Class Activities: Cross-Sectional vs. Longitudinal Research

Directions (Activity 1): Which research design (cross sectional or longitudinal) is depicted in each of the following examples?

1. a study of changes in intelligence over adulthood that examines intellectual abilities in the same 1,500 individuals each decade from ages 50 to 80 years

2. an examination of childhood changes in social development that representatively samples and then compares 18,000 participants assigned to groups of 4-, 8-, and 12-year-olds

3. an investigation of changes in physical development in infancy by comparing the progression of fine and gross motor skills in 22,000 infants of different ages, ranging from 2 months through 22 months

4. a study of changes every 20 years in political attitudes (liberal vs. conservative) over a 40-year span in 3,000 adults between the ages of 25 and 65 years

Directions (Activity 2): Using the above-described study of changes every 20 years in political attitudes over a 40-year span in 3,000 adults between the ages of 25 and 65, design a research project from both a cross-sectional and longitudinal perspective. In doing so, compare and contrast the advantages and disadvantages of each of these time-sensitive, developmentally oriented research designs.