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Module 4

Interviews of College Students

Introduction

In Piaget's theory, concrete operational thought is characterized by serial ordering, simple classification, and conservation logic applied directly to objects. A person using concrete reasoning doing a Piagetian task must be able to observe objects and/or manipulate them. Formal operational thought involves proportional reasoning, separations or variables, elimination of contradictions, and class inclusion or exclusion operations. A person using formal reasoning is able to work in situations where one does not deal directly with tangible objects. A person using formal reasoning can apply concrete operations and can go beyond these operating when solving problems.

In the videotape you are about to see you will observe Thomas Campbell and Phil McGee interviewing students from Illinois Central College who are responding to the Algae, Frog, and Mealworm Puzzles. The interviews demonstrate that a college population includes students who approach certain tasks with concrete reasoning patterns, while others apply formal reasoning.

Objectives

To assist you in describing and/of identifying responses that indicate concrete or formal reasoning as applied to different tasks.

Procedure

As you view this 26 minute videotape, watch the clues in each student's reasoning which indicate the use of concrete or formal reasoning patterns.

Reference

"Interviews With Students," videotape made by Dr. Thomas C. Campbell of students at Illinois Central College, East Peoria, IL 61635.