Beyond divergent thinking: Measuring creative process and achievement in young children

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Abstract

Creativity is an elusive construct that is difficult to measure in children, and divergent thinking tasks have been overused and may be unreliable as measures of creativity (Baer, 2011). This study examines creative process and achievement in children using a problem-solving task (Daehler & Chen, 1993). Children (N=98) ages 4 to 6 tried removing a ball from a jar using common objects. Success with retrieving the ball was a measure of creative achievement. Creative process was assessed by coding creative behaviors such as object exploration, combinations, manipulation, and ball retrieval attempts. Results suggest differences in creative behaviors between successful and unsuccessful children. Successful participants created more unique object combinations ($p=0.02$), spent more time manipulating ($p=0.05$), and spent less time attempting to retrieve the ball ($p=0.02$) than unsuccessful children. Results suggest that this task moves beyond divergent thinking assessments by measuring both creative process and achievement in children.