mother (although signalled by her brother). After all, her drawing, following her brother's, could have (should have?) matched the first one done. Furthermore, it is interesting to point out how she simultaneously asks her brother to do as she says while at the same time preventing him to do so. Indeed, Emma takes *Leo's* eraser. She does not grab hers (only 3 cm away from her hand) but she makes a large move to take it on her brother's right.[6] Holding this eraser, she starts the erasing process. Leo reacts immediately by preventing her from touching his drawing. This refusal is done in a multimodal way: he pushes away his sister's hand and says 'no' (L4). His head askew, his fist clenched on his pencil, he appears stubborn when answering a renewed request from his sister 'no but look he's too tall' (E5), he claims 'but who cares' (L6). This is an interesting statement, since he seems to imply that it is not his father's size that matters, but his mother's. Thus, he remains coherent with his first statement referring to the size of *Mom*. His sister's renewed request is a complex act. Indeed, the wording not only allows for her to reprimand her brother ('no but look' (E5)), but also to explicit the preparatory condition (in the technical sense of the aforementioned speech act theory, *cf.* above) to the request she made to her brother, to shorten the father's legs. Leo will give in, allowing the resolution of the negotiation.

The fine analysis of the complete unfolding of this negotiation (which lasted for about 30 seconds) enables the exposure of this very essential difference between the positions of both children, in regards of their parent's size. It is important for Emma that her father be not too tall *compared to* the mother. In other words, Leo distinguishes between each of his parent's size, while Emma has a relative vision of it. Proof of this will be offered during the final size adjustments of the figure's representations.

The size adjustment

We will not know with what term Leo wished to qualify his father as he gives in ('but who cares dad is' (L6)). Indeed, his sister interrupts him by adding a mysterious argument (the size of arms but we do not know to whom they belong to) and by acting out. We shall see that this acting out takes place jointly and in two steps. First step: Leo withdraws his chest close to the drawing and lets Emma erase energetically the lower part of the legs. She does this with her brother's eraser, still in her hand. Along with this jerkily gesture, the comment she makes is another formulation of the previously given justification to her request towards her brother 'you know dad you see he is not that tall' (E7). She finishes her work very carefully by brushing away the eraser scraps, by picking up again her pencil and pointing it at the spot she just changed, saying, 'you see'. At this point, the drawing of the father has become incomplete: he is shorter, but amputated! Second step: Leo cannot leave it that way and intervenes. He pushes back his sister's hand standing in his way and carefully draws the feet, without lengthening the size of the legs. Hence, he totally meets his sister's request. He validated it by bringing an end to the drawing. Thus, he agrees with his sister but he also gives back his *Dad's* integrity. An enigmatic exchange follows. E9: 'dad is taller', L10: 'yeah yeah', E11: 'there'. It is enigmatic because Emma appears to contradict herself, because we do not know to what Leo nods in agreement, nor do we understand why Emma concludes with 'there'. What we do know is that the tracing has led to a local irreversibility: *Dad* became shorter. The first part of E11 marks, speech- and gesture-wise (Emma puts down the borrowed eraser) the realisation of this joint decision, with shared responsibility, following a tight negotiation. At this moment, *Dad* is shorter than he was 30 seconds ago and recovered his integrity; but at this very moment the father

is still too tall, in relation to the mother. That is what motivates the second adjustment, noticeable to whoever looks at the drawing: here too *Mom's* legs have been erased.

The second part of E11, 'except that' marks a renewed awareness on Emma's part. The mother is still too small compared to the father. This time, no negotiation will take place. Emma, reaching for her own eraser (*cf.* note 5), removes the lower part of the representation of her mom's legs and redraws them longer. This erasing and this tracing are done without consulting her brother, without justification, without comment. The conversational exchange taking place parallel to this activity relates to secondary technical aspects, the eraser's scraps ('I'm taking away my things here' (L16)) and the fact that the sheet moves or not ('don't move the sheet don't move the sheet' (E15)). Leo concludes this exchange by asking why his *Mom's* feet are glued together. By doing so, he does not question at all the validity of the transformation made by his sister. On the contrary, questioning one of the parameters not relevant to the modification (the fact that the feet are glued together and not the fact that they are big, as he nicely states it since the beginning with his six-year-old child's approximation), he confirms the adjustment Emma just made. It has to be said that she finally achieved what Leo requested little before the beginning of the extract: 'hey look at her, isn't she skinny mom you should've put on a skirt, she looks like a little girl (laughs) mom looks like a little girl doesn't she do them bigger her feet (3 seconds) er put her some earrings on' (from 3 min 59 s to 4 min 14 s). The earrings have indeed been drawn and she has become taller. *Mom* is no longer short; *Mom* is no longer a child. Emma has satisfied the potential request contained in the statement expressed in the conditional tense and repeated: 'she looks like a little girl'. The mother became an adult.

