

My Virtual Child Update 1

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1. How does your baby's eating, sleeping and motor development compare to the typical developmental patterns in the first 9 months?

According to our book the average newborn's sleep cycle means they will wake every three to four hours around the clock (Kail, 2012). Around the 4 month mark the baby begins to follow the day-night sleep pattern that we consider to be the normal sleeping pattern for humans and by six months the text state that babies may sleep through the night in their own cribs (Kail, 2012). Bryson was a fairly good baby and didn't have too many issues with sleeping. At three weeks Bryson seemed quite lethargic but the doctor said it was nothing to be concerned about. He would sleep for about two hours at a time, but then is awake and quite active. At 3 months old Bryson the program reported that he was awake more than other babies at the age and constantly moving. By 9 months he had established a typical sleeping pattern for a child his age. In terms of motor development, Bryson was reported to be more active than other babies at 3 months old and liked to move around a lot. At 9 months he had developed motor skills typical of a 9 month of child. Bryson did seem to get lots of digestion issues and also had diarrhea quite commonly.

2. How is your Child's attachment relationship to you or your partner developing? What is happening at the 3-month and 8-month periods that might affect attachment security according to Bowlby and Ainsworth and various research studies

The attachment relationship between an infant and its parents can influence the child's social and emotional relationships for the rest of its life. Because of this it is an extremely important part of an early child's life to develop this attachment. There are many studies on attachment that show how the initially contact and relationship forms has an impact not only on emotional and social growth of the child but also on the mental development of the child (Kail,

2012). Bowlby & Spitz (1953), studied children who grew up in institutions and the results of the study showed that even though the children were given excellent health care and nutrition other aspects of their development was damaged (Kail, 2012). A study performed on monkeys later by Harlow & Harlow (1965) further confirmed that an infant monkey who does not develop an attachment to a parent figure or adult struggles in social, emotional and mental development later in life (Kaio, 2012).

Bowlby and Ainsworth's work describe the stages of attachment and how the development of secure attachment increases the survival for a baby. Secure attachment can be identified by a baby that

“May or may not cry when the mother leaves, but when she returns, the baby wants to be with her and if the baby is crying it stops.” (Kail, 2012)

In terms of Bryson’s development he was described as being very attached to me and my partner. The specialist said it was clear that Bryson had a strong and secure attachment to you and was beginning to develop such an attachment to my partner. The importance of this attachment is that many of the theorists believe that it provides the basis for all other relationships for the child. A child that has securely attached can feel more comfortable exploring, socializing and experimenting as they know they have their parents there to look out for them.

3. Describe and give examples of changes in your child’s exploratory or problem solving behavior at 8 through 18 months and categorize them according to Piagetian and information processing theories.

According to Piaget there are four major stages of cognitive development. These are sensorimotor stage, preoperational stage, concrete operational stage and the formal operational

stage (Kail, 2012). Children are curious beings and Piaget recognized this. He theorized that because of this natural curiosity the way children make sense of their surroundings and experiences as they develop involve three methods of creating understanding of their world. The three stages are assimilation, accommodation and equilibration (Kail, 2012). Assimilation occurs when a child experiences something new and then connects the new information with theories they already have about similar experiences (Kail, 2012). Accommodation refers to when a child modifies their theory after recognizing that not all experiences fall into one category. Finally equilibration is where a child will reorganize their theories to bring about a state of equilibrium and understanding rather than disequilibrium (Kail, 2012).

At 8 months of age Bryson was given the object permanence test. According to his age and Piaget's four major stages of cognitive development, Bryson fell into the sensorimotor category of development. This stage lasts from birth to approximately 2 years old. Around 4-8 months Piaget explains the child's thought process as "out of sight, out of mind" when referring to object permanence. A child will reach for an object at this stage but if you put a blanket over it they won't search for it as they believe it vanished. At 8 months this idea changes and the child begins to recognize that the block is object is still there just hidden. When Bryson was given the test at 8 months he could find the block as long as it was placed under the same cloth and demonstrated multiple times. However, when the block was moved under a secondary cloth next to the original, Bryson failed to understand the change of location and continued to look under the first cloth. This is described as an "A not B error" and shows a lack of understanding about objects and more of a mimicking behavior (Kail, 2012). By 18 months Bryson was administered the test again. This time he successfully found the object whether it was under cloth 1 or cloth 2 signifying in Piagetian terms that he had a full understanding of object permanence.

The information processing theory uses the analogy of how humans process information similar to that of a computer. It focuses on how information gets stored in your memory. There are three key components to your “mental hardware”. These are sensory memory, working memory and long-term memory. Within the development of these three memory components are stages that represent development in mental processing. These changes include children using better strategies to process information. An example of this is how younger children have to sound out each word; however older children can retrieve it simply from memory (Kail, 2012). The other stages are an increased capacity of working memory, greater inhibitory control and executive functioning, increased automatic processing, and increased speed of processing (Kail, 2012). This theory differs from Piaget’s explanation of Bryson’s test results as the theorist believe that our memory and processing strategies build upon previous information built in and as our brains and bodies grown these process become faster and automatic processes rather than having to think about every step (Kail, 2012). Information processing theorists believe that Piaget’s work does not fully explain the mental processes that go into developing the cognitive growth in enough detail.

4. Analyze your baby’s temperament in more detail at 19 months than you did at 8 months. How would you describe your baby in terms of the five aspects of temperament utilized by the Virtual Child program (activity, sociability, emotionality, aggressiveness vs. cooperativeness, and self-control). Has your child’s temperament been stable over the first 18 months? Explain goodness of fit.

At 8 months Bryson really wanted to use his motor skills and was very active that I had to keep a close eye on him from wandering off. At 18 months the report stated his activity level is normal for a child his age. It also mentioned however, that I need to stimulate his cognitive and problem

solving skills more. Bryson now has a regular sleeping pattern and is not as restless as he was at 8 months. I think that his activity level is normal but I may try to choose more activity based tasks to ensure that he does not become lethargic or less developed in his motor development.

Bryson's sociability has changed a lot since 8 months old. He was extremely shy, especially when meeting new people and liked to play by himself more than others. By 19 months he is ready to start preschool and even though he is still a little shy with strangers he seems more open and less afraid to get to know people. I do not believe he is extroverted but he definitely has the skills to get along with other children and adults.

In terms of emotionality and the intensity of emotions that Bryson feels, I would say he is less emotional than others. On occasion he will become upset, but this behavior is short lived and he returns to his happy social self fairly quickly according to the program.

At 18 months Bryson seems to be getting along well with other children, and in the report he was described as being unusually cooperative for a child of his age which means he would adapt well to a preschool type environment. The report made one comment about Bryson becoming slightly aggressive toward another child when they tried to take his toy. After a few minutes he then gave the toy to the other child and found something else to play with. For a child of his age and the tendency for these children to be very focused on themselves I believe this shows his advanced cooperativeness with others.

I also think this shows that Bryson has good self-control of himself. At 8 months Bryson had typical emotions and reactions for his age and in the report some of this still showed through with his reactions towards strangers. But he responds well to our direction and I haven't noticed any signs of hyperactivity.

I believe Bryson's temperament has changed over the last 18 months. Early on he was quite restless and would get upset more regularly. As he has grown older he is not as fussy and has become quite relaxed and comfortable obeying rules and getting along with others. Goodness of fit is important and I have tried to encourage Bryson to go outside his comfort zone but not so much that he withdraws from situations. I want him to be exposed to many different experiences so that I can foster his curiosity and creativity.

5. Is your child delayed or advanced in any area of development according to the 19-month development examiner's report? Based on what you have studied, do you think this is most likely a result of specific biological or environmental factors?

The 19-month report for Bryson came back very positive about both his physical and mental development. Bryson scored above average in all aspects of language development and I was told that he is ready to be read aloud to more frequently as he can follow story lines more readily. His memory functioning was pretty good and we were encouraged to ask him to recount experiences to help develop his memory more but also encourage more language growth. Bryson was above age-norms for building a block towers that model ones made by the examiner and the examiner also noted that his spatial skills were also above age-norms for doing things like copying shapes, coloring within the lines and solving picture puzzles. In terms of motor development, Bryson was average and we were encourage to play more outdoor games with him and provide more opportunities for physical activity to further develop this. His concentration level was also normal for his age with Bryson being able to stay focused on a task for 10-15 minutes.

When starting the virtual child program we were asked to take a quiz about ourselves. When I look at how Bryson reacts to things and how he is developing I feel as though his

temperament and outlook is very similar to the way I am. I do believe that biology plays an important part in laying the foundation for development and growth. However, I definitely think that the environment your child is in and the opportunities they have to fully explore, experiment and communicate with others is essential for them to develop to their full potential. After the 19-month examiners report I realized that I had been focusing more on reading, talking and building cognitive function with Bryson and not as much time taking him out and being active with him. I believe I will try and choose more active options in the future to try and increase his motor development skills. The nature-nurture theme discussed in the text describes how virtually all aspects of development is affected by both heredity and environment combined (Kail, 2012). As stated earlier I also believe that both aspects are critical in determining how your child will develop. Once the child is born, you as the parent cannot change their genotype so you have to provide them with a safe, caring and encouraging environment to foster their creativity and curiosity as they grow.

6. Describe your child's communication and language development in the first 30 months. Is your child developing at a typical or atypical rate?

From the moment that Bryson was born he was making lots of noises. When asked the questions in the beginning though I didn't realize that this meant his language skills will develop as they have so far. He was also a very active baby so my initial thoughts to the questions were that perhaps his motor development skills would be more advanced. At eight months Bryson was making lots of new sounds and I would encourage him by responding to him and talking around him a lot. At nine months old, Bryson began to understand a few words and point to something he wanted. Typically this behavior is seen when the child is about 12 months old and therefore I recognized that Bryson was advanced in his language development already. At twelve months

old, he clearly understands a couple of dozen words and he also spoke his first clear word and pointed at the object in question. I also found in the program that Bryson had a tendency to try and mimic other languages. At 12 months old he tried to speak mandarin and at 18 months he had learned a few words in Spanish from a neighbor child. All reports on Bryson's language skills are that he is developing rapidly. He wants to talk all the time and the reports also state that he knows an unusual amount of names for things. At 19 months he scored above average in all aspects of language development. In his last examination on his development Bryson scored in the above average range on tests of language comprehension and production, and provided unusually complete and grammatically mature sentences in a conversation with the examiner. I believe that Bryson is developing at an atypical rate in his language development.

