Undergraduate Psychology Research Methods Journal

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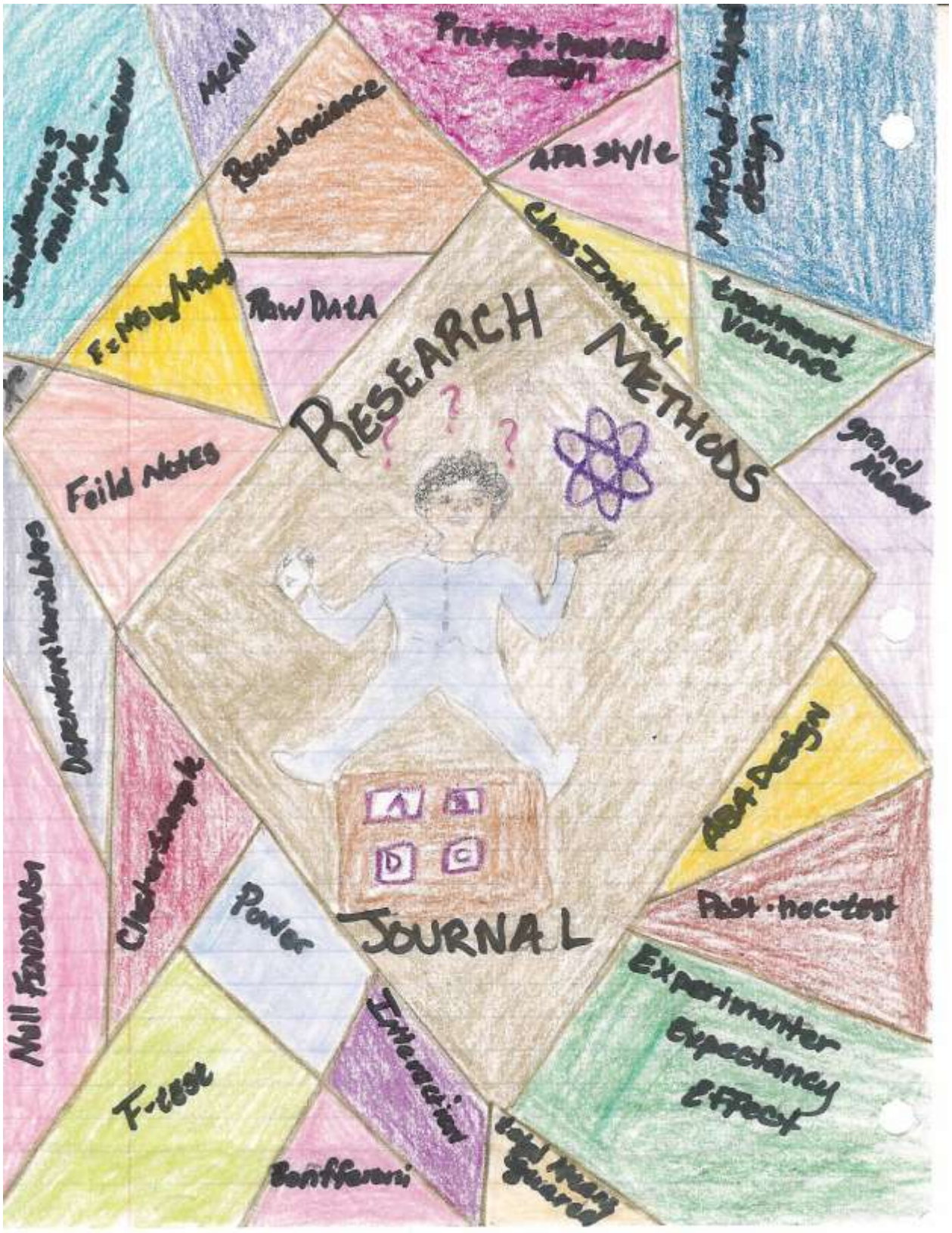

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About the Research Methods Journal

The current issue of the Research Methods Journal marks the first issue of the first volume of this class journal. This exciting publication contains two research proposals submitted for publication by all students enrolled in PSY300.11: Research Methods in Psychology class in Fall 2002. The students have worked very hard to integrate their original ideas for research with their knowledge of research design issues studied in this course. Each student also played an active role in the editorial process of this publication by reviewing and critiquing anonymously, four proposals submitted by fellow classmates.

