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| Fieldnote Note | 21 | Date | 09/08/21 |
| Locations | Bungalow 3, Campus | Weather | Cloudy and wet |
| Child interactions | Red, [one of the children], Norman, Simone and James | Staff Interactions | Monty, Thelma, Sue, Sammy and Avril |
| Times | 2.30pm – 6.30pm | Total Time in field | 4 hours |

Arrived on campus today and didn’t see anyone outside on account of the wet weather. I headed straight for Bungalow 3. As I came down the corridor, [one of the children] spotted me and came out from the living room and gave me a hug before I went into the office where I found Monty and Thelma. I noted that ‘all seems quiet’ having noticed that the living room was darkened, and it looked like the children were watching a film. Monty noted that it was ok now but that it had been a tough morning dealing with the fact that Norman had defecated in his room this morning (something that has happened before) and that there had been a lot of ‘fall out’ from that. After some small talk, checking-in and discussing the fact that the children would be returning to school next week (I can start to arrange 1-2-1 interviews with staff soon), I went in and said hi to everyone in the living room and got a seat while the film (Big Daddy) was on.

There was new furniture (sofa and chair and foot stool). Sue was on the chair in the corner, [one of the children] was perched on the foot stool, which was also holding the living room door open. Simone, Sammy, Red and Norman were variously positioned on the new L-shape sofa and I was able to get a seat on this at one end. Shortly after I sat down, [one of the children] came over and sat next to me and rested her elbow on my leg as [they] paid attention to the interaction between Red and Sammy. The interaction was pretty low-level conversation and physical contact; the majority of attention seemed directed at the film, although with Sammy asking Simone and Norman to stop pestering each other from time to time. This situation continued for approximately 20 minutes before moves were afoot for [one of the children] and Red to go swimming with Peter who was returning from being out with James.

Much to the consternation of the rest of the group, Red put the film off and logged out of his Netflix account disrupting the film for everyone (despite Sammy having assured him that he would have logged it out after the film – these are child accounts on the main Netflix account and not ‘owned’ by the children). There was some movement and discussion during this change over – requests to borrow swimming goggles, changing of trainers, and staff interacting about various timings and arrangements. After about 10-15 minutes, it was agreed that a new film could be selected to watch but that Sammy would sit between Norman and Simone so that they didn’t ‘wind each other up’. Simone was resistant to moving as she was ‘too comfy’ where she was. When it was suggested that Sammy would join me and Norman on the other sofa instead, this almost changed her opinion on the matter – it seems that the closeness of Sammy was an important consideration to the arrangement for Simone. The situation was finally resolved by Sammy lifting Simone in a fun way and carrying her down the hall to the other end of the bungalow and coming back (he tells me later that this just helps her to ‘reset’).

Once the film was on, there followed an extended period of engagement with it. Simone lay on the other sofa next to Sammy, quietly watching the film and often sucking her thumb. Norman was next to me and, while he also watched the film quietly, I became (in a side-glace way) really intrigued by his body language. He contorted himself into various positions on the couch during the film. At first, I thought he was just trying to get a comfortable position, but he continued to move about into quite unusual positions at different points in the film. For example, at one point he seemed to be almost in the downward dog position and was viewing the film through the space between his arm (holding him up) and his torso. I started to notice some of the emotional content of the film – Paddington is a children’s film, but it does deal with content such as being away from home, being temporarily cared for by another family and then becoming a member of that family. I wondered if his hiding his face with a pillow, getting into different positions, and (at one point) seemingly biting (softly) his own arm were related to the types of emotions that were being triggered for him during this film – he did not appear upset or unable to cope but, rather, this was his equivalent for thumb-sucking. James had joined us and was sitting quietly at my left side for the end of the film.

Shortly after the film finished, Avril arrived in and asked if she could speak to Sammy and then Sammy went out of the bungalow and Avril stayed. I assumed that something was going on or had to be done in Bungalow 1 (where Sammy normally works with Avril and others). Internet connection was allowed from 4pm and Norman started playing on his hand-held Nintendo Switch – Minecraft. Simone started to move around more – falling off the sofa, tapping Norman’s foot, jumping on the beanbag – she looked like she had energy she needed to burn. Sue was asking Avril about when Sammy would be back, and I detected a bit of tension between them, and Avril confirmed that there was a ‘situation’ at Bungalow 1. Simone said, “Daniel must have kicked off in Bungalow 1” and, when the staff were non-committal, she outlined her reasoning. “Well, let’s be honest, there’s only Dennis, Graham and Daniel down there. Dennis and Graham don’t need Sammy to calm them, so it must be Daniel”. Her analysis proved to be correct on this and, as I thought about it, on many other things that she ‘works out’ on campus – even Avril said ‘you’ve got spooky powers’. It seems to me that 10-year-old Simone is super sharp. She continued to get more physical. She batted away a suggestion of going outside for a while with Avril on the basis that Avril couldn’t play football and ‘none of you can play football’. She looked at me and then away. I knew she knew I could play football, but I didn’t suggest it because I had the impression she didn’t want to play football with me (I have been off campus for a couple of weeks and she hadn’t yet spoken directly to me and I respect her right to feel wary of me again).