7. How is your child progressing on typical toddler issues, such as learning household rules, learning to follow routine, listening to you, developing self-control and learning to get along with other children?

I believe my child is progressing well in terms of toddler issues. At the 18 month mark I was concerned with some of his behavior and also potty training. I realize now that a lot of his behaviors were from him trying to gain more independence and after noticing this I began to encourage him but made sure to let him figure problems and experiences out for himself. This seemed to help a lot and he did not seem as argumentative and grumpy as I was not smothering him. He listens to both me and my partner on the program and Bryson has above average language skills which helps us to communicate clearly and effectively. At 2 years the report stated he was unusually cooperative with others for a child his age. Sometimes he can show a little aggression when there is a certain toy he wants but shortly after he is fine sharing the toy or starts playing with another toy so the other child can use it.

8. Analyze your own parenting philosophy and practices. What principles from learning or social learning theory, Bowlby, Ainsworth, Piaget, Vygotsky, Information processing theory, neuroscience or other theories do you appear to have relied on in the making your parenting choices or interpreting your child's behavior? Include three principles and identify one or more theorist who promoted these principles in your answer.

Each theory that is presented on the topic of child development have their pluses and minuses. They all have different ideas about what takes place and how a parent can influence their child's development and growth. My parenting philosophy is to be encouraging and supportive but not to be overbearing and overly protective of the child. I want the child to feel attached to me and have a good bond, but I also want them to feel secure enough to explore and be independent as I think this is an important life skill for any child to develop early on. I tried not to give Bryson the answers straight away and encouraged him to experiment or gave him the time to figure out problems on his own while still encouraging him to stick with it.

To teach my child good behaviors and self-control I believe I did use the learning perspective theory as my approach. When Bryson did something good and that I wanted that behavior to continue I would reinforce it by giving him a small reward or words of encouragement and celebrating the achievement. When he displayed undesirable behaviors I would withdraw my attention and ignore the behavior as a form of punishment to decrease the behavior from reoccurring.

Bowlby and Ainsworth discuss how children need to develop a good attachment to their parents or guardians so that they feel comfortable to explore because they have a safety net to fall back on. They describe that there are four types of attachments that can occur and what that means for a child who forms such an attachment (Kail, 2012).

I believe that my child has developed well and from all the reports stating his cooperativeness with others, his want to experiment and explore as well as his determination to solve problems all show that he feels secure to attempt things. The reports stated that he had a secure attachment to both me and my partner in the program and I was happy that he feels secure with both parents. Because of this I firmly believe that is why my child is able to get along well with others and has little anxiety when he does meet new people, problems or situations.

Vygotsky believes that social interaction plays is the basis in the development of cognition. Vygotsky (1978) states: "Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological)" (Kail, 2012). I am a strong believer that socializing and making sure your child interacts with as many people as possibly helps them to develop. In terms of building culture, the connection made between the parents, close family and the child is important in carrying on traditions and learning morals and values of that family. I look at how even though my mother and I have different personalities we use many of the same mannerism and I also share the same values as my family even though there have been lots of outside influence.

In the same way I like Vygotsky's theory of the importance of social interaction in cognitive development I also like Bandura's social cognitive theory. This is similar to the reward and punishment learning perspective, but it also has a social interaction side as well. He believes that the influence and importance of others also have an effect on child development. I agree with this as I have seen how children and adolescents can change when hanging out with different crowds. When they are young they can be influenced readily by groups or other peers.

References

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Virtual Child Update – Part 2

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1. What activities and experiences have you and your child engaged in that might be promoting healthy behavioral practices and an interest in physical activity?

Healthy behavioral practices refer to how to the behaviors children present in terms of emotional and physical health. One of the main learning methods of small children is through imitation and mimicking their parents. From an early age children will look at their parent's behaviors and follow them, so it is important that parents mirror their actions with what they say so that the child will not get confused.

Healthy behavioral practices may include exercising regularly, eating a well-balanced diet with lots of fruits and vegetables, controlling anger and outbursts and trying to lead an overall healthy lifestyle. Once the child sees a parent who is in control, stable, and follows a healthy lifestyle, they will follow this positive example more readily than if these behaviors are not presented.

According to *The Center of the Study of Social Policy* there are three main root causes that can impact a child's social, emotional and behavioral health. These three causes are poverty, trauma and inadequate treatment (2012). Many children who live in environments that may have one or all of the above causes will struggle to develop healthy behavioral practices as they may not have strong role models that are able to show them how to develop those healthy behavioral practices. Children who are in situations as stated above tend to focus on acquiring basic needs such as food, shelter and safety. This is not to say that all people in that position will not be able to provide their children with healthy behavioral practices but it is harder to model the behaviors themselves if they have to worry about providing basic care for their children with minimal resources.

Families who are well off and are able to provide good modeling for their children sometimes fail to do so also. Many are unaware of how children imitate their parent's behaviors almost all the way through childhood and adolescents until adulthood. If a child observes their parent modeling unhealthy behaviors, such as avoiding exercise, skipping breakfast, abusing alcohol, tobacco, and drugs, the child is more than likely to adopt some if not all of these behaviors at some point in their life (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 2012). There are always exceptions to the rules but as stated in the first paragraph it is important to make sure that the words spoken to the child match the actions a parent is portraying to ensure that the behavior does not become a habit.

I believe that my partner and I have done well in nurturing positive healthy behavioral practices and encouraging Bryson's interest in physical activity. He really enjoys riding his tricycle and either my partner or I will join him or invite friends to encourage him to exercise regularly while having fun and developing social skills. We also encourage him to continue trying many different sports to further develop his motor skills and build up his confidence. The reports show that Bryson has a very good temperament and gets along with other children well. I believe one turning point in this behavior was how we involved Bryson in looking after his little sister. Signs of jealousy and aggression began to show when she was first born, but by encouraging him to be a good big brother and trusting him with different responsibilities allowed him to feel comfortable that we still care for him just as much as we did before. I focused more on language development and reading in his first two years but for years 3-4/5 I really did start to focus on more physical activity and healthy behaviors as I want to ensure that he gain confidence and will live a healthy lifestyle for his whole life.

2. Describe the development of your child’s language and cognitive skills and discuss how these might be affecting his or her interactions with you and your responses.

There are four major forms that are used to describe language and its development. These forms are phonology (sounds of language), semantics (word meanings), syntax (rules in forming sentences), and pragmatics (focusing on communication between others) (Kail, 2012). Infants make many noises and usually begin making vowel sounds which is termed cooing (Kail, 2012). This will then progress onto babbling and after time intonation can be noted in the young child. At the age of about 18 months children start to memorize words learning at rate of approximately 10 words per week (Kail, 2012). This pattern continues to occur and as the child grows sentences start to take shape as their basic understanding of syntax and semantics develop.

A typical 3-4 year old milestones in language development include telling a story, having a sentence length of 4-5 words, develop a vocabulary of nearly 1000 words, name at least one color, understands words such as “yesterday” and “lunchtime”, begins to obey requests and know his or her last name and even several nursery rhymes (PRO-ED Inc., 1999).. There are many disorders that may cause a child to not reach this milestone in language development. Some of these disorders include stuttering, speech sound disorders (articulation and phonological processes), and dysarthria. Also certain conditions such as autism, cleft lip and palate attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder could also contribute to problems in language development of a child.

Bryson’s reports have also come back positive regarding his language development. The report from when he was 18 months stated that Bryson was above average in language development. At two years of age he was reported as being in the average range of a child his age in language comprehension and production. At nearly 5 years of age the report stated that Bryson

could read a few short words and write his name and could name most of the letters of the alphabet. He has an age appropriate understanding of phonological awareness and performed above average on tests of vocabulary and his ability to retell a story.

Cognitive growth discusses different areas of mental development. These include thinking, reasoning, problem-solving and understanding (3- to 4-year-olds: Developmental milestones, 2010). As stated above, Bryson is developing age-appropriately in language development. This helps in his cognitive development also and allows him to attempt problem solving and reasoning more readily as he has the underlying semantics of many words to help him make sense of these new scenarios. A typical 3-4 year old cognitive milestones include correctly naming colors, understand the idea of same and different, remember parts of a story, understand time better, count and understand the concept of counting, sort objects by shape and color, and complete age-appropriate puzzles 3- to 4-year-olds: Developmental milestones, 2010).

Not all of these milestones need to be met at this age, however you should notice a progressive growth in the child's development to ensure there are no cognitive or language development issues. Similar to the disorders and conditions that may cause problem in language development some characteristics that could signify an issue in cognitive and language development include not understanding simple commands, avoids making eye contact, lacks interest in interactive games and doesn't engage in fantasy play, persistent drooling and trouble speaking, inability to stack four blocks and has trouble handling small objects, being unable to use a sentence with more than three words and uses "me" and "you" inappropriately (PRO-ED Inc., 1999).

In terms of cognitive development and after my research I believe that Bryson is developing well. The reports stated that he showed an advanced ability to count, use numbers,

understand quantitative relationships and classify objects. It also stated that he had a “real knack” for art projects involving working with blocks and geometric shapes.

I believe that Bryson’s average to above average language development has been beneficial in how he responds and interacts with others and ourselves. He has made many new friends and due to his strong ability in language he is considered ready to move on to kindergarten and has a fantastic base to build upon. Even when Bryson was younger the reports stated he had great problem solving skills and was good at categorizing and working with puzzles. To further develop his cognitive and language development I have to ensure that I present him with activities to stimulate his curiosity and problem-solving abilities as well as continue to develop his vocabulary by reading and having conversations to him and with him on a regular basis.