We are very proud to bring you this very first issue of our journal and hope that you are inspired by some of the proposals found in this journal. Please note that all ideas presented in this journal belong to the author of each proposal. If you are interested in pursuing any of these ideas for your research project, you must obtain permission from the author before proceeding with the project. All relevant contact information is found at the end of this journal.

Dr. Michiko Nohara-LeClair

Course Instructor

Relationship Between Pay and Job Performance

Jessie M. Bell

There is no argument that employee morale has an effect on an employees production and job performance. I want to see if pay ties in with employee morale and research whether there is a relationship between pay and job performance. I find myself often saying things like "They don't pay me for this" in my workplace which leads me to believe that if people were paid more they would be willing to do more. Job satisfaction is so important because it is one of the three most important predictors of overall well- being (Judge & Watanabe, 2000). Sousa-Poza (2000) states that job satisfaction depends on the balance between inputs, such as effort and education, and outputs, such as pay, benefits, and working conditions. If there is equity between the two then the employee will have high levels of job satisfaction.

The 1997 International Social Survey Program (ISSP) collected data from 21 different countries regarding job satisfaction. The results indicated that overall each country's job satisfaction is high, but that job satisfaction has decreased in the past ten years. Having an interesting job and a good relationship with one's boss, not money, had the largest effect on job satisfaction. Having an exhausting job has the most negative effects on job satisfaction (Sousa-Poza, 2000). I hypothesize that higher pay results in higher performance. The idea of equity supports my hypothesis. People put in what they get out and if people get more out then they will put more in.

Method

Participants

The participants will include 100 part-time employees and 100 full-time employees, 18 and older. There will be 50 male part-time, 50 female part-time, 50 male full-time, and 50 female full-time participants.

Materials

The materials needed include: informed consent forms, feedback letters, and surveys (See Appendix A).

Procedure

Members of the working force will be recruited through their employers. Different types of workplaces will be targeted such as construction sites, law firms, car dealerships, fire departments, retail stores, restaurants, and non-for-profit organizations to get a good sample of the different occupations out there. Each participant will fill out a survey, which asks questions about the amount of money each participant makes and about his or her perceived productivity at work (See Appendix A).

Implications

If my hypothesis is supported and pay does affect job performance, the higher paid people would report that they are more productive and the lower paid people would report that they are not as productive as they could be. If my hypothesis were not supported, the higher and lowed paid participants would have the same levels of productivity. I will use a one tailed t-test to analyze the results to see if the relationship between pay and job performance is significant.

References

DeConinck, J. & Stilwell, C. (1996). A construct validity analysis of scores on measures of distributive justice and pay satisfaction. Educational and Psychological Measurement, 56, 1026.

Judge, T.A, & Watanabe, S. (1993). Another look at the job satisfaction-life and the job satisfaction relationship. Journal of Applied Psychology, 6, 939-948.

Sousa-Poza, A. (2000). Well-being at work: a cross-national analysis of the levels and determinants of job satisfaction. Journal of Socio-Economics, 29, 517.

Appendix A

Survey

Age:

Sex: M F

Occupation:

1.) Are you considered a part-time or full-time employee at your place of employment?

2.) What is your annual income? <10,000 10,000-25,000 25,000-40,000

40,000-60,000 >60,000

3.) Are you satisfied with your income? Yes No Unsure

4.) Do you think you deserve to be paid more? Yes No Unsure

5.) If you were paid more would you work harder? Yes No Unsure

6.) On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being least productive and 5 being most productive, how do you rate your productivity at work? 1 2 3 4 5

7.) Using the same scale as above, how would your boss rate your productivity at work?

1 2 3 4 5

8.) In general, do you think people who work harder deserve to be paid more?

Yes No Unsure

9.) If you were your employer would you pay yourself the same less than or more than you get paid now for the work that you do?

Effects of Class Attendance on Overall Grades

Sarah Seay

One research inquiry that comes to question is whether school attendance has an effect on overall grades made by each student. This question comes to mind for numerous reasons. If students do not miss school does this mean they get better grades because they are learning more or because of their dedication and motivation and low absence levels. Is it that students who miss numerous days of school do not care about their grades or that their grades are lower because they do poorly on tests and assignments?

Some research has already been done on this particular topic. Mekies and Snell (1995) showed that there was in fact a correlation between grades and attendance. They noted that Professor David Romer of the University of California did a study of this particular topic and found that students who often attended classes also got better grades. A better grade is meant to be an A or B grade.

