Child Psychology – Child Observation Assignments

You must do two of the following assignments.  
The first assignment is due March 5, 2009
The Second assignment is due April 23, 2009

Please complete the assignments in chronological order by the age of the child.

Papers are to be at least five pages in length and are to be double spaced and thoroughly proofread. Grammatical/spelling mistakes will impact your overall grade. Please use APA format. The library website contains the APA guidelines. Papers will only be accepted on the due date prior to or during class. Extensions will only be granted under dire and documented circumstances.

Each paper should have a bibliography. Sources are to be scholarly in nature. Books, journal articles and scholarly websites only. You must use at least two different mediums. A list of websites is not acceptable. When using websites you must make sure they are of a scholarly nature. To determine this go to the library’s website and follow their guidelines. Popular media and websites like Wikipedia are not scholarly.

See these links for more information:

For information on APA format see:
http://library.msmc.edu/student_research_assistance/bibliography.php

For information on scholarly websites see:
http://library.msmc.edu/student_research_assistance/evaluating.php

When you observe the children for each assignment, please make sure and have the Field Work Log signed. You can find a copy of the log on my website (faculty.msmc.edu/soco8662). This is a requirement for this course as well as your education courses (for those of you wishing to become teachers).

You will be doing observations and interviews. If you get permission you may be able to record your interviews. This may be easier than having to write during the interview and allow conversation to flow more smoothly. Please make sure and make the interview casual and fun for the subject. If they become upset at any time you should stop your line of questioning and alert a responsible adult (parent or teacher). Enjoy interacting with and observing the children.
Assignment Choice #1 – Living With a Toddler – Parental Interview and Observation

Obtain parental permission to observe a toddler (1-3 years old) for at least three hours in a home or day care/pre-school setting (facility must approve also). Listen and observe the child and his interactions with others. Pay attention to how the child communicates with others and responds to challenges and frustrations. Observe how the child expresses his emotions. Observe the child’s gross and fine motor skills. Where are they in their physical development? If you have the opportunity try and determine if the child has a hand preference, what type of grasp they use to pick up objects, can they cut or color effectively, can they open and close items easily, turn knobs, etc? What does the child seem to like to do over and over again? Does the child appear to be practicing a skill?

Interview the parent (or parents) using the following questions plus three of your own well thought out questions. As you ask questions conversation may flow to other areas not covered. Any additional information you get about the child in this manner may also be included in your interview.

Make sure to first get the basic information necessary to be able to describe the child (age, sex, family composition, ethnicity, socio-economic status, physical characteristics, illnesses or disabilities).

1. What was the child’s birth like? Were there any complications?
2. What are your child’s eating and sleeping routines?
3. Does your child have special food preferences? Is he willing to try new things?
4. How would you describe your child’s activity level? Introverted/Extroverted?
5. Does your child like to be with other people? Children?
6. How does your child react to strangers? Siblings? Animals?
7. Does your child attend day care/ babysitter? Who spends time with your child on a regular basis?
8. When did your child say his first word? Take his first step? Any other firsts?
11. What is your child’s favorite activity? Toy, etc.?
12. What is your favorite time of day with your child? What are the most problematic or frustrating times or activities?

After completing the interview and observation summarize your findings and compare your data to information about child development from your textbook, class notes and scholarly sources. Make sure to include where the child is in all the domains of development (biological, cognitive, psychological and social), referencing major theories with substantiation by the information you obtained in your interaction with the child and his family.
Assignment Choice #2 – The World of the School-Age Child – Interview and Observation

After obtaining parental permission and permission from the facility, observe a child in an elementary school for at least three hours. In your observation, try to determine the extent to which the child interacts with classmates and teachers.

Interview the child. The following is a list of questions you should ask. Please include at least three well thought out questions of your own.

1. What does he like about school? What doesn’t he like?
2. What are his favorite and worst subjects?
3. How does he feel about his teachers? Does he have a favorite? Why?
4. Does he have friends? Who are his best friends? Does he have problems with any of the kids? How does he handle the problems?
5. What does he do after school?
6. Does he participate in any activities? Sports, scouts, church, lessons, etc.?
7. Where does he live? What type of neighborhood? Does he like it? Friends?
8. Who does he live with? Siblings? Birth order? Do they get along?
9. What are his future plans? What does he want to be? Tell him about your plans.
10. What is he especially good at? Proud of? Is there anything he is bad at?

Make sure to first get the basic information necessary to be able to describe the child (age, sex, family composition, ethnicity, socio-economic status, physical characteristics, illnesses or disabilities) if possible.

After completing the interview and observation summarize your findings and compare your data to information about child development from your textbook, class notes and scholarly sources. Make sure to include where the child is in all the domains of development (biological, cognitive, psychological and social), referencing major theories with substantiation from the information you obtained in your interaction with the child. Did you find it difficult not having a parent to talk to about the child? How confident are you that you got accurate information about the child?
**Assignment Choice #3 – Tween/Adolescent Peer Relationships – Interview and Observation**

After obtaining parental permission and permission from the facility, observe children of 10 – 14 years of age in a school for at least three hours. If you can, observe the children in class and during their free time. In your observation, try to determine the extent to which the children interact with classmates and teachers. Look at how they communicate with each other, how they express their emotions. Do they seem to be copying each other? Do children with the same mannerisms, dress, etc. seem to be congregated together?

Interview one of the children about their peer relationships. Begin the interview by identifying yourself, your purpose (a course assignment on peer relationships during the tween/adolescent years) and assuring your subject that his responses will remain confidential. Get demographic information so you can describe the child in your paper (age, sex, family composition, ethnicity, socio-economic status, physical characteristics, illnesses or disabilities) if possible.

The following is a list of questions you should ask. Please include at least three well thought out questions of your own.

1. I’d like you to tell me about the people in your group of friends, describe them. Which friends do you typically hang out with during school?
2. Which friends do you hang out with after school or on weekends?
3. Which friends do you invite to your house/parties?
4. What makes a friend different from an acquaintance? What really is a friend?
5. Do you define “friendship” differently now than you did when you were younger?
6. How many “true friends” do you have?
7. How does the size of your current friendship group compare with its size when you were younger?
8. What happens when you and a friend have a fight? Is that person still your friend? How do you try and resolve the problem that caused the fight?
9. How do you and your friends keep in touch?
10. Who is the most popular person in your friendship group? What is that person like? Why do you think that person is popular?
11. Can you rely on your friends for help? What kind of help? Do you also ask other people for help? Who?
12. Have you made any new friends this year? How do you do that?

After completing the interview and observation summarize your findings and compare your data to information about late childhood and adolescent development from your textbook, class notes and scholarly sources. Make sure to include where the child is in all the domains of development (biological, cognitive, psychological and social), referencing major theories with substantiation from the information you obtained in your interaction with the child. Pay close attention to the child’s social competence and the changing concept of friend from childhood to adolescence described in your textbook. Your essay should include the extent to which your subject’s responses confirm or refute the material on peer relationships presented in your text and your scholarly sources. Please feel free to offer your own interpretation of your subject’s
responses, including comments on how you yourself might have answered the questions at your current stage of development. Do you think that the subject answered the questions completely truthfully or do you feel they were telling you what they thought you wanted to hear?