3. How well is your child adapting to social situations in the home and outside the home? Does your child have any behavior or emotional problems at this point? Why do you think these problems are occurring and what are you doing about them?

As language and cognitive skills start to develop rapidly, children are also learning how to use these new found skills to interact with others and communicate what they need or want. Typical social and emotional development milestones for a 3 year old includes following simple directions, recognizing own limits, does not cooperate or share well, may play alone but near other children, ability to make choices between two things and the ability to register other people’s moods and feelings (3- to 4-year-olds: Developmental milestones, 2010). At four years of ages social development and interaction with others grows and changes even though only one year passes and include typically behaviors such as now taking turns, sharing and cooperating with others, expressing anger verbally rather than physically, children start to feel jealousy,

sometimes the child will lie to protect themselves, but understands the concept of lying and enjoys using their imagination (3- to 4-year-olds: Developmental milestones, 2010).

Atypical social and emotional behavior and development can result in problems communicating and interacting with others for their whole life. Signs that may concern a parent at ages three is if their child shows little interest in other children, has extreme trouble separating from parents, and has poor eye contact (Recognizing developmental delays in your child: Ages 3 to 5, 2012). At four years of age warning signs like clinging or crying whenever a parent leaves, ignoring other children, not responding to people outside the family, lashing out when angry or upset and resisting dressing, sleeping, or using the toilet may occur (Recognizing developmental delays in your child: Ages 3 to 5, 2012).

Bryson does not seem to have any of the issues stated in the paragraph above and therefore I believe that he is developing at a typical rate in his social and emotional development. At his 3 year report the reporter stated that Bryson was cooperative and friendly with both adults and other children. He was self-confident in novel social situations and seemed to be well-liked by several children. At four years of age the kindergarten teacher the teacher thought Bryson was doing well with the peer group. He made several little friends in the kindergarten prep session.

4. How would you characterize your parenting style? (Authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, or variations?)

There are three parenting styles that can be used to describe how a person raises their children. These styles are not set in stone and parents can change styles or create variations of each. The first parenting style is the authoritarian parenting style. A parent following this style expects their children to follow strict rules that have been established by them and result in punishment if they are not followed (Cherry, 2013). When researching this style it seems that

parents who follow this form of parenting often cannot explain the reasoning behind their rules and use answers like “because I said so” to explain them. They have high demands and are concerned with status and obedience as well as not being willing to explain their reactions (Cherry, 2013). Authoritarian parenting styles generally lead to children who are obedient and proficient, but they rank lower in happiness, social competence and self-esteem (Cherry, 2013).

The second style is authoritative parenting. This is a step down from the authoritarian style. Parents will still establish rules and guidelines with the expectation their children will follow them. Parents who follow this style tend to be more responsive to their children and will listen, nurturing and forgiving their child if they fail to meet their expectations (Cherry, 2013). Baumrind describes these parents as “assertive, but not intrusive or restricting” (1991). Baumrind goes on further and states “Their disciplinary methods are supportive, rather than punitive. They want their children to be assertive as well as socially responsible, and self-regulated as well as cooperative” (1991). Authoritative parenting styles tend to result in children who are happy, capable and successful (Cherry, 2013).

Permissive parenting in the third parenting is when the parent does not have many expectations of their children and rarely demand anything of their children or discipline them. Baumrind describes permissive parents as nontraditional and lenient, do not require mature behavior, allow considerable self-regulation, and avoid confrontation” (1991). When you think of this style of parenting I would think of the parent who wants to be their child’s best friend rather than taking on the responsibility of being a true role model and parent. Permissive parenting often results in children who rank low in happiness and self-regulation. These children are more likely to experience problems with authority and tend to perform poorly in school (Cherry, 2013). In the article they also described one other form of parenting style called the

uninvolved parents. These parents fulfill the child's basic needs and do not contribute much more after that. Uninvolved parenting styles rank lowest across all life domains. These children tend to lack self-control, have low self-esteem and are less competent than their peers (Cherry, 2013).

The way a person parents their children can have a large impact on how the child develops and interacts with the world around them. In terms of my own parenting style I believe I fall mostly under the authoritative parenting style. I understand that people, especially children will make mistakes. I believe these mistakes or bad judgment calls leads to learning by the child being in an environment that encourages them to understand what they did wrong and by working together they can fix the issue so they do not have to face the consequences of that again. By being too hard on children and not providing an explanation as to what they did wrong can be detrimental to their social and emotional development.

The permissive parenting style may be wonderful when you are a teenager but there comes a point when a child needs a strong role model and guide to help them through awkward and new stages of their lives. The final category I found in my research I don't believe is anything like me. In terms of mixing the different styles I believe different circumstances cause for different reactions by parents. In some cases especially concerning the safety and well-being of your child the authoritarian style to parenting may be used to reinforce the rules to ensure the child's protection. Permissive parenting could be used when children are in the middle-school to teen years as a way to bond and not seem so protective over your child who may lead to them pushing away from you. When I have children I hope to fall into the authoritative category as it is a middle ground and will hopefully produce well rounded children.

5. Describe three specific examples of changes in your child's behavior at age 4 that seem to stem from growth in cognitive and language ability since the period of infancy.

During preschool years much advancement occurs in almost all areas of growth and development. Cognitive skills improve, fine motor skills develop as well as gross motor skills and language and literacy growths can be seen. Symbolic thought is one of the major advancements that occur in the preschool years. This refers to how a child thinks and the use of symbols and internal images are used to represent objects, persons, and events that are not present (Pearson Education (Ed.), 2010). Some examples of this that children show include play, drawing, writing and speaking (Pearson Education (Ed.), 2010).

At infancy this type of thought isn't well established. Approximately around a child's first birthday parallel play can be witnessed where children may sit close to each other but not interact, however they are aware of what the other child is doing (Kail, 2012). From 15-18 months associative play is seen where children engage in similar activities and may share toys with one another (Kail, 2012). After the age of two cooperative play begins to become the normal form of play for children. This form of play is where children pick out themes and work together to take on roles to support that theme (Pearson Education (Ed.), 2010). By the age of 3 ½ to 4 most children will participate in cooperative play. Cooperative play allows for the development of symbolic thought because children create themes in their minds and then play together to make the themes become reality in their games. When preschoolers engage in dramatic play much symbolizing can be observed. Children use objects to stand for things that are completely different, and they transform themselves into pretend characters. From the reports on my virtual child Bryson fits participates eagerly in physical or dramatic play with the

children. He loves telling us about what has been happening in his fantasy play and taking on different roles with other children or adults and play imaginary games, or make his action figures enact various adventures. I believe this shows that he has developed a lot from not wanting to share toys, to creating stories about pictures in books to now where he interacts with other children and his toys to form make believe characters.

Another area I have noticed advancement in is Bryson's language development. Language advances rapidly during the preschool years. As stated in an earlier question four main areas develop in these years to assist with language development and understanding. These are phonology, or speech sounds; semantics, or word meanings; syntax, or sentence construction; and pragmatics, or social uses of language (). Bryson has always had good language skills and has been reported as advanced in the areas of vocabulary and his ability to create complex stories.

Bryson has a very good vocabulary and can hold quite a conversation. He is showing more and more interest in listening to books. He occasionally turns the pages and recites the book from memory! Bryson is constantly asking questions and shows a great interest in learning about animals

Many children begin to read and write in the preschool years. However, their efforts are not always recognized by adults. They write by scribbling and read by pretend book looking. However, these early literacy experiences are the foundation of later reading and writing in school. Literacy experiences vary from one culture or family to another. Not all children come to school with a conventional knowledge of print. However, children of all cultures arrive with skill in personal expression; some families emphasize oral expression, others artistic expression.

FINISH

6. How would you characterize your child's personality? Would you say your child is primarily over controlled, under controlled, or resilient?

At the beginning of the 3 year section My Virtual Child described different personality types. The three types of personalities discussed is the controlled child, the under controlled child and the resilient child. The aspects of personality that play into deciding what category your child fall into includes cooperativeness/aggression, impulsiveness/self-control, emotionality, and introversion/extroversion (Manis, 2012). From the initial questionnaire to our answers throughout our virtual child's life till now has all played into what personality type they fall under.

The program describes the over controlled category as a who follows rules and is very cooperative, however in social settings the child may become shy around others and does not deal well under pressure becoming anxious or clingy (Manis, 2012). An example of how this personality type may react to the scenario of starting at a new school would show the child being shy but cooperative.

The under controlled child is a child who does not have many barriers and therefore becomes uncooperative, will not follow rules put in place and shows signs of aggressive behavior regularly. The child may not be considered shy in social settings but does tend to overreact or become emotional when stressed (Manis, 2012). The under controlled child might react to changing schools in an aggressive, emotional manner and will tend to misbehave.

The resilient category defines a child's personality as not only being cooperative and following rules but also well balanced in terms of being friendly, non-aggressive and outgoing. They are able to stay on task and has the ability to regulate moods as well as not getting too

stressed in new situations (Manis, 2012). The resilient child will be cooperative, friendly and adapt well to starting at a new school with minimal problems.

After the two reports and Bryson's reactions and behaviors in social environments, I believe he falls under the resilient category." A resilient child is one who is cooperative and follows the rules, is friendly, non-aggressive and outgoing, is able to focus on tasks without being too distracted, has good regulation of his or her emotions, and is adaptable to new situations" (Manis, 2012). Bryson has always been well behaved and follows rules. He had some signs of aggression when entering preschool; however this is typical of a child from ages 2-3 to not want to share or get jealous of other children and the toys they are playing with. He changed schools with minimal problems, cooperates well with other children and has many friends. Initially he seemed shy, but after ensuring he had a secure attachment early on he has become very comfortable in social settings. The reports show that he is able to stay on task and doesn't tend to lose focus when working on school work. From all of the scenarios presented I strongly believe the Bryson fall into this category (and wish that if I have children one day, my child will be nice and easy like Bryson).

