
Child Observation Growing In The Home Setting

The context for my observation was a child in a home setting. Within an affluent community in Kent. She was part of a family of five (5) which she was the last born.

The observation method I used was that of the Tavistock model (Bick, 1964) with my consigned was to observe this child, which I will call Baby F due to confidentiality, for an hour for six weeks and write up my observation records after each session. In this reflective report, I will include my reflections, challenges, and then the feedback I received from the class after the presentation.

The parent was aware of my role and the purpose for which this observation was being carried out (academic purpose), as I had to seek their consent even though it was very challenging at first, due to safeguarding and confidentiality issues.

The first session of my observation took place in the late morning when Baby F was playing, at the playing area in the lounge of the house. It was not a smooth start for me when I entered the house as my presence did not go well for Baby F, she began to cry at first, so I had to move to the kitchen (back of the room) , independently confined in a corner wishing not to be seen and that my presence would not be felt by Baby F.

The lounge was full of bunch of colourful toys, books, dressing up clothes and the chaos of buzz and feelings that quickly forewarned me of my home, where I have younger children, where the stage of exploring the world extends their infant philosophy as to how their world performs and exist around them daily.

At first, I really found the beginning very challenging and onerous to relax and focus steadily on Baby F completely, as I quite often found myself talking inwardly and taking my eyes off her and trying to make eye contact with both the mother and the Baby F. I found it very unusual to be in a room, and not being able to engage or communicate to anyone, very boring and stressful. For this session, I observed Baby F keenly and I had to really try and to clear my head from any thoughts that would be judgmental on her, which were only thoughts based on pieces of data, that had been shared by the mother. I had found myself forming and basing my assumptions of Baby F background and family life style, just looking at the surroundings and area of settlement, which were entirely my belief and poorly learned through prejudices (ecological theory- Bronfenbrenner).

Through this reflection, it has helped me balance between the facts, perceptions and to test myself on how information gained about Baby F, had given me an extensive concern into how I perceived she might play, and interacts with other children from different background, during her development or encounters in life. I just needed to separate these two feelings that are quite contradictory in parts (Goldstein, 1990).

I found myself watching Baby F carefully and helplessly, as she moved from one activity to the next, first playing with the coloured toys that make music, to picking shapes objects that she grabs, by the hand and let it fall on the floor, enjoying the sounds that forms from the toys. She slowly and gradually moves to explore different toys that seemed more adventurous and that of

toddlers as she had older siblings, that poked her out of the way (Sensorimotor stage).

Watching Baby F through her play, I could not stop myself from thinking how her future goals, aspirations and what she might be really trying to build through her thought and actions of play, and this quickly made me to think of Jean Piaget's (1973) theory on children's cognitive development as children take an active role in their own learning process through the interaction of the knowledge round them by adapting to previous ideas to be able to accommodate new information. Again, I had to object to my expectations on stages of Piaget's theory, since it not fixed and concrete in any child as every child is perceived to be different and unique. Due to every child ability, variations in development and the mind of a child according to Schemes.

On few occasions, I did see Baby F coming towards my direction with toys in hand which made me wonder, if she had an idea about my presence, sometimes I found myself moving further to a corner just to prevent any eye contact or interaction which made her mum stare. My eagerness to get involved with the child was very powerful, and was very difficult to clearly and easily stand-alone wondering. Hence, my ability to remain static in this role enabled me to standby, whiles slowing down and to carefully consider in greater details the kind of relationships (system theory) and attachments that exist with this child. (Bridge, G & Miles, G (eds), 1996).

With the Tavistock method, sitting whiles observing Baby F at the same time, made me feel more vulnerable and mostly unusual at times, since there were no accepted focus other that of the observer. This made me feel very anxious and unsure. Recollected in his work ' being a professional usually, is giving up all forms of authority and being open minded to what might emerge within practice' (Segal, 2003).

How I identified and managed my feelings in relation to the observation, of Baby F also reminded me of a reading, about (Isabel Menzies Lyth,1989) work, "the considerable aspects in determining the personal and corporate behaviours are through the expression and self-consciousness" which she wrote in her book about anxiety and how it's being experienced. Being able to accept and contain my inner feelings during my uncertainties which might impacted on the overall observation made me appreciate the kind of challenges and difficulties that social workers go through daily in line of professional practice.

