

Professional Paradigm

Nikara M Haroldsen

Department of Home and Family, Brigham Young University–Idaho

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Sister Betty McQuain

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Introduction

The way we view child development greatly impacts how we teach and nurture children. The knowledge I have gathered over the last several years of attending BYU–Idaho has impacted the way that I interact with children and how I believe I can help them develop in all domains. There are four theorists that have ultimately influenced my views on child development: Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, Albert Bandura, and John Bowlby.

Jean Piaget

Jean Piaget was a theorist born in 1896. He was known for his research on the four stages of cognitive development. Piaget's four stages of development are sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational. The sensorimotor stage is when children aged 0–2 grow their motor skills and develop a knowledge of object permanence. During the preoperational stage, children aged 2–7 begin to engage in pretend play, and they are not influenced by logic as much as visual appearance. The concrete operational stage describes children ages 7–11, which is when children begin to think logically and understand conservation. Lastly, the formal operational stage is when children 12 and older begin to think more abstractly. Jean Piaget also taught about assimilation (adding new information to existing knowledge), accommodation (modifying existing knowledge to adjust to new information), and equilibration (the balancing of assimilation and accommodation) (McLeod 2024).

The research of Jean Piaget has helped to more clearly understand the cognitive and social growth children go through at specific ages. It helps me to understand how I can tailor

my lessons to children's needs. It also helps me to have a greater understanding of why children's behaviors are at specific ages.

Lev Vygotsky

Lev Vygotsky developed the theory of the zone of proximal development and scaffolding. The zone of proximal development is defined as the potential for cognitive development that a child has with some assistance (scaffolding) from a mentor (Gowrie pp. 9). Scaffolding is the temporary support and guidance a child receives from an adult/mentor (Gowrie pp. 16).

Gaining the knowledge of scaffolding and the zone of proximal development has helped me to understand the value of meeting children where they are and encouraging little bits of growth. Autonomy is also important in helping children develop their skills without being held back by an adult doing too much for them.

Albert Bandura

Albert Bandura developed social learning theory. Bandura was most well-known for his Bobo doll experiment. During this experiment, researchers learned that children imitate the behaviors that they observe, even violence at times. Bandura classified observational modeling into the categories of active, verbal, and symbolic. Active means that children are following behavior that they learned from a real person. Verbal modeling is when a child imitates behavior based on a descriptive account. Symbolic modeling is when children take information from real or fictional scenarios and imitate it (First Discoverers pp. 5).

Albert Bandura's research taught the importance of an adult's actions on a child's behavior. Media exposure can also contribute to what children model. In my future parenting and childcare work, I will be aware of my actions that children can imitate and how it may impact them. I want children to have a positive and productive example to follow.

John Bowlby

John Bowlby taught about the four types of attachment which are secure attachment, anxious attachment, avoidant attachment, and disorganized attachment. He taught that a securely attached child wants to be near their caregiver, returns to their caregiver for comfort or safety (known as a safe haven), explores their environment knowing that they can return to their caregiver when needed (secure base), and experiences some separation anxiety (NSPCC 2021).

Knowledge of attachment styles has helped me to understand and be aware of how children's behaviors may reflect what their relationship with their caregiver may be like. Using this information, I will be able to offer advice to parents on how to help improve their relationship and attachment to their child. I will also be able to use my knowledge of attachment style to grow healthy attachments with the children I will care for. Helping children to have positive experiences with attachment early on will help them in their relationships later in their lives.

Conclusion

Learning from and following the principles and theories taught by Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, Albert Bandura, and John Bowlby has increased my desire and confidence in aiding

children's development. Their theories will help me to encourage children's autonomy as they develop in each stage. I will also be able to scaffold children's learning within the zone of proximal development. Through their research, I understand that my actions have an impact on children's behaviors and understanding of the world. Lastly, I can help create secure attachments between a child and their caregivers.

References

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