7. Look for evidence of continuity as well as discontinuity in your child's behavior from infancy through early childhood. Give an aspect of ability or personality that has remained fairly stable. Give an aspect of ability or personality that has been unstable. Why do you think change occurred in one area and not the other?

According to Kail, the continuity and discontinuity issue is an "issue concerned with whether a developmental phenomenon follows a smooth progression throughout the lifespan or a series of abrupt shifts" (2012). When relating this to the virtual child assignment distinguishing abilities and personality that have remained constant (stable) through infancy to 4 years old and

recognizing differences (unstable) in the child's behaviors, abilities and personality opens our eyes to how certain episodes or environment changes have an impact on the stability of a child's behavior.

An area I believe that Bryson has remained stable since infancy to 4 years of age is his language and literacy development and ability. From a baby he was always making noises and singing along to songs. Once he started to talk there seemed to be no stopping the progression of his ability and vocabulary as well as the development of understanding words. All the reports from examiners and teachers have all confirmed his ability as being average to above average and as one of his main strengths.

Another area of stable progression is his cognitive function and his spatial awareness in terms of putting together puzzles and building. Since he was able to grasp toys he had the ability to build with blocks quite well and was noted as being above average in this ability. His skills have continued to develop with the help of providing stimulating games and activities to foster these skills. He asks lots of questions which plays into this learning ability and by encouraging him I believe his ability to think logically and be aware spatially will continue to develop positively.

An area of discontinuity in Bryson's development I believe is his personality in terms of social interaction with others. As an infant, Bryson was very attached to me and then eventually my partner. He was very shy around other adults and would cry and fuss whenever we were away. I was worried about this behavior and so I made sure to try and put Bryson in lots of new situations and meeting other people with me there to show that it was ok to help him understand that there was nothing to fear. He did show some aggression when starting at preschool and jealousy about toys other children were playing with at ages 2-3 years old. This was another

change in his personality as the reports had always stated that Bryson was a cooperative baby. After reading the report I made sure to encourage Bryson to share. He also showed this type of behavior towards his new baby sister. To stop this behavior I involved Bryson in the activities concerning the new baby to ensure he didn't feel like he was being left out and this seemed to change his behavior towards her and at school. From age 3-4 it seems as if his personality has returned back to being cooperative rather than aggressive, and he has become very social. In one report he is stated as have many friends that like to follow him as a leader showing that rather than being shy in social setting and meeting new people he is now quite comfortable being the center of attention and playing with multiple different children.

8. Your virtual child is growing up basically in an average American cultural setting. Based on what you have learned from the course, how specifically might your child's behavior be different if she was raised in a different culture?

I grew up in Australia and even though it is a different country to America we have a very similar culture that all westernized countries have. The only difference I believe is the emphasis on sport and how schools run themselves. So for this section I have chosen to discuss how growing up in a culture very different from my own may change the behavior of my child. The first part I would think about is how the mother and father relationship works in different countries. In cultures that are still hunter and gatherers the mothers would most likely stay at home and raise the children, and the fathers would be off hunting and possibly building new homes and therefore may not have too much interaction with the child.

Alternatively in agricultural societies you can witness both the mother and the father working in the fields with the baby on the mother's chest or back and the younger children working alongside them. In a family like this where working the land is their only source of

income to help raise their family many children may not attend school or only be taught basics in terms of reading and writing as they are taught how to farm before learning other skills as that is the family business.

Co-sleeping is another different cultural aspect to raising children. In our text the book describes how in western societies children tend to sleep in a crib or separate bed very early on. However in many cultures children will sleep with their parents in the same bed no matter what age they are. This behavior continues from infancy up to preschool years (Kail, 2012).

I recently had a discussion with Anila Din who is from Kenya. She talked about how she grew up helping her mother around the house and also the community. She grew up in a house that had dirt floors and sometimes they did not eat for days at a time, however she said she never felt like she was missing out because that was “normal”. Communities like this tend to think more about the success of the group (community) rather than focusing on individual needs and wants. Many of these communities co-sleep with their children as this shows they are part of a group. Anila said, children would play together in the community and it was extremely close. If a family need help, money or food, the whole community would help them and all they would like in return is to know that if they were in need that they would help them too.

In terms of school, Anila learned how to write by drawing in the dirt with a stick. Her school was set outside and they did not have books or writing utensils. To make toys children would gather sticks, rocks and old clothes to create balls to kick. After listening to how she grew up it made me wonder how I would have turned out if I had grown up in a culture like that. Many African cultures believe in putting the community first and looking out for their neighbors. Even though education is extremely different from how it is here, Anila was still able to go to college and now works at Ivy Tech in America.

In terms of Bryson I believe he would not get so caught up in materialistic things. I worry that he will lose his curiosity and fire to learn if he is given lots of toys and watches too much TV. The idea of being part of a community and focusing on the success of a group rather than personal or individual success is something that is not new and I would love to encourage that sort of thinking in Bryson. If Bryson was to grow up in a different culture I believe his outlook on what is important would change. He may be more focused on working rather than building up reading and writing skills. The connection between him and his father would be very strong especially when learning how to do the family business as he would be encouraged to follow in his family's footsteps. Play would become less about what the latest video game was and more about how you can use your imagination to create magical worlds as there may not be any TV's, game stations, movies or books for children to view.

If I had to choose where I would like my children to grow up, I would still choose a western society because of the emphasis on education and the availability of good health care to ensure the safety and health of my child. However I think that there is a lot to be learned about how other cultures raise their kids and I think that I may become an anti-TV parent, instead encouraging play outside or fantasy play for as long as possible. I would also love to create the sense of community a lot of other cultures have, as I believe that is lacking in our society and cause children to become selfish.

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Virtual Child Update – Part 3

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- 1. Based on the evidence from age 6 and 8 years, how well is your child adapting to the school social environment and to the peer group? To what extent does this adaptation seem to depend on personality characteristics that are fairly stable in your child, and to what extent does your child seem to be developing novel behavior to cope with these new situations? Refer to the textbook for particular points about the responses of children in this age group to the peer group and the school environment. (2 points)**

Many changes occur between the ages of 6-8 years old. Children are leaving the comfort of their preschool environment and entering the school environment. This new environment exposes children to multiple new experiences. How a child responds to these changes can impact how successful they are in the school environment. One of the bigger changes is the amount of other children in the classroom. Typically pre-school classes are smaller in number and children become comfortable playing with only a small social group. Kindergarten and first grade could potentially have 30 children and can cause a child to feel shy and unable to cope with the new social situation. Another factor that influences a child's ability to adapt to the school environment is the teacher controlled environment and then the more child controlled environment on the playground. Most children are used to being monitored closely throughout the whole day. However, the playground environment and the independence they are given to choose friends to play with can be a difficult to navigate and once again cause problems for the child's social development and peer-relationships.

Some emotional milestones that occur during the ages of six to eight years old include developing relationships with people outside the family as they realize emotional needs can be met by peers as well as the family unit. This can include becoming attached to another adult besides parent, i.e., teacher, caregiver, club leader (Ormrod & McDevitt, n.d). Children start to understand more complex emotions, start to want more emotional freedom and space from

parents, become better at controlling and concealing feeling and also begin to form a broader self-concept of themselves by recognizing their strengths and weaknesses especially about social, academic and athletic ability (Ormrod & McDevitt, n.d).

In terms of social interaction children in this age group still prefer to socialize with their own gender (Ormrod & McDevitt, n.d). There can be some interactions between boys and girls but this usually comes in the form of teasing. The start to become aware of gender stereotypes more and this can lead to exclusion of the opposite sex in play. Children tend to be competitive, bossy and unhappy if they lose in a competition (Ormrod & McDevitt, n.d).

.Most children have a "best friend" and as more friendships develop friend influence also grows stronger and therefore children become concerned about being liked by others. One other common social trait that occurs during these ages is tattling and this is a common way to attract adult attention.

From my research I believe that Bryson is adapting well to school. Initially it was reported that Bryson was shy around his classmates and was not as outgoing as he seemed to be in the preschool environment. In his first grade report he it stated that he “worked cooperatively in groups ad consistently respects the rights and possessions of others and consistently demonstrates appropriate peer social interaction” (Manis, 2012). However, in the comments the teacher said that “Bryson over-reacts to stressful situations and can become anxious, moody or slightly depressed. With encouragement, he usually seems to come out of it before the day ends” (Manis, 2012). To encourage Bryson to be more open to new experiences I started to choose options that exposed him to new environments to push him out of his comfort zone. By the end of the first grade Bryson was able to feel comfortable and perform well in the school environment. To help develop this ability to cope as a parent I made sure to get Bryson involved

in group activities like sports teams and a choir so that he would have more experiences meeting new children and develop his social skills. I believe that by exposing Bryson to new and different situations it helped him to feel comfortable in the school environment.

2. How smart is your child, and in what areas? Refer to the summary of multiple intelligences that appeared at age 6 and to sections of your textbook and the course reader article on multiple intelligences. Find specific evidence regarding your child's verbal, logical mathematical, spatial, musical and bodily-kinesthetic intelligence from your observations of your own child as well as the psychologist's report at age 8 years, 11 months and explain how it ties in to the your course reading material. (2 points)

The three common areas that are assessed to determine cognitive ability are verbal ability, spatial ability and logical-mathematical ability (Manis, 2012). The multiple intelligences theory, created by Howard Gardner, suggests that there are in fact nine different intelligences instead of the standard three. The different intelligences include musical ability, linguistic ability, logical-mathematical ability, spatial ability, musical ability, bodily-kinesthetic ability, interpersonal ability, intrapersonal ability, naturalistic ability, and existential ability (text book). Gardner believes that ability can be developed and that a person has multiple abilities not just one. Sometimes a person is aware that they are stronger in one area than another, for example a person may be talented in musical ability but not as strong when dealing with spatial problems. He also comments that a person who is low in one of the abilities can work on making it stronger however it may just take a longer time.

