

Week 3: Class List Logs & Descriptions

I. Highlights

- A. The class list log gives you a quick, efficient way to capture a little information on every child in the room. It only works on specific observable behaviors and does not capture the little details and nuances you get through other methods.
- B. Absolute objectivity is impossible, but we can try to get as close to it as possible. Self-reflection helps us become aware of our own biases so we can learn to be more neutral.
- C. Physical descriptions should include only what you can see, not emotions or personality. Be detailed enough that an outside person could create a mental picture based on your description.

II. Homework

- A. Go back and answer any questions classmates leave you in their replies to your online posts. (It's courteous & professional to follow up. Your answers can be short.)
- B. There's no class next week because Leslie will be in Sacramento, but our assignments are still due. Watch email for messages about what to do to prepare for our next class (two weeks from tonight).
- C. Due Wednesday 9/17 at 3 pm: At least 3 replies on the discussion forum
- D. Due Wednesday 9/17 at 3 pm: Two quizzes in ANGEL
- E. Due Saturday 9/20 at 3 pm: In the Dropbox in ANGEL, tell her the name, age (in years and months) and school of the child you're using for your case study. No paragraph needed, just those three pieces of information.
- F. Due Saturday 9/20 at 3 pm: Class List Log assignment. Turn in through Dropbox in ANGEL. The form to use is under Forms in ANGEL.

- G. Due Thursday 9/25 in class: (our next class meeting) Bring a printed copy of a physical description of your case study child. (See the last page of these notes for more details on what to include.)
- H. Optional CDTC (Child Development Training Consortium) forms are due to Leslie by October 6th even though you did the online portion too. She needs the physical signature on the paper. Bring them to class or mail them to her office. This isn't homework for class, but it is free money if you're working in a licensed program, so turn take advantage of it!

III. Assignment Notes & ANGEL Changes

- A. Added "Dropboxes" to turn in some assignments online. Two assignments that are due next Saturday, September 20th, are there.
- B. Added a "Forms" folder with forms we can use for various observations.
1. Some methods of observation need a form or template to start with, so you'll find those here.
 2. These are a starting point. Leslie said you can add/embellish/change it to make it more meaningful or useful to you. It doesn't have to look exactly like her form.
 3. The Class List Log assignment's form is there. More will come later.
- C. If you need to observe at the WVC Child Development Center on campus, sign up for an appointment in the binder in the office. There's a new electronic gate so someone will have to buzz you in. If there's no one in the yard, call the director, Shelley Gonzales, at (408) 741-2153 and she'll send someone to let you in. A buzzer/doorbell is coming, but it hasn't been installed yet.

IV. Nilsen Chapter 1: The Class List Log

- A. A reflective journal can be very helpful, but isn't assigned for this class. It gives you a place to express your personal opinions/feelings/assumptions.
- B. It's important to separate our own personal feelings from the facts we are objectively observing.
- C. Figure 1-1 is an example of a class list log.
 - 1. All examples in this book are *examples*, not the only way to format things. It's fine to make your own in a way that works for you.
 - 2. It says to alphabetize the names of the children so it's easier to find the names. This is helpful in your own classroom, but it's not necessary in this assignment.
- D. You can use a class list log for any specific, observable skill. Examples are listed on page 29 under "Uses."
 - 1. One example is separation from parents at drop-off. Every child has their own process and timeline for transitioning into the school environment.
 - 2. You could look at a cognitive concept such as classification of objects or specific vocabulary words
 - 3. The skill you're looking at depends on the needs and abilities of your kids — classification could be useful for preschoolers but not infants, etc.
- E. Class list log gives you a quick systematic way to capture a little information on every child in the room
 - 1. Helps you get to know the program, emotional climate, and this group of children by helping you see each child doing the same activity on the same day
 - 2. Would really need to do several class list logs to get an authentic sense of the entire class. Be careful of making assumptions/conclusions based on just one

log for this assignment because it's only one activity, one day, not the complete picture.

F. Our homework assignment due 9/20: Complete a Class List Log

1. Take notes on binder paper or print the blank form. Write on it, then type the notes into the form to turn in online in the Dropbox. You do not need to turn in your original handwritten notes.
2. Choose a skill or behavior to observe in each child. Should be something appropriate to the needs and abilities of the age group and children you're observing.
3. On the form, "recorder" is you and "observing" is the skill you're looking at. (You can delete the blue example text.)
4. On the form, the "name" column is for the child's name. If you don't know the name (if it's not your classroom) or you're worried about confidentiality, you can write "Child A" and "Child B," or "Boy #1" and "Girl #3" or "Red Jacket" or whatever works for you to keep track of which child is which.
5. The "observable facts" column is what you see of the behavior you're observing.
6. The "personal notes" column is optional. Here you can record more descriptive details if you want to. This is to keep the objective, observable facts separate from the more subjective notes.
7. For example, if you're observing separation, you might say:

CHILD(REN)	OBSERVABLE FACTS	PERSONAL NOTES
Adam	Crying, clinging to adult's leg	Crying hysterically
Chris & Justin	Separation not observed, playing together in sandbox	Parents left before I got here

