Three Ages Paper

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I have neither given nor received help on this work, nor am I aware of any infraction of the Honor Code

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Introduction

For this project, I interviewed three different people in three different one-on-one settings. The first was Brandon, age eighteen. He was chosen because he is eighteen years old and he fit my area of interest, placement in the family, by being an only child. The second person I interviewed was my sister, Alisha. She is twelve years old and the youngest child in our family. Finally, the third person I interviewed was Katie, age five. She is a close family friend and was chosen because she completed my area of interest by being the middle child in her family. I interviewed Brandon over the phone, Alisha in person, and Katie over video chat. The responses were recorded as types notes on the same document with the questions. As mentioned before, my area of interest was the placement of the individual in their family and the impact that it had on their lives growing up. My other are of interest was career choice. I expected that everyone would be happy with where they are in their family and that the younger the interviewee, the more classic their career choice would be (i.e. doctor, teacher, etc.).

Interviews

The three areas of development that I covered in my interviews were social, cognitive, and physical development. I feel like they impact each other because as the child develops physically and cognitively, they also develop socially. The child will make friends that are developing at the same rate as them when it comes to school or their physical traits. In the next few paragraphs, I will compare growth and expectations from the class textbook.

Katie has grown up in Salem, Virginia for most of her life and is the middle child in her family. She was asked a series of questions relating to her size compared to friends, favorite subject in school, and why she likes her closest friends over her other classmates. It has been shown that by the time children reach 6 years of age, their proportions are quite similar to those of adults (Feldman, 2018). Katie falls in line with this research because she has lost almost all of her baby fat and is starting to look more like a small adult. According to Piaget, regarding Katie’s cognitive development, she should be in the preoperational stage where children’s use of symbolic thinking grows, mental reasoning emerges, and the use of concepts increase (Feldman, 2018). I feel that Katie follows this part of Piaget’s research because throughout the interview, she gave short and incomplete answers. For example, when asked what her favorite subject in school is, Katie replied simply with, “letters”. Finally, the textbook says that, “older preschoolers… pay more attention to abstract concepts such as trust, support, and shared interests” (Feldman, 2018), when regarding social development. Katie is beginning to show signs of this stage of development because when asked why she is friends with someone whom she considers to be her best friend, her response was, “because I like him, he is kind”.

Alisha has grown up in Roanoke, Virginia for her whole life and is the youngest member of her family. She was asked a series of questions regarding her height compared to her friends, how she feels about group projects in school, and the type of relationship she has with her closest friends. According to the textbook, girls begin their growth spurt around age ten, and boys begin theirs around age twelve. Alisha seems to fall in line with this statement because she considers herself to be taller than most people in her grade, especially the boys. Regarding cognitive development, Alisha has reached the concrete operational stage. This stage is defined as active and appropriate use of logic (Feldman, 2018). She demonstrates this by thinking logically about whether or not she liked group projects and then giving an example as to why she feels this way. She could also clearly explain what her favorite subject in school is and why. Finally, the textbook says that “friendship at this stage is characterized by feelings of closeness” (Feldman, 2018). Alisha demonstrates this because she has begun to make friends who have similar interests and has picked a select few to be friends that she trusts and tells almost everything to.

Brandon has grown up in Roanoke, Virginia for his whole life and is an only child in his family. In the textbook, according to figure 14.1, at age eighteen, males tend to be taller than females. Brandon fits into this chart as he described himself as taller than most of his peers, including females. He is at the formal operational stage in his cognitive development. This stage is defined as the stage a which people develop the ability to think abstractly (Feldman, 2018). Brandon demonstrates this stage by being able to answer a multiple-part question about his view on group projects in well thought out pieces. Finally, the textbook states that at this stage of social development, the adolescent has reference groups which are defined as “people with whom one compares oneself” (Feldman, 2018). I feel that Brandon has reached this stage because he has made friends within the football team he plays for and they compare things among themselves such as height, weight, and strength.

Discussion

The interviewees were different because they were all at different periods in their development. They were also all in different places in their family: an only child, middle child, and youngest child. However, they were also similar in many ways. For example, all of the interviewees described their friends as kind and said that they shared similar interests with them. Alisha and Brandon both agreed that they liked to work in groups on school projects because different people can have different strengths within the different parts of the project. They also all liked the place that they have in their family, especially Katie.

Each interviewee has a different developmental characteristic that is most apparent at their current stage of development. Physical development is defined as changes in size, shape, and physical maturity of the body, including physical abilities and coordination (Areas of Development, 1993). For Brandon, this characteristic seemed most apparent. He has begun to realize he is taller than his friends and others his age and is comfortable with himself physically. Cognitive development is defined as the ability to reason, problem solve, and organize ideas (Areas of Development, 1993). This is the most apparent characteristic for Alisha. She has moved to the point of development where she can answer questions fully and with more detail. She is figuring out what subjects she likes in school along with the pros and cons of working on projects in groups. This shows her ability to reason and organize her ideas. Finally, the most apparent characteristic of development in Katie’s current life is social development. Social development is defined as the process of gaining the knowledge and skills needed to interact successfully with others. She demonstrates this by knowing who her closest friends are and being able to give reasons as to why she considers them her best friends.

I feel that John Watson and BF Skinner are the development theorists that provided me with framework through which the individuals can be compared. They theorized that learning is gradual and continuous and development is a sequence of specific conditional behaviors (Child Development Theorists, 2010). Through observing these individuals and analyzing their answers to my questions, it seems that development is continuous and does not happen abruptly. I also feel that Piaget provided me with some framework. I used his stages to decide whether or not each interviewee is where they are supposed to be in regards to their age and the stage of development that they should be in.

Conclusion

As the interviewees increased in age, their answers were more in depth and thought out. It is obvious that Brandon is more physically developed than Katie, and that Alisha falls somewhere in the middle. Alisha is able to answer questions fully, showing her cognitive development, but has not yet finished developing in any of the characteristics that were studied. One finding that surprised me was Alisha’s career choice. When asked what she wanted to be when she grows up, Alisha responded with, “An intensive care unit doctor. I like helping pother people and I think that it would be fun because you would get to see different situations and how it affects the patient’s life”. This response surprised me because it was much more in depth than I expected it to be. At her stage of development, I would expect that most children would choose something more stereotypical such as a doctor or a teacher.

The only problem that I encountered throughout this project was that Katie was not able to interview in person due to pink eye. She also was not comfortable with interviewing over the phone because she was not able to see the person that she is talking to. We overcame this problem by using video chat for our interview. I feel that my observations are valid. I am confident that my interviewees answered the questions to the best of their abilities and that their answers connect well with Watson and Skinners views of childhood development.

References

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