Lucas A Case Study about Child Development

Allison Gallahan Child Development, Section B Professor Stetzel May 6, 2009

Abstract

After an extended period watching and observing Lucas, the bystander is able to see where Lucas is developmentally. He is growing physically, mentally, and emotionally as a child his age, four years old, should be maturing according to many theorists and people who have studied child development for many years. While he has not mastered all the required steps for his age group he is achieving more and more of them each day and will be able to enter school in good standing. The following case study will discuss where Lucas is excelling and where he still needs a little work.

Lucas

A Case Study about Child Development

Lucas is almost four years old and lives with his mom and dad in a house in the country. His father is a train engineer and spends a few days a week on the rails while his mother stays at home as a housewife. Their house sits on a large plot of land surrounded by woods on one side and a cornfield on the other. They have neighbors but only on one side and across the street. They also have many pets, two dogs, three cats, and some fish. Lucas is presently the only child but that will be changing in a few months, as his mother is pregnant and due at the end of July. He loves trains, animals, ice tea, and being inside and outside of his house. His favorite movie is the Polar Express. He does not like the word "No" and is having a tough time adjusting to his mom's attempts to add structure into their unstructured lives as her due date approaches. This nickname exemplifies his fun loving, goofy, energetic personality. Throughout this study, the observation of Lucas will take place at two places: his house, inside and out and the college.

Part II: Physical Development

Lucas developed normally through the prenatal, infancy, and toddler stages. He was born on March eighth in 2005 by cesarean section after a full term, normal pregnancy. At birth, he weighed eight pounds twelve ounces and measured twenty-one inches long, which according to the Center for Disease Control (2000), put him in the seventy-fifth percentile for weight and ninetieth percentile for length. As an infant Betsy, Lucas's mother, chose not to breast feed and instead gave him formula. As a toddler, Lucas hit all the important milestones, according to his mother, included learning to walk which occurred around fifteen months.

As Lucas progressed from a toddler to preschooler, he continued to progress as he should with only one minor lapse. When Lucas was three, he broke his first bone. He broke his right

arm during the spring while playing in the woods behind his house with his dogs. Having a cast on his arm only slowed him down and kept him out of the water, but other than that nothing changed. At four years, he is forty-two inches tall and weights around forty-six pounds, keeping him in the same percentiles as birth, again according to the CDC (2000). Most of this growth occurred, as it should, during the toddler years.

Even though Lucas just turned four he has hit many of the required gross and fine motor skills according Gober (2002), he can run, hop, jump, walk up and down stairs alone, dress and undress, use the bathroom on his own. I have witnessed Lucas running or jumping many times whether it be running to tackle someone when rough housing, jumping on the trampoline, or both when he is playing with his second cousin who is just a few months older. Going up and down the stairs also do not cause a problem because Lucas gets plenty of practice with his room being on the second floor and wanting to show every visitor his trains, which are kept in his room. Using the bathroom is a big accomplishment for him because it took him a long time to matter and has only mastered it within the last few months. However, he still needs practice skipping and being comfortable using scissors. Lucas is right where he should be with his physical development.

Part III: Cognitive Development

Similarly to Lucas's physical development his cognitive develop is also maturing at what theorist would say is a normal rate. Feldman (2007) writes that upon reaching the age of four a child should be rapidly expanding his vocabulary, beginning to think intuitively but still thinking almost entirely on himself. While observing Lucas throughout his life but more intentionally over the past few months I have seen each of these characteristics in one way or another.

He progressed through the building blocks of language beginning with babbling and moving through his first word around fifteen months and first sentence a little while later. While his mother does not know the exact time when he started babbling and spoke his first sentence, she does recall however never being concerned about the development. Yes, his first word may have came little past the time which many developmentalist call normal, Feldman, (2007) for example, explains that the first word tends to occur between ten and fourteen months, the extra month did not cause any long term affects. Currently, he is speaking in full sentences that vary in lengths and purposes. He enjoys watching television shows about super heroes and if given the chance, he will spend large amounts of time, sometimes up to twenty minutes, telling his listener all about them.

Lucas's cognitive development in the area of language has a lot to do with the fact he is inquisitive and seems to enjoy learning. According to Gober (2002) and his developmental checklist a four year old should be able to count and should be drawn to letters and sounds.

Lucas demonstrates a inclination to want to read and will often ask someone around him to read him his favorite book or play with the magnetic letters his mom bought him. Additionally, by playing games like Candy Land or Chutes and Ladders where he can count the required spaces indicating a beginning understanding of numbers. Another example of a time when I noticed Lucas genuinely wanting to learn and wanting things to be perfect, another of Gober (2002) characteristics, occurred as he was picking up game pieces after we finished playing. He spent a few seconds growing more and more frustrated as he angrily smashed the top and bottom boxes together. Eventually, he got the two pieces together but not before tearing the corners of them. However, when someone stepped in and showed him how to correctly put the two pieces together he welcomed the advice and was then able to properly close the box. After getting the

box together, he started to think of ways to fix the box. He suggested taping it, and was excited when that idea was welcomed and put to use. This not only demonstrated intuitive thought but helped Lucas feel intelligent and begin to learn that it is perfectly okay and acceptable to ask for help when needed.

Lucas is developing cognitively a little more everyday and seems to be on his way to accomplishing all the key milestones. His language skills are growing each day and he is learning to try new things on his own with the idea that he can always ask for help.

