Course Project
Method section and Data collection
both due Wed, February 16, beginning of class

In this part of the course project, you will collect data and write an APA method section (1-2 pages), based on an experiment on your topic that I suggest to you. The studies are all variations on studies that read about in your focus article. Hopefully the studies will fit somewhat with your background research. I have tried to design studies that are easy to implement and yet will produce interesting and analyzable results.

In writing your method section, the APA manual is an excellent resource. Section 1.09 of the manual has a useful description of each of the various sub-sections of an APA method. You can also find examples in the MS Prep section of the manual. Pay attention to formatting, since the formatting of an APA style document is conventional and follows relatively rigid rules.


Question: Do students remember information more easily in the same environment as they learned it?

Student researchers: Naomi, Ku, Linda, Becky S., Mariko, Sheena, Huy, Becky C., Nick G., Maggie, Cedrina, Andrew (12)

Rationale: Many studies have shown that environment plays a role in remembering (although some of the results are inconclusive). At Carleton, the final exam system allows students to self-schedule final exams (for certain classes) in the Concert Hall. If environment does play a role, students taking a final exam in the Concert Hall (a different environment) could be at a disadvantage compared to students taken a final exam in their classroom (a consistent environment).

What to do: You each will need to recruit 4 participants. All of your participants will learn material in one environment (a classroom); then, half (2 participants) will be tested in the same environment (the same classroom) and half (2 participants) will be tested in a different environment (the Concert Hall). You should conduct your study with each person individually (that is, don’t collect data from several people at the same time). Collecting data from each participant will probably take about 15-20 minutes.

Once you have recruited your participant, take him or her to a small classroom (e.g., Olin 101 or similar). Tell your participant that they will read a short article and then be tested on the material. Have your participant read the excerpts from the article on Ginkgo Biloba. For the participants in the different environment condition, go for a 1-minute walk across campus to another building (preferably the Concert Hall, if available, otherwise another large lecture room, such as Boliou 104 or Olin 149). Talk to your participant to distract their attention away from the material they just read. When you reach you destination after 1-minute (or more), have your participant complete the short questionnaire. For participants in the same environment condition, do the same, but instead of walking to another building and room, return to the same room where the participant read the article.

Score each questionnaire and bring your data to class on Feb 16.
2. **Laughter and humor.**

*Question:* Is laughter always a response to a humorous comment or does it serve a social function?

*Student researchers:* Lucy, Annie M., Maria, Yasmine, Salem, Oren, Anna G., Aisha, Jeff, Ginger, Jessica, Nicholas S., Lizzie (13)

*Rationale:* Laughter could be a response to a humorous event or comment or could serve social functions, such as strengthening and maintaining social connections. At the very least, if laughter is social, it should be contagious, with the mere presence of laughter provoking laughter in others (hence, the sit-com laugh-track).

*What to do:* Observe social interactions over the next week and collect at least 15 instances of laughter. You may be involved in the social interaction, but it may be easier to be objective in your ratings if you are an outside observer, or at least not the one doing the laughing. Take a note of each instance of laughter, rate the laughter on a scale, rating the humor of the situation on a scale, and record the characteristics of the situation.

Bring your coded data to class on Feb. 16.

3. **Sarcasm and irony.**

*Question:* Do social factors (such as the gender or occupation of the person speaking) affect the interpretation of sarcasm and irony?

*Student researchers:* Greg, Helen, Becky E., Sarah J., Lisa, Sara T., Rachel (7)

*Rationale:* The focus article comments that “[irony is made evident to the understanding either by the delivery, the character of the speaker, or the nature of the subject.” In this study, we’ll use written scenarios, so we can’t manipulate the delivery, but we can examine differences in the character of the speaker and the nature of the subject. For example, we might expect that Carleton students will perceive irony differently when a fellow student is speaking than when a faculty member is speaking. Or we might expect that (positive) irony (“You are so lazy” to someone hard working) may be interpreted differently than sarcasm (“You are so hard working” to someone lazy).

*What to do:* You each will need to recruit 6 participants. Each participant will read a set of short stories and give ratings about how he or she perceives a critical statement in the story. This critical statement can be perceived either literally or figuratively (ironically). For example, the statement “You are sure a good friend.” could mean that the person is literally a good friend or that person is actually a bad friend. The stories will vary in the character of the speaker of the critical statement (gender and social status) and in the nature of the irony (positive vs. negative).

Bring your data to class on Feb. 16.