Other research also shows that class attendance affects grades. Research done by Von Blerkom (1992) showed that when class attendance is required of students, the average attendance per day was 82%. When class attendance was not required as part of the students grade the average class attendance dropped to 76%. His study also found that the beginning of the semester showed higher attendance levels than the end of the semester. One theory on this phenomenon is the disengagement/discouragement theory. This theory consists of missing classes leads to poor test grades, which therefore results in discouragement or a dislike of the class.

Another study stated school attendance as being the number one problem in grade schools. Alpert, Geromini, Kane, Kayne, Klerman, Rose and Weitzman (1986) showed that a large percentage of students were absent in various schools on a given day. Alpert et al. (1986) showed a study of nine schools in the Boston school district. Their study showed that children who missed school excessively and their families were not challenged with obligations or illnesses compared with regularly attending students. Children who missed school had no greater health problems or family obligations than children who attended regularly.

These studies show that school attendance in grade schools as well as undergraduate courses at the college level is a problem our society faces.

Method

Participants

Subjects will consist of 100 undergraduate students at Lindenwood University. The students will be freshmen students at least 17 years of age taking a freshmen level course. This course will not be optional; it will be mandatory for all freshmen at some point in the year. This course will be History 101. Four classes of History 101 will be monitored. Four different teachers will teach each of these four courses to ensure validity. Two of these teachers will be males and two will be females. Ideally, this experiment would hold 25 students in each class. Ideally, the experiment would have 50 female undergraduate students as well as 50 males. However, sex is not a factor, the number of female participants and male participants do not matter.

Each participant will be given an identification number to ensure his or her confidentiality. Their attendance and grade will be paired with the identification number they receive. Their names will never be revealed.

Materials

Materials used in this experiment will consist of an attendance sheet checked everyday by professors monitoring participants. The sheet will consist of all participants in that particular class. The checked sheet will be given to the professors for each day of class. It will have the date on it as well as a box to be checked by the professor if the participant did attend class in that pacific date.

The experimenter will not provide the grading scale. Rather the professor will grade and conduct class in the usual manner in which he/she usually does.

Procedure

The procedure that will be used in this specific experiment will consist of four professors willing to participate in the experiment. These four professors will teach History 101 or another general education course. Once the experimenter recruits these four professors before the semester begins, then the experiment can begin. On the first day of class, the professor will ask the students in the class if they are willing to participate and have their attendance and grades monitored. The first 100 students to agree will be the participants. If the students dropped the class or decided they did not want to participate in the study any longer than their data would not be included in the results.

The experimenter will receive the grades for each participant at the end of the 15-week semester. Ideally, the grades and check sheets for attendance will be turned in the

last week of classes. The experimenter will put each identification number into one of three categories. The first category would be rarely missing class (zero, one or two absences). The second category would be missing class often (three, four or five absences). The third category would be missing class excessively (six or more absences). Then the students' grades will be paired with their identification number and the category in which they fell.

Implications

The hypothesis for this specific experiment is students who missed class two times or less will be the students who receive higher grades. For my hypothesis to be supported I will expect that at least 75% of the students who received high grades such as A's and B's will have missed class less than two times in that specific class. Snell and Mekies (1995) showed an experiment where students who attended class 95% of the time were more likely to receive good grades such as A's and B's.

If the hypothesis came to be true, this would mean that by missing numerous days of class one sacrifices his/her grade. By missing one day of class, each student misses out on the opportunity to learn new pieces of information. When it is time for the student to be tested in this information, he/she will not know it therefore doing poorly on the test. This result would be valuable to our society in that it would make it known to parents to stress to children at a young age the importance of education and learning.

If my hypothesis was not supported, meaning that only a small percent of the participants who missed class rarely received higher grades than my only conclusion would be that perhaps many participants were ill. This study does not account for why

participants missed class, just that they were not there. Perhaps a better experiment would go into detail about the reasons of the absences. For instance being ill or having a family obligation. Another reason students may miss a lot of class and still receive a high grade could be that a large number of the participants were in sports and their extracurricular activities required them to miss class frequently.

References

Snell, J. & Mekies, S. (1995). Student attendance and academic achievement: A research note. Journal of Instructional Psychology, 22, 126-127.

Van Blerkom, M.L. (1992). Class attendance in undergraduate courses. Journal of Psychology, 126, 487-495.

Weitzman, M., Alpert, J.J., Klerman, L.V., Kayne, H., Lamb, G.A., Geromini, K.R., Kane, K.T. & Rose, L. (1986). High-risk youth and health: The case of the excessive school absences. Pediatrics, 78, 313-322.

