Three Ages Paper

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I have not given nor received help on this work, nor am I aware of any infraction of the Honor Code.

The three participants in this Three Ages Project were Mary Anderson, Lindsey Fitzgerald, and Jacob Karafa. Mary Anderson is a five-year-old girl, who is a friend’s daughter. Mary was chosen because she was easily accessible, and available to be interviewed. Mary’s interview took place at Panera with her mother. Mary’s interview was recorded by hand. Lindsey Fitzgerald is an eight-year-old girl who is the daughter of a relative. Lindsey was chosen because she fits in the middle age group, and was allowed to partake in the interview process. Lindsey’s interview took place at her home on a Sunday morning. Lindsay’s interview was also recorded by hand. Jacob Karafa is a 16-year-old male who was interviewed because he offered to partake as the individual in the third age group. Jacob’s interview took place at Sweet Water Grill and Restaurant. Jacob’s interview was recorded by note taking on a laptop. The rationale of this project is to interview individuals in three different age groups: Early Childhood (3-6), Later Childhood (7-12), and Adolescence (13-19). There will be the same six questions asked to each individual. The point of this project is to be able to see, and analyze the answers and how they progress/change as the individual increases in age. The questions are based off of physical, cognitive, and social/personality developmental themes. I expect to find that as the age of the individual increases the more developed, and complete answers I am going to receive.

 The three ages of development are: physical, cognitive, and social/personality. Each stage is different at the different age ranges. To begin physical development in the preschool Early Childhood period is when height and weight begin to increase rapidly. Also, the body becomes more muscular and less rounded. The brain is growing larger, and neural interconnections continue to develop, and lateralization emerges. Finally, gross and fine motor skills advance quickly. Children develop handeness, and can throw and catch balls. In the later childhood phase, growth begins to slow down, and gross motor skills, and fine motor skills continue to improve amongst the kids ages 7-12. In adolescence, ages 13-19, girls begin their growth spurt around 10 years old, and boys around 12. Girls reach puberty two-three years before boys. Girls approximately hit puberty at 11 or 12, and boys hit it around 13 or 14. This is the stage when sexual characteristics begin to develop, as well as secondary sexual characteristics (Feldman, 2011). Cognitive development at the Early Childhood age range, children show egocentric thinking, and “centration”. Also, an important aspect to this phase is that memory, attention span, and symbolic thinking are enhanced, and language improves rapidly. In the Later Childhood age range, children begin applying logical operations to problems. They also begin to understand conservation, and transformation. Another interesting development during this stage is that children can “decenter”, and begin taking in multiple perspectives. Finally, language pragmatics, and metalinguistic awareness is improved greatly. In the Adolescence phase of this section is when abstract though thrives. Adolescents are able to think hypothetically, divide attention amongst different things, and monitor through metacognition. During this time egocentrism begins to develop as well (oneself is most important). Self-consciousness is quite common at this stage. The finally stage is social/personality development. In the Early Childhood stage children develop self-concepts. A sense of gender, and racial identity will begin, and peers are seen as individuals to form friendships with. Morality is rule based and focuses on rewards/punishments. The Later Childhood stage is when children use psychological traits to define themselves. Children use social comparison to understand one’s own standing, and identity. The idea of what one is able to do, and not to do grows. Moral problems are approach in a way to maintain social respect, and what society defines as right. Finally friendship patterns of boys, and girls differ. The Adolescence stage of social/personality development is when self-concept is organized and reflects other’s perspectives. Defining one’s identity is a key task, but can sometimes be quite confusing during this time in a “teenagers” life. Autonomy can bring conflict with others, and sexuality is of high importance at this time. I think each age section builds on one another, but as an age group is taking in all three phases it can be a lot, however, each phase can correlate into the other in some way (Feldman, 2011).

