Research Study and Research Study Portfolio

Students in the Child Growth and Development class are required to conduct a modified research study during the semester. The purpose of the study is to gain insight and perspective into the physical, social, moral and/or cognitive development of children by examining children directly in their natural environments in the light of critical theories of child development.

The research study is designated modified for several reasons.

1. Students have insufficient time to select a valid sample population for the study. Therefore, they will have to be satisfied to work with a single child or group of children conveniently available.
2. Populations of children used in the study will not be large enough for making large-scale generalizations. Instead, students will have to be satisfied to gain perspective and insight in a specific context.
3. The time for collecting data is short. Students will need to design studies that can be implemented in one or two sittings. It is not reasonable to conduct a longitudinal study (over time) because there are only a few weeks available for collecting data.
4. Students will not be able to control all conditions during the study. Access to children is carefully protected, and students in the class are required to respect all conditions imposed during the study by those people responsible for the well being of the children.

Students will be given guidance throughout the semester as they propose, conduct, and report findings on these studies. The following criteria are offered as a “starting point” for the research studies.

A. Students may work alone or in small cooperative groups for the purpose of conducting the study.
B. Students will choose a child/early adolescent or group of children/early adolescents from infancy through age 14 to observe/study during the course.
C. Students will develop a research study based on the child(ren) selected.
D. Students will submit a Research Study Portfolio that documents the five critical elements of the research study.
E. Students will submit individual elements of the Research Study portfolio from time to time in order to document progress and to gain instructor feedback/guidance/support. Dates for submitting individual elements will be posted on the course calendar.
F. Students are required to meet with the course instructor at least once in a face-to-face conference.
G. All five individual elements of the study must be included in the final Research Study Portfolio.
The Research Study Portfolio will consist of five elements (see details below) that must be collected and presented in a coherent whole to the course instructor no later than November 21. The portfolios submitted must include a table of contents that provides navigation to the following five required elements.

I. ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY. Students are expected to construct an annotated bibliography. The annotated bibliography must

A. Include a minimum of eight authoritative sources specifically related to the research study – one may be the course text
B. Include at least two “primary” texts [Ex. If research is based on Piaget, READ Piaget!]
C. Include at least one current [2000 and later] periodical
D. Include at least one document located using an electronic database (for example, ERIC) – please include a printout of the search.
E. Include at least one “authoritative” online reference
F. Include all of the sources listed in the bibliography/works cited section of the research paper plus additional sources that you may have read while deciding on a research study question or that you read to gain background knowledge for your research study but that had little relevance in the final paper.

For more information on constructing the Annotated Bibliography, go to http://dante.udallas.edu/edu3327/annotated_bibliography.htm

II. *RESEARCH PROPOSAL. Students are expected to develop a research proposal that includes

A. An introduction to the theoretical foundation for the study
B. A Statement of the problem (and any sub problems)
C. Critical questions that will guide the study
D. Hypotheses based on authoritative reading
E. A preliminary list of terms critical to the research study
F. A partial annotated bibliography (that includes a minimum of three sources with at least two primary texts)
G. Criteria to guide the collection, analysis, and evaluation of data
H. A preliminary data collection instrument
I. A carefully scripted methodology/procedure

*Research proposals must be approved and signed first by the course instructor and then by the adult responsible for the children involved in the study. Data collection may NOT begin until the course instructor has approved proposals. Individual appointments for proposal discussion/approval can be made with Mrs. Khirallah. Before Mrs. Khirallah will approve proposals, students must
have a site for the research study.

III. DATA AND TREATMENT OF DATA. Students are expected to collect data using the methods, procedure, and instrument(s) indicated in the research proposal. This section of the portfolio must include the following:

A. Raw data that was collected using the collection instrument defined in the research proposal (this is the data collected directly from children)
B. A rubric, scale, list of words, or other appropriate tool for analyzing and treating data created IN ADVANCE of data analysis to guide the analysis of data. Some students may want to apply statistical procedures learned in other classes. Students may use either quantitative or qualitative research methods.
C. A clear explanation of the research-based “system” and tool used to analyze and evaluate the data for each problem addressed. The “system” must be logically and conceptually connected to theoretical concepts in the particular research study. The researcher MUST include in the explanation how “difficult” data was categorized.
D. Carefully analyzed data collected using the process and instrument created/selected – organized and graphically represented.

