Preoperational Stage – Piaget

Preoperational stage (2-6 years)
- symbolic thought
- egocentrism
- Confusing appearance and reality
- Precausal reasoning

- Piaget - limitations in children’s thinking
  - Centration

Manifestation of centration:
- Egocentrism - tendency to view the world from one’s own perspective
- Three Mountain Problem
  Piaget & Inhelder (1956)
**Theory of Mind** (between 4-5 years)

- Ability to think about other people’s mental states and form theories of how they think
  - Mental states
- **False Belief Tasks**
  Sam puts some chocolate in a blue cupboard and goes out to play. In his absence, his mother moves the chocolate to the green cupboard. When Sam returns he wants his chocolate. Where does he look for it?

**Intuitive Thinking**

- Conservation task

- **Conservation** — knowledge that quantity is unrelated to the arrangement and physical appearance of objects

**Types of Conservation Problems**

- **Number**
  - Rearranging elements
  - The type of conservation task grasped the earliest!
- **Substance**
  - Altering shape (clay, water)
- **Length**
  - Altering shape, configuration
- **Area**
  - Rearranging figures
- **Weight**
  - Altering shape
- **Volume**
  - Altering shape (water in container)
Precausal Reasoning

- Preschoolers love to ask questions
  - Why is the sky blue?
  - Where do babies come from?
- Piaget
  - young children not capable of true mental operations
  - cannot engage in cause-and-effect reasoning
  - I haven’t had a nap, so it isn’t afternoon

Rethinking Preoperational Thinking

Egocentrism - Borke (1975)
- Replicated 3-Mountain expt.
- Children 3-4 years
- Farm Scene
- FINDINGS??

Culture and Cognitive Development

- Piaget - Cog dev focus - indiv performance
  - child construct schemas
- Vygotsky - Cog dev focus - child’s social & cultural world
- Sociocultural
  - Scripts - schemas that specify who participates in an event; what social roles they play, what objects are used during event
Functions of Scripts
• Guides to action
• Allows people to coordinate their actions
• Provide a means by which abstract concepts that apply to many kinds of events can be acquired and organized

Unevenness of Development
• Content and structure of new events
• Cultures influence the unevenness of children’s development:
  1. By arranging the occurrence and nonoccurrence of specific activities
  2. By determining the frequency of an activity
  3. By regulating child’s role in the activity

Relationship between Language & Thought
Piaget:
• Lang & thought are interdependent
• Language:
  – allows child to represent actions symbolically.
  – allows child to think beyond the present to the future.
  – can be used to consider several possibilities at the same time