ABSTRACTS

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CAN "INTERNALIZATION" BE MORE THAN A MAGICAL PHRASE?: NOTES TOWARD THE CONSTRUCTIVE NEGOTIATION OF THIS PROCESS

Lucien T. Winegar (Randolph-Macon College, Virginia, USA)

Often in contemporary developmental theory, "internalization" is invoked as a magical phrase. As Gregory Bateson noted, ostensibly scientific terms often function as black boxes: conventional agreements not to question any further. This presentation, constructed in three sections, is intended to clarify the concept of internalization. First, it is noted that internalization is a process of transformation, not transmission: it is not merely the transmission of unaltered information from a caretaker or peer into a child, but a process by which individuals negotiate with each other the co-construction of their world and their eventually mutual understanding of it. The second section suggests that internalization is of limited utility when much of the meaning constructed is between individuals rather than inside each of them. Indeed, perhaps the field should be discussing the similarity between the environments in which information is first learned and that in which it is later applied by a child. Specifically, internalization is less necessary when these two environments are similar, or when considerable support from others is available. Finally, certain differences exist between child-child and child-adult interactions, in that it is often methodologically easier to see the process of co-construction between relatively equal status peers. Each section is illustrated by data from studies of child and adult initiated actions in several contexts.

THE RELATION BETWEEN CONCEPT FORMATION AND COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

Rene van der Veer (University of Leiden, The Netherlands)

Throughout his career Lev Vygotsky took a vivid interest in concept formation in children and its relation to their cognitive development. On the basis of empirical findings and theoretical considerations, he claimed that the ability to form scientific or academic concepts forms a milestone in cognitive development and that this ability is furthered by instruction in school settings. In proposing this view he relied on Herbart's theory of the formal disciplines and Koffka's structural notions. Vygotsky's view is fascinating but highly controversial. In the present paper we will present his argument and offer some critical comments.