

Questions for Professor Thompson

1. What is the specific assignment for this essay?

The general topic for this assignment comes from a couple of sections from our child psychology textbook, *Infants and Children*, covering “Motivations for Parenthood” and “Preparing for Parenthood.” In these sections, the author describes the many practical, psychological, sociological and physiological factors affecting people’s choice to have children and the transition to parenthood. Keeping these factors in mind, students choose ONE of the following topics:

1. Interview your mother (and/or father) and grandmother (and/or grandfather). How did they approach the decision to have children and the transition to parenthood? What factors affected the decisions they made and the path they took? Consider your own plans and views on this topic. What similarities and differences do you notice in the way three generations approach these issues?
2. Interview your mother and/or father. Describe, in detail, the particular story of your pre-conception, conception (not those details, please!), gestation, birth, and first months. How did the issues raised in your textbook play out in your parents’ particular case when they had you?
3. Choose an autobiographical/ family history slant on these issues that may be particular to your own life or family. Pre-approve your personalized topic with me before you start writing your paper.

Sarah chose to write on topic #2, with a dash of topic #3.

2. How does this assignment fit with the goals of your course?

Psychology 203 is a broad survey course on child psychology and human development. One of the explicit goals of the course is to challenge students to think about the way they were raised and the impact various factors have had on their present development, personality, and life situation. This assignment invites students to learn more about the circumstances that were present in their parents’ lives around the time of their birth, and to learn more about the story of their birth and early days. One of the most gratifying things about giving this assignment (other than reading the papers themselves!) is that students often comment, after the fact, on being surprised how much they hadn’t known, and how much they learned, about their parents’ lives and their own birth story.

3. Why does this student’s essay stand out for you as strong writing?

Sarah’s paper stands out for me as strong writing for a number of reasons. First, she skillfully weaves the story of her biological parents in with the story of her adopted, or real parents, making circumstances that could be tricky to write about come across very clearly and naturally. Also, she conveys the love that her parents have for her in a way that is very moving. It is emotionally powerful writing. Her essay made me cry, but it also made me laugh. She includes a number of vivid anecdotes, like the one about her brothers pushing her across the floor in a diaper box, that I found quite charming.

Overall, Sarah's paper stands out for me as strong writing primarily because of my reaction to it. I found myself immediately wanting to show the essay to others, to watch their reaction as they read it.

Questions for Sarah Yoon-Miller

1. How did you go about completing this essay? What steps did you follow?

I started writing this paper the same way I start every paper, with a free write. Then I interviewed my mom; she confirmed a lot of the information that I already knew and that I had put in my free write, and she sent me a copy of my medical history. My mom keeps a medical history for all of my siblings. Because there are so many of us, my mom has to write stuff down so she doesn't forget it. Whenever we have doctor's appointments my mom will look at the medical history before the appointment so she can tell our doctor about all of the important medical stuff that has happened since the last appointment. In the medical history my mom has a part that talks about our background and our birthparents, this was the part that I was interested in.

Once I had this information I started writing a rough draft. The first one was long, and I eventually went through three rough drafts before I was satisfied with the editing and revising.

2. What was the most challenging aspect of this essay assignment?

The hardest part was keeping it under four pages. There was so much that I could say about my background and about my parents and older brothers, so many little details. But after lots of revising I finally had a draft that I was satisfied with that also had the right amount of detail and the appropriate length.

3. How does this essay connect to your work in the course as a whole?

We had just finished learning about prenatal development and birth. We also spent a little bit of time on preparing for parenthood. The assignment was to find out about how our parents prepared for our birth. This went right along with what we had just learned in class.

4. What is the most important thing you learned from doing this essay?

I had always known the basic story of how I was adopted, but I didn't know the details. After talking with my mom I learned about all of the little things that she and my dad had to go through before they got me. All of the paperwork they had to complete, and all of the emotional stuff they went through as well. It was fun to learn about what my parents went through when they got me: all of the things they had to adjust to, and all of the things other people said about adoption. It was also fun to hear about the funny stories. I talked with my oldest brother about it, and he told me some things that he saw from his perspective as an older brother. It was cool to hear the different points of view of my brother and my mom.