

The logic of interpreting evidence of developmental ordering: Strong inference and categorical measures.

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Abstrak

Developmental ordering is a fundamental prediction of developmental theories and a central issue in developmental research. However, logically sound evidence of developmental ordering is difficult to obtain. This article analyzes the logical basis of testing developmental order hypotheses with categorical measures. Depending on whether saltatory (i.e., discrete) or continuous developmental changes are being assessed, the observed relationship between categorical measures yields very different types of information about developmental ordering. When change is continuous, the relationship between the measures does not confirm any one ordering hypothesis, but rather, disconfirms one or more hypotheses. Whether an underlying variable undergoes saltatory or continuous development has long been recognized as an important theoretical issue, but its impact on the interpretation of developmental ordering has not previously been explicated