When interviewing the children the first two questions had to do with cognitive development. The first question was: How do you prefer to learn? Mary who is five years old, responded by saying she prefers to learn through toys, or in other words hands-on. Lindsey said she enjoyed learning from an older person, or teacher because they are able to go into explanation. Jacob said he would prefer to learn visually, but can learn any way that is asked of him. The second cognitive question was, do you remember your last birthday? And what you did? Mary remembered she had a Scooby-Doo party, and got lots of presents. Lindsey knew she went out to dinner, but couldn’t seem to remember what she got as gifts. Jacob remembered everything. He knew he went to District of Columbia with friends, and family, and had tickets to go to a concert at the Verizon Center. The next two questions were based off of social/personality development. The first question was: What do you want to be when you grow up? Why? Mary said she wants to be a Fairy because they can fly, and have magical powers. Lindsey said she wants to be a vet because she had a deep love for animals. Last, but not least, Jacob said he wants to be a defense attorney because when he argues he tends to get his way. The second social/personality development question is, do you prefer to play alone, or with others? Mary prefers to play with others, especially with her one best friend. Lindsey prefers to play alone because she likes to make her own rules. Jacob said he likes to participate in group work, and activities. The last two questions fall under the physical category. The first of the two was: What’s your eye color? And where did you get it? Mary responded with, “Blue! I chose the color blue when I was little because it has always been my favorite color.” Lindsey in words said she had brown eyes, and that she knew her parents had given her the eye color. Jacob said his eyes are green, and he got the color through genetics. The final question was: How tall are you? What else is that tall? Mary said she was about four feet tall, and as tall as her dog who is a Great Dane. Lindsey said she is 4’9, and is as tall as one of her friends. Jacob said he was about 6’2, and the same height as his Yukon SUV. After interviewing the participants, it was clear that Mary was young, and not sure what to make of the whole situation, Lindsey was very into the process, and engaged, Jacob was very monotone, and gave off a little attitude when answering questions.

