**Virtual Child Written Project Assignment**

Four-Assignment Version of Reflective Questions

Virtual Child Report (Assignment) 1: Infants and Toddlers (20 points)

Choose 7 or 8 questions whose total point value equals 20 or 21 points. The total points awarded will be no more than 20 points.

General guidelines: a good answer will address every part of the question, and will describe the child’s behavior and provide 1 or 2 supporting examples. In addition, wherever possible, you should relate your descriptions and explanations of the child’s behavior to the concepts, theories and research covered in class or in the book. Please avoid expressing an unfounded opinion – try to base your arguments on research studies and conclusions, or a theory that seems well supported by the research in the field.

The questions are printed below along with a scoring. Use college level English in your responses. Be sure to type the VC’s age and the Reflective Question, number and points prior to your responses. Use 12-14 pt font with 1 ½ spacing. Be thorough in your responses, see above.

**Set 1: 9 months**

1. How does your baby’s eating, sleeping and motor development compare to the typical developmental patterns in the first 9 months?
   -- 1 point for describing VC’s behavior in each of two domains and referring to what might be expected at these ages. (2 points)

2. At 8 months of age was your child an “easy”, “slow to warm up”, or “difficult” baby in terms of Thomas and Chess’s classic temperamental categories? On what do you base this judgment?
   -- 1 point for explaining the category, and one point for a supporting observation on VC’s behavior (2 points)

3. How is your child’s attachment relationship to you or your partner (whoever is the mother) developing? What is happening at the 3-month and 8-month periods that might affect attachment security according to Bowlby and Ainsworth, and various research studies?
   -- 1 point each for describing two aspects of the child’s behavior that indicate attachment is developing at 3 or 8 months, and 1 point for describing one aspect of
parental behavior that may affect attachment security. (3 points)

Set 2: 19 months
4. Describe and give examples of changes in your child’s exploratory or problem solving behavior from 8 through 18 months and categorize them according to Piagetian and information processing theories.
--- 1 point for describing an improvement or a qualitatively new behavior and one point for explaining it using a specific Piagetian or information processing concept to classify the child’s behavior (2 points)

5. Analyze your baby’s temperament in more detail at 19 months than you did at 8 months. How would you describe your baby in terms of the five aspects of temperament utilized by the Virtual Child program (activity, sociability, emotionality, aggressiveness vs. cooperativeness, and self control)? Has your child’s temperament been stable over the first 18 months? A blurb defining and providing examples of the five aspects of temperament is provided at 12 months in the program, but you should seek out further explanations of temperament from your textbook. Explain how the concept of goodness of fit (also discussed in the blurb on infant temperament) applies to your interactions with your child.
--- 1/2 point for giving a supporting example of each of the five aspects of temperament, 1/2 point for addressing the issue of stability and 1 point for discussing and giving an example of goodness of fit (4 points)

6. Is your child delayed or advanced in any area of development according to the 19-month developmental examiner’s report? Based on what you have studied, do you think this is most likely a result of specific biological or environmental factors?
--- 1 point for describing an area of delay or advancement, 1 point for a hypothesis and 1 point for evidence regarding biological or environmental factors from the lecture or readings (3 points)

Set 3: 30 months
7. Describe your child’s communication and language development in the first 30 months. Is your child developing at a typical or atypical rate?
--- 1 point for a general description of his/her language development and 1 point for discussing specific evidence of either normal or atypical development (2 points)

8. Have there been any environmental events in your child’s first 2 1/2 years that you think might have influenced his or her behavior? On what do you base your hypotheses?
--- 1 point for each of two environmental events – be sure to explain how you
think they influenced your child (2 points)

9. How is your child progressing on typical toddler issues, such as learning household rules, learning to follow routines, listening to you, developing self-control and learning to get along with other children? 
----1 point for each of three toddler issues (total of 3 points)

10. Analyze your own parenting philosophy and practices. What principles from learning or social learning theory, Bowlby, Ainsworth, Piaget, Vygotsky, information processing theory, neuroscience or other theories do you appear to have relied on in making your parenting choices or interpreting your child’s behavior? Include three principles and identify one or more theorists who espoused these principles in your answer. 
----1 point for discussing an example from your parenting that fits a concept or principle from each of three theories you select from the list above (3 points)

Virtual Child Report (Assignment) 2 – Early Childhood (age 3-4 years) (20 points)

Choose six of the following questions. You must choose items 2 and 6 (worth 4 points each), and then 4 of the remaining six items (worth 3 points each). The total possible is 20 points.

