**Field Observation of a Child**

This project requires you to do a one-hour observation of a child (ages 5-12) in a natural setting, and then write a 2-3-page report about your observations.

You should be as unobtrusive as possible and use a notebook to write down the activities, behaviors, and interactions that you are observing during that time.

HOW TO PROCEED

IDENTIFY A SUBJECT. If you have friends or relatives who have children whom you could observe, contact them. When setting a time to observe, keep in mind that you want the child to be awake, alert, and active. If you have children of your own you may use them as subjects, but keep in mind that this will only be effective if you can separate your observation from your normal mode of watching.

Observe and record the behaviors and interactions of the individuals you see.

OBTAIN PERMISSION to observe a child from both the main care-giver and the child (if age-appropriate). Explain that the observation is a class assignment for child development, and the purpose is to acquaint you with the types of activities and interactions that children that age engage in, and to bring alive some of the material you have been studying.

ASSURE CONFIDENTIALITY. Explain that nobody will be identified by name or identifiable characteristics in your report.

PREPARATION. Before observing the child, review the assigned reading that describes the expected behaviors of a child the age of your subject. Focus on: language, cognition, social interaction, motor abilities, socialization, emotional development and gender roles. Your note taking will be much more productive if you have prepared.

OBSERVE and RECORD.

Give the child a pseudonym to preserve confidentiality. Note the following: date, time, setting, age, gender, distinguishing characteristics (dress, appearance, etc.).

Take notes on:

* the activities the child engages in, the objects used (and how)
* the quality and quantity of social interactions (Does the child initiate? Is the child seeking attention? If so, positive or negative? Is the child seeking play? Comfort? Assistance?)
* How about the interactions with other children? Is the child playing?
* Take notes on the content of language, motor development and coordination
* Write down, verbatim, some of the language interactions or vocalizations.

WRITING THE REPORT. Read your notes carefully and think about how to organize the information for your report.

Organize the top of your report as follows:

* Subject:
* Pseudonym
* Date:
* Age:
* Time:
* Gender:
* Setting:

In a brief paragraph, describe the general setting, the child’s presentation, the other people in the setting, etc. The major body of your paper will report your observations and interpretation of development you see taking place. Whenever possible, you should relate observations to what you have learned through module readings.

Do not simply describe or list what you observed. **Interpret or explain** what your observations illustrate about the child’s stage of development. This is the most important part of this assignment.

If you wish, you may end the report with a personal reaction to the experience.