

Comparison between the theories of socialization of herbert mead and jean piaget ...

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Jean Piaget and Herbert Mead both came up with theories on child development. They are secondary agents of socialization in America today because their theories have played a big role in the way parents bring up their children in addition to coming up with educational content for children at various stages of development. The focal arguments in the theories are different with Piaget laying emphasis on the stages of cognition while Herbert Mead focused on the development of self awareness. The theorists ultimately agree that the socialization of a child becomes more developed as the child becomes less egocentric and more aware of the needs and desires of others. This essay shall focus on comparing and contrasting the two theories.

Both theories (Piaget's and Mead's) are centred on the development of the child but the focal point of each is different. Herbert Mead's theory focuses on the development of the concept of self while Jean Piaget's theory focuses on the development of the cognitive abilities of the child. According to Mead, during childhood, the I is the prominent personality of a child. The I is focused on its own needs and desires being met hence the spontaneity of wants and desires observed among children. On the other hand, Piaget's main argument is on the cognition of the environment. He states that the child does not merely absorb information passed on to them but rather selects and interprets what he or she sees, hears and feels.

According to Herbert Mead, the socialization process of a young infant occurs through imitation of the actions of those who are around the child. For instance, a child makes pies using mud because he or she has seen adults cooking. A child will dig because he or she has seen other people do the

same. The process of socialization according to Mead is a gradual and evolving process; as evidenced by the fact the games that a child plays evolve from simple to more complex. Piaget also reiterates the gradual process of child development albeit from a cognitive perspective in stating that the child does not merely passively absorb information but rather he or she selects and interpret what they feel, hear or see. At each stage of cognitive development, the child acquires a new set of skills. He went on to state that the acquisition of a new set of skills at one stage of cognitive development is dependent on the successful completion of a previous stage. The attainment of self-awareness according to Mead entails being able to see oneself as others see you. Self awareness is a gradual process of being able to differentiate between “ I” which is the unsociable infant from the “ me” which is the social self. Socialization comes as a result of understanding what Mead referred to as the “ the general other.” According to Mead, between the ages of eight and nine, the child begins to understand the social values and acquire moral values. They learn organized games which are unlike the unsystematic games that characterised their formative years. Jean Piaget on the other hand described the cognition abilities of the child at this phase of development. He states that between the ages of seven and eleven, the child acquires the ability to understand logical notions. At this stage, the egocentricity of children is less evident as compared to when they were younger. A comparison of the theories on this aspect reveals the following: both theorists concur that the socialization at the ages seven to eleven is more developed since the child has the ability to be considerate of the values of others.

Jean Piaget and Herbert Mead are secondary agents of socialization in the American society because of the following reasons: to begin with, Jean Piaget and Herbert Mead's theories provided further understanding on the development of children this information has been used in the development of educational content for children at various development stages. In addition to that, their theories have provided critical information that has helped parents understand the socialization process of their children. The modern day parents can therefore design activities that will aid the socialization process of their children.

Conclusion

Jean Piaget and Herbert Mead enhanced the understanding on child development particularly in regard to socialization. Although Mead focuses on self awareness while Piaget focuses on stages of cognitive development, both theorists agree socialization is a gradual process and advances as the child becomes less egocentric. Based on this understanding, parents in modern day American society have been able to help their children in the socialization process while educational content is tailored to cater for different stages of development.

COMPARISON BETWEEN ETHNOGRAPHY AND SURVEYS

Ethnography refers to a method of sociological research that involves garnering first hand information from the study subjects by living, interacting and becoming a part and parcel of their lives. For instance, a researcher seeking to understand the religious practices of a given community could

conduct use ethnography as a method of sociological research. Surveying on the other hand is a method of sociological research that entails handing out of questionnaires to the study subjects so that they can fill in their views on the topic that the researcher is studying. For instance, a survey could be used by a researcher seeking to draw out opinions on a subject such as trends in education. There are differences and similarities between the two methods of research.

Ethnography is subject to the skill of the researcher and the connection he or she makes with the study participants. If he or she gets too close to the participants, then he or she is likely to lose an objective perspective therefore resulting in subjective responses that may not necessarily be a representation of the study participants. If he or she is too detached from the participants, the observations may be based on prejudiced notions. On the other hand, conducting a survey may not necessarily be pegged on the expertise of the researcher. This is because as long as he or she can design questions that are relevant to the topic of interest then it is possible to draw out the objective responses from the study participants. In addition to this, the results of the study are not pegged on the observations made which are based on the connection the researcher makes with the study participants. However, due to the close proximity of the researcher to the study participants during ethnography, the results can be a closer reflection of the reality as compared to the results in a survey. On the other hand, the results of the survey may be superficial; a far reflection of the actual beliefs or values of the responses which the researcher may be seeking to draw out. The researcher carrying out an ethnographic study is prone to several

physical challenges. For example, the community of interest could be hostile and unreceptive towards the presence of a stranger in their midst. The journey to and from the community of interest may be marked by rough terrain and harsh weather therefore making it difficult for the researcher to access the study area. On the other hand, a researcher conducting a survey may not encounter physical difficulties given that questionnaires can be sent via courier services and sent back to the researcher. The questions can also be part of an online survey allowing for study participants in any part of the world with internet services to participate in the survey.

Works Cited

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