Three Ages Project

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Pledge: I have neither given nor received help on this work, nor am I aware of an infraction of the Honor Code.

# Introduction:

# For this assignment, three different people were interviewed one-on-one, and their answers were recorded. The participants were all children in different stages of development. The children’s ages ranged from three years old to fifteen years old. The interview questions focused on their home life, school life, friends and family, and their average day to day life. Through these questions, I was able to thoroughly assess the cognitive, emotional, and physical aspects of each of the individuals.

The youngest participant was three year old Adam. Adam is a happy, energetic little boy I often babysit, and since he is comfortable around me, and we know each other well, I thought he’d be a perfect interviewee. Adam is in his first year of preschool, and goes three days a week: Monday, Wednesday, Friday. I know Adam can be a wild child, but he is also incredibly intelligent for his age, so I was excited to get the chance to learn more about him. The interview took place at his home, where I knew he’d be the most comfortable.

The second child I interviewed was eight year old Annalise. Annalise is one of Adam’s older sisters, so I babysit her as well. Annalise is in third grade. Annalise was also interviewed in her home, so she was comfortable in her interviewing environment.

Finally, the last child interviewed was my little brother, fifteen year old Jakob. This interview was the easiest by far due to Jakob’s age and maturity, and also because of the familiarity between us. This interview, like the other two, was done one-on-one. Jakob was interviewed in our house.

The goal of this project was to observe and assess children of three different ages and developmental stages. Preparatory to this project beginning, based on prior knowledge and evidence I had gathered while taking this education class, I inferred that I was going to find vast differences in the three participants I would be interviewing. I knew going in that, because each child was at a different developmental stage, their answers would vary a good deal. I knew that as I interviewed the participants, I would observe a number of different reactions to questions, and would be given differing answers.

Interviewing Process:

Since I am close with Adam and his sisters and family, I know a good deal about him, what he likes and dislikes, and what his normal day-to-day routine looks like. After he got back from preschool I made him his favorite snack and waited for him to eat it, since I knew if he was fed and happy he’d be more willing to sit still and corporate with me while I asked him questions. Once fed, Adam sat down with me in the living room, and I started off the interview by asking him things he liked to garner his interest.

Me: “Hey bud. Did you hear the trains today?”

Adam: “Yea! Daddy’s gonna take me to see them when he gets home!”

This question helped me gage social emotional domain of Adam’s development because right off the bat I started evaluating his emotional development. Adam became visibly excited at the mention of trains, one of his favorite things, and began to tell me about how his dad had promised to take him to the local train station downtown. In the textbook, social emotional development is defined as development that, “includes changes in emotion, self-concept, motivation, social relationships, and moral reasoning and behavior-advancements that depend in large part on children’s interaction with other people” (McDevitt 5). In order to have a well-rounded understanding of Adam’s social emotional development, I continued the interview by asking him more questions.

Me: “How was preschool today?”

Adam: “Really fun. We played tag and got goldfish as a snack.”

Me: “I love goldfish. Is that your favorite food?”

Adam: “My favorite food is ‘Munchies’.”

Me: “What’s ‘Munchies’ Adam?”

Adam: “A place daddy took us.”

Me: “What did you get there?”

Adam: “I got a [quesadilla.]”

Me: “Is a quesadilla your favorite food?”

Adam: “Yes!”

This discussion / line of questioning helped me to gain a further understanding of Adam’s social emotional development, as well as some understanding of his cognitive development. It shows his ability to recall memories and talk about past events accurately. His answers also showed his love of certain foods, as well as an interest in playing with friends. Adam didn’t mention anything he had learned in preschool, but focused on the snacks he ate, and the games he played. These answers show that in this stage of development, a child’s focus tends not to be on academics as much as things they personally enjoy, such as playing tag and eating goldfish and quesadillas.

