

National Qualifications 2006

Psychology Higher C212 12

Research Investigation Briefs for use in Session 2005/06

This document contains detailed briefs for each of the Research Investigation titles to be used in session 2005/06. Candidates must choose one of the Research Investigation Briefs from the list below:

Psychology: Understanding the Individual

- (1) **Stress**
A correlational study investigating the relationship between daily hassles/uplifts and health. (*see page 3 for more detail*)
- (2) **Memory**
A laboratory experiment on the use of chunking to improve STM recall. (*see page 4 for more detail*)

Psychology: The Individual in the Social Context

- (3) **Intelligence**
An investigation into the impact of gender on self-estimated intelligence. (*see page 5 for more detail*)
- (4) **Atypical Behaviour**
A field experiment investigating attitudes to atypical behaviour, using a social distance scale. (*see page 6 for more detail*)
- (5) **Prejudice**
A questionnaire survey of attitudes to the elderly in people of various ages, with correlational analysis. (*see pages 7-8 for more detail*)
- (6) **Anti-social behaviour**
An observational study to compare the nature of violent content in different types of children's TV programmes. (*see pages 9-10 for more detail*)
- (7) **Conformity**
An experimental investigation of the influence of others' judgments on estimation of number of sweets in a jar/pasta pieces in a pack. (*see pages 11-12 for more detail*)
- (8) **Social relationships**
A non-experimental study to compare views on relationship rules for couples, between genders. (*see pages 13-14 for more detail*)

NB Several references are provided with each brief. Some are widely-available texts, others are journal articles. It is not necessary for teachers and candidates to access all of these sources, for the RI report. The information provided in the brief may be used, and in all cases, many other relevant research studies are covered in various textbooks.

Psychology Higher C212 12

Research Investigation Briefs for Session 2005/06

Note

Higher Psychology candidates are required to undertake a Research Investigation (RI) as one of the two components of the external Course assessment. Teachers and candidates should select one of the five research investigation briefs provided here. For session 2005-6: two are based on a topic from the Unit 'Psychology: Understanding the Individual', and four are from 'Psychology: The Individual in the Social Context'.

Please also refer to the current Arrangements document, particularly the Guidance on Learning and Teaching in the 'Investigating Behaviour' Unit specification. The practical skills of planning and logging research are required for internal assessment of that Unit, therefore the NAB materials for the Unit provide a template for a research plan and log; it is recommended that this forms the basis of the RI. Comprehensive guidance on the conduct and reporting of the RI is given in the SQA document *Research Investigation Guidance for Higher Psychology* (2004). Information on Course Assessment can be found in the *Course Assessment Specification (CAS)*.

The research design to be followed is provided in this document. The references provide useful background information on the topic under investigation. Teachers/lecturers are encouraged to promote candidates' active participation in the design process, rather than simply giving the brief as a handout.

It is the centre's responsibility to ensure that candidates follow ethical procedures with all participants. See the BPS *Code of Conduct, Ethical Principles and Guidelines* (2000), at www.bps.org.uk; and the ATP *Guide to Ethics for Teachers and Students of Psychology at Pre-Degree Level* (2003), the latter being included in the SQA document *Higher Psychology Research Investigation Guidelines* (2004).

Research Investigation Briefs for Session 2005/06

(1) Stress

A correlational study investigating the relationship between daily hassles/uplifts and health.

Background: In 1967 two doctors, Holmes and Rahe, observed that critical life events seemed to be associated (correlated) with stress and poor health in their patients. 'Life events' include experiences such as death of a spouse, divorce, retirement, etc. The researchers developed a Social Readjustment Rating Scale (SRRS) to measure the amount of adjustment demanded by these life events. They found a small but significant positive correlation between amount of adjustment and illness, and concluded this was due to the stress of life change. Extending these research findings, DeLongis *et al* (1988) suggested that it was not just major life change events that related to stress, but also the chronic hassles and uplifts of daily living. Hassles (things that annoy you) and uplifts (things that cheer you up) include cooking, being organised, weather, your children/family, etc. These events may hassle you or make you feel good; some may affect you a little, some a lot. Using a 'hassles and uplifts' questionnaire DeLongis *et al* investigated married couples over a 6 month period and did find a significant relationship between hassles and health problems.

