

Patricia Monge

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Professor Longley

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Commentary Paper Draft

Zoie or Baby Zo is a 9-month-old baby girl. Zoie is African American, Latinx, and French-Canadian baby girl who has small, brown chinky eyes with round chubby cheeks. Zoie was born on February 15, 2020 during the start of the Covid-19. Zoie has very little hair but enough to make two adorable little pig tails and able to fit in 18-month-old clothing. Zoie lives with mom (Alexa), Older sister (Eliza, 4), grandma (Carmen) who lives right up stairs and grandpa who is visiting. The family lives a 2-bedroom apartment in the Bronx in the section of Huntspoint. Baby Zoie and the family will be moving soon to a new house 45 minute away from their current apartment. Inside the apartment Alexa shares her bedroom with Eliza and Zoie and they all sleep on Alexa's king size bed. In the first months (1-3months) Zoie had her own bassinet that would completely move all angles making easier for Alexa to pick her up during the night and breast feed. Their typical New York apartment only has room for at least 3 people and in their new home, Alexa has mentioned "I want the girls to be comfortable and they would each have their bed and their space to play and be kids".

Alexa's believes that children need love and compassion the same adults do. Alexa wants her girls to "love and respect everybody despite their differences. I want the girls to always be the best they can be and never conform to society and to overall be independent". Alexa has a

clear goal/expectation for her girls and as Zoie's infant teacher we will support Zoie by making sure we are acknowledging her feelings, thoughts, and creativity. In the article "Diversity and Infant/Toddler Caregiving by Gonazalez-Mena & Bhavnagri (2000) it talks on teachers using "reflective thinking". Reflective thinking is the ability to take careful consideration of the family's belief and culture. Infants teachers will use dialogue with the reflective thinking to find out more ways and come up with solutions that are appropriate with the family and their culture and always make sure that Zoie is feeling comfortable as well. Zoie's family is African American, Latinx and French-Canadian. Alexa's mom is from Dominican Republic and her dad is African American from Canada. Zoie's dad Jeremy is African American with a mixture of Cuban and Puertorican. Zoie and her family enjoy celebrating Christmas, Thanksgiving, New Years and Birthdays. Infant teachers need to be open to and accepting of different ways of caring and teaching, and thoughtfully explore the many ways to help children and families feel welcome (Parlakian & Sanchez (2007)) (p.2). The teachers can make the family feel more welcome by asking Alexa to bring pictures of the important people in Zoie's life. The teachers can make a relationship with Jeremy by asking Alexa on his opinions.

The Gracia-Bercy family are individualists. Alexa is really big in letting her children be independent. During, the interview Alexa shared that she makes her to be independent because she does not want anybody to "play them" she uses statements like "Eliza those are Zoie's toys not yours" when Zoie is getting upset because she can not put the square shape through the triangle slot bigger sister Eliza automatically tries and help her but Alexa says "Eliza let her do it on her own, she needs to learn just like you learned. If you want help her with her shapes you can

but do not do it for her”. An Infant teacher can support Zoie’s family by encouraging Zoie. In Peterson (2012) it states “when adults use words to describe activities, they encourage children to deepen their learning experience.... Infants and toddlers need opportunities to explore on their own and during interactions with a caring adult” (p.2). The Gracia-Bercy family follows Zoie’s natural rhythms. When observing the family during the interview she mentioned that she gives Zoie the breast whenever she wants. Alexa stated “This little girl is always hungry, so I just feed her all the time”. When I asked Alexa if she would try to set a schedule for Zoie’s feeding and she stated “she does not like it, I tried for at least 3 days and I stopped”. As infant teachers we need to observe and really “examine” what the cues of the children are. Infant teachers will use these cues to communicate with the parent if they see if Zoie’s natural rhythms are not working, they can make a solution to try and see if baby Zoie is feeling comfortable and always ask mom what are opinion and her suggestion are. This is making mom feeling secured and valued, when a baby and a family are feeling secure Zoie will flourish and her self-awareness will help with developing new skills. When the teacher is able to individualize the schedule of feeding, sleeping and diaper change and is attended appropriately Zoie will be creating her own personality with security and secure. This is what Alexa wants for Zoie.

This was Alexa’s second pregnancy and even before she had the confirmation from the doctor that she was pregnant, Alexa was certain that she was pregnant. Alexa was getting sharps back pain and was frequently tired. Alexa shared the story of going to Marshalls in Harlem, NY with a pregnancy test she had brought from CVS. The pregnancy test came positive automatically but Alexa was still in a mild shock not because she was not planning the baby but