The differentiated point of view of the two children

We can see here that both children have contrasting views about their parents' size. We have already mentioned this earlier. A justification is found in the actions carried out jointly by the siblings. The negotiation started with an agreement linked to the relation between both sizes. The gestural language makes this very clear. Emma does not see her father as being too tall, she sees him as being taller than the mother (the virtual line descends to the right of the drawing). She wants to get her brother to *shorten* the father. We notice a resistance on Leo's part, who made a tall representation of the father. We have shown that his feeling is not about the relation between both sizes but their symbolic value ('but who cares'). The fact that the mother appears to be small is mainly perceived by Leo as the fact that she resembles a little girl. On the contrary, for Emma, it is the realistic nature of the relation between the sizes that prevails. The proof of it being that the father's shortening is not enough. She starts immediately and without consultation to lengthen the size of the mother (further elements appearing as they negotiate the size of both children support this hypothesis), Leo validating the mother's lengthening.

On the interaction scale we see a subtle play of convergence of interests and signs of autonomy. Both may accept the final state. Leo may do so because he was able to complete the drawing of his *Dad* (admittedly less tall but tall nevertheless) and because he obtained that his *Mom* resembles a mom and not a little girl, meaning an adult. Emma may do so too because she managed to make the size relation more realistic (in the end, the father is taller than the mother, but only slightly). This intense negotiation took place in several ways. It leads to a jointly accepted decision, which updates itself in a non-reversible transitional permanent way (let us not forget that the drawing is done with a pencil and is as such erasable). The interaction between both children, mediated through the use of tracing instruments, led to a graphic production for which they clearly share responsibility.

On the clinical scale, a first observation could be about the spontaneous distribution that takes place between both children: each of them will draw 'its' parent without raising any question amongst them. When Leo states 'I'm drawing dad', Emma will make no comment; nor will Leo react to Emma's assertion 'mom, I'm going to draw her'. Despite the fact that the instruction explicitly requested both children 'to come to an agreement', this non-negotiated task sharing can be translated as the consequence of the projective identification which leads most of the time, instruction permitting, the child to draw a figure sexually identical to its own. Machover (1949), whose work has been confirmed by all the authors who since took an interest in this topic, established that, when it comes to drawing a 'human figure', the frequency of drawing one's sexually identical figure is significantly higher. Therefore, it is to no surprise that this brother and sister decide to draw the parental figures of their own gender before representing themselves. One can formulate the hypothesis that this question raises no debate due to the sibling's mixed gender. Emma and Leo are respectively eight and six years old, ages at which the gender differentiation is of a modest expression, mainly with hair and clothing details (Greig, 2000). The parents' representations, which they suggest, are well in line with this apparent desexualisation, characteristic of the latency period. And so, *Mom*, although wearing pants, this by the way being questioned by Leo: 'you should've put on a skirt', is a woman through her hairstyle animated with a sweeping movement, through the wearing of earrings and the presence of a handbag, a typical feminine accessory. As of *Dad*, he wears a sweater and pants, has short hair and wears glasses. The signifiers being used to differentiate the sexes suggest that both children possess the graphic means in line with their chronological age to indicate the belonging to a gender (Perron & Perron-Borelli, 1996).

If each child can choose which figure of the parental couple to draw, it is nevertheless not free to represent it as it wishes. The instruction requires a single drawing of the mutual family and insists on the need to reach an agreement, so as to compel each to take into account the other's advice, orders and suggestions. The written reminder of the instruction, the presence of both experimenters and of the cameraman, are enough incitements to not derogate from this formal request. The way Emma and Leo behave shows that they are anxious not to let the other proceed to its own liking: they hardly ever draw at the same time and only rarely and briefly allow themselves autonomous and concomitant tracings. Concerning the parents' size, whether in width or in length, it is obvious that it divides both children, even if the figures' thickness does not lead to redrawing the traces. Leo's parents are more imposing than Emma's, the latter criticising him for a father too fat: 'hey, wait, not too fat you exaggerate here a little dad he is not that plump', whereas he considers very frail the mother drawn by his sister: 'isn't she skinny mom'. Beyond the worry, by the way clearly denied by Leo ('but who cares …') but displayed by Emma to convey the true corpulence of the figures, what is at stake between both children is far more the prestige of the parent which is not measurable by its real size but by the dimension of the symbolic space it takes up on the sheet. In other words, Leo's dad is taller than Emma's dad and Emma's mom shows a smaller difference in size with her dad than Leo's parents. To shorten a dad, to lengthen a mom is trying to reach a consensus whereas the projective identifications bring Leo to draw a tall Dad and Emma a Mom not much smaller than her spouse.