Aim: To discover whether there is a relationship between daily hassles/uplifts and illness.

Hypothesis: Candidates should devise suitable null and correlational hypotheses for the investigation.

Method: A non-experimental study by means of a questionnaire survey using a correlational design; the co-variables being daily hassles/uplifts and health. Candidates should identify an appropriate sampling method (opportunity is acceptable) and devise an ethical standardised procedure. A questionnaire should be prepared for measuring daily hassles and uplifts, to include a number of items that may hassle or uplift you. Participants should be instructed to consider how much of an uplift *and* hassle each item was for them (*see A Level Psychology Practicals for example*). A short questionnaire should be prepared to measure health, e.g. 'how many times have you visited the doctor in the last year?' Other materials should be prepared, including brief/request for consent, standardised instructions, debrief.

Specific Ethical Considerations: As well as routine ethical procedures (informed consent, right to withdraw, confidentiality, debrief, etc) candidates should be encouraged to explore ethical issues specific to this investigation. They should be aware of the rather personal nature of the task, and therefore of the need to ensure privacy, the right to withdraw, and sensitive treatment of participants.

Results: Data obtained should be tabulated as raw data and organised in pairs of scores, ie every participant will have three scores, one for hassles, one for uplifts and one for health, the hassles score should be subtracted from uplifts to give one score. This score should be correlated with the health score. Descriptive statistics should be applied which are appropriate to the data: a suitable type of graph would be a scattergram. Measures of central tendency and dispersion, and other types of graph (eg histogram), may be given, though not essential.

References:

DeLongis, A., Folkman, S., & Lazarus, R.S. (1988). The impact of daily stress on health and mood: Psychological and social resources as mediators. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 54 (3), 486-495.

Holmes, T.H. & Rahe, R.H. (1967). The social readjustment rating scale. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 11, 213-18.

A Resource pack for 'A' level Psychology Practicals. Cara Flanagan + Hartshill Press in association with Hodder + Stoughton Educational.

Psychology Higher C212 12

Research Investigation Briefs for Session 2005/06

(2) Memory

A laboratory experiment on the use of chunking to improve STM recall.

Background: As early as 1885 Ebbinghaus observed that STM capacity was limited to around 6 or 7 items of information. George Miller in 1956 extended the observations of Ebbinghaus and scientifically demonstrated the limited capacity of STM to 7 plus or minus 2 pieces of information. Miller further suggested that STM capacity could be improved by chunking. Chunking consists of combining units of information into chunks of information, e.g. arranging letters into words, words into meaningful phrases and so on. Chunking is therefore related to LTM as that is where our understanding of the meaningful chunk lies (Bower + Springston 1970). Lange (1973) further demonstrated that items are best recalled when presented (chunked) into categories, e.g. floor, window, ceiling, door and wall would be remembered better than banana, table, sea, piano and ruler.

Aim: To investigate the use of chunking in improving STM recall.

Hypothesis: Candidates should devise suitable null and experimental hypotheses for the investigation.

Method: A laboratory based experiment using a repeated measures (groups, within subjects) design; the two conditions of the Independent Variable (IV) are chunking of information and no chunking of information. The dependent variable (DV) is the amount of information recalled. Controls should be discussed, with particular reference being made to the use of a repeated measures design. Candidates should identify an appropriate sampling method (opportunity is acceptable) and devise an ethical standardised procedure. Stimulus material should be prepared in the form of two memory recall tasks; one with and one without the use of chunking. Apparatus/materials should be prepared, including brief/request for consent, standardised instructions, debrief.

