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The Analysis of Cognitive Learning Theory

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Describing a development is not an easy task, and there are many theories surrounding the numerous ways of describing how development occurs. One of these theories is the theory of cognitive development, more commonly called cognitive theory, brought forward by the famous psychoanalytic thinkers, Jean Piaget. This theory has come under scrutiny and has multiple critiques against it. With that being said, this theory has some merit to it as it does pertain to many people as they develop, in particular, with their logical reasoning and critical thinking abilities. Throughout this paper, I will be talking about what the theory actually is, what critiques it has against it, and finally, proving the relevance of this theory, with actual scenarios brought on within my own life.

First off I will be discussing what the actual developmental theory is. This theory pertains to how the critical thinking develops as the brain ages. The brain develops the ability to think critically and how people think as they develop. Often broken down into four different sections or categories, this theory breaks down how brain the develops and is differentiated by age. The first stage is known as the Sensorimotor stage of development, and has the average age range from birth until the time the individual turns two years old. This stage refers to the individual utilizing the primary senses to understand how the world will work. The individual is able to differentiate between themselves and other objects at this stage (Piaget, 1952). The second stage is called the Pre-operational stage. Language starts to develop within this stage, however, higher brain function is still developing, often from the age of two until the age of six. The individual is unable to classify objects based upon basters thinking; objects are classified based on concrete physical attributes (Piaget, 1952). The third stage of this

developmental theory is the stage of concrete operational thought. This stage entails the understanding and the application of logical thought and often occurs within the ages of six until age eleven. The individual has knowledge and the ability to grasp and fully understand an object that is placed in their path (Piaget, 1952). The final stage of this theory is an ongoing stage from age twelve and onward. This stage is called the formal operational stage; where the individual now has the ability to think abstractly and possess hypothetical constructs. This stage is often associated with the “real” intelligence associated with schooling and other knowledge taught in schools (Piaget, 1952). This theory was developed by a man named Jean Piaget. Jean Piaget developed the theory in his famous book “The origins of intelligence in children” published in 1952.

With all of this being said, there are some critiques to go along with this developmental theory. The cognitive theory posed by Piaget, is just a guideline. There could be an individual that will fall behind or excel ahead of the guideline posed by Piaget. For example, there could be a child that is able to understand and think logically ahead of the guideline posed previously; enabling the child to be probably classified as a “gifted” or “genius” child according to the classifications of IQ ranges and scales posed within class time and within the textbook (Berger, 2014). This developmental theory can also be compared to the learning theory. The learning theory is a theory that explains how children will learn as they develop. This theory describes that many children will learn through how they are rewarded and how they are punished. In particular, we can compare the theory of cognitive development and the specific strain of learning theory: behaviourism. This specific strain of learning theory focuses in on the change in behaviour in response to a change in the environmental stimuli (Berger,

2014). The learning theory follows through into the cognitive theory through the change in how the individual thinks over time. The learning theory focuses on how people will change based upon how they are treated and this can include how the brain develops. For example, if an individual were to be punished for thinking and reasoning logically (for some strange reason), the child will learn using the learning theory that they are not supposed to do what they did and they will learn and hinder the cognitive development. However, with the learning theory and in particular, behaviourism, this theory mainly looks at an individual's behaviour and how that will develop over the course of development. Compared to the cognitive theory which focuses in on the cognitive development of the brain itself.

This learning theory has directly impacted my own life as I have developed. Focusing in on two specific times where this cognitive theory has impacted my life would be in my early childhood and middle childhood. My own experience has not perfectly aligned with the theory, but has mostly aligned, but I was ahead of the guidelines thought of by Piaget. During my own early childhood; approximately the pre-operational stage, I was ahead of the guidelines of Piaget. The general guidelines of the age range by Piaget for early childhood, are mainly using language to understand the world (Bhagat, 2018; Piaget, 1952). However at that time period (ages two to six), I was able to apply logical operations to questions while understanding all questions posed (Bhagat, 2018; Piaget, 1952). During my middle childhood; approximately the concrete operational stage, I was slightly ahead of the development stage that was suggested by Piaget. I was able to understand the world and able to think creatively and apply knowledge to abstract concepts around the age of eight years old; around three to four

years ahead of Piaget's suggested guidelines. The general guidelines of the formal operational section of development is being able to understand and apply hypothetical concepts to abstract ideas (Bhagat, 2018; Piaget, 1952). Overall, the development was not one hundred percent aligned but served my parents a good baseline of what to expect from me, but I was just a little early in the developmental stage.

With everything previously mentioned in mind, this developmental theory has four major sections; ages birth to age two (sensorimotor), ages two to age six (pre-operational), ages six to age eleven (concrete operational), and ages twelve and onward (formal operational). This theory was proposed by Jean Piaget in his book "The origins of intelligence in children" in 1952. Each stage has different characteristics of the developing brain, each more progressively advanced than the last. This theory is comparable to the learning theory. Each require brain function and deal with the developing of the brain and cognitive thought. This theory has applied to my life in more than one stage; mainly the early and middle childhood stages. And I personally was mainly ahead of these stages that Piaget suggested.

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