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THE OBSERVER'S HANDBOOK

Man: A Course of Study

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OBSERVING CONFLICT

If you were studying physics, you would have batteries and pulleys in your classroom. If you were studying chemistry, you would have chemicals and test tubes. If you were studying biology, you would have small animals to watch. But in this course you are studying about man, so you observe human beings.

Human beings are around you all the time. But because you are one yourself, it is difficult to stand back and observe the way human beings act.

In this project you will observe the behavior of young children without taking part in what they are doing. You will be watching for conflict among young children — how fights start, how they end and how they are avoided.

A. OBSERVING IN A KINDERGARTEN

Observe children in a kindergarten for 30 minutes.

Watch a small group of children. (Do not let them know you are watching them.)

Every time a fight occurs (either an “action” fight or a “word” fight), record what happens.

Use the Data on Conflict sheets to record your observations. (There is a sample on the next page.)

When you have finished, look over your notes. Do you have a good record? Are there ways to take your notes faster or make them more accurate?

Some time later, observe kindergarten children again for 30 minutes.

DATA ON CONFLICT					
DATE _____ PLACE _____					
NUMBER OF BOYS, NUMBER OF GIRLS	HOW FIGHT STARTED: ACTION(A) WORDS(W)	FIRST THING SAID OR DONE	ACTION THAT TOOK PLACE	LAST THING SAID OR DONE	HOW FIGHT ENDED: ACTION(A) WORDS(W)
2G	A	"That's my place"	Deborah pushed Karen away from table	"I'll tell on you"	W
SAMPLE Ask your teacher for several.					

B. HOW FIGHTS START

Collect your data sheets and think about the notes in the “First Thing Said or Done” column. Put an × next to similar ones and find a name for this general topic children fight about.

Put a ✓ next to other similar notes and find a name for that group, too. Make a chart like the one below to group your “first things said or done” into general topics children fight about.

Underline the topics other animal species might fight over, too. In the margin, give an example of a species that might. Circle any general topics animals would never fight about.

EXAMPLES	GENERAL TOPICS CHILDREN FIGHT ABOUT
"It's mine"	POSSESSIONS
"Give me back my paste"	
John grabs Sam's scissors	
"You're a pig"	INSULTS
"John is a crybaby"	

C. PREDICTING THE START OF A FIGHT

1. When you watched kindergarten children, how could you tell that a fight was going to start? On a sheet of paper list as many clues (both words and actions) as you can.
2. If you were watching another animal species, what actions would give you a clue that a fight was going to start? List the clues under the name of the species you observe.

D. HOW FIGHTS END

Look at the “Last Thing Said or Done” column on your data sheets. Put an × next to ones that are alike and find a name for this general way of ending fights. Make a chart like the one below and write in examples for each group.

Circle any ways children ended fights that other animal species would never use.

EXAMPLES	GENERAL WAYS OF ENDING FIGHTS
"I didn't mean it"	RETREAT
"O.K., you can have it"	
Jane walked away	

E. PREDICTING THE END OF A FIGHT

1. How can you tell that a fight among kindergarten children is about to end? What clues (words and actions) help you?
2. What clues would you use to predict how a fight among _____ would end? (Choose any animal you want and list the clues.)

F. CHALLENGES

The things people do that start fights are called challenges. When a person pushes in front of another, he is challenging the other's place **on purpose**.

Observe children in your neighborhood or schoolyard. Look for challenges **on purpose** that *do not* result in fights. Use a chart like the one below to record your data.

CHALLENGE	WHAT DID EACH CHILD DO TO AVOID THE FIGHT?

Observe again, this time looking for **accidental** challenges. Are these accidents ever mistaken for deliberate challenges? Use a chart like this to record your data.

ACCIDENTAL CHALLENGE	HOW COULD YOU TELL IT WAS AN ACCIDENT?	DID A FIGHT FOLLOW?	WHAT DID THE CHILD DO WHEN HE WAS ACCIDENTALLY CHALLENGED?

List some ways that accidental challenges are prevented from becoming fights.