Discussion

Filming produces observables that allow comprehension the children's activity and not only the mere activity's result. More precisely, the analyst considering the drawing sees

perfectly well that both parents' legs have been worked on: they clearly show traces of erasing. Yet, he cannot give any value to these erases. This can be a problem, since it is obvious that legs having been erased and retraced have a different value altogether if the modification work is done by Emma, by Leo or both jointly – the result of a negotiation or not, the result of an individual activity or not. There is no use to further develop this point since it is so obvious that the author and the way to rectify are linked with the representation that each of them has of their parents, hence of their family. And this is one of the very topics of this kind of study, to work with the significations contained in this graphic. The recording mode offers the possibility to trace the event, which leads to the drawing-object. It allows indeed capturing the phenomenon, which is essentially short-lived. Wordings and gestures erase themselves as they are carried out. Obviously, graphite and eraser traces remain on the sheet but not their story. It is this progression from unstable to stable that becomes ground material for analysis, the value gain which we strongly believe in, as it allows for a subtle analysis. Of course, this type of experience enabling the kind of study relative to children's graphic production could hardly be used for a quantitative research. We claim, however, that its monographic aspect brings added value to our work.

Conclusion

From a clinical point of view, one can easily notice how two children of the same family do not represent the same 'reality'. The obvious deserves to be underlined: if, being outside the family structure, it is possible to offer an 'objective' representation of it, taking into account the chronological ages, the physical appearances, the ways to dress, etc., being a member of this family, one can only offer an eminently subjective point of view. Being from the same family results in having a specific perception of it, which varies, according to the place one holds, in such a way that the forced upon collective drawing becomes a disruptive exercise. This study about Emma and Leo's co-drawing of their family, and more precisely about the size of the parental figures, nicely illustrates the specific position each holds in the shared but also so different family cluster.

The relation between both sizes appearing on the final drawing is the result of an interactional process. The study of this process was made possible by the data's construction mode (filmed joint activity). Of course it would be better to repeat this type of observations in order to be able to work on a large number of co-drawings. This would highlight the regularities, if not the rules (should they exist), controlling the joint production of drawings of the family. In other words, it appears that beyond the monographic aspect of this type of study, the horizon of the statistical treatment is at reach (with still a long way to go); in the same way that the ethologists have accumulated observations in order to unveil the invariants in the animal behaviour. Consequently, going through the analysis of singularities is quite essential.[7] This procedure has to be supported by a method of data build-up enabling the study of the joint forms production dynamics and giving access to the interactional story leading to the drawing as a completed product.

Notes

1. The original version of this article 'La production conjointe d'un dessin de famille: un histoire interactionelle' was published in *Bulletin de Psychologie, 61*(3), 2008.
2. However, the reader can refer to note 6.
3. We would like to thank Jean-Charles Hautecouverture for his precious help.
4. They made possible the following analyses; thank you Elodie Petesch and Géraldine Jeannot for the quality of your work.

5. Let us point out, alongside this analysis, that the use of personal pronouns is recurrent all along the session, referring sometimes to real figures, sometimes to represented figures. They are quite often accompanied by the pointing at the drawing by means of finger, hand, tracing side of the pencil or non-tracing side of it. Each time, this difference between the referents to these personal pronouns (real figures *vs*. represented ones) refers to questions of responsibility of both children towards the representation modes. This could be the object of a specific study about the link between the production of the graphic form and the children's co-responsibility towards the intra-family symbolic of this drawing.

6. Here we have another recurrent observation: everything seems to point to the fact that the tracing and erasing instruments were tied to their representation. The only time Emma intervened in a concrete way on her brother's drawing (to finish the arm stretched towards the mother to be done), she did it by grabbing her brother's pencil to drop it in the split of a second later to draw the mother's hand.

7. It is obvious that, for us, the event in its particular nature is a subject for a scientific study. This being said, we do not follow literally Bachelard's quotation, which headed this text. According to us, one should not be confined by a singular approach. We herewith propose a path in relation with the production of children's drawings, which could (admittedly not an easy task) fit a study supported by a large number of data and consequently by a statistical treatment.

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