

**BLOOMSBURG UNIVERSITY**  
**Department of Psychology**  
*Lifespan Development: Dr. Jeffrey D. Leitzel*

**Some suggested paper topics**

- ψ Are there really “stages” in child development?
- ψ Are there developmental stages in adulthood? What is the evidence for continuity/discontinuity in adult development?
- ψ Can there be an integration of behavioral and developmental approaches or are these underlying "world views" antithetical to each other?
- ψ What is the current state of our knowledge of how children learn their first language? What is the evidence for the major theories of language learning?
- ψ What is the evidence for sex differences in personality and mental health? How have cultural biases affected research and theorizing concerning women?
- ψ Why does human aging occur? What is the current state of knowledge regarding biological and/or psychological aging?
- ψ Is adolescence necessarily a stressful period? What is the effect of one's theoretical position on their answer to this question?
- ψ What are the effects of homelessness on children emotionally, socially and academically?
- ψ Is there research that explains sex differences in mathematical, verbal and spatial abilities?
- ψ How do writers of various theoretical positions view moral development? What is the current evaluation of Kohlberg's work? Gilligan's?
- ψ Is there evidence for prejudice towards the elderly?
- ψ How do relationships between parents and children change over the life cycle?

**Some suggested debate questions**

1. Do pregnant women have a right to refuse medical treatment aimed at safeguarding the health of the fetus?
  - A. Society has an obligation to protect the unborn, and courts should therefore compel pregnant women to comply with medical procedures in the best interest of the fetus.
  - B. Pregnant women should be conferred the same rights to make decisions about their bodies as are granted to men and to non-pregnant women.
  
2. What is the best approach for dealing with child abuse?
  - A. An abused child's interests are best served by removing either the child or the abusing parent from the home, and prosecution of the abusing parent.
  - B. Child abusers are victims, just as their children are. All possible efforts should be made to keep the family together, providing support and therapy.
  
3. Should parents begin academic instruction of their children before they are old enough to start school?
  - A. Absolutely! This is one valuable way for parents to give their children a head start to academic success.
  - B. No! Academic instruction of young children before they enter school provides no lasting advantages, and may in fact be harmful.
  
4. Should parents attempt to foster traditional gender roles or androgyny in their children?
  - A. Parents should be encouraged to instill traditional masculine and feminine roles in their sons and daughters.
  - B. Parents should be encouraged to raise an androgynous sons and daughters.
  
5. Are the developmental costs of mothers' employment worth the benefits?
  - A. The costs to the child of mothers' full-time employment overshadow any benefits that may be obtained.
  - B. Mothers' full-time employment provides benefits that more than compensate for any costs that are entailed.
  
6. Should high school students be allowed to work?

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- A. Adolescents should be encouraged to have a part-time job because of the benefits attained.
- B. Adolescents should be forbidden to work because of the negative social and academic implications.
7. What is the best approach for dealing with juvenile delinquency?
- A. Juvenile delinquency should be handled simply as a form of crime: youthful offenders should be treated the same as adult criminals.
- B. Juvenile delinquency should be regarded as a cry for help by troubled youngsters; therapeutic approaches are the best way to deal with the problem.
8. Should training for parenthood be mandatory?
- A. Courses designed to prepare people to be effective parents should be a mandatory part of public, private, and parochial schooling on the secondary level.
- B. Courses designed to prepare people to be effective parents should be available, but no one should be required to take them.
9. Should adult children be required by law to care for their aging parents?
- A. Adult children should be required by law to provide any necessary support for their aging parents.
- B. Government and social agencies should provide care to the aged, families should provide, at most, supplements to this care.
10. Should euthanasia be legalized?
- A. Euthanasia should be legalized and recognized as a humane approach to terminal illnesses and in certain other situations.
- B. Euthanasia should remain illegal.
11. Is daycare harmful?
- A. Research indicates that the absence of a consistent primary caretaker during a child's first few years produces serious emotional and psychological debilitation.
- B. Child development investigators have found no consistent adverse effects of out-of-home child daycare.
12. Can human intelligence be increased?
- A. Some theorists view intelligence as a changeable and multifaceted characteristic that can be changed and taught using appropriate training.
- B. Previous efforts to increase intelligence have failed to produce any appreciable gains, and programs to do so are based on a faulty understanding of the nature of intelligence.