Quincey Epley

Bridget Franks

TED 2380-Development and Learning in Adolescence

3 May 2021

**PART ONE—Observation Notes**

March 29: Wearing crop top, sweatpants, and converse, participates and asks questions in class, minimal makeup, nose out of mask most of the time. Walks very quickly. Slouches. Asked lots of questions in class

March 31: She asked to go to the bathroom, left, came back a couple minutes later walking very quickly. She grabbed her backpack from her desk and left again. She looked embarrassed. I am assuming she got her period and had to come back to grab her period products. She did not really participate in class discussions when she came back. Later she complemented my glasses.

April 6: She was having a conversation with one of her friends, where she mentioned she participates in show choir, and how exhausting it is to get from the choir room to the classroom. Good class participation, and she forms her own strong opinions.

April 8: Talks to the teacher and I before class starts. Inquisitive, participates in class. She rides the bus or rides home with her brother depending on the day.

April 13: Her father contracted COVID-19, so she had to stay home for the remaining two weeks in my practicum experience.

**PART TWO—Developmental Summary**

**Physical**

Bella is in the freshman honors U.S. History class I was observing. She is about 14-15 years old. Bella is thin, short, and healthy. She seems like she may still get taller, which is still normal for someone her age. She is probably five-foot-one and around 100 pounds, which is on the lower side of “normal weight” for her body mass index (BMI). She walks fairly quickly, and never seems winded after walking a long distance or walking up four flights of stairs. Age fourteen is still relatively early in pubescent development. These types of changes are very embarrassing when they first happen. I observed her embarrassment when she had to come back into class after leaving for the bathroom, so she could grab her backpack and tampons or pads. She did not make eye contact with anyone and seemed to get in and out of the room as quickly as she could. She would sometimes lay her head down on the desk in class, which could show inadequate sleep, which is important for everybody, not just teens.

Her biggest strength in physical development is her aerobic capacity. She never gets winded, no matter how quickly or far she is walking. She seems to struggle with coping with the changes that come with puberty, and maybe body image. I did not notice many changes in her physical development while I was there, just different energy levels.

**Cognitive**

Bella asks most of the questions in her class, and they are usually higher-level thinking questions, which shows her cognitive development. She makes good connections between the content we are studying and recent political events. She asks good clarifying questions. She is really good at forming her own opinions and expressing them to her class. When we talk about historical politics, she can easily identify special interests and express what she thinks would have been the more logical choice in her eyes. For example, we were talking about the second wave feminism movement in class, and more specifically Roe v. Wade, the supreme court case guaranteeing access to abortion under the fourteenth amendment, she saw how some people thought that terminating a pregnancy is immoral, but she also expressed her point of view saying “if you don’t think abortion is right, don’t have an abortion,” expressing her view that it is a personal choice, and that other people’s religious views should not dictate what all people can or cannot do.

Her greatest strength in the cognitive area is definitely her critical thinking skills. Her biggest struggle may be seeing things from other perspectives. I think she forms her opinions and does not want to be challenged on that. I noticed changes day to day, some days she would be more vocal and ask more questions, and some days she just was quiet and kept to herself.

**Emotional**

Bella’s mood seems to be different every time I see her. Sometimes she is very energetic and talkative, and sometimes she comes in, sits down, looks bored, and will usually just put her head down and be quiet the whole period. I think this is pretty typical for girls her age. Dealing with all of the changes in their brain and their hormones that affect their mood and attitude. High school freshmen haven’t had the opportunities to learn how to deal with their emotions healthily and effectively, so they express their feelings however it has been modeled to them, and often explosively. Bella just keeps to herself when she is in a bad mood.

She seems to have a good sense of community. She feels connected to the people around her and wants the best for everyone. She wants everyone to succeed and get what they need, and she vocally advocates for that in class.

Bella was very embarrassed when she had to come back into the classroom after leaving for the bathroom, in order to grab her backpack because she most likely got her period and needed her period products. It makes a lot of sense that she would still feel embarrassment about her period because she probably thought everyone was looking at her and would know. I remember the shame that came with getting your period, but you tend to grow out of it as you get older.

The part of emotional development Bella struggles with the most is her emotional regulation. She is often in different moods when I see her, and they seem pretty intense. Her strength is in her empathy. I saw her change day to day on her mood and how much it is affecting her participation in class.

**Social**

Bella has friends in the class, but they sit on the other side of the room, so they usually only talk before or after class. She participates in Show Choir, meaning she is active in school activities. When she speaks, she always seems confident in what she is saying. She does not stutter. She was always dressed very trendily. She wore crop tops, Chuck Taylor Converse shoes, bracelets, necklaces, and usually jeans or sweatpants. This shows that she is current on what is socially acceptable and popular. She is often on her phone when we have independent time in class, when it is appropriate, and often texting or snapchatting people (I am assuming her friends). Bella is in Show Choir, which can be a social circle she is in. Show Choir is a performing art, so she probably has good self-esteem and self-confidence in order to be able to perform in front of crowds or at a competition. She is becoming more independent with her thinking. She is forming her own value system through experience and questioning why things are the way they are, now and throughout history. Her greatest strength in her social development is her ability to say what she means concisely and with confidence.