8. If you don't know if the person dropping off is mom or dad, you can just call them "adult"

9. Remember not to ask for details you can't observe (such as the child's name if you don't know the child, or who an adult is) because your job as the observer is to sit back and observe inconspicuously / unobtrusively
10. Do your best to capture information on every child, but we know children can move around quickly. It's possible you may miss one child or double-record one. Just do your best.
11. Summary at the end should be two paragraphs, no more than one page.
 - a) Delete the blue text and type your summary directly into that space.
 - b) The first paragraph is about the context of your observation.
 - c) The second paragraph is about your personal feelings. For example:
 - (1) The classroom felt very tense as soon as I arrived, lots of negativity from the adults for some reason
 - (2) Piercing, heart-wrenching cry from a particular child, hard to listen to
 - (3) Surprisingly peaceful environment, would like to start my day this way if I were the teacher or parent here
 - (4) Felt the adults were not as warm and responsive as I think they could have been
12. Be there observing for as long as it takes to get everyone. If you're looking at separation and children arrive between 7:00 and 10:00 am, then it will take three hours. If you're checking if they can pedal a tricycle, then do it during their outside time and make sure everyone gets a turn on the tricycles.
13. It's ideal to do this in the classroom where your case study child will be. This is practice at doing a class list log, but it's also helping us to understand the context of your case study child's class.
14. To clarify: You only have to do one of these. If you were really using them in your own classroom or in a new classroom you're trying to learn about, you

should do several different class list logs to get a more complete picture, but only one is assigned for this homework.

V. Memory

- A. Think about what you were doing last night at 7:00 pm. What about a week earlier? What about a month ago, August 11th at exactly 7:00 pm? For most of us, memories fade with time.
- B. This is an ethical issue with observation and documentation. We need to capture the descriptive details, little nuances, circumstantial details, etc. by recording right away after something happens. You'll lose clarity over time if you wait to record later. To be fair and accurate, you need to record immediately.
- C. When you schedule your observations, remember to schedule time afterward to fill in the descriptive details right away. Don't tell yourself, "I'll do it later" because then you may accidentally insert untrue details or lose the affective/emotional piece of the experience.
- D. After the fact, we're likely to remember the basic behavior but lose the context/environmental details
- E. We're more likely to remember behaviors when there's an emotional connection (such as the child whose cry tugs at your heart strings or whose whining gets under your skin) but what we remember later isn't necessarily accurate or complete

VI. Discussion Forum Review

- A. Cohen, Chapter 1, page 2: "One hopes that no teachers would every try for so much objectivity that they would cease to be responsible and responsive adults to their children. It is far better for a child to have a warmly interested teacher who has kept no records than a meticulous observer with no warmth."

1. Maybe the most important quote of the whole chapter.
 2. This shows the two extremes: no observations, or no warmth. We should aim for a balance in between.
- B. Absolute objectivity is impossible, but we can try to get as close to it as possible.
- C. It's a constant battle against our own biases. "If we are to see children as they are, our lens must be anti-bias." What does it mean to be anti-bias?
1. Being neutral, but how do we become neutral? It's hard!!
 2. Trying to focus on the positive instead of the negative in a child can be helpful, but it's not neutral. There's still a bias toward only the positive.
 3. Need time to be self-reflective to cut through the mental garbage so we can maintain rational grounded awareness of what's really happening
 4. Try to simply take in what you see in front of you in this moment. This is hard because your brain brings in baggage of your own culture, past experience, your parents' words/opinions on the subject, etc. We are constantly battling our own past when observing other people's children.
 5. It may be easier to be neutral with a group/environment you don't know because you won't have any expectations for it or experience/baggage to bring to it.
- D. Reflection matters a lot.
1. It takes time to learn to trust your own thinking, see yourself as a valid source of good ideas, but also be able to ask for help when you need it.
 2. Reflection requires a lot of self-knowledge.
 3. New teachers often think being a "good teacher" means you always have an answer or a curriculum plan for every minute. It takes time to realize that it's better to build curriculum from the children's needs and interests instead of from a curriculum book.

- E. Understanding the meaning of a child's behavior by putting yourself in the child's shoes
- F. Appreciating the efficiency of checklists and Post-It notes for covering every child, but realizing it misses much of the descriptive detail
 - 1. Checklists will tell you if all of your children can count from 1-10, but not how they count, in what contexts they count, when they count spontaneously without an adult prompting, etc.
 - 2. You'll appreciate checklists more after doing a few running records, which capture more detail but take much longer

VII. Descriptions of people

- A. Activity: look at a full-length photo of a person and write a detailed description.
- B. Make sure physical descriptions are objective. For example, you can say someone is *smiling*, but you can't know by looking from the outside if they're actually *happy* inside.
 - 1. That's a subjective guess. If you observe the same person 20 times and they're always smiling, a concluding statement could be that this person seems to be happy most of the time, but you can't state that they're happy as an objective fact because you can't directly observe it.
 - 2. There are lots of reasons to smile: happiness, nervousness, embarrassment, posing for a photo, pretending to be happy, etc. Can include a descriptive term if it seems like a "nervous smile" or "forced smile" but avoid jumping to conclusions about what the person is thinking or feeling based on that look.
- C. When doing the physical description of your case study child (due next class, Thursday 9/25)
 - 1. Physical description without any judgement of their emotions or personality

2. Be descriptive enough that a person who doesn't know the child could make a mental image of them
3. Include hair color and style, eye color, shape of face, approximate height (measure yourself or the furniture and guess; don't measure the child with a tape measure — remember you're supposed to be unobtrusive), any noticeable physical marks, their posture/body shape, etc.
4. Include their clothing. Look for the most descriptive term that accurately describes what you see: Is it a shirt or a blouse? Are they pants or slacks or jeans or leggings or sweatpants?
5. The printed copy you bring to class is a work-in-progress. We'll read each other's and help each other polish the descriptions so you can include an even more accurate description in the end-of-semester documentation collection.