Since Bryson was very young reports showed an increased development in his linguistic development skills. He tested above average in all the reports for language development and reading ability. This was the case again at the 8 years, 11 months report stating “his scores were in the average to above average range in word reading, reading fluency, phonological awareness

and spellings” (Manis, 2012). He scored into the gifted range for the verbal portion of the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children. Due to his strong and constant results in language tests, I believe that Bryson leans towards the linguistic ability in terms of Gardner’s Multiple Intelligence Theory. However, Bryson is not only linguistically intelligent. He also scored into the gifted level for both his mathematical and spatial ability. This shows that a child can have multiple different intelligences that aid in how successful they are in the school environment.

One area that Bryson struggles with is his musical ability. Although he has attempted an instrument and joined a choir, the program always states that he is out of tune and this has actually turned into a family joke. A person does not need to be great in every ability, but being aware of your strengths and weaknesses can help a person to plan ahead to prepare for the challenges they may face when using an ability that may not be their strongest. It is also important for teachers and parents to be aware of children’s abilities to either encourage them or know when the child will need more assistance. Abilities can be developed so if child is musically inclined, but never given the chance to develop it, they will not become a musician. Parents and teachers need to include different learning experiences so all children can use their different abilities and become more confident in their stronger abilities.

3. Describe some examples of your child's behavior or thinking that you think are due to typical American gender role socialization and explain why you think so, referring to the text and lectures regarding gender roles and sex differences in behavior. Several examples can be found in the Virtual Child program at ages 6 and 8. How closely does your attitude toward gender roles correspond to typical American attitudes, and if there is a discrepancy, to what do you attribute this (e.g., cultural background, attitudes of your own parents, etc.)? (2 points)

Socialization is the process of how young children learn to fit into society (Chartschlaa, 2004). More specifically is how gender roles are taught to children in our society whether parents

or teachers know they are doing it or not. From a very early age boys and girls are treated differently. People are becoming more aware of the gender stereotypes and are trying to break the patterns; however there is still a long way to go before a child would be able to grow up in a gender neutral society.

Examples of gender stereotypes in children include that girls like to play with dolls, they like to help their mothers, they talk a lot, girls never hit and they will grow up to be a nurse or a teacher. Boys on the other hand like to play with car, help their dads, build things, enjoy rough and tumble play and are expected to be a boss or in charge of a business when they grow up.

Bryson plays mostly with other boys. Typical American gender role socialization tells kids that boys need to play boy games that are usually rough and dirty while girls typically will play games that involve dressing up or homely duties. In the program I have volunteered in the classroom at Bryson's school and observed that he plays with a large group of boys whereas the girls in his class tend to socialize in smaller groups. Bryson and his friends spend a lot of their time playing sports, roughhousing, or roaming the neighborhood on bikes and skateboards. They rarely play with girls, but Bryson seems more tolerant of girls than many of the other boys. I have tried to make sure that Bryson includes his little sister into activities with his friends as well as making sure he has one on one time playing with her which I believe has helped him to become more tolerant of girls. I also try to expose Bryson to exceptions to the rule like pointing out when we see a female firefighter or a male nurse to show that boys and girls are not stereotyped to work in different jobs and can choose to be in any career they want.

My attitude is different from the typical American view of gender roles. I believe this comes from my background as my family breaks many of those roles on an everyday basis. My father is a teacher and my mother is a Doctor of Law who attends conferences and is very well

respected in the Australian law community. As woman in a male dominated career, she has shown to me that if you work hard and are committed to your goals, you can succeed no matter what gender you may be. When choosing the options for what toys Bryson plays with and who he plays with I try not to be gender oriented and never stopped him from playing with dolls and encouraged him to socialize with girls which promotes my feelings about gender roles in society.

4. Describe changes in your child's academic skills between ages 6 and 10 and assess how well these skills are developing. If your child has any problems that affect school work, such as dyslexia, ADHD, or low levels of verbal, mathematical/scientific or spatial ability. Describe these problems and explain what you and the teachers are doing about them. The 5th grade report card will be useful for this but you should also incorporate your own observations. If your child doesn't have any academic difficulties, describe what you are doing any way to help your child do well in math/science and literacy (reading, writing and communicating). (4 points)

Between the age of six and ten years old, many changes occur in a child's development and growth. In terms of academic skills children in this age group start to think in more complex and logical ways. While they are still considering thinking in concrete terms they are able to consider several parts of a problem or situation (Kail, 2011). While the ability to start thinking about several parts of a problem is developing, children in the lower age range will still struggle creating connections (Healthwise, 2011, Topic Overview).

Some cognitive development milestones include rapid development of mental skills, a greater ability to describe experiences and talk about thoughts and feelings, less focus on one's self and more concern for others and thinking logically (Bhalla, 2012).

In terms of speech and language development a child's use of language becomes more sophisticated and they are more direct and clear in their speech.

As all of this growth in cognitive and language development is occurring some problems may arise for different children in the form of learning disabilities. Learning disabilities are different from intellectual disabilities as the disability has nothing to do with the intelligence of the child. Generally learning disabilities will be discovered as a child struggles with certain subjects, reading and writing or language development. According to Kail the three categories that determine if a child has a learning disability include: 1) difficulties mastering an academic subject, 2) have normal intelligence, and 3) are not suffering from any other condition that could explain poor performances (Healthwise, 2011, Common Concerns). It is important, as parents to be aware of the milestones that occur during this age range to monitor the progress of their child (Healthwise, 2011, Common Concerns).

There are three main types of learning difficulties concerning how a student interprets information being taught in the classroom. Developmental dyslexia refers to a student that has difficulty reading individual words (Kail, 2012). When a student is able to read without any problems but struggles to understand or comprehend what they have read, it is called impaired reading comprehension. Finally the third type of learning disability is not as understood as well as the other two and is called mathematical learning disability or developmental dyscalculia and refers to students who have difficulty learning and retrieving mathematical information from memory (Kail, 2012).

About 5% to 10% of all school children in the U.S. have learning disabilities (Kail, 2012). Dyslexia is the most common type. Since reading is a key element in learning, children with dyslexia can have trouble mastering basic skills and succeeding in school. Some symptoms of dyslexia include late talking, pronunciation problems, difficulty rhyming words, impaired ability to learn basics such as alphabet, problems writing, confusing letters such as “b” and “d”,

and trouble connecting letters to their sounds (Healthwise, 2011, Common Concerns). Students who struggle with dyslexia struggle to connect what they see due to problems processing information they also tend to have challenges with writing, spelling, speaking and math (Healthwise, 2011, Common Concerns).

ADAH or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is another common disorder in children that can impact their learning. According to Kail, “roughly 3% to 5 % of all school aged children are diagnosed with ADHD” (2012, pg.155). There are three main ways children suffering with ADHD show signs. The first is inattention or the inability to stay focused on one task and jump to another, hyperactivity and the child’s inability to sit still and finally impulsivity referring to the child acting before thinking what they are doing (Kail, 2012, pg. 155). Some common signs to look out for as parents and teachers include a students who are in constant motion, squirm and fidget, do not seem to listen, have difficulty playing quietly, often talk excessively, interrupt or intrude on others, are easily distracted and do not finish tasks (Healthwise, 2011)..

Bryson is constant receiving positive feedback concerning his academic abilities. In his fifth grade report he was described as being gifted in language development and reading ability as well as the verbal portion and for both mathematical and spatial ability. The psychologist report also went over behavioral and attention problems and reported that he did not have any unusual problems with impulsivity, inattentiveness or hyperactivity. By this report and my research I am confident that Bryson does not suffer from any learning disabilities or ADHD. Throughout the program I have chosen answers to ensure that Bryson has had lots of experiences and access to books and information to fuel his desire to learn. I think this has helped him to become such a successful student.

5. How well is your child adapting to social situations in the home and outside the home? Does your child have any behavior or emotional problems that have become apparent between 6 and 10 years of age? (some possibilities include internalizing and externalizing problems, ADHD, and obesity). Why do you think these problems are occurring and what are you doing about them? (2 points)

Starting school and being exposed more to the larger world can cause problems in both social and emotional growth for children. Between the ages of six and ten children push away from their parents and start to form more relationships with friends, teachers and people outside the family unit. If a child struggles in social situations or is emotionally unstable to deal with all the changes occurring when they enter school, problems can arise which can be multiplied as other children are sometimes not the friendliest. This is where self-esteem and a child's sense of worth or belonging can be affected drastically depending on what is happening around them.

Some signs of this stage of social and emotional development in children show the child starting to show concern about being accepted by peers, the tendency to assemble in larger groups than in early childhood, a lesser need for adult supervision than in early childhood, outdoor peer groups structured with games and sports, increase in gossip as children show concern over friends and enemies, some social exclusiveness, with friends being reluctant to have others join in their activities and predominance of same-gender friendships (Ormrod & McDevitt, n.d).

Issues concerning bullying are common during this stage and can be attributed to a number of factors including a child having either a learning disability, ADHD, being overweight, and a children lacking in social skills who often end up being rejected by peers. Bullying can have devastating effects on a child's self-esteem. Self-esteem in elementary school is usually

linked to scholastic achievement, athletic ability, social ability and physical appearance (Kail, 2012, pg. 354). From reading the factors that are linked to bullying and then how self-esteem is built a connection can be made between why children who suffer with disabilities or being different tend to be picked on by other students.

Bryson has seemed to fit into school very well. Although he is sometimes shy he has always had many friends. When he started school he was reported as not being as outgoing as he was in preschool. He also showed signs of being scared and worried about starting middle school. In one report it stated that Bryson sometimes becomes anxious and frustrated but after some time he calms down. I believe that Bryson is developing well in terms of building a strong sense of self-worth and good social skills which are needed to be successful in school and in life. One way I have ensured Bryson develops this is by getting him involved in many group activities and inviting friends over to the house so that he learns how to play and make friends with lots of children and adults and is not afraid to do so.