because of how accurate she was early on. Alexa told her mom but did not tell the dad until she was 2 months. Alexa mentioned she just “did not feel like telling him, she would be his 4th child) although Alexa did not care as long as he did his job as a dad. Alexa kept working as a Lead Teacher throughout her pregnancy and around month 6 she was told that her blood pressure was a little high and that they were going to monitor her and make sure everything is fine with the baby and Alexa. Around the last months Alexa was complaining that she was ready for Zoie to come out because she was really low and it was hurting her back. Alexa gave birth on February 15, 2020 at Montefiore Hospital and it was the easiest labor. Zoie weighed around 7.5 pounds and 4oz. During the baby’s 1st week, the COVID-19 pandemic was starting to be known and starting to be a worldwide issue. It was difficult having a newborn baby and 3.11-year-old (at the time) who receives services and constantly requires something to do to keep her to come down since grandma was still working and “exposing” herself at the bakery. Bringing the baby home was something Alexa was excited about because she wanted to be in the comfort of her own home. Alexa was taken home by Jeremy who lives in the same neighborhood. After giving birth and giving birth Alexa was not really eating, she made sure she consumed something since she was breastfeeding. Zoie was/is breastfeeding and in the beginning, Alexa was putting her in a “schedule” and making sure Zoie was getting as much breastmilk and less formula. Zoie’s routine in the months where she was still “small” she slept the whole day and would wake around 10pm and Alexa would feed her and Zoie would stay awake. Because, Alexa does not bother Zoie’s sleep unless she is getting picked up by dad on different days and it can be twice or even three times a day. In this case I believe an infant teacher would probably have information then me on Zoie’s routine. The infant teacher will make sure she is responding and have trial & error options and will start to communicate with the family things that be concerning or things

that are working out. The teacher will be creating a connection by attending those needs of feeding, play time, napping etc. The child will know that they are being valued and cared for. These daily routines are part of the Infant Curriculum. Alexa and Zoie's dad are not together but they do have great communication and parenting responsibilities. The infant teachers will use the daily communication with Alexa and work into involving Jeremy in the classroom. Zoie spends her time equally between Alexa and Jeremy. Although Zoie lives with Alexa, Jeremy is welcome to come and pick her up whenever he wants. Zoie has an important relationship with Alexa but Alexa does say she does things or "acts" a certain way when she is with her dad that she does not show as much when she is at home with her. Zoie does not act aggressive or "misbehave" with dad but Alexa does not know how to really explain it she says it is something that has to be witnessed. The family takes turn in watching Zoie. As infant teacher welcomes Zoie into the classroom, and involving grandma and Jeremy in decision making will make baby Zoie's development "easier". Baby Zoie is learning new things with the help of Alexa. For example, Alexa recently had gotten Zoie a toy that brings a plastic ball, triangle, square, and star. Alexa first plays with the toy showing Zoie how the toy is supposed to be used and encourages Zoie to try on her own. Zoie is currently working on clapping her hands. Alexa encourages her by singing a little Spanish rhyme while clapping and Zoie tries to imitate by clapping her hands. Zoie enjoys watching the Netflix show called "Cocomelon". Alexa mentions that she can sit there very quietly and focused for a few minutes. Zoie does not carry any toy but she does have a pacifier that she uses and Alexa is trying slowly to get her out of it.

Alexa supports Zoie's development by making sure she is communicating everything step by step to both Zoie and Eliza. Because, Eliza at times needs to be the "rules" or "expectations" repeated she does the same to Zoie which she knows is a crucial thing to do with your baby. The

family plays peek-a-boo with Zoie and they have a set time to read books at 8pm. Alexa has been trying to introduce Zoie to a Ziplock bag filled with 2 different colors and letting Zoie experiment with mixing the colors with her hands. The activities that the family engage in help Zoie to learn because they play peek-a-boo. Peek-a-boo helps children develop the skill of Object Permanence of knowing that the object or person is still existing. Communication & Language is being learned by the constant communication from Alexa talking to her baby about everything and is being reinforced by the books, songs, the shows that Zoie is encountering on a daily basis. Emotionally Zoie is being supported every time mom is attending her needs and letting her know that everything is okay. For example, I observed Alexa saying “Zoie mami what’s wrong. I see that you’re crying and you might be uncomfortable. Do you need a diaper change? Let’s check.” This communication is letting Zoie know that her feelings are being acknowledged.

Based on Allard & Hunter (2010) temperament handout “Children who are easy & flexible tend to be happy, regular in sleeping and eating habits, adaptable, calm, and not easily upset” (p.1). Zoie shows signs of being an easy & flexible child. Zoie seems happy and does get frustrated or upset when something does not go her way like Alexa mentioned. But she does get upset when Alexa says “No or be nice to your sister”. When using the *Identifying temperament type* handout Zoie was right in the middle, out of the 9 traits she had 5 (high) and 4 (low) which I interpret as easy and flexible.

In the upcoming sections, we will take a look of Zoie’s development in each developmental domain. The domains include; Cognitive, Physical (Gross Motor & Fine Motor), social, emotional, and sensory processing. We will start by looking at Zoie’s Cognitive development,

Zoie is able to crawl across the room to pick up a toy. Zoie is at the Coordination of Secondary Circular Reactions stage. This is when babies are beginning to combine all their abilities to reach a goal which was picking up the toy (2010). Infants: Cognitive Development [Video file].

