

Drawing development



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Explain and critically analyse stages of drawing development as described by Luquet and Piaget.

Luquet was one of the first to start researching into the development of drawing using a cognitive development theory and releasing a book in French during 1927. He described differing stages of drawing development which a child will pass through; this became known as the stage account. Luquet thought that after a period of scribbling that children go through, there were four stages of realism which children will also go through. These were thought to be fortuitous realism, failed realism, intellectual realism and visual realism.

Fortuitous realism shows the child's drawing as mostly scribbles but the child can see real life objects within the marks. The child will do this again and again and notice these 'accidental' representations, until they reach the point where they will set out intending to draw something representational from real life.

The child will be entering the second stage which is failed realism when they consistently set out with the intent to draw something resembling real life. During this stage an adult can see what the child has set out to draw although it can look like there are many mistakes with important features missed out and objects not always where they should be, (such as a child's drawing of a parent, where the parent has a face but no body, with its legs and arms extending out from the head).

Intellectual realism occurs when improvements of the child's concentration and attention occurs, meaning the drawing will depict prominent important features of the object. This is the stage where the child will feel it is

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important that the defining features in the shape are drawn. To achieve this, the child will use transparency, draw certain features as if like a plan, and draw certain things broken down. However this perspective is different to how the object is seen in real life and the child notices this and will start to become concerned about drawing this way.

This leads to the child wanting to draw life like representations of an object and this takes the child into the fourth stage, visual realism, which means that the child will draw an object from one perspective and will only draw the object's features from the same perspective.

In 1956 Piaget took the work of Luquet's (1927) stages of drawing to use to develop his framework, which too was using a cognitive development theory, Piaget didn't see drawing as a special part of development, but rather a window into the general cognitive development of a child. For him, a drawing showed the cognitive competence of a child rather than what stage of development they were at. For the most part, Piaget agreed with Luquet's theory and both of their frameworks has similar stages of development for children's drawing. There are certain strengths for their theory which include that they seem to explain 'seeming' stages of acquisition, supporting evidence for this was shown by Clark (1897) who studied children aged 6 to 16, they were asked to draw an apple with a hatpin passing through it, the younger children were found to draw a continuous line while the older children tended to only draw the visible parts of the pin, and Freeman & Janikoun (1972) who studied cups that were drawn by children. The cups had a flower pattern and were positioned so that handle or flower pattern was either visible for the child or not visible for the child, they found that they

younger children drew the handle even when it was not visible where as the older children only drew what they could see. However, the weaknesses for Luquet/Piaget's stage theory are that the roles of culture and environment had not been taken into consideration. Evidence against their stage theory has been shown by Selfe (1977, 1995) who studied artwork of gifted children and autistic savants. She studied a young girl with autism who could draw remarkable pictures, the drawings she studied were produced by the child between the ages of 3 and 9, and said that the girls pictures were remarkable because they were done while she was so young and because Nadia (the young girl) did not show that she had any type of ability to see conceptually. This goes towards showing that not all children will go through the stages that Luquet and Piaget suggest, but whether this is just for children with conditions such as autism is not currently known. Barret, Beaumont & Jennett (1985) also provide evidence against Luquet and Piaget's stage theory by talking about the instructions which the children received, for instance, did the children receive standard instructions (with the instructor saying " draw exactly what you see from where you are sat") or whether the child received explicit instructions (with the instructor saying " draw exactly what you see from where you are sat, look at it very carefully so you can draw it just as you see it"). They found that when children received the standard instructions 11% of the children got the drawing correct, and when the children received the explicit instructions 65% of the children got the drawing correct.

According to Luquet (1927), children move gradually from one stage to the next and that they can still draw from pervious stages in when they are in

that last stage, this is because they may still want to represent something in a different way. He suggests that the reason children will draw the same things over again without them varying much is not due to habit but that they prefer to draw it in that way. Luquet's theory should not be considered as just a stage theory as he had many other points to add to it, including the two above, for this reason children's drawing ability should be seen as more of a fluid motion, since a child will progress through the stages but can easily slip back if they want to, allowing them to represent not only the part of the object that they see but the whole of the object.

Kellogg (1970) used a generalist theory and took a different approach by suggesting that drawings of children are just patterns as children only draw things that show what they perceive as 'good form'. She found that usually when a child reaches 5 or 6 years old, that most children will be able to draw a fairly accurate and complete person; this is because by this age most children will have formed a drawing formula which allows them to continuously and consistently draw an accurate picture of a person. She thought that some shapes can be seen in children's scribbles and that it is these shapes that can then be used to form a picture. Kellogg did agree that drawing made use of the base of representational experience but says that the use of the lines would differ. Kellogg did come up with a descriptive classification that had the appearance of developmental progression by looking at thousands of children's drawings and examining them closely. These drawing showed that the development passed from basic scribbles then diagrams, then shapes finally moving to combining shapes, she

suggests that when a child reaches that stage the child is functioning as an artist.

Willats (1977) used a perceptual theory but agreed that drawings can be seen as representations but thought that children could possibly experience perceptual problems when they try to draw a 3D image on paper (a 2D space). He also suggested that children can change the solutions to these problems as they grow older and develop. Willats (1977) took children aged from 5 to 17, and showed them a real scene, the children were asked to draw what they saw from a fixed view point. When the children had finished their drawing Willats chose to classify the drawings using a drawing system which gave a certain score to a picture. The score was given based on the number of correct representations of occlusion by overlap. There are many drawing systems and during this investigation six were found, and it was shown that it was the older children who used the more complex systems. Willats found that there were discrete stages at which the development took place which was found to cover all the ages of the children tested, this also showed that the ability to use overlap appears continuous, with few children using overlap at under 9 years old with children learning fast between the ages of 10 and 12 years old.

Arnheim (1974) used a generalist theory and had suggested that a child will draw an object which will show the defining features (as the child sees them) in the simplest way for the child to be able to draw them within a piece of paper (2D space). One example that was given of this is that a child will most likely draw an animal from the side so that the relationship between its legs, tail, and any other defining features are visible allowing

people to clearly see what animal it is, while a child will draw a person from the front, allowing the facial features to be depicted and also showing the symmetry of these features making it clear that it is a person. This was supported by Ives & Rovet (1979) who consistently found that children of any age who had passed the scribble stage, and were asked to draw an object that was familiar but without seeing the object, all used those specific ways of drawing.

Luquet and Piaget are the two big names when it comes to looking at the development of drawing in children, but much more research has been done since Luquet's initial research in 1927 which was popularised in 1956 by Piaget. They both took the cognitive development approach to drawing development which may have been why they both agreed on the stage theory, with research by others looking into different approaches to drawing development. There is a lot of support for Luquet and Piaget's theory of stages of drawing development, and although it has a few criticisms, the main one being that it does not account for any cultural differences, most psychologists will agree that there is some form of stages of development that a child will go through when it comes to drawing development. Another criticism of Luquet and Piaget is that it does not think about the children with such developmental conditions as autism and asperger syndrome. These conditions can involve delays and impairments in the development of the child's communicative and social skills, which may delay the child in some area's of development, while other children with these types of disorders have been shown to be good at certain things which including drawing, with some children showing remarkable advancement in drawing. It also depends

on the instructions that the children are given as to whether they get the drawing correct or not, and so the instructors have to be careful how they ask the children to draw the object otherwise it may influence how they draw the object.

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