Teacher Feedback and Student Grade Improvement

Sara Sullivan

I am proposing a research project to discover whether there is a significant grade improvement in students receiving positive feedback from teachers on tests, assignments, or papers, as opposed to students receiving negative feedback or no feedback at all. I decided to look into this question because I have read several studies pertaining to student motivation and achievement and am interested to know how much, specifically teacher feedback, will improve student grades throughout the course of a semester. The studies I have reviewed discuss student motivation and achievement and indicate students' perceptions of how these behaviors are likely to occur.

In a study by Bray, Hancock, &Nason (2002), the effects of professors' instructional methods and university students' conceptual levels on students' achievement and motivation in a course on computer technologies were discussed. Instructional methods for this study are characterized by teacher-centered learning and student-centered learning, while students were rated as high- or low-conceptual learners. The dependent variables measured are student achievement and student motivation to learn. The findings of this study suggest that students' motivation to learn is a function of personality variables and characteristics of the learning environment (Bray et al., 2002). This study also suggests that regardless of conceptual level, all students are motivated to learn when exposed to student-centered instruction (Bray et al., 2002). This finding pertains to my proposal because the idea of student-centered instruction includes positive feedback and interaction from the teacher.

In a study conducted by Herman, Pedersen, Reinke, Tucker, & Voger (2000), elementary and high school students completed an open-ended questionnaire regarding African American students' perceptions of academic problems and solutions to these problems. Thematic analysis of these responses produced the following: academic preparation and active participation in class would enhance academic success, positive peer influences would be helpful in promoting academic success even during pre-adolescent years, self-empowering African American students by teaching them self-management techniques would promote academic success, and praise and encouragement by teachers and parents is needed to facilitate African American students active participation in class and their school work (Herman et al., 2000). My proposal would be useful here to research how closely positive teacher feedback and improvement of schoolwork are related.

I predict that there will be an effect of positive feedback on grade improvement. I feel that the previously discussed articles provide rationale for the importance of positive feedback from the teacher to improve grades throughout the semester. Positive feedback is a great motivational factor for students as is shown above.

Method

Participants

I intend to have 90 high school students as participants from a writing, a math, and a science course of junior or senior status. Each of these three classes will contain thirty students.

Materials

A class listing from each of the three classes being used is needed to assign experimental and control groups. A standardized list of remarks and comments that are acceptable under each category to be used will be given to the teacher of each class involved. Other materials that may be needed would include books, paper, and pencil, which students would already have access to through the school.

Procedure

To begin, teachers for each class will be given a class roster with each student randomly assigned to group one, two, or three. Students in group one will be given positive feedback on all tests, assignments, and papers throughout the semester, group two will be given negative feedback, and group three will be given no feedback from the teacher. The teachers will use the standardized list to write comments and remarks on all returned papers. Throughout the study, the students will be unaware that they are part of an experiment and will later be asked for consent to use their data.

Implications

Through this experiment, I expect to find that students who were given positive feedback are more likely to improve their grades throughout the semester than those students who are given negative feedback or no feedback at all. If my hypothesis were not supported I would expect to find no difference in grade improvement between groups one, two, and three. I would use an analysis of variance to conduct statistical analyses of the data collected.

If my hypothesis is supported, it may help to indicate that teacher's positive feedback is motivation enough for students to want to succeed. Other studies could be

done to help reinforce the importance of teachers giving positive feedback. This experiment may help teachers to understand what motivates their students. It would be useful to society as a whole to help reassess different ways of motivating students to want to succeed.

References

Bray, M., Hancock, D. R., & Nason, S. A. (2002). Influencing university students' achievement and motivation in a technology course. Journal of Educational Research, 95, 365-372.

Herman, K.C., Pedersen, T., Reinke, W. M., Tucker, C. M., & Voger, D. (2000). Student-generated solutions to enhance the academic success of African-American youth. Child Study Journal, 30, 205-221.

Does Mood Affect Learning and Memory?

Meila Fleming

Mood is the state of mind or emotion. However, does mood affect learning and memory? I stumbled upon the question one day in my eight o'clock class completing an assignment on research questions. The only thing that I remembered from class is my teacher stating that learning is affected by one's mood. Research has been researched on this topic in the past but in different forms. One of the articles that I found was about research on the Effects on Learning, Behavior, and Mood. The other article that is similar to my study is long-term effects of emotion and cognition. Most research shows in fact, mood does affect learning. Learning and memory occur more when one is happy or interested in what is being taught. My hypothesis is that mood does in fact affect learning.

