Assessment of Child Behavior: Brandy's Case

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Abstract

In this research, we will approach the case of Brandy, who is a six-year-old Caucasian girl. Throughout the year in first grade, it went well for her; until unfortunately one day she had been displaying bad behaviors, and her parents were notified. The teacher was unclear about why Brandy was acting up as she had been. Her mother wonders if it partly had something to do with the fact that she herself was busy at work and hardly gets a chance to spend time with her. She does have a social life with the neighbor kids. She was reported to have been bullied by some classmates because of her speech impediment, so her mother and the teacher agreed to speech therapy. Here is a presentation that explains Brandy’s behavior that focuses on a variety of important topics. There will be clarifications of Brandy’s ecology and major areas that possibly influence her behavior. Also, this will indicate the role that she plays in the family and how it goes along with her expressed behavior. Different theories will be examined in the particular influences in the microsystem and macrosystem, and which one fits the best for Brandy.

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Brandy is perhaps having trouble communicating her needs at school because of her speech impediment, and most likely is being teased occasionally for it. This might explain why she recently acted up in anger in the classroom. If her temper problems are not showing up at home, but showing up at school, there might be an underlying cause for the problematic behaviors.

***Family and social environment***: For Brandy, it seems that this is a positive trait in her life. She has a lot of support surrounding her; she gets along in positive ways with her siblings. Since she has been attending after school care, and completes her extra-curricular activities, this appears normal, as well. If she gets into trouble for lying or another reason, she seems to feel remorse, just like many other children do. The case at hand does not indicate major behavioral problems at home. (Argosy University Online [AUO], 2017). She is relatively active with her neighbors and surrounding community, and enjoys playing sports.

For healthy child development, positive interaction between social environment and child/parent features is of utmost importance. Families need to aid their children in developing a sense of self as well as of themselves as individuals (Australian Institute of Family Studies [AIFS], 2013). Together with parents, a child definitely needs to have encouraging and strong bond. Even when facing other kinds of trouble, a child could gain resilience, and he or she can have healthier mental outcomes in the future, if intervention for Brandy’s lisp is taken care of as soon as it is detected (Davis & Gavidia-Payne, 2009).

***Socioeconomic Status:*** Within a society, this commonly denotes the position rank that is established from social and economic aspects (Berns, 2013). This is another plus for Brandy; both her mother and her father seem to be well-educated with master’s degrees. Her father seems to be holding up well in his full-time job, and her mother is just now starting out on with a new job that most likely would take up more time than her education in graduate school. One would most likely form the opinion that the family is at the higher end in socioeconomic status because both parents work in higher-paying jobs. They are able to provide most of the things she needs or desires. Davis and Gavidia-Payne state that, “In addition to child-specific factors, researchers have also focused on the impact of family characteristics on quality of life” (2009). For the most part, family income has considerably increased the attention on this matter since it has been shown to influence the emotional well-being of all family members, as well as the environment on the home front (Davis & Gavidia-Payne, 2009).

***Health care:*** The parents have opted for Brandy to attend speech therapy given by the school twice a week to improve her speech impediment. Since they are of higher SES, they most likely have access to all kinds of health care. They agreed to this speech therapy at school, because it not only would improve her lisp, but it would help alleviate the bullying she receives from some of her classmates who do not understand that she cannot help it.

***Physical environment and safety:*** As far as the report we see on Brandy, there is no evidence listed that she may have been abused at home (AUO, 2017). According to their higher socioeconomic status, Brandy’s family members most likely adjust the methods they interact with one another to the height of stress they experience at home. All kinds of families experience stress, no matter what status they hold (Berns, 2013).

The stresses such as those in the workplace, ill health, and dysfunctional relationships (Berns, 2013). Brandy seems to be well as far as physical health and attends school on a regular basis. However, there seems to be something missing here. Since both parents work, there might be reduced interactions with their children; all children need closer relationships with their mother and father, and might need more affection and attention. The fact that both parents work might mean less “family time”.

