

## Project Guidelines

### Overview

This semester, you and a small group of your classmates will design, conduct, and report the results of a psychological study. The study may be on any social psychological topic you wish and may use any of the following research strategies: laboratory experiment, questionnaire, field study, naturalistic observation (observing without interfering), or archival research (e.g., examining the relation between average city temperature and homicide rate).

### Human Subjects Application

Any study that will use humans as participants must submit a human subjects application and have it approved prior to data collection. Only one application should be submitted per group. The application requires a complete informed consent form, debriefing form, and description of your procedure. Your grade will be based on the thoroughness and clarity of the first draft of your application.

### Annotated Bibliography of 7 sources

Use PsycINFO (through EBSCOhost) to locate seven professional psychology journal articles or book chapters that you are likely to use in your paper, and submit the references for these. Include author(s), date, title, journal name or chapter title, volume or book title, and page numbers. Give the reference, then write a paragraph describing how the reference will contribute to your paper. Discuss how the study is both similar to and distinct from your study. Try to connect the findings in the article to your study by listing all the intermediate steps. Don't just say the study "supports your hypothesis" – explain *how*. Do not use any part of the abstract in your paragraph. Your grade on this assignment will depend in part on how well-chosen your references are. Pick articles that are as relevant to your topic as possible. Grade will be based in part on the clarity and insight of your paragraph descriptions.

### Methods Section

This is the first section of your paper that you will submit for a grade. When writing scientific papers, it is often most efficient to begin with the Methods section because it tends to be the most straightforward and easiest to write. This section is divided into three subsections using headings (see *APA Publication Manual*, 5th ed., pp. 113-115): Participants, Materials, and Procedure.

### Analysis Plan

First, restate your hypothesis. Then, write a brief description of each variable that you will have in your SPSS file. Describe what statistical procedures you will perform to test your hypothesis, using variable names where appropriate. Finally, describe the results that would support your hypothesis. For example, "Our hypothesis is that there is a positive correlation between hours of TV watched and grade point average. The data file will include the variable TV, which will be the number of hours the participant reports watching in the previous evening, and GPA, which will be the participant's self-reported grade-point average. We will be correlating TV and GPA. A significant positive correlation between TV and GPA would support our hypothesis."

### Pilot Study Report

After your human subjects application has been approved, schedule a pilot test in which two of your friends play the role of participants. Afterward, ask them about the study: was anything unclear? Did they figure out what your hypothesis was? Write up a 2-3 page report (double-spaced) describing what you learned from the pilot study and any changes you think will be necessary.

## Final Draft of Paper

### General paper specifications

- Typed
- 12-point font
- Arial or Times font
- Double-spaced
- 1-inch margins
- 10+ references
- 10-15 pages
- Each page numbered

### Formatting and style

The paper must conform to the 5th edition of the American Psychological Association's *Publication Manual*.

### Citations

Any statement of fact that could be reasonably disputed must be backed up with a citation: "Overall, the psychological literature indicates that men tend to be more aggressive than women (Eagly & Steffen, 1986)." As this example illustrates, the general format of citations in APA style is parenthetical, with a comma separating author(s) and date of publication. If you use a direct quote, you must also give the page number. Do not cite "class notes" – find the original source. See the APA Publication Manual for how to format citations.

### Oral Presentation

Each group will present their project to the class during a lab session near the end of the semester. You may have as many presenters as you like (1, 2, or 3), but each group member will receive the same score for the presentation. Your presentation should last 10-15 minutes (but no more than 15 minutes; you will lose 1 point for every minute beyond 15 minutes you take). After your talk, your classmates have an opportunity to ask questions. You can make your classmates happy by asking them questions after they present, because they will not be able to earn a "good" or "excellent" score on "responding to questions" unless they receive questions from the audience. Your goal is to effectively communicate the purpose of your study, its methods, its results, and the meaning of those results.

### TIPS ON OTHER ELEMENTS OF YOUR PAPER

The remaining sections are not turned in separately for a grade, but I include descriptions of them here to help you in putting together your paper.

#### Title Page

The title page is the first page of an APA-style manuscript. See pages 10-12, 296-298, and 306 of the Publication Manual. Under your name and affiliation, please also list the name of this course ("PSY 344: Social Psychology") and the semester and year.

#### References

The reference section is a list of all the sources that you cited. It should be on a separate page from the rest of the paper, and should come after the Discussion section but before any Figures or Tables. The word "References" should be at the top of the page, centered. The whole list should be double-spaced. References should be listed in alphabetical order by first author. You should have at least ten references. Each reference should be formatted using a hanging indent (in Microsoft Word, this is done using Ctrl+T), with the first line flush left and subsequent lines indented 0.5 inches. See chapter 4 of the Publication Manual on reference formatting.

#### Results and Discussion

The Results section contains all of the results of your analysis, including means, *t*-tests, and correlations (see Publication Manual pp. 20-21). If you wish, you may put your figures or tables into the results section rather than after the reference list, but be sure they are formatted correctly (Publication Manual pp. 147-205). The Results section is not just a robotic presentation of statistics; make sure that you use a running commentary so that your reader understands why you chose a particular test. Give thought to how to organize the Results section: present the most important analyses first, and group conceptually related analyses together. Whereas the Results section presents the results, the Discussion section interprets them (see Publication Manual pp. 26-27). You may do some interpretation of results in the

Results section (e.g., "...which supports our hypothesis") but most of the interpretation should come in the Discussion section. Below is a useful way to organize the discussion:

- Begin with clear statement of whether or not your hypothesis was supported.
- Interpret the results, offering alternative explanations if possible
- Explain any inconsistent or unpredicted results, if possible drawing on the results of previous researchers (e.g., results found for one gender but not the other)
- Acknowledge limitations (e.g., sample, materials)
- Discuss the importance of your findings, both practically and for theory in the field.

### **Introduction**

The function of the introduction is to tell the reader why you're doing this study and to develop the rationale behind your hypothesis. This section begins broadly with familiar ideas and quickly narrows to focus on your specific research question. You should state your central research question within the first three paragraphs. The introduction also reviews previous research that has been done on this topic. Cite at least five sources that help to develop your hypothesis or that provide relevant theory. Your introduction should completely justify the hypothesis; readers should get to your hypothesis and think "of course, this is obviously the next step." Do not cite vaguely related articles and then spring the hypothesis on unprepared readers. After stating your hypothesis, provide a brief overview of your procedure. This overview should be no more than a single paragraph and should provide enough information so that a reader could skip over the methods and results sections and move directly to the discussion and still have an idea of what you did in the study.

### **Abstract**

Best advice before writing your abstract: read a bunch of abstracts from published articles (e.g., read abstracts from the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* using PsycINFO) immediately before you write yours. The abstract should be comprehensive enough to capture the major content of the article, but is limited to 120 words or less. It should begin with your general topic, very briefly describe your procedure (preferably including the number of participants), cover the major results, and have a sentence or two about the implications of your findings. You are permitted to use numerals for numbers less than 10 (elsewhere in your paper, these should be spelled out: e.g., "two"), but all acronyms must be expanded: Subjective Well-Being Scale (not "SWB Scale"). Citations should include the first initial of the author's first name: (L. Festinger, 1957). Assume the reader of your abstract will never read your paper – the abstract must be able to stand on its own. See the Publication Manual pp. 12-15 and page 298.