

LAB EXERCISE #2 ADULTS AND REINFORCEMENT

In this lab activity, you will be doing two things. The first involves analyzing the physical layout of the center. This is to allow you to familiarize yourself with the center, its rules and regulations, its schedules and its personnel. The second part of this activity allows you to become familiar with the personnel and their philosophies about childcare. You will also be observing the adult/child interactions. You should already have some ideas about this from your observations in Lab #1. This week, however, we will examine these issues in more depth. This in-depth observation will facilitate later lab exercises.

The preschool environment is composed of the materials and furniture and the people. The physical environment is an important one both in terms of safety and in terms of how easily the environment can foster development. A stimulating environment will encourage exploration which helps a child to develop. A poorly designed environment will do the opposite. Safety is also a major consideration.

The adults are the other essential component of the equation. Good childcare workers are critical if children are to thrive and grow in a daycare environment. Some workers know more about child development than others. Some are better interactors than others. How the staff interacts with the children is a major issue. What is the tone of voice? What do their nonverbal movements say? Are they consistent with the verbal messages given? What type of reinforcement does the staff use? Are they constantly saying no? You will be doing a quick global assessment of these issues. However, throughout the semester you should also be watching these interactions so that you can include your analysis in the final lab report.

In Part One you are to draw a diagram of the center. You will do at least two drawings. One is of the inside and one of the outside. The drawing does not have to be exactly to scale. It should be somewhat to scale, however. Include all equipment including any floor coverings and partitions. Also describe the colors of the center and the wall décor. Finally include a list of the materials available. To do this well you may need to do more than 2 drawings.

In Part Two you will do two things. In the first, you will describe the center staff and their philosophies of childcare. To obtain this you will look at center brochure and written information available to parents and prospective clients. You will also ask the staff a couple of questions. The second task here is to observe one or two of the staff in typical interactions with the children. You will describe the situation and what the staff says and does. Remember that nonverbal communication can be as important as verbal. What does the staff member's body language say? Be cautious about setting down your observation notebook once you have made these observations.

Part One

Do a series of drawings that diagram the center and its physical setup. Include inside and outside areas. Include wall décor and colors. Include a list of materials available. The drawings do not have to be to scale but there should be some semblance of size relevance.

Part Two

- A. Read the center literature that is available and describes the center staff and philosophy. Ask a staff member (when they are not occupied with a child) about their training if it not in the literature. If it is listed, then you can skip these questions. Ask the staff what their philosophy of childcare is.

- B. In this part, observe the staff throughout your time at the center. Describe (verbatim if you can) their interactions with various children. List the situation, the child, child's age, and what the worker says and does. Note nonverbal behavior. You should have at least 3 interactions noted.

LAB REPORT QUESTIONS PART B

1. What are the best features of the Center? What would you change?
2. How would you design an ideal center if you had unlimited funds?
3. Who are the staff at this center? What is the general philosophy? Do their actions
What would you recommend that the legislature require for childcare workers to be certified?
4. What type of reinforcement is used at the center? (positive, negative, punishment)
Referring to the chapter on behavioral theories, speculate on the impact of these types of reinforcement.