***Behavior:*** As mentioned before, Brandy’s “slightly emotional” problem that her teacher reported might well have been that she had grown tired of being made fun of; thus, Brandy reacted strongly to this situation by throwing the pencil. Getting in trouble with her parents at home for lying occasionally is not out of the norm for a child of her age. She is intelligent as a six-year-old, and is the youngest in her classroom. Generally it appears that she is happy, even though she gets picked on for her slight speech problem. I could see this as an isolated incident, but the concern that the teacher relayed to her parents is understandable.

***Education:*** It shows in the case that Brandy enjoys school and her extracurricular activities. Perhaps this is evidence that the after-school care is an encouraging source to help her build good skills by regulating a time for study. It most likely has an impact on her general outlook about her regular attendance at school. It would be even better if Brandy’s parents were involved a bit more in her study times.

According to many studies, parental involvement in a child’s education holds an encouraging influence (Child Development Institute [CDI], 2014). The older the Brandy becomes, the more homework and study time she needs; thus good study habits need to be encouraged. Enhanced scores in her schoolwork, quicker homework completion, improved behaviors and attitudes, as well as young Brandy being more likely to become involved in positive extra-curricular activities can occur; the earlier her mother and father get involved, the better the results. I believe that out of all of these areas that seem to influence Brandy’s behavior are family, social environment, and peers.

***The family*** provides the closest influences for the child; from infancy, this is the first socialization that occurs.  It is evident that protection from harm and affection are paramount for a child’s health. The nature of the family structure is of utmost importance to attend to emotional needs of all children (Mahalihali, 2016).  It seems that since both of Brandy’s parents are away most of the time during the week, her older siblings could provide a lot of guidance and emotional support, since many children look up to the older ones than the younger ones in the family unit (Rosenblatt, Howes, Rizzo, & Corsaro, 1995). A child growing up in a home that is shared with other brothers and sisters learns that he or she has to share with them. He or she will pick up the ways in which the siblings’ work as a team.

And of course, Brandy will learn the ropes of how the older siblings might compete for things they want from someone (Mahalihali, 2016). Important values and coping skills for behavior are given to the child by the family (especially by the mother and father). They must each take a part in forming those crucial values and teaching them the difference between right and wrong.

Brandy attends after school care, and this could serve as a helpful source for her development. However, it has been found that features of the family and a child’s experiences seem to matter quite a bit more. For the real family of the child, there is no genuine substitute (National Institutes of Health [NIH], 2006). There were correlations present between development of children and the actual structures of child care; however, for the child development, the value of the mother-to-child interactions was found more vital.

***Social environment*** has much to do with the proper development of proper child behavior; depending on what kind of social environment Brandy has surrounding her. Brandy has positive social environment going for her as young as she happens to be; she is active in her sports teams, is involved in the community, and the care after school. With all these things surrounding her, she can learn many new things like responsibility, sharing more, and socially developing with a wide range of groups with different races, social classes, socioeconomic backgrounds, and cultures. It will teach her about the value of hard work, and tolerance for those who are much different than she is. If she is shy at first about her lisp, this could give her encouragement and practice with what she learned in speech therapy, by using her voice in these various social settings as well.

***Peers:*** Developing positive relationshipsare obviously an important part of child development. A child will always have the basic needs of “fitting in” and associating with other children. If Brandy has neighborhood friends who are in her same age group, then this could be a real plus for her. If her parents permit her to invite other children for playdates to their home or to bring Brandy to another friend’s house for a few hours, this can affect her social life in a more positive way, and since Brandy does go to an after-school program during the week, this can affect the extent of positive interaction with peers as well (Berns, 2013).

As positive an outlook as Brandy seems to display, she may have felt she had to hold back the struggles from the peers in the classroom; the peers in her neighborhood may be the only understanding ones when it comes to her slight speech impediment. That lack of awareness and understanding from the other students may have been hurting her for a long time, and this may be the cause of her outburst and temper problem that particular day that the teacher had reported. As a child grows older and struggles for independence, he or she tends to hold more value to what the other children’s opinions are other than that of the parents.