Specific Ethical Considerations: As well as routine ethical procedures (informed consent, right to withdraw, confidentiality, debrief, etc), candidates should be encouraged to explore ethical issues specific to this investigation. They should be aware of the rather personal nature of the recall task, and therefore of the need to ensure privacy, and sensitive treatment of participants.

Results: Data obtained should be tabulated as raw data. Descriptive statistics should be applied, which are appropriate to the data, ie a mean recall score; suitable type(s) of graph(s) should be selected, ie frequency histogram or bar chart.

References:

- Bower, G.H. + Springston, F. (1970) Pauses as recording points in letter series. *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 83, 421-30.
- Lange, G. (1973) The Development of conceptual and rote recall skills among school age children. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 15, 394-406.
- Miller, G.A. (1956) The magic number seven, plus or minus two: Some limits on our capacity for processing information. *Psychological review*, 63, 81-93.
- A Resource pack for 'A' level Psychology Practicals. Cara Flanagan + Hartshill Press in association with Hodder + Stoughton Educational.

Research Investigation Briefs for Session 2005/06

(3) Intelligence

An investigation into the impact of gender on self-estimated intelligence.

Background: Research by Hogan (1978) and Higgins (1987) has demonstrated that when people are asked to estimate their own IQ, men give higher estimates than women. Further support comes from Beloff, who in 1992 found that male Scottish undergraduates consistently estimated their own IQ to be around 6 points higher than female Scottish undergraduates. Beloff supported the conclusions of Hogan and Higgins, claiming that the differences found in IQ estimations could be attributed to the socialisation process. According to Beloff, females receive 'modesty training' which leads them to view themselves as intellectually inferior to men. In a review of eight such studies, Furnham (2000) suggested that gender differences in IQ estimation may be due to biological rather than environmental/social/cultural factors. Average differences found in actual IQ scores between genders are small, and diminishing over time.

Aim: To discover if the difference between genders in estimated personal IQ is still prevalent today.

Hypothesis: Candidates should devise suitable null and experimental hypotheses for the investigation.

Method: A field experiment by means of an IQ estimation task using an independent measures (independent groups, independent samples) design. The Independent Variable (IV) is gender, its conditions male and female. The dependent variable (DV) is estimated own IQ score. Controls should be discussed. Candidates should identify an appropriate sampling method (opportunity is acceptable) and devise an ethical standardised procedure, for administering the task and for recording the responses. Apparatus/materials should be prepared, including brief/request for consent, standardised instructions, debrief, response sheets.

Specific Ethical Considerations: As well as routine ethical procedures (informed consent, right to withdraw, confidentiality, debrief, etc), candidates should be encouraged to explore ethical issues specific to this investigation. They should be aware of the rather personal nature of the task, and therefore of the need to ensure privacy, and sensitive treatment of participants.

Results: Data obtained should be tabulated as raw data. Descriptive statistics should be applied, which are appropriate to the data: measures of central tendency, and a measure of dispersion; suitable type(s) of graph(s) should be selected, ie bar chart of means/medians, possibly frequency histograms.

References:

- Beloff, H. (1992). Mother, father and me: Our I.Q. *The Psychologist*, 5, 309-11.
Furnham, A. (2000). Thinking about intelligence. *The Psychologist* 13 10, 510-514.
Higgins, L.T. (1978). The unknowing of intelligence. *The Guardian*, 10 February.
Hogan, H.W. (1978). I.Q. Self estimates of males and females. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 106, 137-138. Cited in McIlveen, R., Higgins, L., Wadeley, A. & Humphreys, P. (1992) *BPS Manual of Psychology Practicals*. British Psychological Society.

Research Investigation Briefs for Session 2005/06

(4) Atypical Behaviour

A field experiment investigating attitudes to atypical behaviour, using a social distance scale.