Part IV: Emotional/Social Development

As with physical and cognitive development, observers are able to see that Lucas is attaining the social developmental milestones as he progresses from the womb through the preschool age. While Betsey was pregnant with Lucas, she stayed away from drugs, alcohol, and other items that appear to increase the chances or cause social or personality problems developmentally. By doing this, the result was as expected; Lucas hit all the important points through in infancy and toddlerhood. For example, he was always able to show a wide range of emotions, classified as a key achievement by Feldman (2007). He was quick to show observers his happiness, sadness, confusion, or frightfulness. He also quickly established a secure attachment to his mother, another one of Feldman's milestones (2007). Lucas was child who needed and wanted to be with his mother and would cry or search for her as soon as she left his sight. By achieving both of these Lucas was able to understand that he could trust people, which allowed him to make the transition from toddlerhood to the pre-school period successfully.

As an energetic and, for the most part, easy going four year old, Lucas is accomplishing many of the expected landmarks yet needs more time to complete other. Using Gober's Developmental Checklist (2002), observers can watch Lucas feeling safe and comfortable in

areas other than those he is familiar too. Similarly, however, he can/will lose complete control of his temper and lash out violently to those around him. For instance, at a wedding Lucas quickly acclimated to the reception hall and wandered around making new friends who danced just as wildly as he did, and not caring where his family was or who was around him.

Additionally, making friends with people his age and leaving his parents side happily shows

Lucas is also accomplishing two other benchmarks written by Feldman. Other times, it is difficult for observers to understand why he is so angry. He will yell mean things at his mother, hit, or throw things at her saying he hopes she falls and gets hurt. The fact that he loses his temper and becomes mean may have to do with Lucas becoming frustrated and feeling he has no options but because he is acting violently this could develop into a big problem when he goes to school. However, it is likely that he will continue to improve upon this skill as he ages and adds more words to his vocabulary so he can better explain what is bothering him, before it causes massive problems for him in school.

Other noticeable developments for Lucas, according to Feldman, are his ability to play with others, cooperatively and the idea that he is beginning to get a sense of gender. He enjoys playing games with his cousin who is just a few months older and they will play with cars or whatever suits their mood that day. He will also play board games, such as <u>Candy Land</u> or <u>Chutes and Ladders</u>, with the understanding that it is not always possible to win. Presently, he is fascinated with Wonder Woman and when asked why he likes her so much his response was because she is a girl and has boobs, as reported by Betsey. He is getting to the point also, where he understands that there are boys clothes and girls clothes, last year for example he enjoyed trying on the clothes his cousin received for Christmas. Yet this year, when his family went shopping and glanced through the area with all the children's clothes he had no problem telling

everyone which ones were for boys and which ones where not. Over all, Lucas is where he needs to be given he still has two years left in the preschool stage to improve and grow socially and emotionally developmental wise.

Part V: Reflection

This experience has taught me a lot about how preschoolers act and why they do the things they do. I truly enjoyed watching Lucas in a different, more professional light during the past few months. I cannot say I am thrilled with how I did everything throughout the project but for the most part, I am happy. By observing Lucas for specific characteristics in the areas of physical, cognitive, and emotional growth I was able to bring the lectures and information from class to life and am thrilled to be able to say I am leaving this class with the understanding of how a preschool-aged child operates.

Because Lucas is my second cousin and I am very close to his mother, I have been around Lucas since his birth and been able to see him go through growth changes. However, I have also heard how other family members always talk about how horribly far behind he will be when he starts school. This project gave me the chance to see from a more professional, outside view where he was and contrary to popular belief he is not behind—he is just an overactive, happy go-lucky, preschooler.

While I am happy about learning the Lucas is on target with his developments, I wish I could have observed him at different times and places. For the most part, other than the day I observed him at a wedding, it was primarily in the afternoons between one and four o'clock.

Also, it would have been interesting to see how he reacted at different locations but that did not work like I had hoped it would have at the beginning, instead, I primarily just watched him

inside his house: inside because it always seemed to be either too cold or rainy when I would visit.

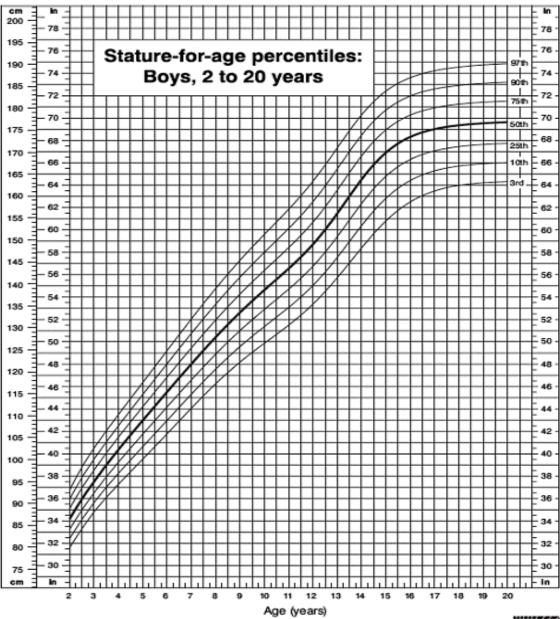
By completing this case study, I was able to accomplish a lot. I now have a much better idea of where a preschool-aged child is cognitively, emotionally, and physically and if that is the age I decide to work with I will be prepared between this class and the Introduction to Early Childhood class I took last year. If I happen to teach a different grade, as I expect and hope to, I have a very good idea of where the child has been and what he/she already went through, I really enjoyed being able to step out of my family role and see how Lucas is from a different, more professional standpoint.

Part VI: Supplemental Materials

These two growth charts illustrate where Lucas is physically and where he may go according to his percentile.



CDC Growth Charts: United States



Published May 30, 2000.
SOURCE: Developed by the National Center for Health Statistics in collaboration with the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (2000).





Candy Land is Lucas' favorite game. It is very important on a cognitive level because it helps Lucas in learning his colors and counting.



This photo was taken at a wedding where Lucas danced the night away with his new friend (background) and could not have cared less where is mother was. This is an example of where Lucas is socially.

References

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