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17 December 2024

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*Commentary Paper*

Child development is the study of ways in which we change and grow from conception through adolescence. The domains of child development include physical, cognition, language and social/emotional development. Social-emotional and language development dictates how they will communicate and socialize in the future. Cognitive development is how a child learns and what they see in their world and use it to advance their skills. Physical development is the ability to use and control your body. In this essay, I will share some skills from these domains that I observed Samantha.

Samantha is a 3-4 years old girl. She has dark hair that is tied up in a ponytail. She is wearing a short sleeve shirt with lace in the front and black and white striped leggings. She has white socks with black and pink sneakers as well. Samantha is seen with dimples on her cheeks and she has dark eyes as well. She is playing in a school setting. You observe different toys around her in the cubbies and number line and spelling on the walls which are placed to engage a child within a school setting. You also noticed her friend Sarah, who is also making a castle with blocks. These are the main observations that took place in the video.

Samantha uses her cognitive skills throughout the video. She shows that she can recognize some similarities and differences between objects around her by stating “mine is taller“. Samantha built her tower very tall with more than ten blocks. Samantha uses her cognitive abilities with her numeracy skills. She is able to count objects, add objects and she says numbers through memory. She watches her tower to see if it will fall, and she even adds more to

test the theory. She starts to think about her tower by making observations and predictions about what will happen next. With her curiosity about her tower, she is learning problem solving skills which is very helpful for her development. Samantha is starting to show skills that she understands how objects and shapes fit in a space and showing skills such as object permanence. As she was building the tower, she was precisely placing one block on top of the other and making sure all the blocks were lined up evenly. These skills Samantha displays, indicate that she has a strong capability to learn the world.

Samantha uses her social-emotional and language skills to play and communicate. She uses words, such as “mine” and “I”. This demonstrates that she is able to use proper pronouns while she is speaking and also knows possessives. When conversing with someone pronouns are essential so other can know who and what you're speaking about. While she was playing, a caregiver was speaking with her asking if her tower was falling and she would answer back saying, “it’s not falling” and she also indicated that there weren’t any more blocks for her to build by saying “no it’s not”. This shows her ability to understand and communicate with others. She also is independently building a very tall tower with blocks next to her friend Sarah. She notices that Sarah is building her own castle and she suggests to her that if Samantha’s tower falls, it might mess up her castle. This is Samantha showing her empathetic side which can help Samantha with her social-emotional growth. She understands that just as she has thoughts, feelings, and goals, her friend Sarah has thoughts and feelings and goals too. This is a great skill when learning how to build trust and friendships as she grows up. She understands when someone is communicating with her and knows when to respond back. Samantha has learned how to communicate and socialize with others.

Samantha portrays multiple gross and fine motor skills throughout this observation. I notice her walking as she is getting blocks to build her tower and you see her reaching up to put the blocks on top of the tower. This shows that she is able to balance and stand alone, and also being able to reach up and lift her arms to stack the blocks. She is able to move every muscle in her body. The fine motor skills she portrays is having hand eye coordination to be able to place the blocks so that they don't fall down and grabbing the blocks and picking them up. She does all of this while also using two of her hands Independently. She was able to build a tower smoothly and accurately, so it wouldn't fall and she slightly ran away before it did fall. She shows how her reaction time was quick and smooth which is essential for safe playing. Samantha has no problems with moving her whole body and using her hands to move objects properly.

When you put a three-year-old and a five-year-old together, you can notice a slight difference and similarly in the development of their skills. While Samantha was building her tower she was moving all parts of her body as well as Jasmine was moving her body on the monkey bars and throughout the whole park. Both girls displayed hand coordination while doing these activities as well. While the girls were playing, they were alone for some time. They were quiet and focused on what they wanted to do, showing their independence. Both girls had similar cognitive skills when it came to problem-solving and creativity. Jasmine was putting sticks in the sand with her sister building something and Samantha was building a large tower. Both these activities also needed the skill to be able to manipulate the objects. Samantha was placing the blocks very precisely, and fitting them in a way that the tower won't fall. Jasmine was also placing sticks in the sand one by one sure the sticks wouldn't fall over. When it comes to language, both of the girls use proper pronouns and possessive words, such as "I". They were also able to communicate with adults when Samantha told her teacher, her tower was not gonna

