Three Ages Project

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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 Ages Project was designed to appropriately determine the overall understanding of oneself when it comes to determining the differences in how we as humans develop. Gathering my subjects was rather easy considering I had access to all three desired age groups. I was also easily able to get in touch with them for the interview portions, most were after school or work. My participants consisted of T.B. an eighteen year old, who was chosen because he is a significant other and is easily reachable in person as well as over the phone. T.B. eagerly willingly agreed to participate in the interview process. T.B. is in the age group of being in college and transitioning into being an adult which is a true balancing act. The setting of the interview was after T.B. got off of work. He was able to talk over the phone and answer all of the questions. Throughout the interview I made sure to note that there were some distractions during the interview, but overall the questions were answered thoughtfully. My second participant was K.M. She is a twelve year old girl, who was chosen because she is easily available by the phone and willing to participate in the interview. K.M. is going through the transitional years of being in middle school and dealing with the hardships of social comparison. The overall setting of this interview was after K.M. got home from school. She was sitting at the kitchen table on facetime (video chat as so I can see her face) getting ready to do homework and answer the questions during this time. My third participant was J.M., a three year old boy, who was chosen because he was easily available over the phone. Most of the time he was willing to answer any questions I asked him. J.M. is in the age group of starting pre-school and transitioning into being a school-aged child. J.M. is always willing to talk and tell stories to anyone who will sit there and listen. The setting of this interview was consistent with the others; over the phone and just getting home from school. The questions were being asked by myself as well as there being a facilitator to help redirect the child if gotten too off task as I was not in person with him. We were over facetime just as I had done with K.M. My questions that I chose to give the interviewees were as followed; What is your favorite thing to do at home, What is your favorite thing to do in school/college, Can you describe your family to me, Can you describe yourself to me, What is the nicest thing someone has done for you, What makes you happy, If you could have one superpower what would it be and why, What is your favorite toy to play with and why, What is your favorite book. The main special interest that was focused on during these questionnaires was the cognitive development of each age groups and recognizing the progression of how more in depth or overall central focus of each question changed. The overall expectations that I expected to find were an overall progression of change in either the creativity or the depth of the answer as the age group changed. With the younger age group, I expected for J.M. to have lack of focus on the actual question and be more associated with telling stories. Depending on the setting of the interview I also expected him to be more focused on what was going on around him in his home setting. With the middle age group, I expected K.M. to be a little more reluctant when giving up answers. I also expected her to be more focused on what others thought about what should would be saying rather than what she thought of herself. With the oldest age group, I expected less information to be given forth as people as they get older tend to not want to burden people with their lives. I also expected there to be less creativity amongst answers than some of the other age groups would demonstrate. Knowing that T.B. was in a relationship I expected there to be a significant amount of talk about the significant other.

Each question that I asked had an overall specific purpose which are as followed: The first question determines the impact of the family on the person, the second determines the effect of the peers as well as the teachers during the child’s life outside of the home the third was the ability to recognize who is in their family along with being able to state their names and the ability to describe their family to me, the fourth was their ability for the person to recognize their self and role in either their family or own self, the fifth was their ability to recognize events that occur and decipher whether they were positive or negative emotions associated with them, the sixth was their ability to recognize positive emotions and the impact they can have on oneself, the seventh was the overall idea of having a superpower gives the child a sense of exploration and I wanted to see how that idea progressed as they got older, the eighth was an open question as the Toy can mean a lot of things and their responses would impact how I will process this question, the ninth in relation to Books and stories it can tell you a lot about a person in the sense of telling their intelligence as well as their likes and dislikes, the tenth question was to determine their overall sense of creativity and where that line transitions as they progress in age. For all of my questions I focused on the three areas of development: Cognitive, Socio-emotional, and Physical. Each area of development impacts the other because as the brain ages there is a deeper understanding of what can go on during their lives past, present, and the potential for an understanding of where their life is going. Ultimately, this will all influence the child and will help them to be brought up to their full potential and succeed greatly in life.

Looking at each interview we can see the progression of how each age group develops differently. When looking at Cognitive development one of the questions I asked was, “Can you tell me who is in your family?” As I stated above the overall idea behind this question was to determine the ability for the participant to recognize their family and also, depending on their response, it to be interpreted to get a better understanding of how they view their own family. T.B responded by first stating attributes describing his family and then went on to talk about how his significant other was a part of his family as well. T.B. also stated that his family was small, and I believe that is important when viewing the questions. With a family being smaller there is more focus on the individual child while he or she is growing up and there is the potential for more egocentrism. When I asked K.M. the same question, her response was started off by describing herself. I think that was a significant thing to note about recognizing herself first because with the age group of 6-12 there is a great sense of egocentrism, where the person really only has regard to themselves. K.M. stated her age and then went in to describe attributes again about the family as a whole. What I though was interesting between T.B. and K.M. was that both described attributes of their family when I asked them who was in their family rather than just telling me names of the people important to them. When I came to ask J.M. I had to be slower, there was some lack of focus and J.M.’s response to my question was a little all over the place. J.M. stated several family members who were in the family but after naming a few J.M. stated “wanna see something cool?” and proceeded to make karate noises as well as movements. From all of their responses I got a clear understanding of all of their cognitive developmental status and would be able to draw conclusions from it later on.

