

## Paper Project Description: Child Interview/Observation Paper

**Instructions:** Each student should choose a typically developing **child younger than 13** to interview and/or observe for this assignment. *You should not interview your immediate family (children, siblings) because it is very difficult to be an objective observer in those cases.* You may interview other child relatives, friends' children, neighborhood children, etc. This interview paper should be written for this section of this course this semester; it should be unique to this course. Very important: It is not acceptable to submit a paper that has been either submitted for a different course or a different section of this course. Students who do so will be assigned a 0 for this assignment. Also very important: you must observe the child. It is not acceptable to simply interview a parent on the phone although it is permissible to ask the parent some questions, especially if the child is younger than 3.

**I. Preparing for the Interview:** After identifying a child to interview/observe, you should generate at least 10-15 questions to ask or to observe that are relevant for that child's age group (e.g., newborn, toddler, preschool, school age). To decide what to observe or ask, first determine which developmental period the subject of your interview fits in and then use the information in the relevant chapters of your textbook and Power Point notes to help you formulate your questions (see below for some ideas, too). Note that some issues are more relevant for one age group than another. **For each question, identify in parentheses after the question what topic/task/or concept you plan to address with that question and the domain (physical, cognitive, or social); include the page number from the textbook that coincides with this information.**

Your interview/observation should focus on all three (3) domains of development: cognitive, physical, and social-emotional. At least some of your questions/observations and some of your paper should be devoted to each domain of development (see below). Again, you are expected to interact with the child who is the subject of this interview, by either observing the child or interviewing the child. Interviewing the parent without observing/interviewing the child is not acceptable for this assignment.

- Listed below are examples of topics that would be appropriate to investigate for children of different ages. Information about each topic can be found in your textbook and Power Point notes. Your interview will proceed more smoothly, and your paper will be much, much easier to write if you formulate open-ended questions, rather than only yes/no questions. Note: it is particularly important that your questions/observations be theoretical in basis (e.g., "what is your favorite food?" is not theoretical). Also, ***it is especially important that you review the [Interview Project Rubric: Online Courses and Child Interview/Observation Paper Checklist](#) for this paper before you conduct your interview and write your paper.*** For your convenience, a copy of the rubric is included at the bottom of these directions.

- Newborn (younger than 6 months): reflexes and motor development; temperament; family's birth experience; eating and sleep cycles; birth or pregnancy complications; range of emotions/social smile; sensorimotor substages; early language development; newborn characteristics; development of attachment
- Infancy and Toddlerhood (6 months to 2-3 years): development of object permanence (sensorimotor skills)--for children younger than 2; type of attachment; temperament/goodness of fit; physical development/milestones (is gross motor and/or fine motor development appropriate for age?); language development (is development appropriate for age?--use of underextensions, overextensions, 2-word combinations), vocabulary spurt; sex-typed play and preferences; event memory; other cognitive development; other sensorimotor substages; categorical self; self-recognition; emotions; Erikson's 1st two stages
- Early Childhood/Preschool (2-3 to 5-6 years): performance on preoperational tasks (conservation, animism, egocentrism, appearance-reality); self-concept development; understanding of theory of mind (false belief); memory of early childhood events/autobiographical memory; expertise; continued language development; continued physical development and comparison to norms; emotional development; sex-typed play and play in general
- Middle Childhood/School Age (6 to 12 years old): performance on preoperational tasks (may be appropriate for younger, transitioning children) and concrete operational tasks; understanding of various concrete operations: seriation, reversibility, identity, compensation, class inclusion-- elementary school children; emerging formal operational thought--for middle school age children; language development; self-concept and self-esteem; friendships and peer status; effects of family structure; sex-typed play and preferences; gender identity, memory strategies & other information processing skills; sibling relationships; achievement attributions; parenting style; physical growth-- comparison to norms

**II. Conducting the Interview:** Before conducting the interview or observation, be sure to explain the purpose of the project to the child's parents. Depending on the age of the child, you should also offer some explanation to the child about what you are doing. It is fine if parents want to look over your questions in advance. Also, tell the child and parent that their participation is anonymous and confidential and that only first names or fictional names will be reported in your paper. You should not share any information obtained about the child with anyone other than the professor of this course for the purpose of this paper. Also, be careful to avoid any questions that might make the person uncomfortable (e.g., questions about death, divorce, abuse, or parental strife). Skip questions your child seems unable to answer or does not feel comfortable answering.

**Very important:** Plan the order of your observations/questions ahead of time, as well as the exact tasks you want to do. Take any props you will need for your tasks/observations with you. Give yourself plenty of time to do the interview/observation. Some children need time to warm up, and you want to build a good rapport for the child first.

**III. Writing the Paper:** Write the paper using paragraph format (NOT question and answer format). The text of your paper should be a minimum of 5-7 pages of text. Organize it into 5 parts: (a) Introduction; (b) The Physical Domain; (c) The Cognitive Domain; (d) The Social-Emotional Domain; and (e) Conclusions.

A. The Introduction: The first paragraph of your paper should include information about the child you interviewed. Include (1) the child's first name (real or otherwise), (2) family structure, (3) age, (4) sex, etc., (5) how you know this child/family and for how long, (6) when, where, and how the interview/observation was conducted, (7) the length of the interview, and (8) what you hoped to learn by interviewing this child.

B/C/D. Domains of Development: The crux of your paper will include your observations and insights based on the questions asked. Be specific about what you wanted to learn by asking each question/completing each task (i.e., what was the purpose of each question?), how you went about getting at this information, and what you learned; **relate what you observed to what you have learned in class and what is in the textbook** (i.e., how the information fits in with certain theories and/or research findings). *You should have a theoretical reason for asking each of your questions.* Your paper does not necessarily need to include every question and answer from your interview, but you should be thorough and have at least a couple examples for each domain.

Your paper should include at least 6 instances (at least 2 per domain) where you link/associate information from the interview with information from the textbook. You should explain your connections and provide page numbers from the textbook that coincide with your observations; **all connections should be paraphrased and not directly quoted.** *Do not just cite definitions from your textbook for your connections.* Also, you are not simply including your questions and answers verbatim in the paper.

Again, your paper should address all three domains of development: cognitive, physical, and social-emotional. All connections to the text should be cited in text correctly using APA style, and your textbook should be cited at the end of your paper on a separate APA-style reference page. **Provide page numbers for information from your textbook that coincides with your responses.**

E. Conclusions: Finally, your last paragraph should be a conclusion/summary about what you learned about this child. Answer all these prompts:

- (1) Where would you place this child developmentally and why? What evidence did you use to make this determination?
- (2) Is the child's development consistent with his or her age? Why or why not?
- (3) What contextual factors may have influenced (positively or negatively) his or her development?
- (4) How did observing this child help with your understanding of child development in each of the three domains at this age? &
- (5) What are your take-aways about child development from completing this interview?

Additional Requirements:

Include a cover page as page 1 and a separate APA-style reference page in which you cite your textbook as the last page of your paper. If you are unfamiliar with APA style for writing a reference page, look it up. **These 2 pages do not count towards the 5 - 7-page minimum text of your paper.**

**A copy of your questions also should be uploaded as a separate attachment.** You will submit two documents to the same dropbox: your paper and your questions.

Before submitting your paper (and even before writing it), review the checklist for the final paper [here](#) and the [Interview Project Rubric: Online Courses](#) for determining your paper grade.