

Case Study: Jessica

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Section A:

Jessica is a 10-year-old white girl and is in the fourth grade. She lives in a suburban neighborhood and attends an elementary school noted for their excellence. Jessica has an eight-year-old brother. Jessica's parents are married and live together. Both of her parents are professionals. Jessica's mother is an occupational therapist and works at a high school, and her father is a physical therapist. Jessica has a great relationship with both of her parents. Jessica has an allergy to tree nuts and receives a dosage of shots for allergies once a week, but she is otherwise in good health.

Jessica is bright and curious. She loves to build relationships with peers and teachers, and is a great role model for younger students. She loves to bake, and doing arts and crafts where she can express herself visually. She also enjoys competition, and playing fast-paced games that require thought. Jessica enjoys physical activity. Jessica wants to be a baker or a physical therapist when she grows up.

Jessica attends school five days a week and lives within ten minutes of school. She also attends latchkey in the mornings and after school every day. Her mother typically drops her and her brother off and picks them up. Jessica is very interested in being a leader amongst her peers, and loves to spend time with friends. She also enjoys spending time at school and looks forward to learning new things.

Section B – Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development:

Jessica is in the **concrete operational** stage of Piaget's theory of cognitive development. As Woolfolk (2013) described it, the concrete stage is "'hands-on' thinking. The basic characteristics of this stage are the recognition of the logical stability of the physical world; the realization that elements can be changed or transformed and still conserve many of their original

characteristics” (p. 47). She can think logically, and has mastered the idea of identity, compensation and reversibility. We know this by observing how Jessica responded to two games, the first of which involved pompoms. I lined up two groups of pompoms, with five in each row. I asked her if each row had the same number of pompoms in it. After counting five in each row, Jessica determined that they contained an equal number of pompoms. Then, I spread out the top row of pompoms, and asked her if both rows still contained the same number of pompoms. Jessica used her reasoning skills with *identity* and knew that since I just spread out the pompoms, that no more pompoms were added or taken away, and therefore the rows still contained the same number. The second game we played described Jessica’s understanding in *conservation*. I filled two glasses with equal amounts of water. Jessica declared that the glasses were equal. Then, I poured one glass into a bowl. I asked Jessica if the bowl and the glass had the same amount of water still. Logically, she described to me that if the bowl is shallower, it had to be compensated in a way so that the bowl is wider than the glass.

Jessica also demonstrated her understanding of *classification* in sorting objects that I gave her. The objects included: a red pencil, a push pin, a piece of white paper, an orange pompom, a piece of blue construction paper, a cup, a green Lego, a brown clip board, and a tan block. I asked Jessica to sort these objects into different groups and to explain to me why they were in their groups. The first set of groups she gave me were:

<u>Group 1 – square shaped</u>	<u>Group 2 – round shaped</u>	<u>Group 3 – misc.</u>
white paper	pompom	red pencil
blue construction paper	a cup	push pin
green Lego		

tan block

brown clip board

After discussing her groups, I asked Jessica if there were any more groups she could make by using the same objects. She gave me another set of groups:

<u>Group 1 – writing tools</u>	<u>Group 2 – craft supplies</u>	<u>Group 3 – building tools</u>
a red pencil	an orange pompom	green Lego
a piece of white paper	blue construction paper	a tan block
a brown clip board	a push pin	

According to Woolfork (2013), “More advanced classification at this stage involves recognizing that one class fits into another” (p. 48). After creating a set of groups to classify her objects, I asked Jessica to reevaluate her groups to create new ones using the existing tools.

Section C – Bioecological Model of Development:

Jessica’s microsystem consists of her home and school, which are both located in a suburban neighborhood. Her classroom teacher is Mrs. A and she has several latchkey teachers. Her family consists of her mother, father, little brother, and grandparents who live just over an hour away. Her best friend is a ten-year-old named Penny. In Jessica’s mesosystem, her latchkey teachers have a great relationship with her parents, as does Mrs. A. Jessica’s parents and Penny are very close and they have a friendly relationship with Penny’s parents as well. Jessica’s neighborhood is very interactive in her school life. In her exosystem, Jessica is exposed to elements of her parents work life, as her mother is an occupational therapist and her father is a physical therapist. Jessica is given access to many after-school clubs at her school, one of which is an outreach group for young girls. She is also exposed to television, radio, her iPhone and iPad. In Jessica’s macrosystem, she grows up in a society in which authority must be respected,

and laws such as: wearing your seatbelt, no underage drinking, etc. For customs, she honors holidays, such as Christmas, Thanksgiving, etc (Woolfolk, 2013, p. 76).

Section D – Kohlber's Theory of Moral Development:

Jessica was asked how she would handle the Heinz dilemma. I asked her if it would be okay to steal a medicine for a family member who was very sick if she did not have enough money. Jessica reported that stealing is wrong, however, she thought in this instance it would be okay to help a family member. Jessica's response indicates that she is in the post-conventional stages of development, in which universal ethical principles orientation are put into perspective in Kohlberg's theories of moral development (p. 100). Her response would also insinuate that judgments (stealing is wrong) are useful, but they are also changeable to fit the given situation. Based on Jessica's response to the Heinz dilemma, it is very likely that she would be able to make sophisticated judgments about right and wrong.

Section E – Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences:

Jessica's strong intelligences are interpersonal and linguistic. Jessica is very outgoing, and loves to spend time with her friends. Together with her friends, she likes to talk through homework problems. This shows that Jessica is likely to learn best by interacting with others. She is very empathetic towards her friend's feelings and loves to create projects in which her friends can learn together. With her projects, Jessica is very interested in creating and organizing plays, musicals, and dialogues with her friends. This behavior suggests that she is likely to have a strong aptitude for linguistic intelligence. She is very vocal, and enjoys keeping a clipboard by her side so she can jot down thoughts she is having about a new project. She also enjoys spending time every day reading, and is often proud of how quickly she is able to read a book. Jessica's weaker intelligence is logical-mathematical. Though she is very curious, and she is

capable of thinking logically, Jessica exhibits little interest in solving puzzles or understanding abstract thinking behind why things are the way they are (p. 121).

Section F – Enhancing Jessica’s Ability to Learn:

Because Jessica is a bright student, it would benefit her to advance her learning. She appears to complete certain assignments with ease. It might be more beneficial to place her in a gifted or enrichment program. As a teacher, I might give her more difficult books, or introduce higher level mathematics questions if she is able to complete the assignments easily. In addition, if I am focusing on her learning specifically, I might tailor to interpersonal learners. Group assignments and dialogues where collaboration would be stressed would be introduced. In addition, I would also include elements for linguistic learners in my lesson plans. Jessica could keep a journal and jot down ideas she is having, and even have time to reflect and comment on any ideas she is having. We could also learn through writing/reading stories or poetry.

The classroom setting Jessica is in should be very interactive and include not only group assignments, but also a place for her to use her creativity. In addition to keeping a journal, using pictures or visuals might be very helpful to enhance Jessica’s learning because she enjoys partaking in crafts. We could utilize crafts to supplement her learning in a way that she could use something she created to help teach others and herself, and to create a fun environment for her to learn in.

Judging by Jessica’s current performance in school, I can predict that she will be gifted and continue to advance in her studies. Because she is so outgoing, she loves to take the lead in her learning and to try to attempt to help her friends.

References

Woolfolk, A. (2013). *Educational Psychology*. Columbus,OH: Pearson Education Inc.