G. PREVENTING FIGHTS

Use your reading and observation to fill a chart like this:

ANIMAL SPECIES	WAYS MEMBERS OF THE SPECIES AVOID FIGHTS
HERRING GULL	
BABOONS (FILL IN AFTER YOU HAVE STUDIED THEM)	
(ANOTHER SPECIES YOU HAVE READ ABOUT)	

1. What is similar about the ways animals and children avoid fights?
2. What is different about the ways animals and children avoid fights?
3. Which are more successful in avoiding fights — animals or children? Why?

H. GROUP MEETING AND REPORT

Meet with classmates who observed fights in a kindergarten. Discuss the following questions, giving examples from your observations. Have four different people report to the class on the four questions. (Be sure to include in each report the important ideas of all the observers.)

1. Which of the fights observed could have been avoided?
How?
2. Is it possible to avoid fighting completely?
Why or why not?
3. What are some of the things you cannot learn about fights from watching? What kinds of questions would you ask if you could interview kindergarten children about their fights?
4. What differences have you noticed between children's fights and adults' fights? Think about how adults fight, as well as what they fight over.

OBSERVING PLAY

What is play?

Is it important to animals?

Is it important to human beings?

This project is about play.

A. DO ANIMALS PLAY?

Make two or three 10-minute observations of different animal species:

- One of an animal alone
- One or two of a group of animals

Suggestions:

- Pets
- Classroom animals
- Wild animals
- Farm animals
- Zoo animals
- Nonhuman primates (For this, you may use film. "The Older Infant" is good for baboons.)

Use as many data sheets as you need to record your observations. There is a sample on the next page. Describe any behavior you think might be play. Use a new sheet for each species.

Then use the data you collected to answer these questions on another sheet of paper:

1. Did you see any actions you thought were play? If so, list the clues that suggested they were play.
2. Did you see any playing that might be helpful to the animal — maybe later in its life?

DATA ON PLAY				
SPECIES _____ DATE _____ PLACE _____				
NUMBER OF MALES NUMBER OF FEMALES	ACTIONS OBSERVED	COMMUNICATION	THINGS PLAYED WITH	ANYTHING ELSE IMPORTANT

SAMPLE
Ask your teacher for several.

B. CHILDREN'S PLAY

Observe young children for at least 30 minutes in a kindergarten, nursery school, playground or anywhere children usually play.

Watch a child alone, for 5 or 10 minutes.

Watch one or two groups of children.

Again, use data sheets to record your field notes. Write down *only* behavior or communication you think is connected with play. Use as many sheets as you need.

Use the information on your data sheets to answer these questions:

1. What are some of the reasons for calling a behavior play?
2. Describe any playing you saw that might be practice for adult behavior.
3. What differences did you observe between the play of boys and the play of girls?
4. How did the children feel when they were playing? (For evidence, write down their words and actions.)
5. Suppose a child dug a hole. When would it be play and when would it be work?
6. What is the difference between play and work?

C. OBSERVING WITH A PARTNER

Again watch children playing for 30 minutes, but this time do it with a partner. Watch the same child or children so that both of you will have data on the same situations, but do not compare your data while you are observing.

Watch a child alone.

Watch several groups of children.

When you both have finished recording your observations on data sheets, compare what you have written down.

How are your observations different?

Why are they different?

D. LANGUAGE AND PLAY AND THOUGHT

Answer these questions with your partner, using the information you both collected.

1. Why do children sometimes talk when they are playing alone?
2. List examples of children's play that would be impossible without language.
3. Did the players ever pretend that some object was not what it looked like to you? (For example, a rug being called a boat.) If so, give examples.
4. Did the players ever pretend that they were different from the way they appeared to you? (For example, a child barked like a dog or marched as if he were a soldier.)
5. Do you ever play just in your thoughts? Write an explanation for your answer.

E. CHILDREN'S PLAY AND PLAY IN OTHER ANIMAL SPECIES

1. Look back through all your data sheets. What actions did you record for animals that you did not record for children?
Do children ever act in any of these ways?
2. How are the things children play with different from the things animals play with?
Do they play with things differently? How?

OTHER PROJECTS ON PLAY

If you would like to continue to observe play, make up your own questions and choose your own places to observe.