The children were the same in that all three were capable of answering the questions, however, each child answered the question in their own way. Mary, for example, answered the questions, but made stuff up a lot in order to answer. Where as, Lindsey knew what was being asked, and knew what her answers were however, her responses were not any more complicated than they needed to be. When Jacob answered the questions, he answered them all truthfully, and even took the questions a step further sometimes turning the interview into a conversation, and not just a brief question, and answer session. It is clear that Jacob has a high degree of all three developmental characteristics. However, it was clear in Lindsey’s, and especially Mary at a younger age that these three developmental stages were still continuing to grow, and add on to previous knowledge the children already knew. Piaget believed the different answered given by individuals provided important difference amongst them. He began his study because he was very interested in why children gave wrong answers to questions that required logical thinking. Piaget was in fact the first psychologist to make a systematic study of cognitive development. Piaget came to a conclusion at first that said children are born with a basic mental structure, which all subsequent learning and knowledge is based/built off of. Piaget’s study was unique in that it centered on only children, focused on specific stages in development and its gradual increase in complexity, and his focus on development rather than learning. Piaget had three basic components to his theory. He broke cognitive development to: schemas, adaptation processes (transitioning from one stage to another), and stages of development being: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational. In other words, schemas were the basic building block for intellectual behavior to be a way of organization of knowledge. A schema is a linked mental representation of the world, and as one grows and develop this schema’s link gets longer, and longer. The next step is adaptation, adaptation occurs through: assimilation, accommodation, and equilibration. Piaget believed children go through stages in the same order, as one another at the same age. He also thought no stage could be missed, however, some children may not attain the higher levels. However, the important part to his beliefs is that the rate in which the children go through these stages will vary upon individual; it is not a cohesive rate amongst every child at the same age. Piaget believed rom 0-2 years, children developed object permanence, 2-7 years children developed egocentrism, 7-11 years development of conservation occurred, and finally 11 years + children manipulate ideas in head (McLeod, 2015). Although the age ranges are a little different from Piaget’s, his overall idea that children progress through different stages at different times in their life, however, at different rates relate very well to the findings found in this interview process. The interview found that each of the children in the different age group was at a different physical, cognitive, and social/personality developmental point. Piaget stage of preoperational thinking is stage that takes place in early childhood, and is time when symbolic thinking grows, mental reasoning emerges, and the use of concepts increases. At this point the children are still not capable of operations (organized, formal, logical mental processes). This concept is a building block for the Middle, and Adolescence stages that follow (Feldman, 2011). A key aspect to the preoperational stage that is interrelated in every stage is egocentric thought. Although as age increases individuals get better at this, however, it is something that is always apart of an individual. At a young age one may not be aware of how others see something, or that one may hold another viewpoint. As one grows they understand this, however, one will look out for their best interest which is a higher degree of egocentrism. The information-processing approach is found in every stage, but begins in Early Childhood. In the beginning, information processing approaches focuses on how children are approaching their problems. This approach provides the most informative way in discovering how children develop cognitively. An example of how the theorist idea develops is how Piaget’s preoperational period turns into concrete operational stage in Middle Childhood, where logical thinking is applied to concrete problems. The final stage of Piaget’s is in Adolescence where concrete operational stage turns into formal operational stage. In this stage the ability to think abstractly begins. Also, Vygotsky believed a child’s cognitive development is based off of their social/cultural world. In other words, Vygotsky believed cognitive development grew through social interactions, participation with others, and working with others to answer problems. Through this the children will grow intellectually, and be able to increasingly function on their own. Although this idea is different than Piaget, working with others does help increase the child’s awareness of others thoughts/feelings, and may counterbalance Piaget’s idea of egocentrism (Feldman, 2011). Erik Erikson believed the Early Childhood years of social and personality development can be known as initiative-versus-guilt stage. During this time children’s view of themselves change as the children have conflicts between, acting alone without parents, or the guilt they feel when they do not succeed without their parents. In Middle childhood, Erik Erikson believed the stage developed to industry-versus-inferiority stage. This stage is known as the focus on efforts to meet the challenges presented by parents, peers, school, and other complexities of the physical world. A theorist that plays a large role in the questions that were asked in the interview is Eli Ginzberg. Ginzberg focused on three phases: fantasy period, tentative period, and realistic period. In the fantasy period that lasts till around 11 year old, careers are chosen without regard to skills, or abilities just to what seems appealing to the children (Feldman, 2011). This would mean Mary, and Lindsey are still in the fantasy period when asked what they wanted to be when they grew up. However, Jacob was in tentative period. The tentative period is when people begin to think in pragmatic terms of the requirements needed for different jobs. They also explore how a particular job will satisfy them. Finally the realistic period is when an individual explores specific career options through actual experience, or training for a profession. None of the individuals in this interview fit into the realistic period (Feldman, 2011).

Although Lindsey is only in the Middle Childhood phase, it is important that she continues to grow, and develop to her full potential. A recommendation for Lindsey to continue growing at a consistent rate is to continue interacting with many individuals, and asking/learning about as complex things as possible. Also, continuing to eat healthy, and balanced will help with physical development. Finally, if ever fallen below average age level on tests, or anything it is important to seek professional guidance in that specific area as soon as possible because a child getting set back is a difficult task to overcome. Theories of development are apparent in individuals because as one learns what each stage consists of then it becomes even more visible to see the break down. Beginning with Mary it is easy to see her thought process is not as complex when answering question like Lindsey’s is, and Lindsey’s thought process is not to the same point as Jacob’s either. The findings from the interview were not surprising at all. All of the children answered questions that were appropriate for their age group, and nothing too crazy was said. The only problems encountered during the interview was getting Mary to stay focused on the six questions long enough to get through them all. This was not too difficult to overcome, just had to get Mary to focus on questions by repeating them once or twice, but she would always answer. The observations taken from the interview are valid because the stages of development are quite clear when analyzing each child’s responses to the questions. If there were additional questions in the follow up, the question of whether they preferred to play with other girls, or other guys more would be asked. Also, what was their favorite subject, and why? These two questions would definitely be asked because the gender identity is a big part of development amongst individuals. Also, education plays a large role in understanding where the child is at in cognitive development, so the reasoning behind why the child might prefer one class to another might help understand their cognitive standing. All three of the children displayed a certain level of cognitive, physical, and social/personality development, and gave a valid interview.