6. Has your parenting changed since the preschool period and if so, why do you think it has changed and what effect might this have on your child? Refer to your textbook or lecture notes for evidence on typical changes in parenting that occur in middle childhood. (2 points)

Naturally as a child grows older and demands more independence, parenting styles change. One of the biggest milestones for change in parenting style is when children go to school for the first time. At this age the child starts to develop connections with more people rather than just the parents for guidance. This shift from being the primary caregiver and person who your child goes to for help and assistance, starts to be shared with others like the teacher and their friends. There is also a switch from helping children accomplish essential milestones allowing

them to choose how and what they want to learn and be more independent. This change in goals mean that parents have to learn to respond and interact differently with their school-aged child compared to how they would have responded to their child when they were in preschool (Bigner, 2006)..

An example of this type of change is the need for parents to be less hands on or physical helpers and should be there as a psychological support for their children to develop their new emerging abilities and gain confidence (Bigner, 2006).. Instead of constantly monitoring every move, parents begin to exercise general supervision and will only intervene if their child is misbehaving which allows the child to work on their own self-regulation due to the trust of the parents to do the right thing (Maccoby, 1984). The trust parents start to give children when they start school comes from the higher level of self-control children have learnt in the preschool years. But some methods can help to increase how much self-control the child has. This includes often reassuring children, helping them to recover from social blunders, and giving positive reinforcement for efforts to learn new skills (Bigner, 2006).. School-age children continue to need their parents but in ways that are very different from preschoolers.

Also expectation of your child changes as they get older. Starting school is a big milestone and can be the first time a parent realizes how quickly their child is growing up. Example of expectations that parents have for their school aged child could include better social skills and cooperation with both adults and children, improved information processing skills in their schoolwork, the ability to complete tasks and assignments without direct adult guidance using their own self-control and motivation (Bigner, 2006).

I believe my parenting style has changed as Bryson has started school. I was quite lenient and possibly smothering when he was younger, being careful to introduce him slowly to new

situations and always being there to help him if he needed me. One example of my change in parenting style was when I was asked what I would do instead of running in to rescue him I have started to choose options that required him to engage in uncomfortable situations so he can grow and gain more confidence in his own decisions. From his report card after grade five and the wonderful year reported for grade six I think the extra trust and independence I have allowed Bryson to have has helped him to grow and develop into a strong and competent young man.

7. Has your child's personality type changed since age 4? Are there any personality traits and abilities on which your child closely resembles you? Describe two of them. Do you think this comes about because of a "genetic" resemblance (i.e., your questionnaire responses) or some consistent practices you've followed in your parenting? For example, if you and your child are both highly open to experience, and you took every available opportunity to explore new things with your child, is possible you've taught your child to be open to experience? (4 points)

Bryson has always been an outgoing child. When he was younger he was very dependent on both me and my partner and was wary of strangers. When he entered pre-school he started to become more comfortable being around other people and children and was reported as being very co-operative and he had many friends. In fact he was the leader of his group. Because of this at four years old I placed Bryson in the resilient category. "A resilient child is one who is cooperative and follows the rules, is friendly, non-aggressive and outgoing, is able to focus on tasks without being too distracted, has good regulation of his or her emotions, and is adaptable to new situations" (Manis, 2012).

Many changes occur when a child enters school and it causes them to leave their comfort zone. The push away from their parents to gain more independence can also cause some children to rebel. If social and emotional skills are lacking, it can cause children to have problems dealing with their emotions and the changes that are occurring around. Therefore, sudden changes in

personality can occur due to low self-esteem or anger over the lack of emotional control. Another issue that can cause changes in a child's personality is the influence that is coming from the expanding social groups and interaction that school brings. As children strive to become more independent and develop their own opinions but they still need guidance.

Bryson has always been a well behaved child. He follows the rules, enjoys school, loves to play sports with friends and is respectful to others. In pre-school he did show some signs of aggression but as he got older this has not become a problem. The reports show that he is a very cooperative and friendly student. I believe this trait is something that is very similar to how I am wired. I am very friendly and tend to get along well with many different people without any issues. Of course, there are always exceptions to the rules but generally cooperativeness is something that I see both in myself and in Bryson. I think my answers to the questionnaires definitely impacts how Bryson responds to different circumstances. For example, when Bryson and Tarni (his little sister) squabbles my response to the fight was to take both of them and put them in time out for a minimum of 10 minutes with the condition that they would not be allowed to play again unless they play calmly. Even though I am sure one of them started the fight I didn't want to make one sibling think they won the fight over the other and create competition. Instead by punishing both children by giving them a time out they have to work cooperatively together to be able to play again.

I also think Bryson's ability to focus and work hard to achieve good grades is very similar to me. I work extremely hard in school to ensure that I get high grades, but it's not just the grade that matters but what I get out of the work that I have put in. I constantly chose to take Bryson on many different learning experiences and read books constantly to him to stimulate his love of learning and understanding about what it takes to be a good student. By stimulating his passion

for reading it has helped him in all other areas of schooling. Initially I was worried about his attention span but by challenging he to read more complex books it helped to increase how long he can focus on different topics. We all need a break from time to time so I also made sure that Bryson has time to wind down and just be a young boy also which is why I believe he is quite stable emotionally.

8. In what ways have factors from Microsystems outside the family, from the mesosystem, and the exosystem possibly influenced your child's development at ages 6, 8 and 10? Find four examples of such influences and make clear why you believe they should be categorized at the particular level you chose within Bronfenbrenner's model. For example, you could choose two microsystems (e.g., classroom and peer group), one mesosystem (parent-peer relations or parent teacher relations) and one exosystem (something affecting the parent directly but the child only indirectly, through the parent). (4 points)

The Bronfenbrenner model was created in 1979 and views child development in an ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). He believed that relationships between individuals as well as their environment as being "mutually shaping." The model describes four interlocking systems that have the ability to shape and individual. The four systems include the micro-system, the meso-system, the exo-system and the macro-system.

The micro-system is the level that refers to the people and objects that are present in one's immediate environment (Kail, 2012, pg.436). Usually this starts with the home of the child and involves interactions with only one or two people in the family (mother and father). As a child grows older the micro-system can become more complex by involving more people in the system. Increasing the size of the system can enhance child development as long as they are enduring reciprocal relationships (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Examples of influence in the micro-system include family, school, day care center, peers, church and the neighborhood play area

(Kail, 2012, pg.436). Starting school definitely had an impact on Bryson. Throughout the program he has never been musically inclined. However, due to his peer group he signed up to be in choir and also in a talent show despite reports stating he is lacking in this ability. His peer group directly influences his development by giving him the confidence to try out new things even if he isn't the best at them. Tarni, Bryson's little sister also influences Bryson in terms of his behavior towards girls. By having a younger female sibling, the reports show that Bryson is more tolerable towards girls in his class compared to other boys without this influence.

The Meso-systems are the interrelationships between the microsystem and the exo-system for example the home, a day-care center, and the schools. These links between the systems can have a powerful influence on child development depending on how diverse and strong they are (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). This system refers to how the microsystems connect to one another. An example the Kail gives is coming home after a very stressful day at work and still being grouchy even though you are no longer in the workplace (2012, 436). An example of how the meso-system impacted Bryson was when he returned home after hearing stories about how mean the eighth graders would be when he starts middle school. The stories he heard at school and about starting school were brought back to us at home and caused him to become stressed over moving to middle school.

The exo-system refers to influences that can affect child development even though it is not experienced firsthand by the child (Kail, 2012, pg. 508). This experience however does have a direct on effect on the parents and other adults who interact with the child and can include places like the parent work, school boards, social service agencies etc. If a person is so stressed about work they will not be able to focus on ensuring that their children are being well cared for and this how something that has no direct contact with the child can still effect the child's

development (Kail, 2012, 436). It has been reported that my partner and I have been fighting more often about working too much and money. This impacts both the children as it makes them feel uncomfortable and it also distracts both me and my partner from focusing on what the children need as we are too busy worrying about work and finances.

Finally the Macro-systems refer to the culture and subculture in which all the other systems are embedded (Kail, 2012, pg. 510). They provide the foundation and organization to the patterns seen within a society. This includes being part of a certain culture or religious group.

All four of these systems have the ability to change and this is termed the chronosystem (Kail, 2012, pg. 437). In the macro-system war or a recession can cause change. In the microsystem somebody leaving home or moving away can cause change so it is important to be aware that these changes can occur.

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Virtual Child Update – Part 3

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My Virtual Child Report 4 –Adolescence (12-18 years)

**1. Describe any physical or behavioral signs of incipient puberty, including changes in physical appearance, behavior or emotions at ages 12 and 14 years.
(2 points)**

Between the ages of 12 to 14 years of age many changes begin to occur in both girls and boys. This is the age when puberty occurs and children experience different emotions and behaviors as well as notice changes in their bodies and physical appearance. Typical physical changes in boys at this age include growth spurts, appearance of facial hair, broadening of shoulders, development of chest muscles, body odor, pimples or facial breakouts, hair growth in pubic region and underarm area, growth of testicles, erections or wet dreams and the deepening of the voice (O'donnell, 2012).

Emotional and behavioral changes occur due to changes in hormones and a greater need for acceptance by peers and the opposite sex. Some emotional changes that are typical during puberty include an increased interest in the opposite sex, mood changes/swings, anxiety or excitement about the changes that are happening, less talkative and open with parents, and being shy and nervous around girls, or flirtatious with girls (O'donnell, 2012).

At age 12-13 years old signs of puberty were becoming apparent in the way that Bryson was behaving and his appearance. It was reported in the program that occasionally Bryson has some sullen or cranky moods but most of the time he was cheerful and pleasant. It also stated that he was growing fast and consuming a lot more food than usual which is characteristic of a growth spurt were the body needs a lot of fuel to cope with the changes occurring. Bryson is also starting to notice girls more although he still acts rather shy about discussing it and wants to play a popular video game that picture women in racy shots.