Background: Attitudes of the general public towards atypical behaviour tend to be negative, and can give rise to labelling, prejudice and discrimination against those with mental health problems, adding to their distress. Nunnally (1961) found very negative attitudes. Some recent research has looked at the effects of the media on perceptions of mentally-ill people: one study found that in TV dramas, 70% of characters suffering mental illness were violent (in real life the figure is approximately 8%); Minnebo and Acker (2004) found that high-school students who watched many police and horror dramas were more likely to believe a mentally-ill person would become violent.

Aim: To investigate whether knowledge that someone has a history of psychiatric treatment will affect another person's judgment of them, as measured by a social distance scale.

Hypothesis: Candidates should devise null and experimental hypotheses for the investigation.

Method: A field experiment, using independent measures design. Brief character descriptions ('vignettes') should be prepared (see Star, 1955), of an individual with or without a psychiatric history; these are the two conditions of the independent variable (IV). The dependent variable (DV) is the social distance score, which represents favourableness of judgment. Possible vignettes: 'Without psychiatric history' condition: "*Imagine that Jenny is a person you know at school/college/work. Though quite shy, she seems a nice person, and is interesting to talk to.*" 'With psychiatric history' condition, add "*Over the last few years she has had spells of treatment in a psychiatric hospital*". A social distance scale should also be devised, with 4 or 5 items such as '*I would speak to Jenny in the street*', '*I would invite Jenny to a party in my home*' etc; responses on a Likert scale, to be totalled for each participant. Controls should be discussed. Candidates should identify an appropriate sampling method (opportunity is acceptable) and devise an ethical standardised procedure, for administering the task and for recording the responses. Other materials should be prepared, including brief/request for consent, standardised instructions, debrief.

Specific Ethical Considerations: As well as routine ethical procedures (informed consent, right to withdraw, confidentiality, debrief, etc), candidates should be encouraged to explore ethical issues specific to this investigation. They should be aware that participants may have personal experience of mental health problems, ensure privacy and sensitive treatment, and emphasise the right to withdraw. Consideration should be given as to how much information is provided regarding the aim of the investigation. If full information is given, socially desirable answers may be given, if not, then ethical issues arise.

Results: Raw data should be tabulated. Descriptive statistics selected should be appropriate to the data: measure(s) of central tendency; measure of dispersion; suitable type(s) of graph, ie barchart of medians/means; other graphs are possible, eg frequency histograms.

References:

- Minnebo, J. & Acker, A.V. (2004). Does television influence adolescents' perceptions of and attitudes toward people with mental illness? *Journal of Community Psychology*, 32, 257-275.
- Nunnally, J (1961), *Popular Conceptions of Mental Health: Their Development and Change*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Star, S.A. (1955), *The Public's Ideas About Mental Illness*. Mimeo National Research Center. Chicago: University of Chicago. Cited in McIlveen, R., Higgins, L., Wadeley, A. & Humphreys, P. (1992) *BPS Manual of Psychology Practicals*. British Psychological Society.

Research Investigation Briefs for Session 2005/06

(5) Prejudice

A questionnaire survey of attitudes to the elderly in people of various ages, with correlational analysis.

Background: Attitudes towards different groups are often stereotyped, whether on the basis of sex, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, age, etc. Stereotyping has been described as a tendency “to place a person in categories according to some easily and quickly identifiable characteristic such as age, sex, ethnic membership, nationality or occupation, and then to attribute to him qualities believed to be typical of members of that category” (Taguiri, 1969). Stereotyping may be regarded as the cognitive component of prejudice, and may therefore lead to adverse consequences, such as discrimination, for the people concerned. There is a risk of self-fulfilling prophecy (Levy and Langer, 1994). Many researchers have discovered commonly-held negative stereotyped attitudes towards the elderly, but ageism has been systematically researched only since the 1990s. Hogg and Vaughan (2002) suggest that the relative lack of intergenerational interaction in western societies tends to result in more ageist attitudes amongst young people; prejudice against old people has been found in college students (Barrow, 1976) and in schoolchildren (Fillmer et al, 1984). The latter showed participants (4th- 6th graders) pictures of young adults and elderly people, and asked them to attach adjectives to each picture; views of the older people were generally stereotyped. Fillmer et al concluded that increased interaction between young and elderly people would help dispel myths relating to ageing and the elderly.

