

## Family and Human Development Comprehensive Exam

The comprehensive exam is designed to provide you with an opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge of issues in Family and Human Development. Listed below are examples of the content that your comprehensive exam may contain: Family and human development theories, contemporary issues in family relations and human development, and research methods appropriate to your discipline.

### **Part 1: Family and Human Development Theories – Theoretical Understanding (4-6 pages, double spaced).**

- Example: A. Compare and contrast theory A with theory B (*theories A & B will be selected by the Examining Committee, within your primary specialization, from the theories listed below*).
- B. To justify your research question (Part 2, below), give current statistics about the incidence and trends in your topic. As appropriate, apply either theory A or B (Part 1, A) to the topic area.

#### **Human Development Theories**

Behaviorism (e.g., Skinner)  
Cognitive Constructivism (e.g., Piaget)  
Social Cognition (e.g., Bandura)  
Sociohistorical (e.g., Vygotsky)  
Behavioral Genetics (e.g., Plomin)  
Ethology (e.g., Ainsworth, Bowlby)  
Psychosocial (e.g., Erikson)

#### **Family Relation Theories**

Feminist Framework  
Social Exchange  
Symbolic Interactionism  
Bio-ecological (e.g., Bronfenbrenner)  
Family Stress  
Family Systems Theory

### **Part 2: Issues in Family and Human Development (4-6 pages, double spaced).**

Example: Using either theory A or B from Part 1 (your choice), create a brief research prospectus that addresses one of the issues listed below (*This topic/issue will be selected by the Examining Committee*). Make sure that your prospectus includes all six of the following components:

1. **A research question**
2. Two or more **testable hypotheses** (Define your independent and dependent variables)
3. **A sample section** (Describe your sampling process and identify strengths and weaknesses of the sampling strategy that you have chosen)
4. **A measurement section** (Specify how you would go about ensuring that your measures are reliable and valid)
5. **A research design section** (Specify aspects of the research design, likely threats to internal validity, and threats to internal validity that are controlled by your research design)
6. **A proposed data analysis section** (Specify which statistical procedures could best test your hypotheses, justify your choice of statistics)

### **Human Development Topics & Issues**

Cohort effects  
Heredity and environmental interaction  
Individual differences vs. universals  
Methodological implications  
Motivation/mechanisms for change  
Quantitative vs. qualitative change  
Sensitive/critical periods of development  
Stability vs. plasticity

### **Family Relations Topics & Issues**

Mate Selection  
Cohabitation  
Adult Relationship Processes & Quality  
Methodological implications  
Divorce (issues for adults)  
Divorce (issues for children)  
Parenting & Child Outcomes

### **Part 3: Integration of Perspectives: Family and Human Development (2-4 pages, double spaced).**

Example: Describe the major theoretical components of theory C (*This theory will be selected by the Examining Committee, within your secondary specialization, from the theories listed in Part 1 above*).

Using the same topic/issue that you addressed in your research prospectus (for Part 2), apply a theory from your secondary specialization (*This theory will be selected by the Examining Committee, within your secondary specialization, from the theories listed in Part 1 above*). Now, critique your research prospectus (especially sections 1-4 in your prospectus) from the theoretical perspective that you just described (theory C).