Werner’s theory of physiognomic perception in children is a key idea when trying to understand how a child perceives the world. In my project, I used children’s’ reactions to the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001 because it was a very tragic event that may be hard for children to handle or even understand as it is. The children viewed pictures with sad music and patriotic music. Their emotions grew stronger, and they drew pictures that expressed these feelings. Werner’s theory proved to be VERY true in the results. One could see his ideas of eidetic imagery, self/object differentiation, pictorial representation, and synesthesia (the combining of senses to express an emotion.) Werner believed that children around the age of 10 and 11 could express their emotions in drawings and connect themselves to the world around them. There are many stages or development, and even though Werner does not precisely categorize them, his theory is very useful in understanding children’s view of the world in connection to themselves.

Werner was born in 1890 in Vienna, Austria. He was a musically orientated child, playing the violin by the age of 7. He attended the University of Vienna with the intent of becoming a music historian or a composer. His love of music became part of his developmental theory on the connection of music and art in the senses, or better known as synesthesia. While studying music, he
became interested in Kant’s philosophy and study of psychology, so he changed his major to Philosophy/Psychology. In 1917, he joined the Psychological Institute at Hamburg where he became a Gestalt psychologist. As a Gestalt psychologist he studied how people perceive things in parts and as a whole with the main focus on peoples sense of things around them as a whole. He studied in many schools in Leipzig and Berlin, which also influenced his view of development in human beings. While at Hamburg, he wrote his first and more famous book, *Comparative Psychology of Mental Development*. In 1933, the Nazis dismissed him from Hamburg because of his Jewish background. He moved to Holland and eventually to the United States where he researched and taught at Wayne County Training School in Michigan, Brooklyn College and Clark University. He and Kaplan published Werner’s second book, *Symbol Formation*, in 1963, which focused on symbols and their connection to words and meanings. He studied various cultures, societies, brain injured children and schizophrenics as well.

Werner was a developmentalist, and his main focus was on people’s comprehension of something as a whole by combining all the 5 senses. This combination is called synesthesia; when a stimulus is applied to 2 or more of the senses to create a more “whole” understanding of a certain event. In his study of children, he found that they live in a phenomenal world that focuses on their life “at hand.” Other theorists use egocentric to describe this phenomenal world. To break out of this world, they go through a series of developmental steps. He
stated that most children under the age of 5 do not comprehend the outer world, and the reason why most adults do not remember their first 5 years is because of a type of infantile amnesia. He did not totally follow this theory that many other psychologists used, but he did refer to it in order to show how a child as he/she develops begins to interact/understand the outer world. Once a child can differentiate between self and object, a child can build a higher understanding. This is when a child can draw pictures that are beyond scribbling, and they can actually represent something in them and around them in a picture. However, the key to Werner’s drawings was the child’s ability to relate the world to himself/herself. This perception is expressed in what Werner calls Physiognomic perception. Also, eidetic imagery emerges under this perception of the world, and eidetic imagery is basically photographic memory. Eidetic imagery is the child’s ability to experience an intense event, keep a vivid image of it in their head, and express it in a drawing. Physiognomic perception is not possible without all of these pieces. The idea is that a child perceives something; the body uses all the senses together to create a specific feeling and when put into a drawing, the child uses facial expressions especially and bodily gestures to express the emotion. Most adults take on a geometric-technical perception of the world, which is basically a literal and realistic approach, while the child’s physiognomic perception is emotionally filled and full of life. An example of this is an adult may see a cup lying sideways, but a child would see the cup as “tired.” Also, in drawings, if a child was attempting to draw something ”happy or bright“
he/she may draw a figure with a large face smiling AND that smile would match the smile on the sun shining above the figure. This shows the connection between the child and the world, and also it can express eidetic imagery too. In eidetic imagery the child exaggerates the size of the most important figure of the drawing. This level in children can even extend to a very conceptual level when they add abstract dimensions or words to describe feelings. Words are a concrete form of physiognomic perception. All these definitions come together to describe the way children perceive the world around them in connection with their own emotions towards it.