Aim: To discover whether there is a relationship between people’s own age and their attitudes to the elderly.

Hypothesis: Candidates should devise suitable null and alternative hypotheses reflecting the variables under investigation. These should be correlational hypotheses. Direction of the predicted relationship should be considered.

Method: A non-experimental study by means of a survey using a questionnaire/rating scale. The design of the study is correlational, the co-variables being participant age or age band (eg intervals of 5 years) and extent of negative stereotyping of the elderly. Candidates should identify an appropriate sampling method (opportunity sampling is acceptable) in order to test participants of widely varying ages, from 16 upwards, including young adults, middle-aged people, and elderly people. An ethical standardised procedure should be devised. A questionnaire or rating scale should be produced, with a response format that uses either a Likert scale, or a semantic differential scale, or a word inventory. For example, with a Likert scale, participants may be asked whether they agree (‘strongly agree’, ‘agree’, ‘undecided’, ‘disagree’, ‘strongly disagree’) with statements such as “*Elderly people tend to be active*”. Alternatively, items may be rated by means of a semantic differential scale: participants indicate on a seven-point scale, between two opposite descriptions, their perception of elderly people. For example: “Elderly people tend to be: active _ _ _ _ _ inactive”. Another possibility is to present participants with a picture/photo of elderly people and a list of 20-30 adjectives - a random mixture of favourable and unfavourable adjectives; each favourable adjective scores -1 and each unfavourable (stereotyped) adjective scores +1. Participants are asked to tick (say) ten that would be likely to apply to the people in the picture. Each participant obtains a single score which is the unfavourable minus the favourable adjectives they have chosen. Whatever the format of the questionnaire, the items and scoring key for responses should be designed in such a way that a higher score indicates a greater extent of negative stereotyping. Scores on items are simply totalled so that each participant obtains a single total score as a measure of their attitude. The questionnaire sheet must also ask for the participant’s age/age band. Other materials should be prepared, including brief/request for consent, standardised instructions, debrief.

Psychology Higher C212 12

Research Investigation Briefs for Session 2005/06

(5) Prejudice (contd)

Specific ethical considerations: As well as routine ethical procedures (informed consent, right to withdraw, confidentiality, debrief, etc), candidates should be encouraged to explore ethical issues specific to this investigation. Negative descriptive words should not be too extreme. With elderly participants in particular, candidates should be sensitive to participants' possible discomfort in answering items relating to age.

Results: Each participant will have a pair of scores, ie age and extent of negative stereotyping. These make up the two sets of scores to be correlated. Descriptive statistics should be applied which are appropriate to the data and the hypothesis: a suitable graph would be a scattergram. Measures of central tendency and dispersion, and other types of graph, may be given, but are not essential.

References:

- Barrow, R. (1976) *Common Sense and the Curriculum*. London: Allen & Unwin.
- Fillmer, H.T. (1984). Descriptions of and attitudes toward the elderly. *Educational Gerontology*, Vol 10(1-2), pp. 99-107.
- Hogg, M.A. and Vaughan, G.M. (2002) *Social Psychology* (3rd edition). Harlow: Pearson Education.
- Levy, B. and Langer, E. (1994). Aging free from negative stereotypes: successful memory in China and among the American deaf. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 66(6), pp.989-997.
- Taguiri, R. (1969). Person perception. In G. Lindzey and E. Aronson (Eds), *Handbook of Social Psychology*, Vol.3. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley

Research Investigation Briefs for Session 2005/06

(6) Anti-social behaviour

An observational study to compare nature of violent content in different types of children's TV programmes.

