

Three Ages Project: Stage 2

Bailey Nixon

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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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For the Three Ages Project, there were three people who were interviewed. Jack of age 4, Kaitlyn of age 10, and Kelsie of age 18 were asked questions in order to learn more about their development, environment, and interests. Jack was chosen to be interviewed because of his close relationship to my family. Jack was recently diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome and has a unique perspective to offer to this project. I expected his responses to the interview questions to be different compared to those with no developmental delay. More specifically, I expected his answers to be shorter and less clear; Jack has a hard time staying focused. In order to interview him, I had my mom film a video of her asking him the questions. She then sent me the video. If I were to have conducted the interview, he would not have answered the questions as well as he did. While he is close to my family, he is not comfortable enough with me to be asked multiple questions and give good responses to all of them. For my next interview, I chose Kaitlyn who is my cousin. I am very close with her and we share a great relationship. I wanted to ask Kaitlyn these questions because I knew she would be honest with me, but also put her personality into the responses. I expected her responses to be very detailed and long; Kaitlyn loves to talk about her experiences. In order to get her responses, we chose to FaceTime because I could not go home to get an in-person interview. In general, this worked well and we were still able to have a full interview. For my final interview, I chose to work with my best friend Kelsie. Similar to my expectations for Kaitlyn, I knew Kelsie would answer the questions truthfully and with long responses. Since Kelsie is a student at Longwood, I was able to complete an in-person interview. I had the questions typed out and I added her responses as she was answering them.

The intended goal of this project is to connect the ideals and themes of Human Growth and Development to people in real life. In order to fully relate to the material discussed

throughout the course, it is important to see and experience real world examples. In order to do this, I structured the questions into four categories: cognitive, social-emotional, physical, and area of interest. For cognitive, in all age groups, questions were asked in various terms about their interests and how they prefer to learn. For all age groups for social-emotional, questions were asked in various terms about their happiness and who they prefer to get advice from. For physical, for all age groups, questions were asked in various terms about their sleeping habits and activeness. Finally, for area of interest, questions were asked in various terms about their future career goals and favorite hobbies. I wanted to incorporate similar questions for each interviewee in order to analyze the differences in their responses. Their differences will help assess the level of their development and their interests at varying age groups.

Jack, representing the early childhood stage of development, was the first person involved in my interviewing process. To begin, Jack was asked whether he liked to read, watch television, or play with toys the most. To my surprise, Jack said he enjoyed watching television the most. This surprised me because Jack is usually very hands on and willing to learn and work through various situations. I was shocked that Jack did not choose playing with his toys, due to his desire to explore and investigate more than the average child. To discover more of his social development, Jack was asked what made him happy. Jack happily responded, “nothing”. I found this funny because it could not be farther from the truth; Jack is typically a very happy child. However, it does highlight his lack of conversational skills represented by his developmental delay. As a follow up question, Jack was asked who he was most comfortable talking to when something was upsetting him. He again quickly responded, “mommy and daddy”. By nature, most children his age would say the same thing due to the extended time spent with family at this age. It is only normal for Jack to also feel most comfortable speaking to his parents about

anything, regardless of it upset him. Finally, to touch on his physical development, Jack was asked about how much he plays outside. I figured this would be the easiest way to assess his activeness in a way that he could effectively answer. Jack responded that he played outside a lot with himself, his sister, and his dog. He also talked about he walked his dog with his mom twice a day around the neighborhood. I also thought his answer was pretty common compared to other children his age. Their activeness tends to be through play, and it appears that Jack does a lot of playing outside.

