Jean Piaget vs. Lev Vygotsky

Differing Views in Cognitive Development

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Overview of Cognitive Development (3-6 years)

- Children at this age are not ready to engage in logical mental operations (thinking). (Papalia, et al, 2011, p. 256)

- Children at this stage need a lot of experimentation in their play. It is not unusual for children to repeat certain activities many times in an effort to gain mastery over them.

- What kinds of activities would you see children doing over and over again?
Piaget’s Cognitive Stage Theory

Stages in Development from Infants – Young Adults

- Sensorimotor: birth to two years
- Preoperational: 2 – 7 years
- Concrete operational: 7 – 11 years
- Formal Operations: 11 - adulthood

Piaget’s theory suggested that development has an endpoint. (Papalia, et al, 2011, p. 30)
Piaget theorized:
• a child acts on his own environment for learning
• ...“the (child’s) solo mind taking in and interpreting information about the world...”
(Papalia, et. al., 2011, p. 34)
• Therefore constructing his/her own knowledge
Piaget also believed:

hands-on activities also aid with learning future complex skills

(Again, children will repeat these activities in order to gain understanding of them.)
Lev Vygotsky’s Social Development Theory

- “...cognitive growth as a collaborative process.” (Papalia, et al, 2011, p. 34)

- “Children...learn through social interaction.” (Papalia et al, 2011, p. 34)
Vygotsky’s Social Development Theory

- “According to Vygotsky, (this) development begins at birth and continues until death.” (Riddle, 1999)

- “Vygotsky believed this life long process of development was dependent of social interaction and that social learning actually leads to cognitive development.” (Riddle, 1999)
Lev Vygotsky

Zone of Proximal Development

The gap between what (a child) can do alone and what a child can do with help from adults or peers who are more capable than the child. (Papalia, et al, 2011, p. 34 & p. 270; Riddle, 1999;
Vygotsky also believed:

Scaffolding is the *temporary* support that adults or more capable peers use to help a child learn a task.

When the child has completely learned the task the temporary support or scaffold is no longer needed.

(Papalia, et al, 2011, pp. 34 & 270)
Vygotksy: Scaffolding Example
Vygotsky: Another Scaffolding Example
Comparison of the Theories [Review]

Jean Piaget

- There is an end point to cognitive development - birth to adolescence
- A child acts on his own environment for learning
- Child’s solo mind
- Hands on activities also aid in learning
- A child’s constructs his/her own knowledge

Lev Vygotsky

- Cognitive development: Learning begins at birth and ends at death
- Social development influences cognitive development
- A child is scaffolded by an adult or peer who is more capable than the child
Vygotsky and Piaget...

Think of examples using both methods.
Resources

- Coffey, Heather - *Zone of Proximal Development*  

- Riddle, Elizabeth (3/8/99) *Lev Vygotsky’s Social Development Theory*  
  http://www.chd.gse.edu/immerson/knowledgebase/theorists/