Background: Much research has been conducted into the possible effects on children of violence in the media, against a theoretical background dominated by the findings of Bandura and colleagues (eg 1963), which formed the basis of social learning theory (SLT). More recently, research studies have monitored media violence (eg Cumberbatch, 1987; Gunter and Harrison, 1998). The 'media violence debate' regularly gains prominence in the press, often in response to distressing violent crimes (such as the Jamie Bulger case – see Newson, 1994).

Various factors have been proposed to explain how likely it is that children may imitate observed aggression, including reinforcement, desensitisation, perceived justification, realism, parental involvement, etc. One influencing factor may be the observed consequences of violence on TV: where injury, pain or death are seen to result from violence, children may be less likely to act out aggressive acts themselves, due to a process of vicarious punishment, according to SLT; therefore, where violence is seen as having no adverse consequences, children may be more likely to imitate.

Aim: To discover whether different types of children's TV programmes (drama and cartoons), vary with respect to the consequences of violent actions depicted.

Hypothesis: Candidates should devise suitable null and alternative hypotheses reflecting the variables under investigation. These should be hypotheses of difference, between programme types.

Method: A non-experimental study by means of observation of behaviour of TV characters. Candidates should select a number of suitable children's programmes to observe, both dramas and cartoons, and identify an appropriate method of controlled time-sampling of the chosen programmes. The two relevant variables are type of programme and consequences of violent acts, however, as this study is non-experimental, these should not be termed IV and DV. Definitions of the categories 'violent acts', 'consequences (death/pain/physical injury)', and 'no consequences' should be established/agreed, and an **observation schedule** devised, showing these categories. Where there is more than one observer of the programmes, inter-observer reliability should be addressed, by collectively watching and agreeing how **behavioural events** are to be allocated to categories. When watching the sampled programmes, observers should record each behavioural event under the categories using a tally system. To improve accuracy and reliability of observation, it would be sensible to video-record programmes. Although standard instructions are not needed (because researchers are not dealing with 'live' participants), the process of selecting a sample of programmes, and time-sampling of the programmes, should be documented.

Specific ethical considerations: As this study does not involve dealing directly with participants, no ethical issues arise. Candidates should, however, comment on this unusual aspect of their research, when writing their RI report. Adult programmes should not be included in the study.

Results: Raw data comprise the tallies of events in observation schedules, and an aggregated table of the total frequencies for all programmes observed, of both types. Total frequencies of events should be calculated under each category for both types of programmes. Descriptive statistics should be applied which are appropriate to the data and the hypothesis: a summary table showing the two types of programme against category totals would be suitable (eg a 2 x 3 contingency table), for example:

Psychology Higher C212 12

Research Investigation Briefs for Session 2005/06

(6) Anti-social behaviour (contd)

Type of programme	Frequencies of events in each category		
	A Total violent acts [NB A = B+C]	B Consequences (death/pain/injury)	C No consequences
Drama			
Cartoons			
Totals			

Appropriate graphical representation might include bar-graph(s) or pie-charts of total behavioural events in each category. Percentages of violent acts resulting in consequences, and those resulting in no consequences, may be compared for each programme type.

NB A more complex study might also predict differences between the specific *types* of consequences, in which case the types of consequences would be separated into three categories. More detailed analyses could then be carried out.

References:

- Bandura, A., Ross, D. & Ross, S.A. (1963) Imitation of film-mediated aggressive models. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 66, 3-11.
- Cumberbatch, G. (1987) *The portrayal of violence on British television*. London: BBC Publications.
- Flanagan, C. (1997) *A Resource Pack for Psychology Practicals*, Hartshill Press/Hodder & Stoughton Educational.
- Gunter, B. and Harrison, J. (1998) *Violence on Television: An Analysis of the Amount, Nature, Location and Origin of Violence in British Programmes*. London: Routledge.
- Newson, E. (1994) Video violence and the protection of children. *The Psychologist*, 7(6), 272-4.

