

OBSERVATION PAPER ASSIGNMENT

PRINCIPLES OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT (85-221) SPRING 2001

OBSERVATION PAPER ASSIGNMENT

The goal of this paper assignment is to relate naturalistic observations of young children to the principles, frameworks, and research you are studying.

1. Select one of the following questions for your observation.

A) How effectively do younger and older toddlers communicate with each other and with adults (e.g., teachers, parents, etc)?

Preparatory Reading: Cole & Cole Ch. 8

Observe the communication with peers and adults at the Cyert Center for Early Education. Compare and contrast the younger toddlers (17 -26 months) with the older toddlers (26 -38 months) with respect to the following features: comprehension vs production abilities, vocalizations, gestures, and other means of communicating needs, wants, and ideas. Record the words and phrases of any children that are already talking. Note any gender and/or culture differences that are evident, Are there any striking individual differences? What strategies do the teachers use to facilitate language development? How does the environment (e.g., room arrangement, materials) support language development?

B) How advanced is the physical development of preschoolers and kindergartners?

Preparatory Reading: Cole and Cole p.220 - 223; 472 - 473

Observe the physical development and motor skills of preschoolers and kindergartners on the playground at the **Children's School**. Compare and contrast the preschoolers and kindergartners with respect to the following features: stature, body proportions, activity levels, large motor skills (e.g., running, jumping, climbing, throwing, balancing, etc) , fine motor skills (e.g., fastening clothes, playing in the sand, picking up small objects, etc.), endurance, coordination, etc. Note any gender and/or culture differences. What strategies do the teachers use to facilitate physical development? How does the environment (e.g., playground arrangement, equipment) support physical development?

C) How advanced is the physical development of younger and older infants?

Preparatory Reading: Cole and Cole p. 181 - 187

Observe the physical development and motor skills of younger and older infants at the **Cyert Center for Early Education**. Compare and contrast the younger and older infants with respect to the following features: stature, body proportions, activity levels, large motor skills (e.g., creeping, crawling, standing, walking, balancing, etc) , fine motor skills (e.g., picking up small objects, manipulating small objects, feeding self, etc.), endurance, coordination, etc. Note any gender and/or culture differences. What strategies do the educators use to facilitate physical development? How does the environment (e.g., room arrangement, equipment and materials) support physical development?

D) How advanced is the language development of preschoolers and kindergartners?

Preparatory Reading: Cole and Cole p. Ch. 8

Observe the language development of the preschoolers and kindergartners during lunch time at the Children's School or free play at the Cyert Center for Early Education. Compare and contrast the preschoolers and kindergartners with respect to the following features: comprehension vs. production abilities, phonology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics, and use of gestures to augment speech. Note any gender and/or culture differences that are evident. If there are bilingual children present, note the effectiveness of their communication compared to the other children. Are there any striking individual differences? What strategies do the educators use to facilitate language development? How does the environment (e.g., room arrangement, materials) support languagedevelopment?

E) How does gender affect the social interactions of preschoolers and kindergartners?

Preparatory Reading: p. 376 - 389

Observe the social interactions of the preschoolers and kindergartners during free play at either the Children's School or the Cyert Center for Early Education. Compare and contrast the girls and the boys with respect to the following features: social approaches, social behaviors, gender composition of play groups, enforcement of gender roles by peers, cross-gender behavior, sex segregation, differences in play types depending on the gender mix of the play group, etc. Note any culture differences that are evident. Are there any striking individual differences? What strategies do the educators use to encourage or discourage sex-typed behavior? How does the environment (e.g., room arrangement, materials)

affect gender development?

****If you would like to study a question of your own design, you need permission from Dr. Fay in writing (e-mail is fine).**

2). Go to the Children's School Entry Door by the Reese Cluster in Margaret Morrison to schedule two 30 minute observations on the sheets posted there. Only one person per time slot. (**For infant observations there can be two people per time slot) The schedule is given at the end of this handout. Reservations must be made by Sunday for the upcoming week.

3) Learn about your observation site via the web: [The Children's School](#) , [The Cyert Center](#). Also, do the recommended preparatory reading before you come to the observation session. Finally, to get the most out of your observations, prepare a checklist or observation form including items listed in the observation section under your chosen question. However, since the unexpected is to be expected when observing children, you should also be prepared to note interesting behaviors that are not specifically listed.

4) Report to the observation site about 5 minutes before your scheduled observation time. Use the intercom to ring for entry. Go to the main office to **sign in and get a name tag**. At the Children's School Rachel Fairweather, the office assistant, will escort you into the school to conduct your observation. At the Cyert Center, Judy Abrams will escort you into the school to conduct your observation. If you need to cancel a session, please call the Children's School (8-2199) so that another student can use that time slot.

5) Conduct at least two 30 minute observation sessions relevant to your question -- one session for each age group. You may use a tape recorder if you like. If you use a tape recorder, you will need to transcribe observations. Submit notes and a diagram of the space (NO need to type!) with your final paper.

Guidelines for Observations

Watch from a distance, preferably in a sitting position. Do not join the group circle or interfere with children's activities.

Cooperate with the teachers and refrain from talking.

If a child approaches you for help (e.g., tying a shoe) or conversation keep the interaction as brief as politely as possible.

6) Answer your questions in [Research Paper Format](#). Be sure to include each of the following components.

- a. Title Page. Includes your name, the title of your paper, the course number and the date.
- b. Introduction. State the question being addressed and relate it to previous research or theory (10 points)
- c. Method. Briefly describe the participants (age, gender, school, etc), and the procedure (site characteristics, day, date, activity and time of observation, how you collected the observations, etc.) . (10 points)
- d. Results. Summarize your observations, making sure to cover all the observation guidelines listed in the paragraph beneath the question you chose. No real names please! (15 points)
- e. Conclusions. Relate your observations to specific concepts, research findings, and theories discussed in class or in the text, and draw conclusions about the meaning of what you observed. (10 points)

Cite at least three studies/theories to support your opinions or provide background research. (with names of the researchers/theories.)

Your paper should be 3-4 double-spaced, typed pages, written clearly and concisely in an organized format, without spelling or grammatical errors (5 points). Please attach your observation notes to your paper. (3 points). All papers are **due on March 22nd by the beginning of class.**