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JEAN PIAGET: A STUDY
OF
HIS METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

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This study was prompted by a question raised by the author John Holt regarding the validity of Jean Piaget's theory of intellectual development. The intent of this paper is to delve into Piaget's methods and techniques of study and to determine if certain aspects of his work are, in fact, being misinterpreted by John Holt.

In his book, The Underachieving School, Holt questions one specific research method used by Piaget as being too inclusive to have a definite scientific validity.

John Holt is a well-known and respected author and lecturer. The premise on which much of his writing is based is criticism of the American educational system. As a former teacher, much of his criticism is quite valid. However, his criticism of Jean Piaget, if it cannot be substantiated, may actually do a disservice to the education techniques by preventing some of Piaget's theories relative to the learning process from being put into practice.

Holt's criticism is based on certain interpretations given by Piaget to the results of the interview technique used with children. It is Holt's contention that there is much room for error in the evaluation of data taken from the interview. He maintains that there is a certain lack of understanding between the adult interviewer and the child

being interviewed.

Many of Holt's readers may be deterred from reading or studying the works of Piaget solely on the basis of what Holt has written. As a prominent figure John Holt is in a position to sway the thinking of many people; thus if his criticism of Piaget's methods of investigation does not bear out, he has possibly done a disservice to the progress of the American educational system.

The main method of study used in preparing this thesis has been one of reviewing the writings of Piaget and some of his contemporaries. Many of Jean Piaget's works were studied from a critical standpoint. A critical study was also made of the research techniques of some of Piaget's contemporaries.

The summary and conclusion is presented as a synthesis of Piaget's work relative to his study of the intellectual development of the child. It is shown that John Holt's criticism is a misinterpretation and has no basis in fact and that Piaget's methods and techniques of studying intellectual development and his resultant theories are valid.

This study indicates Piaget may be accepted as a new and reliable researcher in the field of the psychology of intellectual development and much of what he has to say is extremely pertinent to education as a whole, and in particular to the classroom teacher.