While looking at socio-emotional development the question I asked was “Can you describe yourself to me?” From this question I was looking to gather how each participant viewed themselves as well as their perspective on their social status, whether that be in school or in their home community. When it came to describing oneself, T.B. used the term of ‘well-versed leader’ but then completely disregarded answering anything else about himself or where he stood amongst his community. T.B. redirected the attention to the fact that dinner was being made and so I gathered that there was a sense of hunger on his mind. I believe that there was some lack of willingness to actually put himself on a pedestal which is why there was very little description of who T.B. believes he is. Moving onto K.M., her response was completely different than T.B., when talking K.M. stated a negative image of herself but then quickly changed that as there was the belief that others would think she is depressed. K.M. got deep with me as there was then the statement that overall there is a sense of kindness and she never gives up on anything or anyone. From this response I understand where this reaction is coming from. Being in middle school is a really tough transitional stage and many children suffer from negative image as well as social comparison. With social media growing so big children constantly compare themselves to others. When I asked J.M. this question he responded with, “Karate chopper, ninja” then my facilitator redirected him, and he answered with “My name is J., and this is from my school it’s got my name on it.” From his response, it is typical of a three year old to have little focus and his sense of creativity is also shining through his response yet he does not even realize it. I also recognized the fact that he goes to ‘school’ with what I understand this is a sort of pre-school setting where the children learn just as they would in a regular classroom.

The final area of development that I focused on was the physical aspect of development. As I was over the phone, I could not do a physical assessment of each individual, but I did ask them a question that regarded their sense of physical activity. The question I asked in regard to physical development was “If you were outside for a whole day what would you do?” From this question I was looking for the participants to respond as though they already had a day in mind that they wish they could repeat. The main thing would be in regard to physical activity rather than just sitting outside being there. T.B. responded as expected for an eighteen year old man, wanting to be outside hiking in the mountains as well as spend it with his significant other. From his response I was not surprised as I was aware of his love for the outdoors and for his significant other. K.M. responded with traveling to her cousin’s house who she noted lives in the neighborhood and also ride her bike. I was surprised by her response as I expected for her to say, “I love to be on my phone and would just do that the entire time” as most middle schoolers would answer that way. From this response I can get a better understanding of her level of creativity as well as what she likes to do in her free time. J.M. being in the youngest age group told me a story and the paraphrased version of that is as follows, “Me my magic run and dirt and dinosaurs, magic wand and turn into a dinosaur, play with big bulldozer real.” From my understanding of this was he turned himself into a dinosaur as well as he wants to play with a real big bulldozer outside. His response does not surprise me as children his age’s level of creativity is far greater than those of T.B.’s age. I also thought it was interesting how he mentioned playing with real bulldozers with emphasis on the real.

All three of my participants are greatly different in the way that each responded to the questions I asked. Transitioning through the age groups is very prominent in the way each responded to simple questions. Each of my participants are the same in the sense that they all have been exposed to similar backgrounds growing up as they all come from a small town with two parents who raised them. Looking at each individually I noticed key developmental characteristics in each case. Most present in T.B.’s case was his self-characteristic as he talked a majority of the time about his significant other as well as the fact that he was hungry. In the case of K.M. there was a significant number of socio-emotional characteristics being imprinted in their answers. There was a lot of worry about what others thought of herself and that is congruent with her age group. As for J.M. there was a great number of physical characteristics as he continuously made efforts to demonstrate his ‘karate moves’ as well as making various noises in order to impress me. The theorist that provided me with the frameworks that these individuals can best be compared to is that of Erik Erikson. Erikson discussed in great length that of the stages and building off of Sigmund Freud’s theories brought his own understanding to a whole new level. The only observation that was inconsistent with his theories of stages was the age groups that he designated seemed to vary upon each participant. The minds of the participants were all different and some were more mature than that of what Erikson believed they should have been at in this time in their life. There is significant evidence of interrelationships of several types of development as my questions I asked were to determine a wide spread of mental understanding. There was a great connection between the cognitive and socio-emotional aspect of each participant as when they were answering I asked them follow up question as to why that was their answer in order to provide myself with a deeper understanding.

Overall these interviews and questionaries’ were very eye opening. It has led me to develop my own sense of the theories of development in firsthand situations. The theories of development are apparent in all individuals based off of speech, understanding, and physical attributes. As humans age so does their mind, they gain knowledge and a better understanding of how the world functions around them. My overall findings did not surprise me as from going through the class I have gathered a better understanding of how we as humans continue to progress through life. I have been fully able to grasp how much nature and nurture as well play into the role of development and now am learning how to recognize when situations are too much or not enough. Some problems that I encountered while conducting this questionnaire was the lack of focus there was by my participants. Doing these interviews over the phone limited my ability to properly get full answers as well as reading the facial expressions of the participants to get a better understanding of how each question affected them. These difficulties were overcome by my ability to redirect the attention of all of my participants and use their distractions to lead into my next set of questioning. As of the difficulty of using phone interview rather than face to face well there was no true overcoming of that just constant redirection as well as listening to their tones of voice change when answering the different types of questions. I feel that my observations are valid. My same set of questions can be given to another student and if they were to ask the question to another set of individuals, they will be able to draw the same conclusions I did. Erik Erikson’s stage theory was most prevalent in my cases and that can be the same for others. If I had the opportunity to ask “follow-up” questions on my observations and add additional questions I would differ my question to each individual. For T.B. I would focus on his significant other as he cares about her greatly and that was prevalent in his first round of interview questions. For K.M. I would try and get her to open up more about her social comparison as she seems to get down on herself a lot and I would try and determine the root of that. For J.M. I would want him to continue to blossom his creativity so I would ask questions about what his favorite superhero is and what kind of things he likes to play with in his home.

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