

Three Ages Project Paper

Rebecca Mills

EDUC 245-07

Professor Cook

April 24, 2020

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This study followed three children of ages 6, 8, and 14. The six-year-old participant will go by the pseudonym “Sophie”. The eight-year-old will go by the pseudonym “Jack.” Lastly, the fourteen-year-old participant will go by the pseudonym “Mary.” Due to unpredictable circumstances, these participants were chosen out of convenience. Their relationship to me was not that strong, but due to COVID-19, I was unable to obtain interviews of random children who I did not know at all. These interviews were conducted using a variety of methods. Sophie and Mary’s interviews were conducted in person and note taking was used to keep track of each answer. As for Jack, his interview was conducted via Skype and the entire interview was recorded digitally in order to confirm that all answers were recorded. Jack was in his own house for this interview, while Mary and Sophie’s interviews took place at my house. After the completion of this project, I hope to gain a better understanding of how different aspects of a child’s life, specifically emotional, physical, cognitive, and social aspects affect them on a daily basis. I also want to analyze the role these aspects play depending on the age of the child.

#### **Interview 1: Sophie**

Sophie was my youngest participant at only six years old. The findings for her levels of development were interesting, yet also fairly predictable for a six-year-old. I began with questions regarding levels of cognitive development. I began asking her questions such as “Do you like school?” and “Is school hard for you?” Surprisingly, both answers to these were “no.” I thought that as a kindergartener, she would enjoy school a little more. After trying to follow up on those responses, it seemed as though she didn’t like school very much because it is “boring.” After a few more minutes, I discovered that she did enjoy reading and that she would rather read a book over watch a movie, which was nice to hear, even if she doesn’t particularly like school.

Some answers I thought were funny was that she picked 100 pounds of feathers over 100 pounds of brinks. In addition, she chose to have 5 pennies instead of 1 dime. This was expected for a 6-year-old, but I found it to be pretty funny. To end the cognitive questions, I asked her what she wanted to be when she grew up and she said she wanted to be a dentist to help fix people's teeth. I thought this was a sweet response and was expecting her to say something less practical such as "a princess."

The next questions I asked surrounded the physical aspects of development. I asked her how tall she was, and she actually did not know exactly. I then asked her some athletic based yes or no questions such as "Can you ride a bike?", "Can you jump rope?", and "Can you do a handstand?" Surprisingly, all the answers to these questions were "yes." She seemed to be a very active kid who enjoyed being outside. I then asked her if she played any sports and asked her to elaborate. She stated that she did play soccer, although she really did not enjoy it that much and doesn't want to continue. She seems like she enjoys doing these outdoor activities more independently rather than with a big team like the soccer team. I lastly asked her "How many teeth have you lost?" She responded with saying she had lost three, and then continues to show me all her teeth and point out which ones had been lost, which ones had grown back in, etc. I was actually surprised by the teeth she had lost because I personally lost teeth very late and forgot about the fact that children in kindergarten would already be losing teeth.

The next section was the emotional questions. To be honest, she didn't seem to portray that many emotions when answering these questions. Everything was very surface level and I don't think she quite had an understanding of extreme emotions yet. She did say that she feels very happy around animals, such as her dog. Although, she couldn't really think of anything that made her sad or what scares her. I was happy to hear her say that she never really worries about

anything. This is predictable, as she is only 6. Lastly, I finally got her to really express an emotion she often feels because I asked her “How do you feel when you have to share with your sister?” and she immediately reacted and said it makes her really mad when she has to share her toys.

The last section of questions regarded social development. She really enjoyed talking about her best friend when asked about her. She said that they like to play together at school. She said that she enjoys playing inside over playing outside, because all of her LOL toys are inside, which she said were her favorite toys to play with. She does have one sister, and when asked about how they get along she stated that they only play together sometimes. In hindsight, her sister is 13 and she is only 6, so there probably isn't too much common ground for them to bond over. Lastly, I asked her about her pets, and she talked about how she has two cats and one dog. She made it very apparent that she favored playing with the dog over the cat.

After conducting this interview, I went back to view the textbook chapter that talked about these areas of development. She seemed pretty in line with the development she should currently be seeing for a six-year-old. An article by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2020) stated that at age 6, children start to become more independent as they go off to school, and I think that was definitely apparent while interviewing Sophie. When interviewing her, her body language showed me that she was a little shy and nervous, but she was also very smiley, so I think she was also happy to be there and not too uncomfortable, which did correspond with the answers she was giving me, specifically regarding social development.

