



SW 713

**Using Observation to Understand
Very Young Children and their Caregivers**

Deep meaning lies often in childish play.

~Johann Friedrich von Schiller

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Office hours – Monday 12:15 - 3:00

Others by appointment

Course Description:

This course will examine theories and techniques for observing and understanding the behavior and interactions of infants and young children and their caregivers. This course will emphasize evidence-based tools for observation that address diverse groups of infants and young children in their primary environments (e.g., family and alternative caregiving contexts). Special attention will be given to issues of diversity as it relates to understanding the nature of interactions. The course will be divided into classroom activities as well as involvement in an evidence-informed intervention project through the department of Psychiatry. Students will be part of a Child Team working/playing with an individual child on a weekly basis to assist the child with separation and reunions while their parent attends a parenting support and intervention group. The course will contribute to post-graduate readiness for endorsement in infant-family practice.

Course Content:

In addition to 10 weeks working with an assigned child, students will debrief with team members, the treatment team clinical staff and the child team leaders. We will address both the objective aspects of observing and interacting with young children and their caregivers, as well as the subjective experience of caring for young children, many of whom face significant environmental challenges, including poverty and maternal depression. Specific strategies for

helping children who are distressed or dysregulated will be addressed. Finally, students will have the opportunity to observe and reflect upon multiple domains of child development, including state regulation, attachment behaviors, and emotional, language, cognitive and motor development.

Course Objectives:

Students will:

- Develop core skills of MSW students in observation and assessment;
- Through use of videotapes, observation notes and individual feedback, specifically develop expertise to understand and respond to the unique communications of young children, who are much less able to utilize words to express their needs;
- Utilize a multidisciplinary approach including faculty influence from psychiatry, and psychology;
- Consider the behaviors and interactions observed through a multicultural lens, making accurate meaning of what is observed through understanding the child in the context of their caregiving environments, which are influenced by broader societal influences;
- Gain exposure to interacting with parents of young children in a supportive way
- Complete one aspect of training for post-graduate endorsement in infant-family practice.

Course Design:

This course will take place primarily in the community, via involvement with Mom Power, a Research project through University of Michigan, Department of Psychiatry and funded by Medicaid. It is a 10-week attachment-based, supportive, parenting Psychoeducation group for high-risk mother-child dyads (0-6 years). In addition to involvement with the project, students will receive guided support (via live interaction guidance as well as weekly observation notes) from the course instructor and research team members. Students will need to be available for approximately 3.5 hours, which includes set up, the group, clean up and debrief each week.

Following the close of the 10-week session, students will have the opportunity to do a post-intervention home visit with their assigned family. In addition, a final course meeting will be held to debrief the overall experience.

Links to CSWE Practice Behaviors:

Practice Behavior 3

- Apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments
 - Distinguish, appraise and integrate multiple sources of knowledge, including research-based knowledge and practice wisdom

- Demonstrate effective oral and written communication
- Analyze models of assessment, prevention, and intervention

Practice Behavior 4

- Engage diversity and difference in practice
 - Recognize and communicate understanding of the importance of difference in shaping life experiences
 - Gain sufficient self-awareness to eliminate the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse groups

Practice Behavior 7

- Apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment
 - Utilize conceptual frameworks to guide the processes of assessment, intervention and evaluation
 - Critique and apply knowledge to understand person and environment

Practice Behavior 10

- Engage, assess, intervene and evaluate...
 - Use empathy and other interpersonal skills
 - Collect, organize and interpret client data
 - Select appropriate intervention strategies

Relationship of the Course to Four Curricular Themes:

- *Multicultural and Diversity* themes will be addressed by careful attention to the impact of social class, ethnicity, family structure, community support, and ability on infant and parent interactions. Different patterns of development which may result from different biological and/or social environments will be identified and differentiated from those patterns of development which may result from deprivation or impairment.
- *Social Justice and Social Change* will be addressed through discussion of the impact of economic and social oppression on infant and child family relationships.
- *Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation* is particularly important in social work with infants and young children because of the potential lifelong impact of facilitating or harmful conditions at this stage of life. This course will emphasize factors that may contribute to resiliency and vulnerability and identify the kinds of environmental conditions, programs, and interventions that promote optimal development.
- *Behavioral and Social Science Research* will be emphasized throughout the course which will draw on empirically based knowledge regarding observation and assessment from a number of other disciplines, particularly developmental psychology and psychiatry.

