Research Examples Worksheet

Analyze the research vignettes below, applying what you’ve learned in Module A Lesson 1.

Vignette 1 –”Don’t Ask Don’t Tell”

This study featured 27 male UCLA undergraduates who were placed in a room with cubicles and told they would work with a partner on a task. They filled out an information sheet about themselves and then read a similar sheet purportedly prepared by their partner. Half the participants learned their partner “was an interior design major from San Francisco who enjoyed cooking and dancing.” The other half got that same information but were also told he had a boyfriend named Josh. The participant was then introduced to his either gay or sexually ambiguous partner. Immediately afterwards, they sat down at a table together and completed a math test.


What are the variables that are being studied? List them.

Can you identify the four components of an experiment? IF so, identify them below.

- Independent Variable _________________________
- Dependent Variable __________________________
- Experimental Group __________________________
- Control Group _______________________________

Decision Tree Questions:

- Do you see the word “cause” anywhere in the description? YES / NO
- Are the subjects intentionally split into different groups? YES / NO
- Do the subjects all do the same thing? YES / NO

What type of research design is this? DESCRIPTIVE or EXPERIMENTAL

What type of conclusions can be drawn? CORRELATION or CAUSE
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Vignette 2 – Racism’s Hidden Toll

A research team of Cornell University collected two weeks’ worth of daily diary data from 174 highly educated African Americans. (One-third had earned a doctorate degree, while two-thirds were enrolled in a doctoral program.) Participants were asked to report incidents of racial discrimination, non-race-related negative life events and symptoms of anxiety and depression.


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What type of conclusions can be drawn? CORRELATION or CAUSE
The ROAH study is a landmark undertaking both for its size — 1,000 participants, 264 women, 640 men and 10 transgender persons with the majority of people (83 percent) having been born in the U.S. Half identified themselves as black, a third Latino and about 14 percent white. The remaining 4 percent identified themselves as Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian or multi-ethnic. The survey included 11 components (sets of questions) in six primary areas: demographic profile, health status, sexual behaviors, social networks, stigma and psychological resources. For several months, these volunteers filled out questionnaires.


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Vignette 4 – Boredom Increases Hostility

In this study 47 Irish students were assigned to complete a highly repetitive task on their computer screens. Half the participants had to perform this task for twice as long as the others, which — according to their self-reports — left them feeling bored and meaningless. They then read a fictional scenario in which an Englishman beats up an Irishman and later admits he “was acting on anti-Irish motives.” They were asked to play the role of judge and sentence the man to jail time. The bored participants “allocated substantially more months of prison” than the others.


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Decision Tree Questions:
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What type of research design is this? DESCRIPTIVE or EXPERIMENTAL

What type of conclusions can be drawn? CORRELATION or CAUSE
Fifty-nine Chicagoans took part in what they were told was a study of attitudes. Half were instructed to attend with a friend, the others arrived alone. Those who arrived with a friend were assigned to the ‘connected’ condition and completed the experiment while sitting in a room with their friend (who could not see or influence them). The ‘unconnected’ subjects were joined in the room by another test participant they didn’t know. All were presented with 11 photos of men described as terrorists responsible for planning the 9/11 attacks. They then completed a “moral disengagement scale” and answered a series of specific questions, including the degree to which they found acceptable such torture techniques as waterboarding and the application of electrical shocks.


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What type of conclusions can be drawn? CORRELATION or CAUSE
In one study, 73 women and 47 men (mean age 40) were randomly assigned to read a scenario about a workplace assistant, his or her supervisor and the type of work they performed. In half the scenarios, the boss was either a male construction-site supervisor or a female human resources supervisor. In the other half, the genders were reversed, so the construction-site supervisor was a woman, and the human resources executive was a man. Participants then responded to three questions assessing how much status, power and independence they believed the subordinate deserved in a future job and what salary they would pay him or her. They also rated the assistant (who was male in half the scenarios and female in the other half), assessing such traits as strength, dominance and timidity.


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DESCRIPTIVE or EXPERIMENTAL

What type of conclusions can be drawn?

CORRELATION or CAUSE
In a study from Italy 234 students (194 female) read a series of 39 sentences, each of which described an action of some sort. The person engaging in this behavior was identified as either a member of Group A or Group B. Twenty-seven of the sentences described positive behavior (Jim gives up his seat on the bus to an elderly woman), while 12 described negative behavior (James of ten tells many lies). Twenty-six of the sentences referred to someone from Group A, while only 13 referred to a member of Group B. The ratio between positive and negative behavior was the same for each group: 18 positive and 8 negative for Group A, 9 positive and 4 negative for Group B. After reading the sentences, participants evaluated the two groups, rating the applicability of such adjectives as “intelligent,” “sociable” and “lazy.” They were then provided with all the sentences and asked to estimate how many of the described actions were performed by members of each group, and how many of each group’s actions were negative. Finally, the students’ level of social conservativism was measured by having them give their views on five hot-button topics, including immigration and gay marriage.


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Vignette 8 – Fat Prejudice

In a study 308 predominantly White, young adult participants from an introductory psychology class rated personality attributes for 8 “virtual” figures (4 male and 4 female) with a body mass index of 18.5 (normal), 25 (overweight), 30 (obese) and 40 (extremely obese). They completed multiple sets of ratings and agreed or disagreed with sample statements like, “People like this make me feel uncomfortable,” “I’d like to be friends with someone like this,” and “I’d like to socialize with someone like this,” among other statements. Subjects rated the figures on controllability, stereotypical attitudes toward obese, and reactions to physical characteristics. Of the participants 63% were female and the average Body Mass Index (BMI) was 25% for males and 23% for females.


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