### **Interview 2: Jack**

Next, I interviewed Jack, the eight-year-old. His body language and energy were very funny. He was super energetic and just a silly 8-year-old boy. I had a fun time hearing his

answers to these questions. Once again, the first section of questions was surrounding cognitive development. We started talking about school, and he said that he really enjoyed school and didn't think it was that hard. He also said that he liked reading, but he would prefer to watch tv. When it came to the questions about picking one or the other, he picked to lift 100 pounds of feathers and also picked 1 dime over 5 pennies, which represented some level of development greater than the 6-year-old I interviewed. When I asked Jack what he wanted to be when he grew up, he said "a judge because they get a lot of money" which I thought was funny. I also asked him if he liked puzzles and he said he liked the puzzles with 10 pieces, but the ones that have 100 pieces are too hard.

Next I asked the physical questions. I asked Jack how tall he was, and he said "10 ½ inches." He stated that he can ride a bike "with no training wheels" and he can jump rope, but he can only do a handstand for 1 second. He said he can probably do 5 pushups. For sports, he plays baseball and soccer, and he hopes to play basketball in the winter. Jack was proud that he had lost 6 teeth already and had to count them all when I asked him. He is definitely an active kid for his age and definitely enjoys the various sports he plays.

Next was the emotional questions. Jack said that he feels happy when he talks to his friends and sad when he doesn't get to do something. When asked about how he feels about being told what to do, he said "a volcano." He loves animals, especially cats. When asked how he feels about himself, he said he feels like a volcano because he feels like one when he feels super angry. He said that five nights at Freddy's and clowns scare him, but he's brave. He said he worries sometimes, but he didn't quite know when. I asked when he feels awkward and he responded by saying he's awkward when he facetimes his sister and when talking to girls. He

struggles with sharing with his siblings because his little sister takes things from him and he doesn't like it.

The last section of questions surrounds social development. When asked about his best friend, Jack said that this best friend is Daniel and that he is very nice and loves dinosaurs. He said he gets along with his siblings sometimes and that they like to watch movies and play videogames together, specifically Mario kart. Jack said he loves playing soccer outside with his friends outside of school. Jack has lots of friends at school and really enjoys getting to spend time with them. His favorite toy is "definitely" his Nintendo Switch because he gets to play Fortnite and Mariokart on it.

An article from CS Mott Children's Hospital (2018) states at the age of 8 years old, children begin to "enjoy being around their friends," can read simple sentences, and develop physically by growing about 2.5 inches a year. After talking to Jack, I think he perfectly embodies the correct development level of other kids his age. He is very social and enjoys physical activity, especially with his friends.

### **Interview 3: Mary**

My last interview was with Mary, the 14-year-old girl. The first category, once again, was cognitive. I asked her if she liked school and if she thought it was hard, and she responded that she did like school and that it isn't that hard for her. When I asked her to lift 100 pounds of feathers or 100 pounds of bricks, she said that they were the same. She said that sometimes she likes reading and sometimes she doesn't, it usually depends on the book, but overall, she would rather watch TV. When asked if she enjoys puzzles and if they're hard for her she responded with "I like puzzles, and sometimes they are hard, depending on how many pieces they have. Her

cognitive development is clearly above the other two children I interviewed, which was predictable for her age.

The next set of questions regarded physical development. When asked how tall Mary was, she said “probably around 5’3 or 5’4,” much different from the younger kids’ responses. She said that she can ride a bike and jump rope but cannot do a handstand. She also talked a lot about how she likes to play soccer. She plays soccer very often, as she is on her school soccer team as well as a travel soccer team. It was apparent that soccer is what consumes most of her free time and that she enjoys it that way.

The next set of questions surrounded emotional development. When asked when she feels happy, she said “when I’m with my friends.” She said that she feels good about herself. In addition, she said she feels scared when she has to be high in the air because she is very scared of heights, but she also stated that she is brave most of the time, like when she flew on an airplane. She said that she does worry sometimes, specifically when “I have to wait a long time to get a test back that I don’t think I did good on.” She also said that she feels awkward when “I get called on by a teacher and I don’t know the answer and the whole class is silent.” She also said that she is fine with sharing with her two sisters, mostly clothes, and it doesn’t make her feel any type of emotion.