Another way I was able to evaluate Adam’s cognitive development. I was able to evaluate it by counting the number of times he became distracted, talked about random things, and asked to play with toys instead of sitting and asking questions. While his constant short attention span was at times somewhat challenging, it provided a great deal of insight into Adam’s cognitive development. In the textbook, the author defines cognitive development as, “the changes that occur in children’s reasoning, concepts, memory, and language” (McDevitt 5). According to the book, children develop their cognitive skills through both hands on experiences, and interactions with other people their own age, as well as people both younger and older. Due to Adam’s young age, he is at a very early stage of development, and his cognitive development will continue to grow. I also noticed that several times during the interview, Adam would start singing a song about the days of the month that he had learned in class. As young children progress into school age, they’re able to retain more memories. With children Adam’s age, using catchy songs and rhymes is a useful technique to make it easier for them to recall memories. Adam was also taking in everything around him, touching different pieces of furniture and toys, and looking excitedly outside. This is because he is in the “exploring and hands on” part of his life. These reasonings make up for Adam’s short attention span and eagerness to leave the interview and go engage in different activities.

Last but not least, the textbook defines physical development as the development, “concerned with the biological changes of the body and brain” (McDevitt 5). It’s the process and time in a youth’s life when their gross motor skills, fine motor skills, strengths, coordination, learning perception, and much more begin to develop. To start assessing Adam’s physical development, we talked about the physical activities, if any, he enjoys doing.

Me: “What outside games do you like playing Adam?”

Adam: “I like tag. We played tag today.”

Me: “Tag is pretty fun! What else?”

Adam: “I like playing hide and seek. And running with my friends. And riding my tricycle.”

Me: “You want to draw me a picture of your friends you play with?”

Adam: “Okay!”

From the information gathered, I concluded that Adam had developed his gross motor skills appropriately for a child his age, and was able to run, jump, and throw properly. The next step was to take note of the way he drew the picture. Adam gripped his crayons very tightly, fisting them rather than holding them with the tips of his fingers like someone with developed fine motor skills might. It took him awhile to draw me a picture he was satisfied with, and he paused several times to stare intently at his drawing, before adding another detail. Although it took him a good deal of effort to use his fine motor skills, this is completely normal as Adam is only about three and a half. Children in his age group are still developing and perfecting their fine motor skills.

The second oldest child I interviewed was eight year old Annalise. Annalise, being a calm, quiet little girl, was polite and well-behaved throughout our interview. Her answers were more detailed and made more sense then Adam’s, and she was more focused on the interview than he was, showing she had a better attention span and was less fidgety. Much like Adam’s interview, I started with a question about school. Then, the questioning turned towards her favorite foods. With these questions I was able to gage her social emotional development.

Me: “Hey Annalise, what’s your favorite food?”

Annalise: “Chocolate chip ice cream. With lots of sprinkles and whipped cream.”

Me: “That sounds delicious.”

Annalise: “It is, we get to have Ice Cream Sundays every Sunday.”

Not only was Annalise able to give a good amount of detail when describing her food, she was also able to recall memories and traditions showing that her cognitive skills were developing normally. Her excitement and passion when describing the food she enjoyed showed her social emotional development as well. Then, I asked her about what she wants to be when she grows up, and continued to analyze her social emotional development as we continued the interview.

Me: “When you grow up Annalise, if you could be anything in the world, what would it be?”

Annalise: “I want to be an explorer!”

Me: “Like in the jungle? Why?”

Annalise: “Yea, I wanna find treasure. And lost groups. I saw on TV that there are a lot of [indigenous] people and I want to find them and save them.”

Annalise’s response show well developed social emotional skills. She showed emotion when talking about saving and caring for others. I asked her a few more questions about her soccer team to finish observing her social emotional development.

Me: “How is soccer going?”

Annalise: “It’s great. I have lots of friends.”

Me: “Do you have a best friend on the team?”

Annalise: “Yea, her name is Jordan. She kicks with her left foot so she’s really cool.”

Me: “That is super cool. What else do you like about soccer?”

Annalise: “I like to hang out with my friends when we’re not in school. I don’t like school a lot.”

Based off of the responses Annalise gave, I came to the conclusion that her social emotional development, when it comes to interacting with others and communicating. She enjoys being around other girls her age and makes friends easily. She likes talking to her friends and making new ones, and is involved in a team sport, showing that overall her social emotional skills are very well developed.

Finally, to assess her physical development, I asked her to draw a picture of her friends, just like I had with Adam. Annalise drew the picture very quickly. She didn’t hesitate at any point, pause, or slow down to think about what she was drawing. Her lines were smooth, and she held the crayons firmly with the tips of her fingers. This all showed that her fine motor skills were well developed. Since Annalise played soccer, this also showed that her gross motor skills were developed.