As previously stated, Jack has Asperger's syndrome, which is characterized by a lack in social development. However, cognitive development can often be enhanced in response. According to Autism Speaks, a child with Asperger's can experience "remarkable focus and persistence, aptitude for recognizing patterns, [and] attention to detail" ("What Is Asperger Syndrome?" n.d.). Additionally, it is also stated that these children experience "hypersensitivities, difficulty with the give and take of conversation, [and] difficulty with nonverbal conversation skills" ("What Is Asperger Syndrome?" n.d.). After the interview with Jack, many of these symptoms are obvious in his demeanor. Due to his developmental delay, some of his developmental stages will unfortunately be impacted. This will occur in more of his social developmental than physical or cognitive, but there will always be differences when compared to his other peers. While his condition is not curable, with an early diagnosis and intervention, many of Jack's symptoms can improve as he ages. According to Laura Levine and Joyce Munsch, "early intensive behavioral intervention has brought about substantial improvement in IQ and adaptive behavior for many autistic children" (Levine & Munsch, 2006, p. 149). With this being said, Jack has the opportunity to excel in all levels of development; however, his journey to accomplish this may be longer and more difficult than others his age.

The second individual who I used in my interview process, Kaitlyn, represents the later childhood phase of development. I started out the interview by asking Kaitlyn about her learning style. Kaitlyn is a high achiever in school and has a reputation for getting good grades, so I was very excited to hear how she does this. Kaitlyn's response indicated that she worked best on her own, when the teacher gave her problems to complete and work out. I was surprised that Kaitlyn did not like when the teacher spoke or when she worked in groups. I then asked her what her favorite subject was and her answer made her previous response make more sense. Kaitlyn told me that her favorite subject was math because "it is fun to find each answer". By nature, Kaitlyn is a very independent person for her age and it only make sense that she learns this way too. Personally, I am the same way when it comes to learning and I always have been. I love being able to solve problems and work on my own. To discover more about Kaitlyn's social development, I asked about who she is most comfortable talking to when something is upsetting her. Kaitlyn immediately began talking about her mom and how she is always willing to work things out by talking. I found this normal that Kaitlyn mentioned talking to her mom and did not mention talking to any of her friends. According to theorists, adolescence is typically when the switch occurs to grow closer to friends and not family members. In addition, to assess her social development, I asked about what made her happy. Kaitlyn replied with, "playing softball and cheering, I always love being around my teammates". I was really happy when she said this; sports are a great way for children to become social and be active. She told me how her practices were twice a week for a couple hours each time. This is a great way for her to learn the importance of not only making friends, but doing activities that are good for her health. By making friends through this process, Kaitlyn is learning a positive association between sports and being healthy. I strongly believe team sports should be an important role in the social and

physical development of children, especially around Kaitlyn's age. Playing sports was the main way I met my friends, some of who I still am close with today.

After talking with Kaitlyn, I did not feel that she was lacking social, cognitive, or physical development. I actually felt that she was excelling in all categories and the things she is involved with have helped her development in many ways. For example, her high achievement and motivation in school have led to her to feel confident in her educational abilities. In addition, her involvement in cheering and softball have allowed her to be active while making close relationships to other peers her age. Kaitlyn represents a very well-rounded, happy, and active young girl.

For my final interviewee, Kelsie represented the adolescent age of development. I began asking Kelsie similar questions about her learning style to assess her cognitive development. Kelsie responded with, "I am definitely a visual learner. I have an auditory processing disorder that makes it hard for me to connect what I hear to what I understand. Words help me see what I need know in a clear way". Before this, I knew Kelsie had a learning disorder but I did not know that it affected her in a large way. It was very interesting to learn how Kelsie is able to best understand the material in her classes. Even though she has this disorder, her overall cognitive abilities are not less than her peers. Kelsie is an extremely intelligent person in academics and decision making. To discuss her social development, I asked the same question about who she would be comfortable talking to if something was upsetting her. Kelsie's response really shocked me compared to what theorists believe to be true about adolescents and their peer relationships. To my surprise, Kelsie claimed that she would be more likely to go to her sister or her mom if she ever needed advice or if something was bothering her. I asked her why and she responded with, "I am honestly closest with them and I know they would never judge me, no matter the

situation”. Personally, I go to my friends first when something is upsetting me, but it is very good that Kelsie has this relationship with her family. She was raised in a very family-oriented household, and this shows in her personality. Finally, to assess her physical development, I asked Kelsie about her sleeping schedule and her activeness. Kelsie replied that she did not get nearly as much sleep and she knew she needed, typically going to bed around 1 am and waking about around 8 am. According to Laura Levine and Joyce Munsch, adolescents are supposed to be getting at least 8-9 hours of sleep each night (Levine & Munsch, 2006, p. 485). Luckily, Kelsie’s lack of sleep is not extreme and does not put her behind for cognitive or physical development. However, in rare cases, getting little sleep can result in negative changes to an adolescent’s brain and body. Kelsie and I also discussed her rate of activeness. She told me that while she does not go to the gym on an often basis, she chooses to walk and take the stairs almost everywhere she goes. It is important for children and adolescents to pursue active choices such as these.

