DVD REVIEW

Classic Piaget collection: Volume 2

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This is the second volume of the classic Piaget collection, which provides an overview of three domains of Jean Piaget’s developmental theory. The first part of the DVD explores the development of formal reasoning patterns throughout adolescence; part two entails a presentation by Piaget on the relationship of memory and intelligence; and the final part explores the process of moral development.

Part one of the DVD, Formal Reasoning Patterns, consists of a useful series of illustrations of both concrete and formal reasoning patterns in a number of adolescents. Reasoning patterns are depicted as existing on a continuum, ranging from concrete to formal, and developing over time. By means of a number of illustrations, it is shown how concrete reasoning patterns result in a haphazard approach to problem solving, with little awareness of cause-effect relationships. Formal reasoning patterns, on the other hand, are shown to lead to a comprehensive and systematic approach to organizing data. The DVD concludes by providing a clear demonstration of how teachers can assist students in developing more systematic and formal reasoning patterns in problem solving, with particular emphasis on the use of reflection on the student’s thinking and approach to problem solving.

The second part of the DVD consists of Piaget’s presentation on the relationship between memory and development at a teachers’ convention in Japan. The presentation is underpinned by the notion that a discrepancy exists between memory-based education and intelligence-based education. Piaget emphasises the latter, positing that intelligence-based education must focus on creating operational structures, which ultimately lead to creativity and innovation. From this foundation Piaget sketches a portrait that relates memory and intelligence in a creative and concise manner, drawing from his personal work with children. His innovative work was the first to hypothesize about the way in which children develop intelligence, and how the process of memory encoding improves with intelligence. Using numerous
examples of how his subjects’ memories improved over time, he illustrates two main components to memory:

- A figurative aspect: provides certain configuration of a perspective, and
- An operational aspect: intellectual schemata on which memory are built.

In turn, he relates the development of memory to the development of intelligence in a circular manner, positing that as memory improves with intelligence, so intelligence is developed through reconstructive memories. His presentation ends with a poetic crescendo when he suggests a shift away from traditional educational models of focusing on the students’ ability to memorize facts, to a more innovative technique that aims at stimulating intelligence schemata through various activities.

The final part to the DVD focuses on the development of Morality. Although this part draws on Kohlburg and Damon’s stages of Moral development, these innovations are based on the work of Piaget, who posited that children develop their own sense of morality as they grow and interact with their environment. Morality is understood as the notion of justice, and it is explored through illustrative interviews with subjects between the ages of four and 24 to depict how morality develops with age. Damon developed the following stages:

- First Stage (interview conducted with a five year old): Children are able to justify their moral choices, with a tendency to favor themselves over others, but still give some consideration to others.
- Second Stage (interview conducted with an eight year old): Children become more objective in their moral choices, and develop the concept of merit. Justice is seen as a repayment system for good or bad acts.
- Third Stage (interview conducted with a ten year old): Children learn to take need, ability, and effort into account, rather than simply considering the outcome of their acts as in the previous stage.

Kohlburg expanded on this, positing that as the child’s social environment expands beyond school, family and friends, the moral issues that are considered become more complex.

- Fourth Stage (interview conducted with a 13 year old): Justice is based on the closeness of relationships, and emphasis is placed on living up to social expectation.
- Fifth Stage (interview conducted with a 17 year old): Authority and laws are taken into account, although the preservation of life seems to outweigh these aspects.
- Sixth Stage (interview conducted with a 24 year old): Law is seen as a process that should protect people, with all people having basic human rights. Mutual respect is emphasized, while simultaneously recognised as an ideal for society. This is the highest level of moral development.
Through these illustrations, moral development is depicted in a clear and concrete manner through interviews with participants at various phases, as a gradual construction that takes place over many years.

This three-part DVD is a useful tool for anyone who has an interest in developmental theory. All three parts are innovative in the manner in which they link Piaget’s theories of development to the education system of the day, with practical implications for how teachers might assist their students in intellectual and moral development. Piaget’s theories were revolutionary at the time they were developed, and are still useful today. The DVD takes relatively complex concepts and illustrates them in a clear and concise manner that is practical and relevant.

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**BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**

Dianne Everitt is a final year Master’s Student in Clinical Psychology at Unisa. Her research interests include child sex trafficking and sexual abuse in children and adolescents.