

3 **The Promise of Drawing as Visual Method in Middle Grades Research**

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ABSTRACT

Although drawing has been used as research tool for well over a century in the fields of psychology and anthropology, drawing remains overlooked and underutilized in educational research. This article examines the promise of visual methods, and of drawing in particular, in accessing middle schoolers' perceptions as a means of informing the middle school reform movement. First I define drawing as a research tool, including the historical evolution of the method and its various processes. Next I present a sampling of studies utilizing drawing in middle grades research. Then I reflect on the major issues and debates related to the method, concerning in particular issues of reliability and validity. Following this, I offer general considerations for employing drawing as a visual method. The article concludes by addressing the question of the promise of drawing as a method in middle grades research.