IV. RESEARCH PAPER: CONNECTING THEORY TO PRACTICE. This section of the portfolio is the research paper that discusses “your” research findings in the context of the theory selected as the foundation for the study. Ordinarily, no first person is used in the paper. The paper will be about 8-10 pages and should include the following:

A. An introduction with a brief description of the problem....and your hypothesis. This information may come directly from your proposal. This portion of the paper may or may not include references.
B. Review of the literature on the topic. This is an extremely important portion of your paper. It should be a synthesis of the reading you did to construct an understanding of the theory and research used to build your study. Be sure that this portion includes appropriate citations to references. This information will come from the annotated bibliography and notes taken on your reading.
C. A description of the setting (context) in which you did your research. Describe carefully the conditions of the study. It would be appropriate to include pictures in this section of the paper.
D. A Description of the general procedure used to collect data. In other words, what did you do? Be sure to explain the theoretical concepts that support your procedure. (This information can come from your proposal and data treatment section.) Also in this section, describe what happened during the project – the “story” of the encounter with the children. Mention any problems or unusual circumstances that occurred.
E. Research findings and questions arising from the study. Here describe the data collected and what the data means in terms of the theory. In this section of the paper, it is appropriate to include and refer to graphic representations of the data included in the data treatment section.

F. Implications from research and their specific connection with theory. This part of your paper must be well thought out. It should include implications of your research for education (or psychology or medicine or parenting) and also reflect the researcher’s growth in understanding with regard to the development/education of children. This portion of the paper should cite references from reading as well as examples from the data collection. It may include a table/graph or other representation of your data in order to make a point. In this portion of your paper, there is a constant interplay between the theory and the data.

G. Evaluation of the Study: This is an important element of the paper. In this section, the researcher(s) need to discuss problems encountered during the research study and ways to improve the study. The evaluation should be at least one and no more than three word-processed pages. The research study evaluation must include discussion of a) degree to which the study results substantiated the hypothesis – or did not substantiate the hypothesis, b) strengths and weaknesses of the research, and c) changes that would improve the study if it were to be done again. Be sure to provide evidence for your comments based on theory and data collected.

H. Bibliography: There is a bibliography based on a consistent format that serves to identify sources for all references cited in the paper.

V. RESEARCH STUDY PRESENTATIONS: Students will offer a 25-minute substantive oral presentation of the research study. All materials used in the presentation must be included in the portfolio.

A. Students MUST provide a handout to the class that includes a brief abstract of the study, key terms with definitions and major theory points. I recommend that you construct a PowerPoint or a Web Page to support the organized and coherent flow of your presentation. If you need technology help, I am more than willing...as long as it is not “totally” last minute.

B. Class presentations will begin Nov. 2 and end Dec. 2. Students may schedule presentations at any time during the semester by submitting a request to the instructor. Presentation dates will be determined on a first-come, first-serve basis. Mrs. Khirallah will add students who have not scheduled their presentations by October 19 to the schedule of presentations. Presentations must be kept to 25 minutes per person! If there are two people working together, you may have up to 50 minutes. Rehearse your presentations well in order to keep to the time.

C. Students must receive approval to present at least one week prior to scheduled presentation date. Approval will be granted based on the
quality of research study and materials prepared.

A NOTE ABOUT FORMAT

Elements in the Research Study Portfolio may be constructed in a variety of formats. I will accept materials online, on disk, on CD-ROM, or on paper. The individual student is required to determine the most appropriate means by which to organize and link the materials turned in. In the case of online materials, students are required to submit disks containing all files and/or documents. All written work (no matter its format) should be polished, proofread, and typed and should represent the student’s best thinking and organization. Final grades will be based upon the considerations and weights listed in the Research Study Rubric.

A SPECIAL NOTE TO STUDENTS WORKING TOGETHER IN TEAMS (HIGHLY RECOMMENDED)

Students who decide to work in teams to complete the research study must meet the following additional requirements:

A. As part of the Research Proposal, the team must develop a chart of responsibilities that clearly identifies the roles and responsibilities of each team member.
B. The Annotated Bibliography must include a minimum of ten sources. Each team member must read and annotate a minimum of five different texts. In addition, team member must read and annotate at least five common sources. Thus, the Research Study Portfolio will contain a separate annotated bibliography for each member of the research team.
C. Each team member must write a portion of the research paper.
D. Each team member must take an active role in the collection and/or treatment of data.
E. Each team member must take an active role in the class presentation.
F. Each team member is responsible for understanding all aspects of the project – and can respond to questions over both theory and collected data.
G. Each team member submits/writes separate evaluations of the research study.
H. Each team member submits an Assessment Form for self and an Assessment Form for each team member.