Throughout my observation Baby F continued to move from one exercise to the next at a point involving the mum in play. At one point, I observed her running towards the mum for support, which was usually understood by her, through dancing, bouncing, jumping about in the room ,then moving toward the book shelf. The mum gently tapped and lifted her, nodding to her that she was well aware of her request, when she was tired and ready for a nap. According to (John B. Watson and B.F.Skinner), " the behaviour perspective is purely through the process of association and reinforcement , as it focuses on how experiences shapes who one is through classical or operant behaviours".

I thought about the uniqueness and complex ways by which children communicate , even though they don't always have the ability to use language to clarify, express their thought, feelings and to explore their individual worlds that surrounds them. By carefully slowing down and observing thoroughly, through her lens, I had the edge to ruminate. Ending my first hour of observation with less moot, than I thought it would and assumed as I left the room.

During the next session of my observation with Baby F, I felt more relaxed, calmed and in assonant with what I was trying to do, this time around. I was much more pleased and complacent, as I was trying to put some kind of theories which I have learnt in class into practice. I had the added luxury of appreciating the fact that, the method I was using, by just observing with my eyes in isolation, and not having any form of writing or an assessment to complete. It was a time to observe Baby F and scrutinize my, own feelings.

During the session , I think I made eye contact with Baby F on some few occasions and I was convinced that she might have known, I was observing and watching her, hence, this I thought was purely my assumption and interpretation. In this session, Baby F was in a play group, where she was really enjoying her exploration of play, I really saw a very different side of her that I have not really noticed during her play at home and with other siblings.

In this time, I could see that Baby F was really socialable, interactive but was mostly attentive, during the play and learning from the other children. When Baby F played with other kids her age, I noticed there were some form of grouping among the different ages, and grabs things that brought disputes, at that very moment, I felt a bust of emotion run through me, and I was reminded of my children's learning and resilience problems. In social learning theory, it focuses on the role of parent and the caregivers with other social influence on the child. Baby F enjoyed the play group a lot, According to Albert Bandura, the development of a child by learning from observing behaviours through external reinforcement and that is shown through the repeat pattern (observation and modelling) but to (Rustin, 2004), the problem of being able to identify ones feelings during working, is really important within the social work profession, as it enable one to be aware of any risk associated with professional boundaries, that could be a potential danger to oneself. Our relationship with service users as professional, needs to be objective and fair but being aware of our self within practice, thus being sensitive to others emotional needs by stepping outside our zone. I do admit that, for an intervention to be effective, a social worker should stay in an obvious and isolated manner, but be whole and flawless.

It was a good experience to have the opportunity to discuss my feelings and thoughts with the class during the presentation. But according to (Erikson ,1950), the talk of the basic trust which is the first stage of his theory of man. I understood and admit that through the discussion, which was quite similar to (Winnicott, 1965), parenting my feelings and thought with regards to what I observed, was openly discussed, whiles we openly and freely shared various experience.

Conclusion

Observing Baby F has helped me to make sense of focusing on a child and their world. Being, able to discuss my feelings and thoughts within the presentation, and those of my colleagues helped me to understand the various psychological theories in relation to practice and the prejudices within myself. According to (Humphries, 1988) , the ability to reflect and challenge our believes, thoughts with the transformation after words, is described as 'perspective transformation'.

Drawings from my observation, I came to a conclusion that observation was a skill that had to be acquired through training and practice. With my experience in a social care setting, I observed service users, made decisions which I had no prior training and knowledge about, but did it anyway. With reference to (Fawcett, 2009) stated that "We learn much from our

observations but we must also welcome that, what we see is the tip of the iceberg.
“Observation do help any observer, to better understand the child’s inner and outer world
(nature vs. nurture) (Hobart, C, Frankel, J, 2004).

I thoroughly enjoyed the experience of observing Baby F, since it helped me to understand diversity within the social work practice. My criticism is the timings for both observation and the presentation of my reflection in class.

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