fall, and Jasmine needed help from her caregiver. Social emotional skills were also prominent between the two girls. They were able to express their own interest. They also have assertive behavior and were able to say what they were doing and how they felt during playtime without being hurtful or mean. When Jasmine claimed she was hot, she took her sweater off and Samantha communicated to her teacher and peer that she was building a tower. Both girls also cooperate with others by talking to children of their age while they are playing and including them in the play.

Samantha and Jasmine may be a couple years apart, but the older you are the more opportunities and time you have to develop more of your skills. Jasmine was able to run with speed and agility to chase her sister, and she was able to climb monkey bars and swing on them. Samantha only did a run gait when she thought her tower would fall. In Jasmine's observation you notice her memories developing when she asked her dad for help twice and knew that he would help her when she asked him. She also has an explanation and a reasoning when she asked her dad to push her on the swing instead of her sister. Samantha's language wasn't so complex as Jasmine's Samantha only gave 3 to 5 word responses whereas Jasmine responded in long sentences. Jasmine was also able to respond to another language which we don't see with Samantha, she only responded in one language. While the girls were playing, Jasmine was able to play with her sister and engage with her and chase her around. She also had a point while she was in the playground, where she got more upset and was demanding for help. Samantha engaged in parallel play with Sarah while building the tower without direct communication. A two year difference between children doesn't seem like much doesn't seem like a big difference. In reality, in two years a child can learn so much and be more complex.

In the first observation video, the baby was in a living room on the carpet and there were a variety of toys around her. Samantha was in a school that had cubbies with toys in them, a number on the walls and also some writings was in a park with sand on the floor With a very open space for children to run around. All the babies had a caregiver with them. They also had toys that were beneficial for their own learning. The baby was in a house setting where the lights looked darker and there wasn't much sound around her. Samantha was in a school setting with a couple kids seen around her and brighter lights as well. Jasmine was in a playground outside with natural lighting and a lot of other children playing around her as well. Due to Samantha being in school, it gave her a structured environment. It allows her to have social interactions with peers. They could provide her opportunities to learn empathy and to cooperate with her peers as well. Samantha was getting positive feedback from teachers, and that boosts her confidence as she is playing and experimenting. Samantha being in school impacts her development by being in an environment that promotes creativity, problem-solving, curiosity, and thinking skills. It also encourages her to have those social skills with her peers around her and teachers as well. She also has access to different materials around her that she may not have in her own house being able to encourage her motor skills. The setting a child learns in can support learning and social behaviors within children.

In the preschool observation video, Samantha displays some aspects of culture. For one, the language she uses is English. This helps her build relationships with her friend Sara and also communicate with teachers. She also is allowed to go to school. Some little girls can't attend school in other countries. Samantha starting school gives her the chance to excel and even start thinking about what she wants to be when she's an adult. It's already helping her build a sense of belonging and developing social skills for her friendships in the future. Samantha also shows

how gender plays a role in her life. She is shown wearing girl clothes with pink colors. The name she has is also a feminine name. This conveys the gender stereotypes of girls wearing girl clothes and having feminine names. Her being a girl can also lead to potential gender discrimination. It can dictate who she plays with and what toys she plays with. She is parallel playing with her friend Sarah, which also shows that she is familiar with the girl role. She shows that she is comfortable around other girls as well as she communicates with a caregiver and Sarah in class. It can also affect her body image when she's older and is able to compare how she looks with others. Samantha has dark features which one can assume she might be of hispanic descent but born in the USA due to the language being spoken throughout the video. She may speak English but many people who look Hispanic can be discriminated against as well. It can affect her getting into a school or getting a job when her name is appearing on forms. The clothes she has on are casual and doesn't follow any religious stereotype either. Some parents who are religious make sure their child is covered from head to toe with no skin showing. Samantha was dressed very casually so her family may not be religious. Religion is known to be beneficial to build a sense of community, values and guidance. However, Samantha not being seen as religious may lead her to have free creativity, which can enhance her cognitive development compared to a child with a limited imagination. Children can be affected by culture in many ways. The way they carry themselves starts in the home and ends up being adapted into the child's life. It's important for children to learn and understand so they develop themselves as individuals and people of the world.