The transition from middle school to high school makes Bryson nervous which is another typical emotional change in children this age as they are so keen to fit in and be accepted by peers. The thought of starting somewhere new can make children worry about how different everything will be. For the first time Bryson had girls invited to his birthday party even though they tended to stay in separate groups which is also typical of this age range and early adolescence. Bryson went to his father and told him that he needed to start shaving which represents a physical change of puberty where teenagers will start to grow hair in different areas. For males this is on the chest, back, face, underarms and genital regions. Even though Bryson didn't really need to start shaving he felt it was important as many of his friends had started to shave so he wanted to fit in with his peers.

Bryson also has become more interested in his appearance and wants to wear certain clothes, shoes and hairstyles. It was even reported that he wanted to get an earring with one of his friends. This is another example of trying to fit in and finding out who they are individually. The final sign of puberty I noticed between the ages of 12 and 14 was that he was showing an increased interest in men's magazines and sexually related websites including porn. He also talks about girls with his friends or via email. He doesn't confide as much to his parents and become slightly embarrassed when talking about sex and porn. I believe that Bryson is showing many characteristics of incipient puberty.

2. What activities and experiences at ages 12 and 14 has your teen been involved in that might promote healthy behavioral practices, physical fitness and skill in sports? (2 points)

Healthy behavioral practices may include exercising regularly, eating a well-balanced diet with lots of fruits and vegetables, controlling anger and outbursts and trying to lead an

overall healthy life. Younger children tend to mimic their parent's behaviors so it is important to be a good and healthy role model for your children. As children grow older they have more say in what activities they do and how much effort they put into maintaining healthy behavioral practices.

Twenty-one percent of the population of the United States is made up of adolescents and young adults (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2013). This is a large number and the behavioral patterns they develop through the teenage years can influence their health as an adult. Many issues arise during the adolescent time because there are so many changes occurring hormonally, physically and socially that teens tend to get pressured and become impulsive. According to the U.S Department of Health and Human Services several different behavioral problems start to peak during these years and it is important for parents to be aware of them in advance to try and avoid issues (2013). Some of these issues include homicide, suicide, motor vehicle crashes, substance use and abuse, smoking, sexually transmitted diseases, teen and unplanned pregnancy and homelessness (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2013).

Adolescence can be a very hard time for some teens to adapt to as they become more sensitive to environmental or outside influences. By encouraging healthy behaviors and building strong self-esteem for teens can help encourage them to not only become healthier more well-adjusted adults but also prevent diseases and problems that may affect the rest of their lives.

I believe Bryson is very well rounded for his age. From the reports it seems that he has a good social group of friends and is well liked which helps to build his self-esteem. I believe this because even though he is not that good a performing or singing he is still excited to throw himself out there and participate in productions. In terms of getting exercise as a family we play video games that involve moving around like tennis on a 3-D video game. We also try to

incorporate learning and being active by going on hikes while observing the wildlife and flora.

Bryson tried out for the baseball team and made it and has become very involved and wants to do everything he can to succeed which shows drive and commitment as well as exercise.

Bryson did seem quite nervous about starting high school. Some comments made in the reports showed that he had good coping mechanisms when he was faced with a friend saying bad things about him. To deal with his anger or frustration he would go and shoot some hoops or get absorbed in his favorite video game to calm down. He is enthusiastic and very involved in school which also builds his self-esteem and establishes good time management skills for the future.

One of the most important elements is that his friends seem very close and although they play video games they also tend to do active activities like going camping which helps to balance out the inactivity.

3. Describe one change in your child's thinking (e.g., changes in humor, abstract thinking, or theory of mind) and discuss how this might be affecting his or her interactions with you and your responses and his or her interactions with peers. Cite evidence from the course that these kinds of changes occur in early adolescence. (4 points)

As children develop they go through changes in cognitive growth which can result in changes in humor, thinking becoming more abstract or changes in theory of mind. Piaget Theory of cognitive development involves four stages. The stages are sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational and finally formal operational (Kail, 2012, pg.179). Although Piaget places age ranges for each stage, a child can be in two stages at the same time while they are developing. The concrete operational stage is where the child uses experiences to understand and apply logical operations and typically ranges from 7-11 years of age (Kail, 2012, pg.179). During early adolescence and continuing into adulthood teens start to move into the formal

operational stage. In this stage a person is able to think abstractly, can speculate on hypothetical situations, and also use deductive reasoning (Kail, 2012, pg.179).

The report on Bryson all suggest that he is slowly moving into the formal operational stage according to Piaget's stages. The program state that "Bryson has a more abstract understanding of people and personalities now. For instance, he points out ways in which his personality is like one parent or the other" (Manis, 2012). Also Bryson sense of humor has become more subtle and he has been pointing out inconsistencies in what I do and what I tell him to do. This shows how he is analyzing more and is able to pick up on things that may have been too abstract a thought previously for him to understand.

Bryson moral development has also started to change. Our text describes Selman's five stages of perspective taking. The five stages include undifferentiated, social-informational, self-reflective, third-person and societal. In the last virtual child response paper reporting on ages 6 through 10 I would place Bryson between the social-informational stage where children are aware that perspectives differ and the self-reflective stage where children can step into other peoples shoes and view them as others do. Bryson was showing signs of seeing himself how others viewed him and he talked about things he didn't like and would like to change. From the ages of 12-18 I believe Bryson's moral development has changed to the latter two stages of Selman's perspective taking.

The second last stage is called "Third Person" and usually starts between the ages of 10-15 years of age. Children and teens begin to step outside the immediate situation to see how they and another person, other than them, are viewed by a third person. An example of this development is when Bryson discusses issues about fairness which are specific things people say and do, rather than incidents in the news. One report came back stating that some peers on a

school trip were caught shoplifting. Bryson's response was that their punishment was fair because they made the school and the program look bad by what they had done. This shows how he not only has developed morals that stealing is bad, but can also see how an incident like that can affect more than just those people.

The last Selman's stage of perspective taking is societal. This is where adolescents realize that perspectives are also influenced by personal, social and cultural contexts (Kail, 2011). This stage occurs from approximately 14 years through to adulthood. I believe that Bryson is also in this stage to following feedback report in the program

“Bryson mentions that he had a long conversation with another student on a bus about all kinds of issues on which they disagreed, such as religion and politics. Bryson listened to the other person's point of view, but when he came home, he wanted to tell you all about his own viewpoints.” (Manis, 2012).

This shows that not only does Bryson look at situations and opinions from different perspectives but he is also able to appreciate why a person has a different view due to knowing that they have had different influences that have helped to shape those opinions.

4. How important have your teen's relationships with peers been to his/her social development, emotional well-being and school achievement from 14-18 years of age? (2 points)

Experiences with peers constitute an important developmental context for children and adolescents (Ryan, 2013). There are many different levels in which children and adolescents interact with their peers including general interactions, friendships and groups. Being able to successfully interact with other teenagers and people increase a teens self-esteem and self-worth

and also aids in their social competence which will help them to develop successful social relationships in adulthood.

Friendships are extremely important, not only to adolescents but to people of all ages. True friendships tend to develop around the ages of 9 or 10 years old. Harry Stack Sullivan suggests five functions of friendships and why they are important. These functions include offering consensual validation, bolstering feelings of self-worth, providing affection and a context for intimate disclosure, promoting interpersonal sensitivity and setting the foundation for romantic and parental relationships (Sullivan, 1953). Basically friends are there to confirm your thoughts, feelings and actions. To make a person feel accepted within a group and feel comfortable expressing their emotions to another without fear of being ridiculed and if they have successful friendship relationships this will carry on into the future and determine how they will relate to others as adults.

A major change that occurs from childhood in terms of friendships is that younger children have the ability to form friendships but tend to lack the skills to sustain those relationships (Kail, 2012, pg476). Slowly we begin to develop more skills to be able to sustain relationships for longer periods of time. Friendships are important as stated above but can come to an end for many different reasons. Some of these reasons include an unwilling to compromise or negotiate, different interests and likes, or conflict. Good friends are considered those who remain stable for a long period of time. According to Kail, researchers consistently find that children benefit from having good friends (pg. 476). This research also shows that children, who lack friends tend to have lower self-esteem, are more likely to be lonely or depressed and are less likely to act pro-socially. Another positive to developing good friendship relationships is that

children with good friends tend to deal better with life stressor such as transitioning in schools and being subjected to different experiences.

One of the main changes that occur from childhood to adolescents is that the child starts to spend more time with their peers and less time with their family. There is less adult supervision when they are with their friends and increasingly they have more friends of the opposite sex (Brown, 2005). I definitely noted this occurring with Bryson even at the age of 12-13 years old. One problem that can arise from this is that sometimes friends will spend too much time together discussing each other's personal problems which can then cause greater depression or anxiety.

In terms of Bryson I believe that he has always been a very social child and this continued through into adolescence. He always had friends and the reports consistently reported back that he tended to be the leader of his particular group. Because of this I believe that it benefitted him as he was never afraid to try new things, he always did well in his studies and only on occasion he showed signs of being depressed or upset. He always seemed happy and confident and I attribute this to having good interpersonal skills and peer relationships.

5. How has your teen adjusted at 14-18 years of age to typical adolescent issues such as risk-taking, drugs, alcohol, and sexual interests, and how have you responded to your teen? (2 points)

Everybody takes risks. It is a normal fact of life, however some risks are more life threatening than others. Adolescents tend to find themselves in scary and often unbelievable situations due to changes in hormones, peer pressure and their search for identity. It is important to note that even though risks can be dangerous that they are important in development because

by not taking risks we can never learn what our capabilities are or experience new and fun adventures.

I believe it is important to distinguish between healthy risk taking behaviors and unhealthy risk taking behaviors, because taking risks isn't necessarily bad. Healthy risks mean that there is a possibility of failure. Examples of these risks include trying out for a sports team, making new friends, travelling or entering competitions. Unhealthy risks and issues that are usually associated with teens include driving too fast, texting or talking on the phone while driving, unprotected sex, smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, stealing, gang activity, or disordered eating (Hudson).