The last interview I conducted was with my fifteen year old brother, Jakob. Since I’ve known Jakob all his life and know most things about him, developing questions to ask him was fairly easy. Jakob is a smart kid and a freshman in high school, so at this stage in his life he knows what he likes and dislikes, his goals in life, and what he wants to do after high school. Jakob and I sat down in our living room, and I started the interview by asking him, just like the other two, how school went. I did this before asking him about his goals and diving into questions that would really help me observe his social emotional development, because I wanted consistency in my interviews.

Me: “How was school today?”

Jakob: “It was pretty good.”

Me: “What was your favorite and least favorite part?”

Jakob: “I had my Photoshop Art class with Rio and Trevor today which I really enjoyed. Least favorite part was finding out I have a Spanish test tomorrow.”

Me: “Who are Rio and Trevor?”

Jakob: “My best friend and this girl I really like.”

This conversation between us helped me analyze his cognitive development. Based off of his vocabulary, his ability to remember past events and remember things that he has to do, and the fact that he is studying a second language, I concluded Jakob’s cognitive skills are extremely well developed. In addition, his mentioning of friends and a girl he was interested in showed his social emotional development. Not only was he socializing and making friends, but he was developing emotions for another girl and showing he was capable of having a “crush,” demonstrating his developed skills. Next, I focused on questions I knew would allow me to further assess his social emotional development.

Me: “What career path do you want to take when you get out of highschool?”

Jakob: “Definitely college. Either MIT or VMI. MIT is an amazing school, but I know going to VMI would make Dad and Grand-Jay really proud.”

Me: “And after that?”

Jakob: “Something technological in the military, probably a marine engineer. I know I want to be a marine like Dad because of how much he loves it and how proud of him it makes us. And serving our country is the right thing to do. Plus after I’m done serving I’d have engineering experience.”

Hearing the detailed response Jakob gave, especially when compared to Adam and Annalise’s responses, revealed a huge social emotional stage difference between the three interviewees. His was very well developed. Since he is the oldest, it makes sense that his social emotional interactions are the most superior and developed. Also, due to his age, he has a better idea and understanding of what he wants to do with his life.

I also asked Jakob about his favorite food, because I wanted to see if he, like the younger two, would associate any kind of positive memory with the food.

“What is your favorite food?”

“Probably lasagna. The kind that mom gets from Costco and heats up in the oven. It tastes the best when she seasons it after she cooks it herself. It’s tastes amazing. Mom is a really talented cook.”

Since Jakob is in the early adulthood stage, his cognitive developmental interactions were much more developed than the other two children. Talking with Jakob, it was easy to forget that we were actually having an interview. He was able to answer my questions quickly and efficiently, gave appropriate responses, didn’t get distracted and didn’t have a short attention span.

Finally, like the others, I had Jakob draw a picture. Due to his age development and just the fact that he is an experienced artist, his drawing was the best by far. His drawing were detailed, had smooth lines, shading, and perspective. He also held the pencil loosely with the tips of his fingers, unlike the other kids. Looking around his room, I say many pieces of art and drawings around his room as well.

This helped me assess Jakob’s physical development because anyone who is able to create artwork with that much detail has very well developed fine motor skills. My little brother also plays basketball and baseball, so his gross motor skills are well developed, as he is constantly hitting, running, jumping, and throwing in these sports.

Discussion:

Once the interviews were completed and I had successfully obtained information from all three children, I was able to sort out my findings, where I noticed both similarities and differences. The first thing I focused on was the cognitive developmental stages each child was currently in. The detail in their responses, their attention spans, and their ability to recall past events and memories all differed greatly. Adam’s attention span was shorter than Jakob’s and Annalise’s. Jakob had the best attention span, which came as no surprise. He was able to focus and answer my questions during the interview and was focused the whole time.