Observe people around you:

Babies
Classmates
Teenagers
Adults
Strangers

Or use other sources:

Movies
Television

Types of questions:

How do children learn to play?
Do people play differently at different ages?
What is the difference between games and free play?
What is a spoilsport?
Do children with no brothers or sisters play differently from those with big families?
If a person is not having fun, can he still be playing?

Or use questions of your own.

TEACHING- LEARNING

A Netsilik learns to act and think like a Netsilik, a Japanese like a Japanese and you like an American. How does this happen?

Choose some activities from pages 16 to 24 and do them alone or with a partner. Record your results on separate sheets of paper.

EXPLAIN OR SHOW

Call a friend on the telephone and try to teach him how to make or do something with his hands (make a model, a string figure or an origami figure; spin a top; tie a knot). Then teach the same thing to someone in the same room with you, but tape your mouth shut so you can't talk to him.

Try again with another person, but this time neither of you can talk or look at each other.

Over the telephone, teach someone how to get somewhere in your town. Teach someone in the same room with you how to get to the same place, but do it without speaking or writing.

What things are easy to teach on the telephone?

What things are easier to teach by showing?

Try them.

SOUNDS OR PICTURES

Find a television commercial that would work just as well on the radio.

Find another television commercial that is just as effective when you turn off the sound.

WORDS OR PICTURES

Find a picture article that would tell the same story without the pictures.

Find a picture article that would tell the same story without the words.

DIAGRAMS

Draw a diagram or series of diagrams to teach a friend how to make something. Then see if it works.

PERSON TO PERSON

Draw a diagram and show it to a friend. Later, ask your friend to draw what he remembers of your diagram. Ask him to show his drawing to someone else, who later draws what he can remember. The third person should show it to a fourth person, who draws what he can remember. Gather up all the diagrams and compare them.

What things changed?

What things stayed the same?

Tell a friend a story or a joke. Have him wait a while, and then tell it to someone else, who tells it to someone else, who tells it to someone else, who tells it to you.

What happened?

How?

Why?

BLINDFOLDS

Blindfold yourself and ask a friend to help you learn to go to another room, get a book and return and sit down. Practice until you can do it without bumping into things or falling. Now see if your friend can tell you how to go and get a different object in another room. Try to get it.

While you are still blindfolded, ask your friend to hand you some familiar objects. Try to identify them.

What new things have you learned about the objects?

Try to do some of these things with a blindfold on.

- Dress yourself.

- Telephone a friend.

- Make up a game and play with friends who are also blindfolded.

- Eat a meal (if your mother doesn't mind).

- Identify a flower.

- Learn a new song.

- Identify people around you.

- Write a letter.

- Identify someone who is not talking.

LEARNING FROM PEOPLE

Make a chart like the one below and fill in the information. Then cut apart the second and third columns and ask a friend to guess which people and what ways of teaching went with each thing you have learned to do.

THINGS I CAN DO	PERSON WHO TAUGHT ME (MOTHER, FRIEND, TEACHER, OTHERS)	HOW THEY TAUGHT ME

TIME AND PLACE

Interview one of your parents or grandparents. Ask him:

Are people teaching me anything you were not taught?

Were you taught anything I am not being taught?

What are the differences between the way you were taught and the way I am being taught?

OR

Interview someone who has moved to the United States from another country or is visiting here.

Ask him the same questions.

BABIES AND MOTHERS

Watch a baby with his mother. On a chart like the one below record the things the mother does or says that might teach the baby something. Later, write down what he might be learning from her.

MOTHER'S ACTIONS	MOTHER'S WORDS	WHAT THE BABY MIGHT BE LEARNING (DO LATER)

LEARNING ALONE

Watch a baby playing by himself. Record things he has learned to do that you think no one has intentionally taught him.

Ask several mothers if their children did the things on your list. Did they do them without being taught?

Or, compare your list with the lists made by classmates.

Or, look in books for pictures of babies in other parts of the world doing the same things.

What things have you learned to do that no one taught you?

ATTITUDES

Make a chart like this. Try cutting apart the columns and rematching them. Why do you think the new combinations are so unusual?

