Informal Behavior Observation Exercise

Part I: The Observation

1. Pair up with a classmate (or two) and observe some children for half an hour or so at the Emery building daycare center. This is a preliminary, informal observation period, so don’t worry about being quantitative and systematic. Be prepared to turn in your notes, but don’t bother to clean them up.

Directions: Enter the Emery building by the front door, go downstairs, and turn right. You will see observation booths on both sides of the hall. We want to observe them during free-play, ideally.

Spring 2013 schedule:

**Room 136**
- AM MWF Preschool (younger children) 9:20-10
- PM (Kindergarten) 2:20-3:15

**Room 156**
- AM MWF Preschool age 9:40-10:30
- PM Preschool age (4-5) 1:05-1:40

2. Compare notes. Did you observe the same children? Describe the same activities? Agree about what happened? Did you observe in the same way (focus on one child, or scan the room)? What kinds of activities drew your attention? What, if anything, might you have missed? Write down a paragraph loosely guided by these questions, and send to me via email.

Part II: Designing our study

1. Think of two or three hypotheses that you want to test in our more formal observation exercise (we will pool our ideas). You can draw these from your knowledge of the literature as well as from what you see. Previous classes have looked at gender differences, always a fertile area for exploration, but you can ask other questions as well.

2. What are the variables in your hypotheses?

3. Think about how to operationalize those variables. If the hypothesis is that males are more aggressive than females, exactly what behavior indicates aggression? Are females more “social”? (with whom? is this one variable or several? What do you record?) You will be observing children one at a time, for a 10-minute period.

4. Write up the hypotheses, variables, and ways to operationalize them and either email to me or bring to class.