

LAB EXERCISE #1

NATURALISTIC OBSERVATION

The purpose of this activity is to introduce you to the skill of naturalistic observation. A second purpose is to familiarize you with the center where you will be observing during the semester. In this activity you will be observing the behavior of children at the center as well as center staff. You are to record only what you see. At the end of the observation, you are to write up your observations as well as answer the questions at the end of this explanation. Bring these observations to class next Monday. We will practice making interpretations of the behavior at that point. For this first lab, you will not be making interpretations on the lab report.

Before you can begin to do some naturalistic observations, you need to orient yourself (and me) to the center.

1. Sketch the center, both indoor and outdoor. Include furniture, play spaces, equipment, etc. (This is not a detailed description. A detailed description will occur in Lab 2. Rather this sketch is a brief overview of the center.) You should make several photocopies of your layout sketch as you will use them in future lab experiences.
2. Describe the Center staff. How many staff, gender, approximate age, names, etc.
3. Describe the children at the Center. How many, gender, ages?

OBSERVATION:

1. Choose one male child to watch. Watch for 3 minutes. Then take a minute to think about what you have seen. Take a couple of minutes to write down what you see. (You will need to sharpen your powers of memory as well as observation).
2. Choose one female child to watch. Follow the schedule in #1.
3. Choose one staff member to watch. Follow the schedule in #1.
4. Repeat 1-3.
5. Next try watching one particular place in the room. (e.g. play house, table). Watch for 5 minutes. Record what happens at that one place.

PART B QUESTIONS LAB EXERCISE #1

(These are to be answered, typed, and turned in by next Monday).

1. Discuss the observation process. What did you find easy? Difficult?
2. Summarize what you observed. Did anything surprise you?
3. Describe the Center, the staff and the children.