

An Experimental Study of Writing Movements.

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With 6 figures.

The movements employed in writing are, for the most part, the results of individual practice. Inherited nervous structures furnish, to be sure, a general basis for this, as well as for other forms of action, but the special character of writing movements is, after all, determined in the main by influences that are brought into play during the years of practice which are generally devoted to acquiring this art. Writing movements are, therefore, especially suited to investigation by the psychologist who wishes to study the relation between movement and the corresponding conscious processes.

It is the aim of this paper to report certain investigations which were undertaken with a view to dealing with one phase of this relation between movement and consciousness. The particular phase here treated may be defined by raising the following question: What is the relation of consciousness to the acquirement of the writing movements, and what change in this relation takes place as the movement becomes automatic? A difficulty in the way of a general treatment of this problem appears at once in the fact that there are so many marked individual variations in writing movements. Our investigation of the relation to consciousness must begin, therefore, with a prefatory analysis of writing movements which analysis shall point out the fundamental similarities back of the apparent heterogeneity.

The principle underlying the analysis here carried out was suggested by a study of the way in which the writing movement develops. If one observes a child he will note that in forming the letters the child