By asking similar questions to all interviewees, I was able to find several comparisons between these three individuals. While Jack, Kaitlyn, and Kelsie all represent individuals in different developmental stages, they all had a tendency to cling to their families for emotional support. This is one of the most interesting things I found through my interview. The development of attachment and this reliance on family and parents is related to Mary Ainsworth’s attachment theory. As discussed by Laura Levine and Joyce Munsch in the textbook, there are four stages of attachment: secure attachment, anxious avoidant attachment, anxious ambivalent/resistant attachment, and disorganized/disoriented attachment (Levine & Munsch, 2006, p. 229). While these are tested and developed as a young child, they impact future relationships with family and others. For parents, it is important to develop a secure attachment with your child in order to prevent poor attachment in the future. In fact, as stated in

the textbook, “Securely attached infants became children who were more competent in their interactions with peers, were more self-reliant, and had better self-control” (Levine & Munsch, 2006, p. 235). It is important to note that all three interviewees grew up with this secure environment. While Jack is still young and relies on his parents for many things, Kaitlyn and Kelsie definitely exhibit self-reliant and self-control tendencies. They are comfortable talking to their mom when things are upsetting them, but they did not rely on their mom for everything.

While some similarities were noted between Jack, Kaitlyn, and Kelsie, I saw differences when it came to their identity and self-concept development. To connect to Erik Erikson, Jack is in the initiative versus guilt stage. Due to Jack having Asperger’s syndrome, it is harder for him to identify closely with this stage. For example, Saul McLeod claims that when children begin to interact and engage with others they “develop a sense of initiative and feel secure in their ability to lead others and make decisions” (McLeod, n.d.). After talking with Jack and getting to know his personality, it is clear he does not fit the mold Erikson highlights for this age. Jack is reluctant to be social and has yet to development strong social relationships with others. However, Kaitlyn is classified under the Erikson’s industry versus inferiority stage. According to McLeod, children will be able to “read and write, to do sums, [and] do things on their own” (McLeod, n.d.). As previously discussed, Kaitlyn has excelled in her academics and has begun to become independent in the classroom. With this in mind, Kaitlyn’s skills and personality show how she is fitting into this stage well. Finally, Kelsie is under the industry versus role confusion stage. During the interview, I had asked Kelsie what she wanted to do after her time in college. She explained to me that she recently changed her major and is confused on what career she wants to pursue. During this age, it is common for adolescents to be unsure of their futures. Therefore, it is clear that Kelsie fits into this Erikson stage. Overall, connecting the interviewee’s



stages and responses to the content discussed in class helped my understanding of development as a whole.

To focus on the development of Jack, I believe it is imperative to make his social development important. In order to do this, Jack must be immersed in more social situations. After his interview, it is clear that he tends to be more comfortable in individual situations. This component of Jack's personality did not surprise me, due to the typical symptoms of children with Asperger's syndrome. With more social interactions, Jack will be able to build relationships and develop a self-identity.

In general, there were some complications throughout the interviewing experience. For example, for Jack and Kaitlyn, they often gave me short responses, which I did expect. During the interviews, I asked short follow-up questions to get them to lengthen their answers. I could have completely resolved this by adding more questions to my interview list, even if I did not ask all of them. I could have asked more questions about each development section, in order to discover more about each of the interviewees position in each stage. If I were to ask more questions, I would want them to be consistent throughout each age group in order to be able to compare and contrast their answers. In general, throughout this process, I learned a lot about the theories we have discussed throughout the semester. I was able to connect real life situations to the terms we have learned. Additionally, it was fascinating to see the differences in responses from each age group, similar to the differences in development in each age group.

## References

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