Piaget was right: Thinking and learning close to the sensory-motor surface creates knowledge that transcends the here and now

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Résumé de la conférence

Cognition, behavior, and development all happen in real time, through sensory-motor interactions with a physical world. In his classic theory of the emergence of cognition, Piaget proposed that infant cognition was grounded in these sensory-motor interactions and, indeed, limited by its very sensory-motor nature. One phenomenon that Piaget used to illustrate these ideas was the object concept as manifested in a task that has come to be known as the A not-B task. Infant’s perseverative searches for hidden objects in that task suggested object representations tightly tied to the here and now of perceiving and acting.
In this talk, I will present evidence that Piaget was right; infant performance in the classic tasks used to measure the object concept are deeply tied to sensory-motor processes. I will then argue and present evidence that this seeming example of the sensory-motor nature of immature is revealing about a fundamental aspect of all of human cognition and its tie to the physical world through the sensory-motor system. In making this case, I will present an overview of the dynamic field model, new evidence on infant performance in the A-not-B task, and an extension of that model to and new evidence on children’s binding of names to objects.

Lecture proposée


Sheya, A. & Smith, L. B. (submitted) Development through Sensory-Motor Coordinations