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT	HOW DID YOU BEGIN TO FEEL THAT WAY?	WHAT WOULD CHANGE YOUR FEELING?
DOGS?		
CABBAGE?		
BABIES?		
RUSSIA?		
GUNS?		
BOYS?		
CIGARETTES?		
OLD PEOPLE?		
STEALING?		
MONEY?		
GIRLS?		
TELEVISION?		
DANCING?		
ITIMANGNARK?		
BASEBALL?		
URGES?		
BEING ALONE?		
YOUR HAIR?		

DO WE LEARN FROM TV?

What is the difference between heroes and bad guys on television? Watch a cartoon program and fill in the differences you observed:

Heroes are _____

Bad guys are _____

Watch a western or spy program and then fill in the differences you observed:

Heroes are _____

Bad guys are _____

Watch any program about a family with several children:

Good children are _____

Naughty or bad children are _____

From these and other programs like them, what do we learn about the American “ideal hero” or good person?

Find a program that you and a friend agree taught you nothing at all.

ADD AN ACTIVITY

Invent another activity to investigate teaching or learning. The activity may be about *how* we teach or learn or *what* we teach or learn.

Suggestions:

Learn something by observing, practicing or trial and error.

Teach your teacher something important.

Learn from an unusual source: a novel, a popular record, a comic book, a cereal box, the parent of a friend, your teenage sister.

Learn with a handicap: ear plugs, heavy mittens.

Teach someone else by drawing a cartoon or acting.

Observe students in a classroom.

Interview a teacher in another classroom about how she learned to teach.

SCHOOLS

What should schools be like to teach you things you will need and want to know ten years from now?

Choose groups of questions that interest you from pages 25 to 27 and discuss them with one or two partners. Record your decisions.

Then do the class project on page 28.

SUBJECTS

What school subjects should students learn only if they want? Why?

What subjects should students learn individually instead of in groups? Why is this better?

TEACHERS

Are there subjects that young people could teach just as well as adults? Which ones? Why?

Could some subjects be learned better outside of school? Which ones?

Would you need anyone to help you learn? If so, who?

STUDENTS

What kinds of students would you like to add to your student body? How would this help you?

Should boys and girls learn together or in separate groups? Why?

What specialists would you want on your teaching staff? Why?

RULES

Should there be any rules in the school?

If so, who should decide what rules there should be?

Who sees that the rules are obeyed?

What rules do you think are necessary?

Who should decide what students wear to school?

Who should decide how students wear their hair?

Are punishments ever necessary?

If so, what kind would you recommend?

SCHEDULES AND CLASSROOMS

Could each student decide his own school learning schedule?
How would you prevent the schedule of one student in the school from interfering with the schedule of another?
(Think of equipment, space, noise, communication.)

Draw a room or rooms for a class.
Include space for group work and for individual work.
If students should be given some private space include it.
Include furniture and equipment.

PLAN A DAY

Plan with your classmates a full day of school for your class. In this day, you should learn the things you feel are most valuable. You will have to decide the following things:

- What subjects will be studied

- What will be covered in each subject

- The schedule for the day

- Who, if anyone, will teach each subject:

 - teacher

 - students

 - guest

 - principal

- What materials will be needed

- What choices students will have

- What, if any, homework should be assigned

- What rules should be followed and who should enforce them

- (Be sure that your plans do not interfere with any other classes in the school.)

OTHER OBSERVATIONS

You can study many topics by observing how animals or human beings act. If you would like to make more observations, you could make up a project of your own. Or, you could follow one of these suggestions:

Work:

- How can you tell whether someone is working?
- Is human work like the behavior of any other animals?
How?
- Is work ever fun?
- What differences can you see between men's work and women's work?

Cooperation:

- Watch a child and list the names of all the people he cooperates with. How does he feel toward these people?
- Watch for cooperation among adults.
- Do other animals cooperate?
- Why do people cooperate? Are there times when people *must* cooperate?

Anger:

- Observe children to find out what makes them angry and how they show their anger.
- Keep a record of the things that make you angry.
- How can you tell when the members of different species are angry?
- Do adults express their anger differently from the way children do? How?

Greeting Behavior:

How do two members of a species meet?

Do boys and girls greet each other differently?

How do adults greet members of their families? Do they greet friends the same way? Strangers?

Do your grandparents greet people the same way your parents do?