

Psychological Experiment Assignment

As a student in this class, you are embarking on your first steps towards becoming a psychologist or learning about the discipline of psychology. Psychology is a science and as such, we use the scientific method to design experiments that test hypotheses, produce empirical evidence and lead us to a better understanding of behavior. All of what we know about psychology comes from experiments – and there is still much to be learned!

For this assignment, your task is to choose one of the topics that we will cover in class and design an experiment that will add to what we know about that topic. For example, we will talk about learning. You may wonder whether note taking during class actually improves learning. Incorporating what you know from class about experimental design and the topic in which you are interested, develop a testable hypothesis and design a fictional experiment that will allow you to test your ideas.

This is a theoretical study; you will not actually conduct it.

Your final paper should include:

Introduction

Briefly introduce the topic, explain your question and why your study is important.

Hypothesis and rationale: What is your hypothesis and why do you predict a particular outcome?

Methods

Procedure: Describe how exactly what your participants will do. How did you select your participants? Will there be multiple groups? How will you assign participants to the groups? What will you measure, in other words what is your *dependent variable*? What is the factor that you will manipulate or that you predict will affect the outcome, in other words what is your *independent variable*?

Results

Analysis: What are the numbers/variables that you will compare? Do not use statistics, instead use statements like “I will compare the scores of group X and group Y to determine if they differ.”

Possible outcomes: Propose a specific outcome based on the patterns of the data.

Discussion

Interpretation: What does the proposed outcome mean?

Connection to literature: Describe how your experiment relates to a finding or concept covered this term and what it adds to the topic. Find at least one empirical (not review) research article to show how your experiment adds to the field.

Ethical considerations: Is anything about this experiment ethically questionable? Justify your choices.

Potential confounds: Could another factor explain your findings? Are your internal and external validity strong (accept that no study does both perfectly)?

Assignment Deadlines:

- 1. Proposal:** Due to Moodle by 5pm on April 25
Submit one paragraph that summarizes the idea you plan to test, briefly describes the basics of your experimental design, and how your idea relates to material from class. We will give you feedback about your proposal to ensure you are on the right track.
- 2. Draft:** Due to Moodle by Sunday May 20 by 5pm.
Submit a full draft of your experiment, including all of the components outlined above to Moodle. You will submit a draft of your paper to Moodle, we will distribute your draft to two classmates and you will receive paper drafts from two classmates on May 21. You will make written comments on your peers' papers and provide constructive comments in class on May 25. More details will be provided in class.
- 3. Final paper:** Hardcopy of your paper due to the Psych Office by 4:30pm on Wednesday May 30. The final paper will likely be between 3-5 pages, double-spaced in 12-point traditional font (times or arial are good choices). Your paper will be assessed on clarity of writing, experimental design and the degree to which you make a connection to class material.

All assignments submitted to Moodle should be in .doc, .docx or pdf format.

If you have questions or need help come to office hours, schedule an appointment or email us!