Research Study

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 allow for the collection of data 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.

1. Students may work alone or in small cooperative groups for the purpose of conducting the study.

2. Students will choose a child/early adolescent or group of children/early adolescents from infancy through age 14 to observe/study during the course.

3. Students will develop a research study based on the child(ren) selected. The study will include (as a minimum):

   I. *Research Proposal (signed by B. Khirallah and supervisor of children involved in study). The proposal must include the following components.
      • statement of the problem (and any subproblems)
      • guiding questions
      • hypotheses
      • definitions of terms
      • preliminary annotated bibliography
• minimum three sources with at least one primary text
• methodology/procedure
• data collection instrument

II. Data Collection & Analysis (Interpretation) of Data – including appropriate Data Collection Instrument

• Data must be collected using a valid instrument that is conceptually linked to the goals and objectives of the study and reflects explicitly the foundational theory/theorist.
• The researcher must provide documented evidence of the “system” used in the specific treatment of the data for each problem addressed - in other words, how did you "analyze" the data - how did you "evaluate" it - what was your criteria?
• Analysis of data and representation of what you learned through your research. You MUST explain how you evaluated the data - how did you decide what was Stage one, Stage Two, etc....you must have a rubric, scale, or list of words created IN ADVANCE of your analysis to document how you analyze the data. Some of you may want to apply statistical procedures that you have learned in other classes. You may use either quantitative or qualitative research methods.
• Data, once interpreted, must be organized and graphically represented – for presentation to the class

III. Connecting theory to practice [This part of your portfolio is similar to a research paper; however, it mingles “your” research findings with the theories/findings of experts.] No first person is used in the paper. The paper is due with the Project Portfolio.

The paper will probably be about 6-8 pages including the following parts:

A. Introduction [brief description of problem, research....and your hypothesis] Take this information from your proposal.

B. Review of the literature on the topic.

C. The setting (context) in which you did your
research; describe carefully the conditions of the study. In addition, describe the general procedure that you followed.

D. Research findings and questions that arise out of the study. Here describe the data collected and the analysis of the data. Explain what you did to organize the data and arrive at the findings.

E. Conclusions / generalizations from research and their specific connection with theory [this should be well thought out....this contains the “what I now know” stuff as well as the “boy, was I naïve” stuff]. This portion of the paper should cite references from your bibliography as well as examples from your data collection. It should include the table/graph or other representation of your data in order to make a point. There is a constant interplay between the theory and the data.

F. Implications of your research for education (or psychology...or ...)

G. Evaluation of the study
   - Problems encountered
   - Ways to improve research study
   - If I had to do it over again

IV. Journal of observations/interactions (minimum 8 entries of one hour each) [scheduled over time]

V. Background Reading/Review of Literature/Annotated bibliography. Please make sure that at least five sources from your more comprehensive annotated bibliography are cited somewhere in your paper. The references cited at the end of your paper do not need to be annotated; however, each included reference must be included in your Annotated Bibliography with appropriate annotation. The final, polished Annotated Bibliography must be completed and submitted with your "connecting theory to practice" paper.
• a minimum of eight sources is required in the Annotated Bibliography
• at least two “primary” texts [Ex. If research is based on Piaget, READ Piaget!] These must be books!
• a minimum of one current [1995 and later] periodical
• journals used as resources must include at least one ERIC search printout
• at least one source must be a web site
• at least five references included in the Annotated Bibliography MUST BE CITED in your paper

Here are two sites that can help you understand what an annotated bibliography is and how to construct one:

• http://www.crk.umn.edu/library/links/annotate.htm and
• http://www.library.cornell.edu/okuref/research/skill28.htm

3. Students will offer a 25-minute substantive oral presentation of the research study. You 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. You will have equipment available to you in class to show your finished products. In addition, if you need help, I am more than willing to help....as long as it is not “totally” last minute

*Research proposals must be signed by Barbara. Khirallah first, then by the child(ren)'s supervisor. Individual appointments for proposal discussion/approval can be made with Barbara Khirallah. Project proposals must be signed by both parties. At that time, students must have secured a site for observations and completed at least one independent observation.
Completed project portfolios are due no later than two weeks after the class presentation. Presentations can be scheduled anytime during the semester. Those who have not scheduled their presentations by October 13 will be added to the schedule of presentations by Mrs. Khirallah. Presentations can be scheduled from November 1 – 22 on a first-come, first-serve basis. No more than two presentations can be scheduled on any given date. Presentations must be kept to 25 minutes per person! If there are two people working together, they may have up to 50 minutes. Rehearse presentations well in order to keep to the time.

How will you be graded on your project? See the portfolio rubric!

Samples of completed projects are available at http://dante.udallas.edu/edu3327