All three interviewees had well developed gross motor skills. They were all able to run, walk, jump, throw, ect. Annalise and Jakob also played sports. The differences in their physical development was seen in their fine motor skills development. Jakob was an experienced artist, and was able to create smooth lines, colored and shaded objects, and was able to focus on his drawings and wasn’t distracted. Annalise was rarely distracted, and Adam was very easily distracted. Due to their age development, I also noticed the way they handled the pencil, and their grip. Adam fisted the middle of the pencil very tightly, Annalise held the pencil in the middle like tightly like Adam, but she also used the tips of her fingers, instead of her whole fist. Jakob held the pencil loosely with the tips of his fingers. I also noticed that the older the child, the more focused they were on the drawing, and the quicker they were able to complete it. A similarity I noticed between all the participants was, when asked about their favorite foods, they spoke about emotional memories tied to the food. Jakob tied memories of food to his mom, Annalise talked about family tradition, and even Adam talked about how his dad took their family out. These fond memories of family is a part of their social emotional development.

As people grow, their lives are influenced by their family, friends and peers, community, teachers, religious leaders, and more. From the moment a baby is born, their parents, siblings, and extended family are helping them learn the basics of life: gross motor skills such as crawling and walking, language and vocabulary, learning how to read, and more. While siblings can help a child with their social skills, peers usually help the most. Children make friends with their peers, socialize, play sports, and learn to communicate and work with their peers, all of which are positively attributed to their social skills growth. While Adam is still learning to interact with others and is only going to school three days a week, he and Annalise and Jakob all rely on their teachers to help them with their cognitive development. Teachers help with this development by teaching their students how to read and write, and as they grow older, they are also taught skills such as learning a secondary language and grammar. Different children living in different environments and with different family backgrounds, and having different experiences will develop techniques specific to their circumstances.

Jean Piaget is a psychologist famously known for his cognitive development on children and the four stages he developed: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational period. One of his main points was centered around the fact that children think differently at different age levels. This is seen in the answers given by each participant and how, depending on how old they were, the answers varied in detail and substance. Piaget believes that, due to a number of factors, cognitive development continues to make changes and adapt throughout childhood. Another theorist with points that present when the three interviews I conducted were being compared was Vygotsky. Vygotsky believed that cultures pass along physical and cognitive tools that, generation by generation, make life easier. He is also quotes saying that, “complex and mental processes begin as social activities and gradually evolve into internal mental activities that children can use independently. In other words, thought processes and cognitive tools in children begin with social interactions” (McDevitt 213).Vygotsky created a social development theory with three major themes: social interactions, the zone of proximal development, and the more knowledgeable other. Children mimic those around them and pick up on the actions of others. There are tons of photos floating around on the internet little boys sitting with their hands behind their head beside their dads, doing the same thing? All of my observations were consistent with these theorists and their theories.

By conducting *The Three Ages Project* I learned a lot of useful information when it comes to child development. Seeing it first hand when interviewing these children in different stages of development truly helped to open my eyes and help me understand physical, social emotional, and cognitive development. I wasn’t prepared for the differences I would observe with each child, especially when it came to attention span and thought processes. I had the most difficulty with Adam, as although I’ve had a lot of experience with him, it was hard to get him to sit down and answer my questions. Every two seconds who was jumping off the couch and running around the room, looking for a toy, or listening to the trains “choo-choo” as they went rolling by. I found it very difficult to interview him, because while he is a sweet boy, he’s very young, energetic, and would rather be moving and exploring vs, sitting still and behaving. However, after promising him a trip to the train station if he behaved, he answered my questions and was very good. Removing all the toys from the room so they wouldn’t catch his attention also helped.

With the exception of Adam’s attention span and tendency to run off and play, the interviews went extremely well, and I feel my comparison of my results and the theories of Vygotsky's and Piaget's is a valid one. The responses from my questions came straight from the mouth’s of the interviewees, and were honest and truthful to the best of my knowledge. If I had the opportunity to go back and assess the children once again then by asking addition questions at a later time then I’d ask them the same questions, and see how they’ve changed. I’d look to see if Adam’s answers were more like Annalise’s, if hers were more like Jakob’s, and if Jacob's responses had changed in any way at all. I was very satisfied with this project overall. With my career path as an elementary school teacher, I think it will be very helpful as I begin to work with children in different age groups.

THREE AGES

Reference

McDevitt, T.M., Ormrod, J.E. (2010).

Child Development and Education: 4th Edition