The last set of questions surrounded social development. Mary talked very highly about her best friend, saying “she is the best person to be around and I love when I get to hang out with her.” She also says that she gets along well with her siblings and they like to take their dog on walks together and ride bikes together. Of course, her favorite activity outside of school was to play soccer with her teammates. She lastly mentioned that she would rather play outside than inside. Outside she likes to ride bikes, take her dog for a walk, and play soccer.

### Discussion

The three children I interviewed had their similarities, but their differences were a lot more apparent. Starting with similarities, they all seemed to have a best friend who they really enjoyed hanging out with. Some physical similarities were apparent to, such as the ability to ride a bike and jump rope. The most noticeable differences come from the cognitive development. Questions were answered differently such as “would you rather lift 100 pounds of bricks or 100 pounds of feathers?” across the different age groups. I hypothesize from this that cognitive development is what develops the most throughout childhood.

When looking at developmental theories and how they are representing the different ages I interviewed, I began with Freud and Erikson’s stages of development. From examining Freud’s stages, it looks like Sophie was in phallic stage, Jack was in the latency stage, and Mary is in the genital stage (Levine et al., 2017, p. 35). Even though I don’t believe Freud’s stages of development are 100% accurate, these are the stages these children are hypothetically in. When comparing this to Erikson’s theories of development, Sophie is experiencing the initiative vs guilt phase, Jack is experiencing the industry vs inferiority stage, and Mary is experiencing the identity vs role confusion stage (Levine et al., 2017, p. 35). I believe that Piaget’s theory pretty accurately provides a framework through which these individuals can best be compared. Piaget’s cognitive development theory stated that we take in new information and we try to connect it with information we already know in order to expand our knowledge on certain topics (Levine et al., 2017, p. 46). When it comes to cognitive development, each child’s cognitive ability only increased as the age went on. For example, in the cognitive based questions, there wasn’t something the 6-year-old was able to comprehend that the 8 and 14-year-old weren’t able to do, and so on. Another theory I analyzed when looking at these results was Lev Vygotsky’s

sociocultural theory. This theory states that the social world and culture has a bigger impact on a child's cognitive development than children being individual learners (Levine et al., 2017, p. 47). It is hard to distinguish whether or not this theory is applicable when looking at the children that I interviewed. While the 6-year-old did appear to be the least social as well as have the lowest cognitive development, that is most likely just because she is years younger than my other participants. In order to test if this theory was actually applicable, I would have to interview a variety of children, all of the same age, but all having different levels of social development. Then I would be able to determine if social development plays such a big role in cognitive development like Vygotsky theorizes.

When criticizing some of these theories in relation to the children I interviewed, I wanted to elaborate a little more on Albert Bandura's theory and how I don't think it quite reflects all children. I actually worked this theory into my interviews. At the end of each interview, I tossed my pencil behind me to signify that it was all over. Each child had a pencil/crayon with them as well in case they were asked to draw something. I wanted to see if the children would show signs of imitation and also toss their writing utensil. Bandura's theory states that children learn best through imitation- they will see a behavior and often repeat that behavior and inevitably learn from it (Levine et al., 2017, p. 44). In my findings, this only happened to be the case with the six-year-old. She also wanted to throw her crayon back and also thought it was extremely funny. I think that Albert Bandura's theory is only applicable with children who are in their early childhood. Children above the age of 10 don't often copy everything they've seen because they have been taught that just because you see someone else or someone on TV act a certain way, does not indicate that that behavior should be copied. Albert Bandura does not specify which age

range this theory applied to, but rather makes a generalization that this is just how “children” behave, which can reflect a very large age category and is not always the case.

To conclude this study, I want to point out the key relationship I saw between two areas of development I examined. These were the areas of cognitive and emotional development. As I interviewed my three participants, I noticed that the more cognitive development the child exhibited, the more emotional development they also seemed to have. For example, Sophie knew very little about when she felt worried, brave, awkward, etc. It seemed as if she really did not experience those emotions very much. On the other hand, when I interviewed Mary, she was able to give me very thoughtful and specific responses for when she feels certain ways, concluding that she feels a broader range of emotions than those who have not developed cognitively enough. I think that while these two have a connection, all areas of development do greatly affect a child and their overall success through their childhood.

## References

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