Brandy is going through some changes, because she has to adjust to her mother’s new schedule. At the same time, she is moving up to first grade. Brandy is playing the role of any other six-year-old. This is a huge step for anyone her age. She is most likely suffering separation anxiety from her mother not being there as often as she was previously. Separation anxiety is not unusual with a child at Brandy’s age. Movement towards independence in a six-year-old child is on the increase. However, this anxiety varies from one child to another; for each one is unique in character (Lee, 2017).

Each child possesses his or her own distinctive skills, likings, and understandings just like adults do (Lee, 2017). Brandy will want to spend more time with her friends or participating in her extra-curricular activities, and further explore and expand her world as time goes by. It will still be hard for Brandy to handle obstacles, certain stresses, or losses in things (such as games). This might also be another explanation for her erratic behavior she displayed that day.

The microsystem is the innermost structure of a child’s ecology in Bronfenbrenner’s theory. It denotes the associations with significant others and the activities the developing child comes across in a certain smaller formations such as the family, school, community, or group of peers (Berns, 2013).

In this microsystem, child learns his or her behavior by observing the surrounding environment. When parents argue and shout at each other and he or she witnesses it, likely the child will grow up to show this aggressive behavior as well. On the other hand, in an environment with parents being understanding, loving, and affectionate towards each other, children will show these same positive traits when they grow up. Children live by their parents’ examples, so it is important for parents to remember to set a positive example to be handed down. They also will learn behaviors from the outside, so it is important to teach them that “golden rule”, which is to treat others as they would want to be treated themselves (Oswalt, 2017).

The macrosystem is the fourth structure of Bronfenbrenner’s theory, which is the largest and most distant set of people and things to a child. However, these people and things continue to majorly affect a child, whether it is positively or negatively. (Oswalt, 2017). This structure includes things such as public policy, cultural values, the economy, to name a few. It is made up of the child’s society and subculture. Examples for this would be this country, its cultures, socio-economic classes, ethnicities, and religious beliefs, and the type of area (i.e., urban, suburban) where a person lives (Berns, 2013).

Even though the child does not have control in shaping his or her values, parents pass these down to the child. Brandy may have picked up the positive trait of how hard her parents work at what they do. In the macrosystem theory, families that are dysfunctional will raise their children to be bitter and destructive, and those who are more active and healthy will produce active and healthy children.

The most fitting theory here is the macrosystem theory, since we do not see any reports or history of negative influences or any abusive or negligent behavior from anyone in Brandy’s home environment. Despite the sudden changes such as her mother’s new job, she seems to be a very well-raised child, and is surrounded by positivity with her role models, extracurricular activities, and her circle of neighborhood friends.

“Your child’s social development depends on your family dynamics, his individual personality and several other variables, but his experiences at school are likely some of the most influential to his socialization” (Pearson, 2017, para. 1). For a child, school is the largest influence next to that of the family.

Curriculum requirements for kindergarten are quite different than that of first grade. The pace of learning increases, more and stricter rules are set, and there is homework to do; thus, this is quite the struggle for the average first-grader.

I imagine that with Brandy’s lisp, she may be too shy to participate verbally in class discussions; and on that day, trouble ensued with her temper when she was teased about it. Her lack of properly communicating may have made her subject to that negativity on the part of the other classmates. It was probably just a small group in the class who do not understand the struggles of someone with a disability.

At age 6, she is just now learning to socialize with others instead of being the center of attention (Morin, 2017). She is sensitive when anything negative like teasing or bullying can be most hurtful. It is most important that she learn to make and maintain positive relationships. At the time of the incident reported, she may have been targeting one particular classmate, most likely the one who initiated the trouble; but again, there was no evidence showing in the report itself.

Since this report indicated that Brandy has the tendency to lie at times, perhaps she would not tell her mother the whole truth about the pencil-throwing incident, because she didn’t want her parents to become angry and confront her about anything. She may have forgotten the values of treating others well and may have just acted on impulse.

At her age, Brandy does have a particularly large circle of support from friends and family. She is active her school, aftercare, and other activities outside the classroom. Those communication struggles will eventually reduce as time goes by, since she is in speech therapy. If the positive activities continue, this will help her to be a more resilient child with a better life.

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