Learning Seed. Retrieved December 9, 2020, from Kanopy. Zoie is also demonstrating imitation by clapping her hands when mom Alexa sings to her a Spanish nursing rhyme song while clapping her hands. Zoie is developing her language & communication by the daily interactions that she given by her mom Alexa (2003). Promoting Language and Literacy: Infant and Toddler Care [Video file]. Learning Seed. Retrieved December 9, 2020, from Kanopy. Zoie is being to the routine of reading books every day at 8pm which will help her form her communication and enhances her vocabulary. (Gillespie,2019). Alexa during the interview showed a video of Zoie trying to say her sister name (Eliza). In the video Zoie is heard making a “zaza” sound. This sound. By hearing Alexa repeating Eliza’s name, Zoie is becoming familiar with language. (2003). Promoting Language and Literacy: Infant and Toddler Care [Video file]. Learning Seed. Retrieved December 9, 2020, from Kanopy. In emotional/Social development, Zoie was sleeping but she woke up and made a sound that sounded like discomfort. Alexa got Zoie from the room and asked her “Zo what’s wrong? Did you have a nightmare? Or do you need a diaper change? Let’s check your diaper. While Alexa is saying this, she was using a calm and soothing voice. When babies get acknowledge with a calm voice this helps them self-regulate. Self-regulation helps babies pay attention, concentrate, and connect with others (Elliot-Gonzalez- Mena, 2011). When speaking to Alexa during the interview she mentioned “I tell both Zoie and Eliza to be nice to each other. I use Eliza so she can demonstrate to Zoie how to share”. When Alexa uses Eliza to demonstrate how to be nice Zoie is learning feelings and how to socialize. Alexa gives Zoie the chance (although is not verbal yet) to express herself. Alexa demonstrated during the

interview that she tells Zoie when she sees that is getting frustrated biting her thumb or pulling her hair when playing, she lets Zoie know for her to say “Eliza not nice (Alexa makes her head shake) or Eliza please stop (Alexa puts her hands together to show “please” and puts her hand out to show “stop). Alexa mentioned that Zoie has not yet tried the hand gestures by she has heard Zoie say “taaaa” during play (Darling-Kurling-Bohlander,2014)

In this next section, we take a look at Zoie’s physical development and sensory processing. Zoie is physically able to stand on her own while leaning on the wall with both hands. Zoie is also able to crawl across the room. At this stage toddlers are coordinating movements (Honig,2007). Alexa showed a video that was sent from Jeremy where his mom was doing “head, shoulders, knees, and toes” with Zoie. Grandma was interacting with Zoie by holding Zoie (standing up) and doing the movements. During the interview, Alexa mentioned she is a little nervous to let Zoie wonder a lot on the floor because they are a lot of things that are still not “child proof”. In Jeremy’s house Zoie explores more because she has a room to herself and its filled with toys of all kinds. In another video shared with me, Zoie is crawling and interacting with dad as he rolls the ball to her and encourages her to do the same by going over in a hand-over-hand situation. By practicing Zoie will gain more bodily assurance (Honig,2007) Zoie also demonstrates physical development painting with Alexa on the weekends if they have time. During bath time Eliza splashes the water. All these activities are helping Zoie to be more aware of herself and understand the world around her (Pica,2010). Alexa’s oldest daughter Eliza receives services. Eliza is very sensitive to certain sounds and does not enjoy certain textures of foods. Alexa mentioned that with Zoie she would like “to expose Zoie in different sensory

activities, to see her interest in that area I have not really tried with her as much”. Zoie’s bedtime routine consists of a little body lotion massage. Alexa started incorporating the body lotion massage after Eliza’s OT therapist suggested to calm her body down during the bedtime transition. Alexa mentioned that she has observed Zoie “enjoying” herself when she is put facing down and Alexa rubs her back. When Alexa turns her off and rubs lotion on her belly, Zoie starts to become “Ms. Grouchy Pants (Alexa calls her). Alexa makes sure she is letting Zoie know that she will be rubbing on her back and rubs her belly and asks her “hmm it seems like you don’t enjoy that do you? When Zoie is getting these nice body rubs, she is receiving the messages that she is loved and well taken care of (Honig,2007).

As infant teachers, we should remember that these babies do not know us and what our intentions are just like the parents. We also need to remember that the most important thing is making sure every decision is made always in the best interest of the child and not us as teachers. Sometimes as teachers we let our personal beliefs and values interfere with making a decision based on the child. Communication with parents is something that needs to be in the list of importance, having great communication means that we can fully devote our time to making sure the child is developing “correctly” and reaching their goals. As the family is transition making sure we are actively listening to the parents on their concerns and their expectations on their child. In order to help the family and baby Zoie settle we need to be able to make sure we are including the family’s beliefs and values in the classroom. This will be done by communicating with the parents and establishing relationships with members of the family that help the child grow. Teachers need to find ways to make their parents are feeling welcomed and valued for.

Teachers can create activities for parents to come and read books, sing songs or even have finger plays with the children. During intake or phase-in is where teachers and parents are communicating all these things before starting in the classroom. In the article by Block (2014) it speaks on the importance of conducting these home-visits before the children start our program. When conducting these home-visits we are taking a deeper look of the family in the comfort of their home. Teachers will get to know about the child's culture and get ideas on how to include parts of that culture inside their classroom not only for Zoie but for all the students in their care.