What she struggles with most is her outward attitude. She comes off pretty quiet and almost annoyed at first, but she is very friendly and talkative. A change I noticed was her comfort level talking to me. At first, she did not really talk to me, but as she got more comfortable with me being in the classroom, she started talking to me more often.

**PART THREE—Connections with Developmental Theories and Research**

**Gilligan’s Theory of Moral Development**

This theory shows the moral development more from the woman’s lens. Carol Gilligan thought that women were more likely to have their moral compass in the perspective of caring for others and about relationships rather than the perspective of justice, which is more prevalent in men. This theory also has stages of development. The first is preconventional morality, which is based on survival and self-preservation. The next is conventional morality, which is when selflessness and caring for others is valued and prioritized. The last is postconventional, which emphasizes taking responsibility for their choices and taking charge of their own lives.

Bella shows development in both the conventional and postconventional stages of morality. She has shown this through class discussions about public policy. For example, when we talked about abortion laws in the United States, she showed postconventional thinking when she argued that abortion should be accessible to people who want one because they are the only one who can make that decision for themselves. Another time, we talked about segregation and the Jim Crow era. She did not really understand why people would be okay with treating other people the way society treated people of color in that era. This showed conventional thinking, where her priority is caring for others and treating everyone fairly.

**Perspective taking**

Perspective taking is the ability to see and evaluate a situation from another person’s perspective or view. This skill is still developing in adolescence, and it is easier for some people more than others. It is very important for children’s social development because it helps them empathize with others and be able to evaluate how people may react to hypothetical situations before they happen. This can make them more informed and keep them out of dangerous and risky situations, because they can anticipate how their parents, teachers, or peers may react if they do or do not participate in these situations.

Bella shows development in this area, but there is also room for improvement. She showed in class that her own perspective is very strong, but if another’s perspective conflicts with her already held viewpoint too much, she is less likely to be willing to see the situation from that other perspective. She is able to put historical viewpoints into their proper context, but her views still cloud her judgement, and she often can’t understand why people hold negative and hateful perspectives. She can see through the lens of others when it comes to people less fortunate than her, or people she can relate to through shared experiences or identity. She just wants to make sure everyone is being heard, loved, and appreciated.

**Coping Strategies**

Teen stress is a huge issue in high schools. Students often start to feel stressed as they are coming into adolescence, and they do not know how to deal with these feelings in a healthy manner because they may have never felt that kind of stress and pressure before in their lives. Coping strategies are ways that people can deal with and handle their emotions. Many people cope with things that have been modeled to them from other teens and adults. Some examples of common coping strategies are shutting down, talking through it, worrying, and turning to drugs and alcohol. Teens need to be shown and taught healthy coping mechanisms to be the most successful they can be.

Bella seemed to have a different disposition every day. Some days she would come in with an abundance of energy, be excited about class, and ask all the questions she could think of; other days, she would come in sluggishly, sit down, put her head on her desk and almost never raise it up again. This shows that she may not know how to regulate her emotions. It is common for teens in their early adolescence to put more stake and energy into their interactions. For example, if she got into an argument with one of her friends in first period, the rest of her day would be bad because she is carrying around that negative energy. It may be harder for her to let go of negative emotions and move forward. This shows the coping strategy of worrying and catastrophizing the situation.

**PART FOUR—Recommendations**

For Bella, I would recommend that the adults in her life check in with her more often. Bella should also be encouraged to express her feelings in a healthy way, like through therapy, art, sports, journaling, etc. This will give her an outlet to get her feelings out. Therapy and journaling will help Bella learn how to articulate her feelings, and maybe not be so frustrated. Journaling can relieve stress and help process her emotions. Writing will also help boost creativity and help her find her voice. Taking up a sport or expressing herself and her feelings through art can be beneficial, because she can get out her feelings and frustrations in a physical way. She should be encouraged to participate in an after-school sport or art program. Playing a sport will also help her stay active and physically healthy. Art helps with cognitive and emotional development and improves fine motor skills.

Adults should check in with Bella throughout the day. This will help her work through and process situations that occur throughout the day, so she may be able to let go of some of her negative interactions and be able to move forward with the day in a more positive manner. This will help her be able to manage her emotions more effectively, and possibly build strong relationships with the trusted adults in her life. With better emotional regulation, she may be happier day to day and be able to help grow her social life.