

Understanding Changes In Time: The Development Of Diachronic Thinking In 7- To 12-year-old Children

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Deterioration and Recovery of Draw-A-Person IQ Scores in the Repeated Assessment of the Naglieri Draw-A-Person Test in 6- to 12-Year-Old Children

AQ: 11

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The study investigated whether mental age in children, as assessed by the IQ in the Draw-A-Person (DAP) test (Naglieri, 1988), can be improved by practice. In addition, it was tested whether children needed novel content to keep up their performance level during test repetition. The DAP test was given to 6-, 8-, 10-, and 12-year-old children ($N = 80$) 3 times. In addition, they drew a police figure 2 times, with task sequence counterbalanced. Repeated drawing resulted in significant omission of detail and deterioration of scores, but the novel task instruction temporarily recovered the IQ scores. This did not occur in the reverse sequence of the tasks, with the less specified DAP instruction given in the 2nd half of the drawing series. Furthermore, structural regressions in the human figure drawing could be observed in individual cases. However, 12-year-olds did not need the external introduction of novel content to maintain their IQ score. Correlations showed that this age group redefined their drawing plan on each repetition, and often created unique figures on each occasion, even if the instruction had stayed the same.

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Keywords: Naglieri DAP test; IQ scores, mental age, updating, deterioration, regression

The distinction between mental age and chronological age is an important differentiation in developmental psychology that allows clinicians and school psychologists alike to assess whether a child is achieving below or above his or her age according to his or her date of birth. This study investigates whether mental age can be improved by practice. Although retest reliability of intelligence tests typically assesses whether a score is stable across repeated sessions over days, weeks, or months, we were interested in whether children can improve their mental age within a single session. We used the IQ score of the Naglieri (1988) Draw-A-Person Test (DAP) as measurement, as it is one of the most widely and internationally used screening tests of children's intelligence. Beyond the mere repetition, we also introduced novel content into the test instruction in order to make the task more interesting to children.

The Naglieri DAP Test

The drawing of the human figure is an early, if not the earliest, activity of children when they begin to use a pencil (Campbell, Duncan, Harrison, & Mathewson, 2008; Chan & Louie, 1992; Cox, 1993; Cox & Parkin, 1986; Freeman, 1975; Goodnow, 1977; Lange-Küttner, 2009; Silk & Thomas, 1988). Because drawing the human figure is and always has been such a widespread activity in children, Goodenough (Goodenough, 1926; Goodenough & Harris, 1950) pioneered a human figure drawing test where a score was calculated based on the amount of detail that is specified by the child. The human figure drawing test was found to correlate moderately to highly with IQ and cognitive development until adolescence (Abell, Horkheimer, & Nguyen, 1998; Abell, Von Bruns, & Wate, 1996; Abell, Wood, & Liebman, 2001; Holtzman, 1993; Naglieri, 1993; Sisto, 2000). The human figure drawing test is still worldwide in use in order to diagnose intellectual development and retardation in children (e.g., Bacchini, Amodeo, Vajro, & Licenziati, 2003; Bombi, 1995; Cannoni, 1993; Chappell & Sletiz, 1993; Cox & Cotgrave, 1996; Dandji, 2002; Dennis, 1960; Goldman & Gilbert, 1992; Golomb, 1977; Jing, Yuan, & Liu, 1999; Kay, 1989; Kifune & Tachibana, 1991; La Voy et al., 2001; Loxton, Mossert, & Moffatt, 2006; Marlew & Connolly, 1996; Naglieri & Pfeiffer, 1992; Richter, Gruesel, & Werle, 1989; Taborda de Velasco, 1993; Vedder, van de Vijfijken, & Kook, 2000). Norms were updated by Harris (1963) and in the Naglieri (1988) DAP test. Socioeconomic differences in children's background were found to be not relevant for the human figure drawing test (Golomb, 1977; Willcock, Imuta, & Hayne, 2011).

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