

Child observation critical analysis

[Science](#), [Physics](#)



ChildObservationBackground The child that I chose to observe was a nine year old boy that I will refer to as Dan. Dan is a highly gifted child who, unfortunately, suffers from cerebral palsy, as well as panic attacks. His parents are divorced and he lives with his mother, who has remarried. His father who also has remarried, does have contact with him, though the relationship is somewhat strained. He comes from an upper middle class background, and has no brothers or sisters. I observed Dan in the waiting room for about an hour (his mother was good enough to bring him in for his appointment a little early so that I could observe him).

The room contained many toys and books for varying ages, as well as a number of magazines for both kids and adults. The walls were covered with different pictures and posters, and there were a number of chairs. Observation Dan's mother, Molly, helped him into the office by supporting him under his arms. His upper body works normally but he has trouble with his legs, particularly his lower legs, and is unable to walk on his own. His mother took him immediately to the corner of the room containing the toys and books, then lowered him to the floor.

Dan picked out a science book that appeared to be geared towards children a few years older than he. Lying on the floor, he began to read aloud and frequently questioned his mother, who sat in a nearby chair, about pronunciation of words, as well as dates and background information on famous scientists mentioned in the text. His mother answered all of his questions, and when she did, he engaged her in further conversation about the subject until he was sure that he understood. His mother was then called into the office to speak with the doctor alone.

Before leaving, she asked Dan if he needed to use the restroom (he needs her help to do so). He told her he was fine, and she went into the office. At this point, Dan and I were the only two people in the room. He continued to read aloud after his mother had left. With her gone, he engaged in private speech when he came to a word he did not know, or a subject he was unfamiliar with. His conversations with himself were very similar to those he had with his mother. About ten minutes after his mother had left, Dan began looking over at me occasionally, but only for a second before going back to his reading.

When he was unsure of a word, he repeated it several times before moving on. His reading grew gradually quieter until I could not always make out the words. At one point, he came across a word that he did not know and began reasoning to himself as follows: “ This must be an English word...although I speak English, so maybe it’s from a different country... or maybe they only use it in England. ” Dan looked at me several times as he attempted to reason through this, but did not ask me for help. After that, he closed the book and looked around the room.

He pulled a rock the size of a large marble from his pocket, and began brushing it lightly against first a nearby chair leg, then his own sneaker. He sat up, experimented with throwing the rock at his left hand, which he held open, palm facing his right hand. I should note that he did not appear to be trying to catch it, but I could not be sure. At any rate, he never did catch it in the several times that he threw it. He then rolled it down his arm a couple of times, before throwing it straight up in the air, leaving his hand out, but not moving it at all as the rock fell past it.

At this point Dan looked at me for about five or ten seconds straight, the first time he had done more than glance at me. He then pushed the book away and crawled over to a large aluminum can with a lid on it that was filled with toys. He brushed the rock lightly against it, but did not open it. Next, he looked at me and smiled. He asked me if he was bothering me and I told him he was not. He told me he did not want to distract me if I was studying. I answered that I was just writing something for school and that he was not distracting me at all.

He said that he did not want to be bothersome and that he had been trying to be as non-distracting as possible. I told him not to worry about it and to just do whatever he wanted. After that, he began to talk to me a great deal. He told me about a book that he had read in the waiting room before and asked if I had ever read it. I answered that I had not and he told me all about it. He said it allowed you to put different wigs and clothes on different people and that he really liked it a lot. He went on to say that it was “ a lot of fun, but it’s not here anymore so someone must have took it.

I don’t know who took it though. ” He then pulled down another book with big wobbly eyes that were placed to be on a different picture every time you turned the page. He asked me if I ever saw this book and I told him that I had. He said that it was “ a really cool book. ” He then started reading it aloud, looking over at me occasionally as he did so. A little later, as he continued to read, his mother came back in and asked again if he needed to use the restroom. He told her he did not, and she lifted him up and helped him into the office for his appointment.

Interpreting the Observation The first thing that struck me about Dan's behavior was that he ignored the toys and magazines, and went straight for the books. Not only that, the first book that he picked out was obviously geared towards kids several years older than he. I knew going into the observation that Dan was highly gifted, and combining that with his physical disability, it made sense that he would be an avid reader and, relative to the other kids his age, a very advanced one. This proved to be true.

Gambrell (1994) says that a child who is motivated to learn will read for a number of reasons, including to gain knowledge. This certainly seemed to be the case with Dan as he was very intent on being sure that he understood exactly what he was reading. Many kids read because they have to, and they learn so that they will get an "A" in school; Dan was reading and learning for the sole purpose of gaining knowledge. This is not surprising given the fact that gifted children have been found to have significantly higher intrinsic motivation to learn all subject areas than do their peers (Gottfried & Gottfried 1996).

This study went on to say that "From the early years through adolescence, children who are identified as gifted evidence superior persistence, attention, curiosity, enjoyment of learning and orientation toward mastery and challenge. This was mirrored in the enthusiasm with which Dan went about the task of reading and being sure that he understood what he had read. The fact that his mother allowed him to pick out a book himself could be relevant to Dan's apparent motivation to read.

Gambrell (1994) reports that over 80% of children name books that they picked out themselves when asked about those they most enjoyed. In <https://assignbuster.com/child-observation-critical-analysis/>

contrast, only 10% talked about books that were chosen for them. A strong correlation was shown to exist between a child's being allowed to choose his own book and his intrinsic motivation to read. Gambrell further reports that learning through books is enhanced by social interactions, which further increase his desire to read. Dan obviously demonstrated this through the conversation he had with his mother while reading.

After his mother left, Dan made frequent use of Vygotsky's private speech (overt verbalizations not intended for a listener), particularly in the form of questions to himself. I saw this as both modeling his earlier conversations with his mother, and actively trying to learn new words and information. Goodman (1981) found that, in problem solving tasks, questions to self occurred more frequently following failures. This too, was the case with Dan who would often ask himself questions after being unable to pronounce a word or figure out its meaning.

Goodman also found that a high rate of verbalizations during problem solving task was associated with increased efficiency. This is consistent with the fact that Dan, who made frequent use of such verbalizations, was a very advanced reader for his age. His frequent glances at me during particularly troublesome spots could have been related to social referencing. He appeared to want to ask me for help, but never did. Instead he simply looked at me as he tried to pronounce the word, as if trying to gauge my facial reaction to see if he was right.

Conclusion Dan appeared to be, aside from his diagnosed problems of cerebral palsy and panic attacks, a fairly normal, though cognitively advanced, nine year old boy. His reading every thing aloud struck me as

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somewhat unusual, and I have no sure explanation as to why; perhaps he feels that he learns better through auditory stimulation. He also seemed to use private speech more than the average nine year old would, but as I discussed earlier, some studies have linked this to better problem solving abilities and high cognitive performance.

References Gambrell, L. B. , (1994). What motivates children to read? Scholastic Literacy Research Paper, 2 Gottfried, A. E. & Gottfried, A. W. , (1996). A longitudinal study of academic intrinsic motivation in intellectually gifted children; Childhood through early adolescence. Gifted Child Quarterly, 40 (4), 179-183 Goodman, S. H. , (1981). The integration of verbal and motor behavior in preschool children. Child Development. 52 (1), 280-289