**Observation Exercise**

**Infant (0-12 months)**

Spend 20 minutes observing an infant with one of his/her primary caregivers

Pay attention to:

1. Tone of parent and infant
2. Parent’s physical handling of infant
3. How well does she or he know the baby?
4. Parent’s responsiveness to the baby: ability to see baby’s needs, read his signal and cues, take his perspective,etc.
5. Play: If there is play between the parent and infant, what is the content and process of the play? What do they do together, and how do they keep the play going?
6. Depending on the age of the infant, how intently does the infant practice physical skills such as crawling, pulling up, and cruising by holding on to furniture?
7. What emotions and attitudes does the baby show as she practices physical skills? Descriptive terms might include exuberant, pleased with herself, determined, excited, reckless, self-contained, calm, irritable, easily frustrated, etc.
8. Observe how the infant responds to frustration. For example, how does she react when she falls repeatedly? Does she become disorganized? Does she remain task-focused? Does she turn to a caregiver for emotional support?
9. What questions arise as you observe? Please list at least 3 questions.

**Toddler (1-3 years of age)**

Spend 1 hour observing toddlers and parents in a public place. A park or playground would be best, though a shopping mall or fast-food restaurant would be interesting as well. Observe the following:

1. If the toddler is in a place where she can play freely, note the balance she establishes between exploration and attachment. Do you see the toddler “checking in” with the parent, either visually or verbally, while she plays? How far does she move away from the parent? What does the parent do to stay in touch with the exploring toddler? What is the toddler’s activity level? What evidence do you see that supports the idea that toddlers are intensely interested in learning about their immediate world?
2. What examples do you see where the toddler takes the initiative or insists on doing things his own way? How do toddler and parent react when the toddler’s assertion of will runs contrary to the parent’s wishes or intentions? How do the parent and toddler negotiate conflicts over safety?
3. What questions arise as you observe? List at least 3 quesitons.

**Interview Exercise**

Spend 30-60 minutes interviewing the parent(s) of an older toddler (between 2 and 3 years of age). Ask the parents to reflect on the differences between their child as an infant and toddler.

1. In general, how is she different at age 2, compared with age 6-9 months?
2. How has your relationship with her changed during the past 1-1½ years?
3. What do you recall about her during the 3-4 months immediately after she learned to walk?
4. How has her ability to communicate changed? How has her new ability to understand and use words changed your relationship?
5. Do you find it easier or harder (or perhaps some of each) to parent a toddler, compared to an infant?

**Preschool (3-6 years of age)**

Spend one hour observing a group of preschoolers, if possible. If not, observe any preschooler you can find! Look for:

1. Play. What are the themes and plots of play? What roles do children choose or assign one another? Is the play gender-segregated or not? How do children deal with disruptions of the play scenario caused by conflicts over whose fantasy will prevail? What reflections of the mass media do you see in the play?
2. Peer relationships. Can you discern elements of friendship in the way they relate to one another? How do they resolve conflicts that arise? To what extent are other children allowed to enter or excluded from the play activity?
3. Relationships with adults. How much do children interact with adults? Do you see different styles of relation – friendly interaction, clinging, or withdrawal?
4. Self control. Observe for potentially stressful situations – separation from parents, conflict with another child, having to wait to get an adult’s attention and the like. What strategies for self-regulation do you observe? Do you see instances of aggression? What seems to have precipitated aggressive behavior? Do you see instances of prosocial behavior?
5. What questions arise as you observe? List at least 3 questions.

**Middle Childhood (6 to 11 or 12 years of age)**

Spend one hour observing a group of elementary-school children, or again if you can’t find a group, any child in this age group.

1. What do they play? How do they interact? What are their attentional capacities? Social abilities? Physical abilities? Do you see any controversies over rules or “correct” behavior? How do they negotiate controversies? How do they control their impulses?
2. List any questions that arise while observing. Please list at least 3 questions.