This type of risk-taking behavior has been linked to adolescent development due to their developing brains. The pre-frontal cortex, at the front of the brain, is the area that governs functions such as reasoning, critical thinking, and exercising self-control (Hudson). The other important section of the brain is amygdala which controls our emotions. Teens tend to have trouble controlling risk-taking behavior and impulses as well as understanding the consequences of them because the frontal cortex is not fully developed yet. Therefore, teens tend to act on impulse as they have not developed the part of the brain that would make them reason with the consequences of their actions (Hudson).

Biology is not the only area that has an impact on these behaviors. Peer pressure has a huge influence on adolescents. This can be good and bad as peers can have a positive influence on each other or negative depending on the circumstance. Building an identity is extremely important for adolescents also and they want to feel accepted making them more susceptible to do things that they know they probably shouldn't just to fit in. A study conducted at the National

Institute of Health found that teens are more likely to engage in risky driving behaviors such as speeding, if they are accompanied by the same-gendered teens in the car (Hudson).

This type of behavior can also come about due to the self absorbed or ego-centrism that is commonly seen in teens. At this age as their brains are developing many believe that they are extra special. This can create a sense of invincibility that increase many risk taking behaviors including unprotected sexual activity, illegal drag racing, and drug use because they truly believe that nothing can hurt them (Hudson).

There are many ways that parents can help decrease risk taking behaviors in teens. They cannot prevent influences from their child's peers but by having an open and stable relationship with the parents can help balance the negative influences of peer pressure. Adults can help teens find opportunities to take healthy risks by encouraging them in constructive pursuits like sports or arts as well as being a model of good risk taking patterns. Another important thing that parents can do is discuss the topics of risky behavior with their teenagers so they know that they are able to come to their parents for help and that they can learn how to evaluate risks that they may be exposed to by already being aware of the consequences.

Bryson didn't seem to have too many issues but he definitely experienced some risk-taking behavior. When he was dating his new girlfriend my partner and I started to get worried that he may be rushing into a sexual relationship. We sat him down and had a talk about waiting until he is more mature, but just in case we also talked to him about safe sex, condoms, and birth control as we want him to be safe and also feel comfortable coming and talking to us about the issue.

Another example of these types of behaviors occurring is when I had to pick Bryson up from a party and I could smell alcohol on his breath. I chose to ground him for a week and then

discuss why underage drinking isn't good. I wasn't personally sure what choice to choose as I find that grounding a child may make them more likely to secretly drink and maybe decide to drive home instead of call so they do not get caught. However it was the only answer that fitted the best with how I would deal with it.

Finally Bryson was becoming more independent and ran off with his girlfriend and they got matching tattoos. I have to admit when this popped up I was quite surprised. This is another example of impulsive behavior and not thinking about the consequences that the tattoo will be on him for life. I think he will learn from his on mistake on that one.

6. Use the 7th & 9th grade report cards and your own observations to summarize your child's academic skills at this point. What specific activities might promote some of these skills? What careers or courses of study might be best suited to your teen's abilities and interests? (2 points)

Bryson has always been interested in school and academics. He constantly scored high in his tests and was placed in the gifted and talented programs. His 7th grade report card stated that Bryson consistently contributes to cooperative group activities and respects the rights and possessions of others, has consistently appropriate social interaction with peers, and even seems to be a kind of peer leader. It also stated that his word reading, spelling and writing skills are strong and that he got A's in English, social studies and Spanish. The teacher commented on his ability to analyze literature well and also on his strong writing skills. He also received A's in his math and science classes and was recommended for honors math and science club for 8th grade.

I believe that Bryson is very academically advanced for his age and understand the importance of doing well in school. As his virtual mother I always encouraged him to play and get involved in academically based games or activities which I believed helped him to develop

his love for learning. I also insisted that he had avenues to have fun like sports or art to ensure he is balanced and has time to relax. His report also stated that he listens attentively, follows directions, and follows school rules as well as being effective at time management, and highly consistent in working independently in the classroom and on homework. He has almost no problems completing assignments and turning them in on time.

For his 9th grade report it came back with similar results. Bryson was able to take Honors Spanish and English on the basis of his 8th grade record, and got A's and commendations from the teachers for both. He also got an A in World Geography and an invitation from the Geography teacher to participate in the Travel Club at the school. Based on 8th grade work, Bryson was able to take Algebra II in 9th grade. He got an A. He also got an A in Honors Biology and received "pleasure to have in class" ratings from both teachers. He received A's in his fine arts classes this past year and a comment that his work was very creative. The only area that he struggled in was music which he has always had problem with and received a C for the class stating "I never want to take another music class as long as I live!"

In terms of careers and courses that might be best for Bryson I would suggest something like engineering or maybe in the medical field. He is great with his math and science skills which will help with both fields. Also his artistic ability is quite good so engineering or architecture could be another possible career path for him. He is very strong in his written and verbal communication skills which I believe can help him in whatever area he decides to choose in the future.

7. As the program ends, what pathways does your child appear to be on in terms of physical, cognitive, social, emotional and moral development? Choose three aspects of your child to discuss. To what extent could you have predicted these pathways based on what you knew of your child's earlier development? (4 points)

In terms of cognitive development I believe that Bryson is on a very good pathway. He has always been an intelligent child and constantly achieved good grades throughout school in all academic areas including English, Spanish, math, science and art. Because of this I believe that his cognitive function is very advanced and that he was able to use his abilities to ensure he succeeded in school. As stated in question three I believe that Bryson is in the formal operational stage according to Piaget's stages. This is because reports state that he has a more abstract understanding of people and personalities as well as being able to analyze more due to being able to process more abstract thoughts. Although I worried when choosing my answers to particular virtual child questions, I believed that Bryson was going to be a strong learner. From the readings and my research a child with strong language and reading skills from an early age tends to have an easier time in school. This is because they are able to interpret the information given to them in the written form and move along with the activities assigned instead of struggling to read the information or wait for the teacher to explain each step. I also think this helps to develop independent working habits as well as building a child's academic self-esteem. Because of the strong reports back from the preschool and kindergarten teachers I had a strong feeling that Bryson was going to be successful in school.

Bryson moral development has also started to change and once again like question three I placed Bryson in the third-person and societal stages of Selman's stages of Perspective Taking. When Bryson discusses issues about fairness which are specific things people say and do, rather than incidents in the news this shows that he is able to view people and things from a third party perspective for example his response to his friends shoplifting. The last Selman's stage of perspective taking is societal and Bryson also seems to be in this stage because he realizes that different contextual background influence how people respond and the opinions they form.

Morally I like the way that Bryson had turned out and I always made sure to not force my opinions on him and show different perspectives when answering the questions on the program. I think by doing this he came out quite well-rounded in terms of moral development and although he has his own opinions he is willing to listen actively to others which shows that he is respectful and open to new ideas and opinions.

I did start to worry in the very beginning as Bryson was not a very social baby and clung on to me or my partner. He would get very upset around strangers and even had issues at the day care with other children. I started choosing answers to the virtual child questions that forced Bryson to be put into different situations to make him more independent and also to make him feel more comfortable with being somewhere or being with someone different to make him more social. I definitely think this worked as the reports for preschool and kindergarten came back very positive that he was cooperative and seem to be a leader of his group. This continued throughout the rest of Bryson's schooling. He always tended to be a leader and have a strong group of friends around him. I believe his social development as a young child definitely created the pathway to where he is now because it built up his self-esteem and made him feel comfortable as the person he is. Although he had some issue with friends, girlfriends and risk-taking he always managed to remain stable, level headed and focused on his school work.

8. Describe one specific way in which you think your parenting mattered for your child's development, based on evidence from the course regarding the contributions of parents to child development. Describe one specific way in which your child developed that appeared to be influenced by factors outside your control, such as genes, random environmental events or the general influence of contemporary middle-class American culture. (4 points)

As children grow up, there are many aspects of their lives which influence and affect their development and behaviors. One of the most important areas that influence children comes

from the actions of their parents. They play a large role in the social and emotional behaviors a child will possess during childhood and later in life. “The way a parent socializes may have a slight amount to do with their genetic makeup, but due to the child's interactions with and observations of, the parents contribute more to the social and empathy related development than heredity does” (Zhou et al, 2002).

I believe there are two areas that my parenting influenced Bryson the most. The first area was putting Bryson in unfamiliar and sometimes uncomfortable situations to make him more independent and able to develop better interpersonal skills with other people. If I did not do this and allowed Bryson to stay stuck to me like glue I believe he would have struggled to make friends and be too dependent on myself and my partner. By forcing him into situations of meeting new people or other children, he had to develop communication skills and realize that to be do this you have to behave in ways that fall under pro-social behavior to get along well with others. Once Bryson became more comfortable with this he really seemed to blossom and always had a good group of friends, transitioned well from pre-school to elementary to middle school and finally high school with little problems.

The second area I believe influenced Bryson’s outcome was focusing on his language and reading development early on. By focusing on learning activities from a young age shows children that this is an important ability for the future. I always tried to make things fun by providing Bryson with different activities or taking him to museums and zoos to stimulate his learning and make him see that it can be fun. I believe that by doing this Bryson developed a love for learning that followed him throughout his schooling. He was in the gifted and talented program all through his schooling and had a set plan to go to college. It is important to me as I love to learn and do well that Bryson also developed this love and I think that I succeeded.

One factor that I can think of that was out of my control was Bryson's musical ability. Although he excelled in all other areas, including art, he could never hold a note and continued to get poor grades in music no matter if I could have put him in lessons. This didn't stop him though from participating in different musically oriented things such as a choir or musical. His high self-esteem and strong friendship group supported him no matter what the circumstances were or how bad he was at music. In his 9th grade report it stated that Bryson never wanted to take another music course as long as he lived. Because I couldn't find a way to improve his ability or desire to enjoy musical things I believe that this area was out of my control and can be attributed to genes.

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