3 years

1. What activities and experiences have you and your child engaged in that might be promoting healthy behavioral practices and an interest in physical activity? Refer to the book and lecture where needed. 
---1 point for each of three activities or experiences (3 points)

2. Describe the development of your child’s language and cognitive skills and discuss how these might be affecting his or her interactions with you & your responses. Refer to the text or lecture for descriptions and explanations of each area of skill. 
---1 point for each of three examples illustrating changes in cognitive or language skills and one point for explaining how they might affect your interactions with your child (4 points)

3. How well is your child adapting to social situations in the home and outside the home? Does your child have any behavior or emotional problems at this point? Why do you think these problems are occurring and what are you doing about them? Refer to the text or lecture as needed. 
---1 point for an instance of adaptation in the home and 1 point for an instance
outside the home. 1 point for describing a problem (or an area in which the child needs improvement) and what the parent is doing or plans to do about it. (3 points)

4 years

4. How would you characterize your parenting style (e.g., authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, or variations or combinations of these styles)? Refer to the book or lecture descriptions to justify your classification. How have your specific parenting techniques changed since infancy?
--- 1 point each for two examples describing your parenting style, and 1 point for illustrating how specific parenting techniques have changed since infancy (3 points)

5. Describe three specific examples of changes in your child’s behavior at age 4 that seem to stem from growth in cognitive and language ability since the period of infancy (e.g., improvements in symbolic thinking, reasoning, knowledge of the world, theory of mind). Refer to the book or lecture.
--- 1 point for each of three examples of changes in behavior; be sure to use one or more concepts from the course, including but not limited to those listed above (3 points)

6. How would you characterize your child’s personality? Would you say that your child is primarily over controlled, under controlled or resilient? Support your argument. Recall that the Virtual Child’s behavior at age 3 and 4 is designed to resemble one of three personality types. The personality types combine some of the temperamental traits with which you are already familiar. The over controlled category refers to a child who is cooperative and follows the rules, but is shy in social situations and anxious and clingy under pressure. The under controlled category refers to a child who is uncooperative or even aggressive, does not follow the rules, may or may not be shy in social situations, and has a tendency to become distracted and overly emotional, particularly when under stress. The resilient category refers to a child who is cooperative and follows the rules, is friendly, non-aggressive and outgoing, able to focus on tasks without being too distracted, has good regulation of his or her emotions, and is adaptable to new situations. Refer to the course reader and lecture.
--- 4 points for a well-documented explanation, with two examples of behavior in different situations that support your argument (4 points)

Questions that go with either 3 years or 4 years, or both

7. Look for evidence of continuity as well as discontinuity in your child’s behavior from infancy through early childhood. Give an example of an aspect of ability or personality that has remained fairly stable. Give an
example of an aspect of ability or personality that has been unstable. Why do you think change occurred in one area and not the other? Refer to the book or lecture with regard to reasons for continuity or discontinuity. (3 points)

--- 1 point each for examples of continuity and of discontinuity. One point for a reasonable explanation, referring to information from the book or lecture where possible, that might account for either continuity or discontinuity. (3 points total)

8. Your Virtual child is growing up basically in an average American cultural setting. Based on what you have learned from the course, how specifically might your child’s behavior be different if she was raised in a different culture? Alternatively, if you are familiar with a different culture (e.g., you or your parents were raised in a country outside America with a very different culture), you can describe how your parenting, or your child’s behavior might be different within that cultural setting. As a third option, describe and give examples of how your parenting style, or any other aspect of your parenting, has been influenced by your cultural background or other experiences.