There are different aspects of culture which influence our lives. My life has been mostly affected by ethnicity, family composition, geographic region, language, religion/spiritual practices, and socioeconomic status. I grew up in South Brooklyn and I am very grateful for

where I live. I always felt safe walking to school and walking home. My mom trusted me playing tag and hide-n-seek outside with the neighbors. This allowed me to build confidence and build great social- emotional skills to build friendship and trust. My friends from the neighborhood are of different ethnicities from me. When I went over to their house I would hear their language and eat their food. I'm very grateful to experience different ethnicities through the friendships I built. My ethnicity is Puerto Rican and I would also bring my friends with me for the holidays and teach them how to use our country's instruments. There are many Puerto Rican traditions I hold near and dear to my heart. My grandma has taught me the traditional way to cook food and some recipes that were passed down. Learning these different traditions throughout different cultures helped me understand others and not judge people for something they do differently than me. The Spanish language was also passed down later in my life. I wasn't allowed to speak Spanish when I was growing up because my mother wasn't treated fairly due to her accent from when she was younger so she decided not to teach me Spanish. Now, she regrets not teaching me Spanish younger but I now speak some Spanish just not fluently as her. If i would have learned Spanish at a younger age i would be more fluent and be able to communicate properly in another language. It was also important to go church every Sunday and have Sunday dinner. My mom enrolled me in religious instruction and I went to school every Wednesday after public school. I had to make sure I never showed too much skin and I had respect and manners to the priest and anyone I speak to. It developed the morals I carry on today. Now I go to church less but I still pray every night and have strong faith. It made me strong and built a sense of responsibility and a routine at such a young age. My family composition also affected my life. My family split up when I was 3 years old. It was only my mom, grandma and I for my whole life. My dad was around when it was convenient. I am also an only child so I had to deal with the hardships all by myself. I didn't

have a sister or a brother to talk to when I needed to talk. I was raised by women who thought they have to be strong all the time. I was a girl who couldn't show any emotion and who had to always be on guard and strong. When I had to leave my mom to visit my dad, I would cry the whole time I was there. I developed anxiety and wasn't able to perform as well as I could have in school and in my personality. I did well enough in school to pass but not to receive a scholarship. I started community college in 2017, and I had no idea what I wanted to do in my life. I ended up not going to my classes and flunking out of college multiple times. I had no sense of what I wanted to do with my life, I was in a depressed bubble. As I grew up, I finally came to senses. I would read books on anxiety and depression. It taught me not to think so negatively, it said to also change the way you speak about your life and to change something in my life. I quit my retail job and started working in a daycare setting. When I started working with the babies my whole outlook on life changed. I am helping them learn and seeing results. I would get many compliments from my supervisors and parents saying that I was natural with children. The babies burst my bubble and made me happy to go to work. Seeing the progress they have with me encouraged me to learn more in this field so I can teach them to my best ability. All these aspects of culture affected my life and led me to the path I am on today.

As an observer, I had to remember that observing only includes what you see and is not based on assumptions. It helps me learn and not hold judgment based on what I think or what I have experienced. Just observing a child can help them as well, by not having biases and just having a way to advance them to their next level. I learned that domain helps each other. Each skill you learn can be put to the test and helps develop more skills in the future. It's great to see less complex skills evolve into skills we use as adults in everyday life. It's important to shape their brain development and their overall well-being for their life. A child that receives early

childhood education in a positive way will have a positive outcome in their future. This experience impacted me by giving me the resources to learn about each domain and how to support them. I've learned the steps into the beginning of the domains and what can be developed within them. I will use these resources and implement them in my everyday lessons when I am a teacher, to help support children's development.