Method

Participants

I will be recruiting participants that attend college I will decide to choose college students because most of them are busy and usually do not sleep until later hours of the night. To choose the participants they will be given questionnaires to find out what time they go to sleep. I wont college students that are not morning people that only get between 6 or 7 hours of sleep a night. Even though I am not testing sex differences, I would like to have an even amount of men to women. I would like to have 20 participants per group (10 men and 10 women).

Materials

The materials that I will be using are four rooms, two equipped with televisions and VCRs.

Pencil and paper

80 test

Questionnaires

Sleeping facilites

Two professors

Procedure

The study that I will be conducting will be within-subjects design. I choose a within-subject design because I want to study the same group in a good and in a bad mood. I will have two even sex groups, one group will be asked to watch a video (comedy) to jump-start their good mood. Keep in mind there will be two groups tested. The first group placed in a room with very anxious professor that loves to teach and he will lecture. All of the participants will receive a pencil and a piece of paper to take notes. After the do asked to complete it to show how much information retained. The second group of participants will be asked to watch a movie (controversial) to jump-start their bad mood. Then the second will be placed in a room with professor who is very strict. A week later of the second group will be given a test to see how much information they retained. All participants will start these procedures at 7:00 in the morning, assuming that being asked to be at an experiment that early will have an affect on their mood.

First I will recruit participants on a college campus and distribute questionnaires. The questionnaires will consist of two questions. The questionnaire will ask, what time do you go to sleep at night? The second question will be how many hours of sleep do you get a night? I will only use the participant that get between 6and 7 hour of sleep each night. They will sleep over night in a facility prepared for sleeping. They will be asked to

go to sleep after 12:00am and before 1:00am. All of the participants will wake up at 7:00am they will be placed in a separate room according to their group. The participant will view the video, after viewing the videos then they will be placed in a classroom. In the classroom, they will hear a professor lecture for an hour and forty-five minutes. Being given a pencil and paper they will be allowed to take notes. The notes will be collected after class so the wont be able to study. A week later, these participants will be called back and asked to take a test to see how much information they can recall. The next day the group will switch roles and be asked to watch the other movies. The process will then be repeated. After all the testing is done the results will be compared.

Implications

I expect to find that my hypothesis is correct, that mood does affect behavior. I will reject the null hypothesis stating that mood not have an affect on learning or memory. This finding implicates that if a person is in a good mood then they might be able to learn rather than when in a bad mood. My study might encourage teachers to make their classes more interesting so that students might learn more. It will also help people realize that if they are in a good mood they might be able to achieve more.

References

Moore, Simon C.; Oakford, Mike. (2002). Emotions; Cognition. British Journal of Psychology,Vol 93 p383

Saravis, Susan.; (1990). Aspartame:Effects on Learning, Behavior, and Mood. Vol.86

Is corporal punishment as effective as positive reinforcement?

Aaron Deakin

Research today has revealed various methods for behavior change and behavior change strategies. A question that leaves many researchers turning their heads is, what is the most effective and efficient way to change aggressive delinquent and violent behaviors. Is punishment as effective as positive reinforcement? This is interesting because in an image concerned society, people may be more apt to model behaviors that are rewarded positively rather than to behave appropriately from being punished. My hypothesis is that positive reinforcement will be more effective than corporal punishment. "Most family and pediatricians favor the use of corporal punishment and pediatricians agree that children should be punished corporally if they misbehave. However former research has found that parents who frequently use corporal punishment have more behavior problems with their children than those who do not" (Brenner 1998 as cited in Abraham).

Method

Participants

There will be 12 people participating in this study of whether punishment is more effective than positive reinforcement. These participants will be undergraduate students from Lindenwood University and will be selected randomly from the researcher conducting the study. The researcher will conduct experimental sessions.

Materials

There will be 12 different copies of the Stroop effect exam: (Reading the color inside the word.) A timer will be needed. A box of candy will be involved. A pen to record results. A small shock machine will be needed.

Procedure

After gaining informed consent from the participants, the participant will be brought into a room with only the researcher. The participant will be given a Stroop effect exam and be told to complete it. Prior to entering the room the participants will have been told that the goal of the study is to try to complete the exam as quick as possible with no mistakes. The participant will have the option of withdrawing from the experiment at any time if they feel uncomfortable which will be in the consent form. When in the room, the researcher will tell the participant that they cannot leave until they complete two Stroop exams as quickly as possible and under two different conditions without errors. If an error is made a new exam is given randomly and they are told to start again.