--- 1 point each for providing examples or explanations of three possible cultural differences or influences on your parenting. Describe the rationale for your claim, and the source of your information (book or lecture, or your own experience growing up at least partially within a particular culture). (3 points)

Virtual Child Report 3 – Middle Childhood (age 6-11 years) (20 points)

Run the child through age ten years, 11 months. Choose five questions out of the eight provided. The total possible is 20 points.

1. Based on the evidence from age 6 and 8 years, how well is your child adapting to the school social environment and to the peer group? To what extent does this adaptation seem to depend on personality characteristics that are fairly stable in your child, and to what extent does your child seem to be developing novel behavior to cope with these new situations? Refer to the textbook and lecture for particular points about the responses of children in this age group to the peer group and the school environment.

--- 1 point for an example of adapting to the school social environment and 1 point for an example of peer group adaptation. 2 points for discussing how any of these adaptive responses depend on your child’s personality vs. novel behavior evoked by the unique demands. (4 points total)

2. How smart is your child, and in what areas? Refer to the summary of multiple intelligences that appeared at age 6 and to sections of your
textbook and the course reader article on multiple intelligences. Find specific evidence regarding your child's verbal, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical and bodily-kinesthetic intelligence from your observations of your own child as well as the psychologist's report at age 8 years, 11 months and explain how it ties in to the material in your text and course reader.

--- 1 point for an example illustrating your child's level in four of the five areas of intelligence (4 points)

3. Describe some examples of your child's behavior or thinking that you think are due to typical American gender role socialization and explain why you think so, referring to the text and lectures regarding gender roles and sex differences in behavior. Several examples can be found in the Virtual Child program at ages 6 and 8. How closely does your attitude toward gender roles correspond to typical American attitudes, and if there is a discrepancy, to what do you attribute this (e.g., cultural background, attitudes of your own parents, etc.)?

--- 1 point for each of two examples illustrating gender role socialization and 1 point for discussing evidence from the book and lecture about gender roles, and comparing them to your own attitudes. One point for giving an example from the program of how you have put your attitudes into play (4 points)

4. Describe changes in your child’s academic skills between ages 6 and 10 and assess how well these skills are developing. If your child has any problems that affect school work, such as dyslexia, ADHD, or low levels of verbal, mathematical/scientific or spatial ability. Describe these problems and explain what you and the teachers are doing about them. The 5th grade report card will be useful for this but you should also incorporate your own observations. If your child doesn’t have any academic difficulties, describe what you are doing any way to help your child do well in math/science and literacy (reading, writing and communicating).

----- 1 point each for two aspects of academic skills, which can include oral language/communication, reading, spelling, writing, understanding of science or social studies, and mathematics, and 1 point for explaining and giving examples of how you are helping in each area. (4 points)

5. How well is your child adapting to social situations in the home and outside the home? Does your child have any behavior or emotional problems that have become apparent between 6 and 10 years of age? (some possibilities include internalizing and externalizing problems, ADHD, and obesity). Why do you think these problems are occurring and what are you doing about them?
---1 point each for providing an example to illustrate how well the child is adapting in the home and outside the home. 1 point for describing a problem or an area in which the child needs improvement and providing a hypothesized reason for the problem and 1 point for describing what you are doing about these problems. (4 points)

6. Has your parenting changed since the preschool period and if so, why do you think it has changed and what effect might this have on your child? Refer to your textbook or lecture notes for evidence on typical changes in parenting that occur in middle childhood.
---1 point each for describing two ways in which your parenting has changed, 1 point for thinking about why it has changed and 1 point for hypothesizing about effects on the child. Be sure to include evidence from the text or lecture about typical changes in parenting in middle childhood. (4 points)

7. Has your child’s personality type changed since age 4? Are there any personality traits and abilities on which your child closely resembles you? Describe two of them. Do you think this comes about because of a “genetic” resemblance (i.e., your questionnaire responses) or some consistent practices you’ve followed in your parenting? For example, if you and your child are both highly open to experience, and you took every available opportunity to explore new things with your child, is it possible you’ve taught your child to be open to experience?
---1 point for describing your child’s personality type and backing this up with observations, and 1 point for each of the two personality traits you have chosen for comparison to yourself. 1 point for discussing the issue of genetic vs. environmental influences and citing observations within Virtual Child to support either a genetic or environmental contribution to behavior. (4 points total).