Research Investigation Briefs for Session 2005/06

(7) Conformity

An experimental investigation of the influence of others' judgments on estimation of number of sweets in a jar/pasta pieces in a pack.

Background: In 1932 Jenness asked participants individually to guess the number of beans in a jar. Participants were then given the opportunity to discuss their estimates with each other and asked to guess the number of beans in the jar again. It was found that the individual estimates tended to move towards a group norm. Sherif (1935) investigated participants' responses to an ambiguous task. Using a procedure based on the autokinetic effect individual participants had to estimate how far a light appeared to move in a darkened room. Then, working in groups of four they discussed how far they thought the light had moved and then again individually estimated how far they thought the light had moved. The results again demonstrated the tendency to establish and conform to group norms. Later researchers, notably Asch (1951, 1952), developed theories of conformity which provide explanations for such findings.

Aim: To discover whether people will conform to a group norm in an ambiguous task; more precisely, to discover whether people's responses in a task will differ when they are exposed to other people's judgements.

Hypothesis: Candidates should devise suitable null and experimental hypotheses, reflecting the variables under investigation.

Method: A laboratory or field experiment using an independent measures (independent groups) design. The two conditions of the independent variable (IV) are the use of a pre-completed high estimate sheet and a blank estimate sheet, and the dependent variable (DV) is the participant's estimate of the number of sweets in a jar/pasta pieces in a pack. Controls should be incorporated in the procedure, including those relevant to the use of an independent measures design. Candidates should identify an appropriate sampling method (opportunity sampling is acceptable) and devise an ethical standardised procedure. Materials should be prepared in the form of:

- a jar of sweets (or pack of pasta), or a good quality (A4 size) photograph of the jar of sweets or of the pack of pasta
- two types of estimate sheets: one with fictitious high estimates (as if given by previous participants) and the other a blank one with no previous estimates shown.

Other materials should include:

- brief/request for consent
- standardised instructions
- debrief.

Researchers should count the sweets/pasta pieces, in order to decide on the fictitious high estimates.

Specific Ethical Considerations: As well as routine ethical procedures (informed consent, right to withdraw, confidentiality, debrief, etc), candidates should be encouraged to explore ethical issues specific to this investigation. They should be sensitive to the possibility that some participants may see the task as an ability test, and therefore feel threatened or embarrassed. Candidates should address the issue of deception involved in the study. Although this task appears similar to popular competitions where prizes are offered, participants should not be asked to pay to take part.

Results: Data obtained should be tabulated as raw data. Descriptive statistics should be applied, which are appropriate to the data and the hypothesis, ie measure(s) of central tendency; measures of dispersion; suitable type(s) of graph(s) should be selected, eg bar chart of means/medians, frequency histograms.

Psychology Higher C212 12

Research Investigation Briefs for Session 2005/06

(7) Conformity (contd)

References:

Asch, S. (1951). Effects of group pressure upon the modification and distortion of judgements. In H. Guetzkow (ed.), *Groups, Leadership and Men* (pp.177-90). Pittsburgh: Carnegie Press.

Asch, S. (1952). *Social Psychology*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Jenness, A. (1932). The role of discussion in changing opinion regarding matter of fact, *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, vol.27, pp. 583-99.

Sherif, M. (1935) 'A study in some factors of perception', *Archives of Psychology*, vol.27, no. 187.

Research Investigation Briefs for Session 2005/06

(8) Social relationships

A non-experimental study to compare views on relationship rules for couples, between genders.

