Seminar in Development and Socialization:
Methods of Developmental Research
EDPSY 582A, Winter, 1999
Wed. 2:00-4:20 pm, Miller 316

Instructor: Dr. Theresa Thorkildsen
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Purpose: Many researchers have been preoccupied with choosing sides in what is becoming
know and the Quantitative-Qualitative Debate (QQD). In doing so, it is possible to miss the fact
that those who study human development rely on methods that offer a helpful synthesis
among common psychometric and ethnographic forms of inquiry. Because experts in human
development are interested in measuring and theorizing about change, neither qualitative nor
quantitative approaches to research can offer the range of findings that are needed to
understand processes of development.

This course will start with the questions:
- What kinds of development can be measured adequately?
- How do developmental researchers demonstrate that they have obtained high
  quality data?
- What kinds of design issues need to be considered in order to measure and
  theorize about change?

Assignments: The course will be organized like a seminar. As a student, you should complete
assigned readings before coming to class and be prepared to discuss the material in them. Class
time will be spent discussing the application of the readings to your respective fields of interest
and generating new questions. Although I do not take attendance, grades do tend to correlate
highly with attendance and class participation. It is also your responsibility to keep the class
informed about potential absences and to obtain information you might miss (either due to
exhaustion during a given class or a missed class).

You will be asked to design your own evaluation plan for the semester. At the very minimum,
everyone will be required to design and complete an independent project and present their
findings to the class. As part of that project, you will be required to find at least 4 articles from
different developmental journals and to incorporate a critique of those articles into your work.
The project itself should involve measuring change of one form or another and evaluating the
quality of the data you collect. Throughout the course you will be asked to talk about what you
are doing, the progress you are making, etc. Finally, toward the end of the semester you will
have about 20 minutes in which to present your findings and discuss possible new directions for
your own work with the class.
If you wish to work towards an ‘A’ in the course, you should also integrate the concepts from this course into your overall program of study and show me how you managed to do so. (There will be no exams.) In the past, students have written several short thought papers in which they talk about their informal reactions to the readings. [E.g., a critique of what you have read, application of research to your area of work, or an integration of the readings with things you already have thought about (and perhaps read about).]

Your areas of interest should be clear to all the members of our scholarly community. In the past, students have communicated these interests in several ways. For example, we will establish an e-mail network to which you will be encouraged to participate. Class contributions allow us to discern your interests. And, other less public forms of communication have been used successfully. Many students and faculty have learned over the years that, when everyone participates, we can all learn, have fun, and avoid unnecessary resentments. People who do not join in are typically ignored rather than punished.

Readings: The course will be divided into three major sections and readings have been selected to provide an overview of each. Some weeks, everyone will be asked to read the same material. Other weeks, each person will read different material on a related topic.

I have ordered two books for the course. The first is a general textbook that can help those who are familiar with basic research design issues explore how developmental psychologists differ from other researchers. The second book is more specialized and highlights ways in which researchers can obtain high quality observational data. Other books that might be useful for your projects will be introduced, but need not be purchased by everyone.

Tentative Schedule

**Week 1: The Qualitative-Quantitative Debate**

**Week 2: Thinking as Argument**
Maxwell, W. (1965). The kingdom where straightforward, logical thinking was admired over every other kind. In W. Maxwell’s, *All the days and nights* (pp. 397-403). New York: Vintage International.

**Week 3: Developmental Theory and Measurement**


**Week 4: Introduction to Piagetian Research Methods**


**Week 5: Interview Techniques**


**See also:**


**Week 6: Coding and Reporting Interview Data**


**Week 7: Introduction to Nonverbal Research Methods**


**Week 8: Observing Interactions**


**Week 9: Coding and Reporting Observational Data**


**Week 10: Student Presentations**

**Finals Week: Student Presentations**