PSY312 Final Project

Due Date: day of the final exam at midnight

Requirements: You will create a research proposal. More specifically, you will generate a research hypothesis, design a study to test this hypothesis, review the current literature, and write a data analysis plan. This paper will incorporate most of what you learned this semester, and all of your previous labs. The paper will include an Introduction, Method section, Data Analysis Plan, potential limitations (in place of a discussion section), and Reference page.

Quick Pep Talk: There is nothing new here - you already know how to do everything in this paper. You *got* this!

Assignment Details: You will submit a paper in standard APA format, size 12 Times New Roman font with 1" margins. Your paper will also include a title page.

How You Will Be Graded: You should carefully review the grading rubric on next page. This is worth a substantial chunk of your final grade in the course.

Late Policy: Because the final paper is due finals week, no late papers will be accepted without my permission. Not turning in the assignment by the due date will result in a grade of zero.

Paper Length: Your introduction must be at least five pages and the methods must be at least three pages. Please note that the number of required pages is a) the minimum, and b) that your paper only has to get one line on that page (e.g., five pages refers to four full pages and any amount of writing on the fifth page). There is no minimum requirement for the other sections. In total, I expect your papers will be approximately 12-15 pages in length.

Grading Rubric for PSY312 Final Project

Name: _____

Dimension Points Earned	Proficient	Developing	Beginning
Introduction	The introduction has an engaging opening paragraph, thoroughly covers the main ideas of the study, integrates information within paragraphs, and clearly supports the hypothesis. (21-25 points)	The introduction was thorough and related to the hypothesis, but lacked integration and/or did not fully support the hypothesis. (15-20 points)	The introduction was missing important details, did not integrate ideas, and/or did not clearly support the hypothesis. (< 15 points)
Hypothesis	The hypothesis is clearly written using an operational definition. (5 points)	The hypothesis is there, but does not include an operational definition for all relevant variables. (3-4 points)	A hypothesis was not included or it was unrelated to the introduction. (< 3 points)
Method	The study was described in enough detail for another researcher to replicate the study, and the measures were clearly defined. (21-25 points)	Some scientifically relevant details were left out, but the study was described well-enough for another researcher to properly evaluate it. (15-20 points)	The study was not clearly explained, the measures were not adequately described, and/or the study poorly designed. (< 15 points)
Data Analysis Plan	The plan tests the hypothesis, contains information about appropriate assumptions, clearly explains follow up tests (if appropriate), and explains what the results would be if the hypothesis is supported. (9-10 points)	The analysis would correctly test the hypothesis, but the assumptions were not checked, and/or the follow-up tests were not included (if appropriate). (7-8 points)	The main analysis did not correctly test the hypothesis and/or no other detail was provided. (< 7 points)
Limitations	The studies potential limitations are clearly addressed, especially with regard to the validity of the results. (9-10 points)	Important limitations regarding the studies validity were not discussed or there was not sufficient detail provided. (7-8 points)	Several important limitations were not discussed. (< 7 points)
Reference Section	The 8+ high-quality references are in correct APA format. (5 points)	Not enough high-quality references were included or the references were not in appropriate APA format. (3-4 points)	Not enough high-quality references were included and the references were not in appropriate APA format. (< 3 points)
Writing Quality	The proposal is well-written, well-organized, and uses proper APA format. (9-10 points)	The paper contained more than two grammatical and/or APA formatting errors, but overall was well-written. (7-8 points)	The paper was clearly a first-draft and/or contained numerous grammar and formatting error. (< 7 points)
Overall Quality	The study was well-designed, thorough, met all of the requirements, and there was clear evidence that the student went beyond the minimum expectations. At least one section of the proposal was exceptional. (10 or more points)	The study was very well done. With minor changes, the proposal could be turned into a Senior study or Master's Thesis. There was clearly a lot of work put into the final draft. At least one section received a perfect score. (8-9 points)	The study was not thoroughly explained or justified, the student needed to continue developing the ideas further, and/or at least one section was missing or poorly executed. (< 8 points)

Guide for Choosing a Research Topic

Research topics are found in a variety of different ways. It is likely that you have questions left from topics covered in other Psychology classes. That's one of the best places to start. The topic has to be focused on a specific issue where all of the terms are operationally defined. You need to review the research literature in a way that indicates that you have selected a topic that is worth investigating and a method that will allow you to address the topic.

You should be able to actually conduct this experiment after writing this paper! Thus, choose a topic that you can actually measure, or reasonably could with a small ($500) grant.

Guide for Generating Research Ideas

The absolute best way to generate research ideas is to start by reading a gigantic pile of books and journal articles. However, this strategy is not realistic for us. Here are two strategies that are more realistic:

1. **The closer-to-conventional way:** Choose a topic (or a few topics) that you find interesting and look it up on PsycInfo (and/or GoogleScholar). Scroll through article titles/abstracts and save citation info for any/all that seems interesting. Once you've developed a nice collection. Read your favorite 2-3 articles/studies closely… Do the findings from these studies provoke any unanswered questions that you find interesting? If so, Eureka! You now have a kernel for a potential hypothesis (simply predict the answer to your new question).
    i. NOTE: the advantage of this method is that your introduction section will be *much* easier to write – you can probably grab most of the citations you'll need from the reference section of the paper from which your idea was inspired. Plus, the logic (and accompanying references) you'll need to write your introduction is already inherently built into your idea.

2. **The reckless-but-fun way:** Go deep into your unconscious, come up with as many options as you can… think some more… then think about whether any of these topics seem like they *should* be related in some interesting sort of way. Are members of certain categories more prone to certain behaviors or traits? Do you think any of the behaviors or traits might be related conceptually? If so, you now have a hypothesis!... BUT… researching for your introduction will be difficult; in order to construct a good argument out of prior research,

you'll have to be crafty about looking up prior research on your two variables and making logical connections…. Be warned: constructing an introduction section for this second method can become frustrating if PsycInfo doesn't easily produce a few good articles.

Guide for Generating Hypotheses

Your hypotheses should be based on previous research or theory. The introduction (literature review) should lead the reader to a clear understanding about why you hypothesized what you did. Then, after deciding on an appropriate method for testing your hypotheses, you should come up with an operational definition for your variables. This will allow you to restructure your hypothesis in a way that represents that operational definition.

Selecting a Method

This class has prepared you to adequately address your research topic. Your choice of method will depend on your topic and the question you want to research. Remember, method sections require enough detail to allow another researcher to replicate the study after reading about it. This includes having clear operational definitions for your variables. The best strategy for creating a research method is to look how other published studies choose to measure variables. After all, why reinvent the wheel!

Deciding How to Analyze the Data

You cannot create a Results section, you don't have data after all! Instead, research proposals include something called "Data Analysis Plan." Your method determines how you analyze the data. Describe the basic procedures that you will use (e.g., Correlation, Analysis of Variance) AND describe what your data should like if your hypothesis is supported. You must include enough information to show that you know how to analyze the data when the time comes. Typically, this is the shortest section in a proposal, but is one of the most challenging. Do not stress, though, I am happy to help you work through this part!

Discussion

Because you have not yet conducted the experiment, you cannot write a typical discussion section either. So, your Discussion section will instead focus on just one area: a limitations section. You should discuss the possible limitations of your methodology. No study is perfect,

but you should have a clear understanding of the weaknesses to your methodology. One way to conceptualize this section is to think about the conflict between internal and external validity.

A word on collaboration

You have a great group of colleagues. Use them (within reasonable limits) to help you make this the best project possible. Discuss your ideas and ask questions. Collaboration is one of the best parts of research!