

## **Child Psychology Winter 2003 Assignment Instructions**

The goal of this set of assignments is to help you learn about one topic in the field of child psychology in more depth. Hopefully this knowledge will apply to your efforts to be a successful teacher, counselor or simply parent. This assignment will have three parts:

**Oral Report:** Familiarizing yourself with the original research and presenting this information to the class as an oral report.

**Journal Critique:** Identifying one relatively current article (preferably 1980 or later; see me for approval of a study if it was conducted before 1980) that was designed to examine some aspect of the topic addressed in the original research.

**Hands-On Research:** Obtain hands-on experience by conducting a “mini-research” project, generally following the procedures of a study that addresses the same topic from the original research. The procedure may be in the article that you critique, but it does not have to be.

### **Oral Report (75 pts for each student)**

You and your partners will be asked to make an oral presentation to the class on the date that corresponds to your topic (See the sign-up sheet). The report should be approximately 15 minutes in length (at least 10 minutes and no more than 20, please). After you have read your assigned chapter from the Dixon text, please summarize this information for the class. When you are done with your presentation, the rest of the class should be familiar with the following:

1. Who were the main researchers on this project? What “era” did they come from? What country did they conduct their research on? Was this their only contribution to the field of child psychology or were they famous in other ways?
2. Before this research study or set of research studies were conducted, what was the current understanding of this topic in the field of child psychology?
3. Following this “revolutionary” study or studies, what changed in terms of subsequent research AND in terms of practice in the field?
4. What legacy did this researcher or research team leave to the field. What do we still think is true related to their findings? What, if anything, has since been contradicted?
5. What, if anything, will you take away with you by having familiarized yourself in this subtopic of child psychology?

### **Oral report criteria for grade**

1. How clear, organized and thorough was your presentation? (25 pts)
2. Did you use audio-visual aids? How well did you use them? (overheads, video clips, Internet, physical props, children or information gathered from children) (15 pts)
3. How familiar were you with the material? How much did you have to refer to your notes? (20 pts)
4. How was your delivery? Did you make eye contact? Were you poised? (15 pts)

### **Journal Article Critique (75 pts)**

Part of conducting psychological research is reviewing and understanding published research studies. In this part of the assignment, you are being asked to identify and find an article published in a scientific journal that is based directly (or in some cases indirectly) on the original research topic. Please read the article and write a paper about the article that answers the questions below. The paper should be typed in 12 pt font and approximately 2 to 3 pages in length. **Be sure to enclose a copy of the research article (including the abstract that briefly summarizes the entire research study) with your report.**

1. What are the independent and dependent variables in the study? Could you have identified them with only the title of the study? (Many titles are in this format: "The effects of IV on the DV.")
2. What did you learn from the introduction section? What is the historical background of the research topic? Which earlier research findings are given as most relevant to this study? What theoretical explanations are emphasized in this section? What is the hypothesis of the present study?
3. What did you learn from the methods section? Who were the subjects? What materials and procedures (e.g., apparatus, directions, assessment tools) were used?
4. What did you learn from the results section? What kinds of statistical procedures were used? What did you learn from charts, frequency tables, and bar graphs? What results did the authors say were statistically significant?
5. What did you learn from the discussion section? How did the authors interpret their results? Did they provide alternative explanations? Did they talk about the limitations of the present research study? What future research studies were suggested?
6. What were the strengths and the limitations of this study in terms of methodology (i.e. how the research was carried out)?

Journal Critique Criteria for grade:

1. How well did you understand and explain the title/introduction of the paper? Did you correctly identify the independent and dependent variables? (15 pts)
2. How well did you understand and explain the methods section of the paper? (10 pts)
3. How well did you understand and explain the results section of the paper? (10 pts)
4. How well did you understand and explain the discussion section of the paper? (10 pts)
5. How well did you critique the study (both strengths and weaknesses), using the material learned in our course thus far? (20 pts)
6. Writing quality (grammar, word choice, spelling, typos, etc.) (10 pts)

## Hands-On Research (100 pts)

The purpose of assignments two and three is to integrate your understanding of research on your topic of interest with the actual practice of that technique with children. As necessary, find a procedure that is at least indirectly related to your topic of interest but that is still something you can imagine trying to work through or carry out with real children.

- The report should begin with a brief introduction (as you saw when you critiqued a study), reviewing other research that has been conducted on this topic. Clearly you should refer to the original research and/or the article that you critiqued. In total you must cite at least three scholarly papers (articles from peer-reviewed scientific journals) that examine the concept. It does not matter whether these articles provide support for the concept or reject the concept. But the articles should represent research that has been done to test that particular concept or principle. Three is a minimum but you may summarize/cite more if it helps explain why and how you picked the research procedure.
- Second, please describe the research procedures that you used to collect data from your subjects. This is the “methods” section on your paper. You must use a minimum of three children, but if possible try to collect data from 5 to 7 children. For example, if you selected object permanence, you would need infants between the ages of 6 months and 1 year. If you selected conservation, you would need some children from the pre-operational stage (around 4-6 years of age) and some children from the concrete operational stage (7-9 years of age). Within reasonable limits, conduct a similar study with your children (individually or in groups) as you found in one of your journal articles. Be sure to collect your data systematically and keep careful notes. I would like you to turn in your original notes and, if necessary, retype them so I can read them.
- Next, summarize your results, both in paragraph form and with tables and/or figures. Attach all records, tables and figures to the back of the paper.
- Finally interpret your results in the discussion section of the paper? Were they consistent with the “literature”? Was there anything novel you discovered? What were the strengths and limitations of your study protocol? What would you do differently if you were to do this type of study over again?

### Criteria for grades

- (1) How well did you introduce the topic in general? Were the three papers from peer-reviewed journals and are they on the same topic? Did you do a good job trying to understand and summarize them? Is there some type of integration from study to study, rather than simply listing them? (20 pts)
- (2) How well did you identify an appropriate number of age-appropriate children/adolescents? How carefully did you think through and carry out the study itself? Were you prepared with proper materials? (25 pts)
- (3) How well did you collect and summarize your data? (15 pts)
- (4) How well did you compare your findings with those of the studies that you read? How thoughtfully did you critique your efforts? (20 pts)
- (5) Writing quality? (Literary quality, grammar, spelling, and punctuation, title, page numbers) (15 pts)
- (6) Proper APA listing of references in the back of the paper and citations throughout the paper. (5 pts)