Background: Successful maintenance of any social or personal relationship depends on various factors. For example, Dindia and Baxter (1987) identified 49 “maintenance and repair” strategies in married couples. Rusbult et al (1986) found evidence of four types of strategies, which could be passive or active, and constructive or destructive (the latter leading to dissolution). Other researchers claim relationship success depends on both parties adhering to certain ‘relationship rules’. Argyle (1988) states that these informal rules govern the “behaviour which it is believed ought or ought not to be performed in each relationship” (p.233). Sets of rules have also been established for a range of different types of relationship, including friendships and work relationships. The breaking of rules is often a feature of relationship breakdown; those most relevant are related to intimacy, trust and social support (Argyle & Henderson, 1984). There is evidence of similarities and differences between cultures (eg Gudykunst and Nishida, 1986). Given that a number of studies have discovered individual differences (eg Hazan & Shaver, 1987), including gender differences (eg Hendrick & Hendrick, 1995; Simpson et al, 1986), in various aspects of relationships, this investigation is concerned with possible gender differences in attitudes to relationship rules.

Aim: To investigate gender differences in the perceived importance of ‘rules’ in couple relationships.

Hypothesis: Candidates should devise suitable null and alternative hypotheses reflecting the variables under investigation. These should be hypotheses of difference, between genders. A simple difference between overall scores may be predicted. If considered appropriate, differences between the genders under each of the three categories may also be predicted (three additional hypotheses required).

Method: A non-experimental study using a questionnaire survey, based on an adapted version of Argyle and Henderson’s (1984 and 1985) ‘relationship rules’, for friends or for partners in a couple. In those studies, rules were categorised as ‘Intimacy rules’, ‘Exchange rules’, ‘Co-ordination rules’ and ‘Third party rules’. For this investigation, a questionnaire should be devised, containing a set of ‘rules’ (those provided in Box 1 would be suitable; they account for three of Argyle and Henderson’s four categories). Participants then indicate how important they feel each rule is, on a Likert scale (eg ‘not at all important’= 1, ‘not very important’= 2, ‘undecided’= 3, ‘quite important’= 4, ‘very important’= 5). Candidates should identify an appropriate sampling method (opportunity sampling is acceptable), to obtain a sample of roughly equal numbers of females and males. A variety of ages is preferable. Other materials should be prepared, including brief/request for consent, standardised instructions, debrief.

Specific ethical considerations: As well as routine ethical procedures (informed consent, right to withdraw, confidentiality, debrief, etc), candidates should be encouraged to explore ethical issues specific to this investigation. Welfare of participants is protected in that they are **not** being asked to give personal information on their own relationships, however, candidates should be sensitive to a small risk of discomfort, due to the nature of the topic, therefore informed consent and right to withdraw need emphasis. It would be wise not to include both members of a couple in the same sample. Participants should not be asked about their sexual orientation, as it is irrelevant to the aim of this study.

Results: Each participant’s total score should be calculated from their questionnaire responses, such that each has one overall score representing perceived ‘importance of relationship rules’. Descriptive statistics should be applied which are appropriate to the data and the hypothesis(es): measure(s) of central tendency and dispersion for both genders, bar chart(s) of means/medians, possibly frequency histograms. If more than one alternative hypothesis has been posited, analyses should be carried out in respect of each.

Research Investigation Briefs for Session 2005/06

(8) Social relationships (contd)

Box 1: Rules for couples

- 1 Touch partner intentionally
- 2 Repay debts, favours and compliments
- 3 Share the costs of joint activities, eg going out.
- 4 Keep confidences
- 5 Show mutual trust
- 6 Engage in sexual activity with partner
- 7 Be tolerant of each other's friends
- 8 Show interest in each other's daily activities
- 9 Talk to partner about personal feelings and problems
- 10 Don't criticise each other in public
- 11 Give birthday cards and presents
- 12 Talk to partner about sex and death
- 13 Be faithful
- 14 Show emotional support
- 15 Stand up for partner in their absence

Scoring key:

Intimacy rules: Items 1, 5, 6, 9, 12.

Exchange rules: Items 2, 3, 8, 11, 14

Third party rules: Items 4, 7, 10, 13, 15

Adapted from:

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