Using Werner’s theory of physiognomic perception, self/object differentiation, eidetic imagery, and synesthesia, does combining the sense of hearing and sight in an intense situation cause a child to draw a picture that is more directed at a particular emotion? Also, as a side question, should the news networks broadcasting the “War on Terrorism” use “sad songs” or “patriotic songs” in connection with pictures? Which affects the children of America more negatively/positively? I tested this experiment on the 5th grade class at St. Elizabeth of Hungary Catholic School in mid-afternoon on November 7, 2001. The class was made up of about 22 children, boys and girls, and they were very anxious to be involved in such an experiment. The children were tested under a control situation. The children watched a slide show of pictures with NO music taken from the September 11th attack. Then they drew a pictorial representation of their emotional reaction to the pictures they had just seen. Then the group of
22 watched the slideshow again with the “sad song” and drew a picture. This process was repeated again, but they watched the slideshow a third time with the “patriotic song” and drew a picture. Surprisingly, the experiment worked almost perfectly because the children did change their emotions and perception of the terrorist attacks drastically. In the control drawing where no music was played, the children drew pictures that mostly had a depiction of “what happened that day.” All of them except a couple had the twin towers in them and the emotions varied from child to child. One child, Katie, cried when she saw the slideshow with no music. This showed that their pictorial representations only depended on one sense, sight, to create a feeling. Amazingly, after watching the slideshow again with the sad song, many of the children changed from scared or mad to sad to match the song. This was a pure example of synesthesia because they combined their senses of seeing and hearing to create a totally new emotion. After the third trial, many of the children changed with the music and drew patriotic scenes or war-like scenes. The vengeful scenes shocked me the most, but most of them were happy, upbeat and patriotic. Their patriotic reaction again, shows synesthesia, which is the basis of physiognomic perception.

The children expressed physiognomic perception in all their pictures, and surprisingly many of them were exactly what Werner describes in his writings on children’s perception. The child expresses a connection between self and objects but differentiates between them as well. For instance, Monica expresses feeling
patriotic by drawing a girl with a flag on her shirt, and she is standing next to a flag. She understands that they are two separate entities, but she connects inner feelings to the outer world. When Sean Luke drew a boy with a tear in one eye and fire in the other, he was drawing a conceptual, abstract feeling of sadness and anger. However, this is only the inner feeling, but since he drew the boy standing in front of the world, that shows that the world ALSO feels sadness and anger. Synesthesia can also work on a level of color and feeling. Most of the children drew almost all of their pictures, especially the pictures in connection to the patriotic song in red, white and blue. These colors represent America, and express a feeling of patriotism. One of my students was Eric. He was an amazing child because he drew very abstract drawings. The first was road kill because when he saw the pictures it “made him think and it made him sad,” and he drew the road kill because it reminded him of the same feeling. This is the highest level of understanding I found in all the children. Monica and Eric were both very symbolic and showed Werner’s highest physiognomic conceptual level. They had the ability to understand what was happening, organize it, express and emotion, but use other symbols outside of what they saw in the slideshow. The second drawing Eric gave was an eyeball looking out and seeing the action, which I found very creative. His last drawing was patriotic with a torn flag and the saying, “stand strong.” Also, other children showed eidetic imagery. After watching all the pictures in the slideshow a couple of them actually drew Bin Laden or people jumping out of the buildings, which were NOT included in the
slideshow. The two I focused on were Michael and Adam, who drew Bin Laden and Marco, who drew the people jumping out of the World Trade Center. Their ability to do this shows the children saw some vivid image, took interest in it, retained the image, and could take it from memory (like photographic memory.) The ability to use eidetic images is also a part of physiognomic perception.

Some limitations I had were that the children knew about the Terrorist attacks, but they had various points of view and exposure to the events that happened on September 11th. It was also very difficult to evaluate some drawings. I actually told the children that they could put a word that describes their feelings, which most of them did and that allowed me to evaluate easier. My greatest setback was the time allotted for this presentation. Because of the lack of time, I would not be able to show all the drawings in detail like I would want to. Each drawing has so many sides to it, and there are so many amazing little touches to each individual picture.

So, what do Werner and the Terrorist attacks have to do with one another? The children’s drawings expressed Werner’s ideas perfectly in that after listening to the music and watching the slideshow, the children based their drawing on their emotional response, which coincided with the music they heard. Werner’s theory proved to be true that children at the age of 10 or 11 are in touch with the world, but they base their understanding of it on what they see, hear, touch, smell, or taste. When one combines these senses, it creates a more intense emotion/feeling. The children already had views of what happened on
September 11\textsuperscript{th}, but their feelings were very mixed, and they changed their perspective in connection to what they heard in the music. Should the news be careful what kind of music they play with the tragic pictures they show? I believe they should. Children do not think on the logical, geometric-technological level that we do. They live in a phenomenal world where they have physiognomic perception. They attach emotion to everything they see whether it is a cup or if it is a terrorist attack on New York City. The key to their perception of the world is how you present it to them. Werner states that children and adults have intersensory experiences, but with children their feeling towards something outside of himself/herself is extremely emotionally orientated. Remember, it is not only what a child may see on the news, but it is also what they hear.

\footnote{I have many of my favorite drawings from the children evaluated in my observation journals}