8. In what ways have factors from Microsystems outside the family, from the mesosystem, and the exosystem possibly influenced your child’s development at ages 6, 8 and 10? Find four examples of such influences and make clear why you believe they should be categorized at the particular level you chose within Bronfenbrenner’s model. For example, you could choose two microsystems (e.g., classroom and peer group), one mesosystem (parent-peer relations or parent-teacher relations) and one exosystem (something affecting the parent directly but the child only indirectly, through the parent.
---1 point for each of four examples and an accompanying justification. (4 points total).

Virtual Child Report (Assignment) 4 – Adolescence (12-18 years)
Answer four of the first 6 questions for a total of 12 points and questions 7 and 8 for 8 points (total of 20 points)

1. Describe any physical or behavioral signs of incipient puberty, including changes in physical appearance, behavior or emotions at ages 12 and 14 years.
   ---1 point each for three examples of physical and/or behavioral (which can include cognitive, social or emotional) signs of puberty and a citation of the text or lecture as a source indicating why these types of changes are important (3 points).

2. What activities and experiences at ages 12 and 14 has your teen been involved in that might promote healthy behavioral practices, physical fitness and skill in sports?
   ---1 point each for examples of two activities that promote physical health and/or sports skill and 1 point for citing arguments from the course or the readings as to why these activities are beneficial (3 points)

3. Describe one change in your child’s thinking (e.g., changes in humor, abstract thinking, or theory of mind) and discuss how this might be affecting his or her interactions with you & your responses and his or her interactions with peers. Cite evidence from the course that these kinds of changes occur in early adolescence.
   ---1 point for describing an example, 1 point for analyzing how this might be affecting interactions with you and 1 point for analyzing how this might be impacting interactions with peers. (3 points)

4. Using the 7th & 9th grade report cards and your own observations, summarize your child’s academic skills at this point. What specific activities might promote some of these skills? What careers or courses of study might be best suited to your teen’s abilities and interests?
   ---1 point each for describing and giving two examples of your child’s academic skills. Make sure not to rely solely on the report cards, i.e., cite your own observations. 1 point for describing some activities that might facilitate growth in academic skills and 1 point for explaining why a particular career or course of study might be suitable. (3 points)

5. How important have your teen’s relationships with peers been to his/her social development, emotional well-being and school achievement from 14-18 years of age?
   ---1 point for each of three examples of a possible connection between peer and romantic relationships to the child’s social, emotional or academic development and
citing points from the course that support the importance of these types of peer relationships to later behavior (3 points)

6. How has your teen adjusted at 14-18 years of age to typical adolescent issues such as risk-taking, drugs, alcohol, and sexual interests, and how have you responded to your teen?
---1 point for each of two examples of an issue your teen has encountered from this list, and 1/2 point for describing how you responded to that specific issue and 1/2 point for describing why it is important to long-term adolescence adjustment (according to the text and lecture). (3 points)

Answer both of the following two questions:
7. As the program ends, what pathways does your child appear to be on in terms of physical, cognitive, social, emotional and moral development? Choose three aspects of your child to discuss. To what extent could you have predicted these pathways based on what you knew of your child’s earlier development?
---1 point for discussing each of two pathways and 1 point each for providing supporting documentation (4 points)

8. Describe one specific way in which you think your parenting mattered for your child’s development, based on evidence from the course regarding the contributions of parents to child development. Describe one specific way in which your child developed that appeared to be influenced by factors outside your control, such as genes, random environmental events or the general influence of contemporary middle-class American culture.
--- 1 point each for describing a parenting and non-parenting influences and 1 point for each example for providing evidence from the course that supports your choice of this influence as important (4 points)