Relationship of the Course to Social Work Ethics and Values:

As child development throughout the life course is so profoundly impacted by the parent(s)/child relationship, this course will emphasize understanding the development and indices of attachment. We will also consider potential ethical dilemmas may arise for social workers working with vulnerable children and families. The impact of social conditions and social policy and the need for macro and micro intervention to improve the lives of children will also be addressed.

Intensive Focus on Privilege, Oppression, Diversity and Social Justice (PODS):

This course integrates PODS content and skills with a special emphasis on the identification of practice and/or policies that promote social justice, illuminate injustices and are consistent with scientific and professional knowledge. Through the use of a variety of instructional methods, this course will support students developing a vision of social justice, learn to recognize and reduce mechanisms that support oppression and injustice, work toward social justice processes, apply intersectional and intercultural frameworks and strengthen critical consciousness, self knowledge and self awareness to facilitate PODS learning.

Accommodations:

If you need or desire an accommodation for a disability, please let me know soon. The earlier that you make me aware of your needs the more effectively we will be able to use the resources available to us, such as the services for Students with Disabilities, the Adaptive Technology Computing Site and the like. If you do decide to disclose your disability, I will treat that information as private and confidential. Also, please notify me if religious observances conflict with class attendance or due dates for assignments so we can make appropriate arrangements.

Course requirements:

- Completion of weekly readings (found in the schedule tab each week)
- Completion of weekly Observation notes, including attention to the developmental domain addressed in the weekly reading, as well as a reflection session - to be described in class. To be uploaded through Assignments every Sunday by 11:00 p.m. In addition, your notes sans the reflection will be due to the Child Team Leader at the same time. NOTE:
- Completion of a final summary write up
- Attend all sessions (10% of final grade); absences will lower your grade since:

- This research project relies on the development of a strong caregiver/child relationship to help young children manage and thrive during separation from the parent.
- The children will come to rely on you...predictability, reliability and consistency are core to any strong relationship..."being there" is incredibly important to clients.
- **There will be no texting or emailing while interacting with the children and families or in the debrief sessions**
- Your active participation includes listening well to others and contributing in all activities related to the group.

GRADING of notes and final paper will be based on:

Thoroughness and relevance of observation descriptions

Ability to suspend judgment in description of observations

Ability and accuracy re: relating observation with developmental domains

Reflective Capacity

Writing, grammar, clarity

Agenda

5/8

Meet in SSWB

Topics

Course Introduction

Course Requirement

MP Overview

Managing Child Behavior

Reading:

Muzik - MP Overview

Murphy - When a child is inconsolable

Keller - Repairing links: Building attachment in the preschool classroom

5/15

Meet at site - 1:15 p.m.

Group - 1:30 to 4:00

Clean up - 4 - 4:15

Debrief - 4:15 - 5:00

Reading:

Lillas - Stress Response Regulation

Observation Notes:

In addition to the MP Guide, note your observations of child's stress response, using the Lillas guide to inform your observations.

5/22

Reading:

Massie Campbell Scale of Mother-Infant ADS
Guedeney and Guedeney - Infant rhythms vs. parental time- Promoting parent-infant synchrony.pdf

5/29

Reading:

Fraiberg-The clinical significance of baby games
Kopp - Emotional Dev. 0 to 24 months
Greenspan - Social Emotional Growth Chart Questionnaire

6/5

Reading:

[http://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/ text/url](http://www.asha.org/public/speech/development/text/url)
<http://www.nccc.org/Child.Dev/mile1.html>
Vallotton - Do infants influence their quality of care: Infants' communicative gestures predict caregivers' responsiveness

6/12

Reading:

Developmental Milestones Chart
Fraiberg - Ghosts in the Nursery

6/19

Reading:

Lillas - Stress Regulation (revisiting to see how your child is doing)
Lyons-Ruth - Attachment and Aggression

6/26

Reading:

Norton- Poverty and Parental Interaction
Hart and Risley - Language Development and Poverty
The Poverty Clinic - Can a stressful childhood make you a sick adult

7/3

NO Group or Class (note: we meet with MP until July 24 so this week compensates for the extra class)

7/10

Reading:

Miron, Lewis & Zeanah - Clinical Use of Observational Procedures in Early Childhood Relationship Assessment

7/17

Reading:

Jones-Harden - You cannot do this work alone

Lieberman and Van Horn - Giving voice to the unsayable: Repairing the effects of trauma in infancy and early childhood

7/24

Reading:

Tutors - Relevance of observation to clinical training and practice