I came back after a toilet break and Simone had gone outside with Avril. Sue mentioned that she was ‘starting to escalate’ and I confirmed that she looked like she suddenly had some energy to burn. Norman drew me into this game of Minecraft, showing me what he was building and asking my opinion on things I don’t quite understand. He used a lot of self-critical language during this ‘I’m dumb, I didn’t think of that’ and I found myself trying to weave in some affirmatory content - how much I had enjoyed his cooking before, how we need to try things to figure out how to do them etc. Sue started making the Tea in the kitchen and came in and out checking if I was ok and going down to check on James who was playing in his room. Norman showed me all the functionality on his Nintendo Switch and was keen for me to witness his game of Minecraft – organising himself to a different charging point so that he could be in a position where I would continue to watch his game.

Down the hall there seemed to be some commotion whereby Simone was back in and Thelma was with her and Sammy was back also. It transpired that she had been running up on skate ramp while it was really wet and dangerous (Simone’s mother having fallen and broken her arm on the play equipment at the weekend during a visit). It turned out that she had been kicking Thelma as she was getting her back in and, as a result she had to stay in her room and have her Tea in her room as well. There was discussion about the previous interaction between Simone and Red from earlier today but Sue confirmed that it had been Simone who had been the instigator at that time as well so he was left out of it (in his current absence at the swimming).

Sue called me and Norman in for Tea and we were also joined in the kitchen by James. I helped the two boys in terms of getting some salad and cheese out onto their plates to join the chicken enchiladas that were already there. Sue was saying how she had never made them before, and she didn’t know what they would be like – she seemed quite anxious about this. The enchiladas were great and the three of us had second helpings! At the table, the two boys interacted well although Sue tried to keep them in more a ‘chill’ mode with a close eye on when they were getting over loud/excited. I asked them if they were looking forward to going back to school and got some ambivalent responses – it seems there are things they do and don’t like about school. James said he liked school because it’s a place where he can ‘get a bit of respect’ (in a cool, gangster-like style) whereas Norman suggested that nobody likes him at school, which I said can’t be true given how funny he is.

The two boys went, reluctantly, into baths after the meal and I helped Sue tidy up in the kitchen. She noted that she was anxious when Simone was starting to ‘escalate’ earlier as she felt that Avril isn’t able to respond to the children in this bungalow effectively and this is why she was asking about Sammy’s return (that’s the tension that I felt earlier in their interaction). She apologised to me about today and said it was because they are short staffed today (I took this to mean that I’d been sitting watching a film etc as some workers worry that ‘nothing is happening’). I reassured her that I am here to see how things are on an everyday basis, and this was another day and gave her further reassurance that her enchiladas were great.

Me and Sammy sat in the living room and Sue was in and out from the kitchen attending to various things. Simone was supposed to be spending some time in her room, but this was a struggle for her and she repeatedly came out to see when Sammy would come and spend some time with her. She even asked me to come and spend time with her but I managed to use my non-worker status to my advantage. I mentioned to Sue (while Sammy was returning Simone to her room) that I’ve noticed that she does struggle to spend time by herself and Sue confirmed that they are trying change that and not always acquiesce to her demands for staff time.

In between these things happening, Sammy told me that his holiday with Graham, Dennis and Avril was great. He told me how anxious Dennis can be and that he can struggle to make friends. When away on holiday, Dennis had come in at 9.10pm and said ‘I know you’ll say no, but I’ve met this girl and I’d like to go to the arcade with her’ (Dennis is 9). After mulling it over quickly, Sammy and Avril had given him some money and asked him to be back by 9.45pm. He wasn’t back by 9.50pm so Sammy went to look around and started to panic a bit when he wasn’t at the arcade etc, but he found him playing with the girl and her sister outside their caravan and all was well. He was really pleased for Dennis because of the type of anxieties he’s had about making friends. Sammy took a great pleasure in the story and in what he felt it meant for Dennis.

After this, there were moves to try and begin to settle the bungalow and I felt I was getting a bit drawn-in/in the way as James was trying to angle for me to go and help him look for something in his room – which I think was just for time with an adult but which would certainly incur the wrath of Simone who would certainly notice it. Therefore, I decided to call it time and said my goodbyes. Sue was in the office writing up some notes/daily observations as I left.