

Draw it! How to Solicit Drawings in Your Work

Anthropologists have not routinely incorporated participant drawings into their research (design anthropology excepted), in part because they believed a camera or movie camera could serve them equally well. Yet, it is not possible to photograph how a person conceptualizes a situation/issue as they think about it. Drawings offer a window into our own cultural models.

Why ask participants for a drawing?

- You gain more insight into an individual's way of thinking than simply inquiring about their outlook.
- A person's drawing can be compared with their statements to validate their interviews.
- Drawings illustrate subgroup similarities and differences, with consensus views emerging.
- Drawings are an intriguing and fun activity during an interview or a workshop, because:
 - Participants appreciate the challenge (once they get over that initial fear of: *Oh, I can't draw!*)
 - Creating a sketch can be done *quickly* (i.e., in about one minute!)
 - Participants enjoy explaining their drawings.
- Sketching is flexible since it can be done both in-person and virtually.
- When you integrate visual images of the culture or subculture into your work, you contribute to cultural models theory in a tangible way.



What process do you follow?

1. Decide on the topic you want to explore.
2. Follow this three-step sequence in asking about that topic:
 - **Describe:** *Talk about how your team worked together.*
 - **Draw:** *Would you draw me a picture of those interactions?*
 - **Explain:** *Now tell me what you have drawn.*
3. Analyze the statements and drawings
 - Conduct content analysis of the **Describe** statements
 - Conduct visual analysis of the drawings
 - Compare each drawing to its **Describe** statement
 - Compare **Explain** and **Describe** statements
4. Discover the emerging insights as you proceed through the three-step sequence:
 - **Describe-Draw:** Novel content is added to the drawings beyond the initial statements
 - **Explain-Describe:** Drawings enhance interviews with stories and perspectives

What kinds of topics work well?

- Topics where variation is expected (e.g., how you think about networking; how you interpreted the outcome of a meeting; how you understand risk management; how you grasp the essence of the group's belief system)
- If you seek a comparison, ask for two drawings (e.g., current culture vs. ideal future culture; attributes of the new department vs. former department; virtues of being an independent consultant vs. a full-time employee).