The first exam the participant will be pinched mildly after each mistake and be given a new exam. The participants overall time until completion will be recorded along with the number of trials taken to complete the exam without error. The number of errors is basically the number of trials because they much start a new exam after each error therefore starting a new trial.

The second condition, the researcher will tell the participant they will be rewarded by candies at the end of the exam. They will be told that the less errors they make, the more candy they will receive. They too will receive a new random exam after each error.

The overall time and trial number will be recorded in this condition until the exam is completed without error.

This is a within subjects design so counterbalancing will be used to avoid order effects. The people would be divided into two groups because there are two conditions.

Implications

My hypothesis is that positive reinforcement is more effective than punishment. In my experiment I predict that participants will complete the Stroop exam quicker and with fewer trials when they are being positively reinforced rather than when they are in fear of punishment. If my hypothesis were not supported I would accept the null, meaning there would be no significant difference between punishment and positive reinforcement. I would use a paired t-test to test for differences between the two groups in this experiment because it deals with a within subjects design. I believe my results could be highly valuable to society. If my hypothesis is correct, we see that positively reinforcing something may be the way to change behavior. Physically punishing someone may seem more effective in short term, but it may be no more affective than positive reinforcement. Parenting styles may change over time from results of a study like this. We may also be able to understand why some children or even adults are more disciplined than others.

Reference

Andero, Abraham A; Stewart Allen. (2002). Issue of Corporal Punishment: Re-Examined. Journal of Instructional Psychology, 29, 90-97

The Effect of Income on the Probability of Divorce

Johanna Bisges

The research question I am proposing is whether the income of a couple has an effect on their probability of getting a divorce, especially among couples in the lower class or upper class. This is of great interest to me because lately I have heard of several divorces of upper class married couples, and I wondered if the reason that they were getting a divorce was related at all to the couples' income. Researchers examining the economic contest of American families living in the 1990's noticed several interesting trends (White & Rogers, 2000). White and Rogers (2000:13) found "significant positive effects of both women's and men's earnings and employment on marriage, marital stability, marital quality, and child outcomes." In other words, economic advantage, whether male's or female's, shows a relationship with higher amounts of marriages, lower rates of divorces, happier marriages, and greater overall happiness and well-being of the child.

Another study, involving the geographic context of divorce, had similar findings. South (2001:1) states that "although a multiitem index of neighborhood socioeconomic disadvantage is positively and significantly related to the risk of divorce, this association can be explained entirely by the low incomes of husbands in distressed neighborhoods." In addition, couples do not get a divorce just because they live in a low socioeconomic neighborhood, but mostly because of the husband's low income (South, 2001).

My hypothesis is that income will have an effect on the rate of divorce mostly among upper and lower class couples. The rationale for my hypothesis is that they have

more stressors in their lives, which could cause problems in a marriage resulting in their divorce.

Method

Participants

The participants will be married individuals between the ages of 18 and 55 living in Missouri. The participants will be those individuals that complete the questionnaire.

Materials

The materials used in this study will the questionnaire that will be mailed to the participants. An example of the questionnaire that will be used is located in the Appendix A of this paper. Along with the questionnaire, materials for sending the questionnaire back will be provided.

Procedure

A questionnaire will be mailed to every Missouri mailing address. I will then compare the answers to the questionnaires that are sent back to me.

Implications

If my hypotheses were supported, I would expect to find a higher rate of divorces among low-income and high-income participants. If my hypotheses were not supported, I would expect to find a similar rate of divorce among all three income participants. To compare each group, I would use a One-Way ANOVA. If either if the three groups had a significantly higher divorce rate then psychologists could work with and even teach individuals in that certain group strategies that could make their marriage better.

References

South, S.J. (2001). The geographic context of divorce: Do neighborhoods matter? Journal of Marriage & Family, 63, 755.

White, L., Rogers, S.J. (2000). Economic circumstances and family outcomes: A review of the 1990s. Journal of Marriage & Family, 62, 1035.

Appendix A

Example of the Questionnaire

Circle one

1) Are you currently?

a) Single

b) Married

2) Have you ever been divorced?

a) Yes

b) No

3) If Yes, how many times?

a) 1

b) 2

c) 3

d) 4

4) If you are divorced, what was your combined income of you and your spouse at the time of your divorce? _____.

5) If you are currently married, how many years have you been married? _____