Experiment Progress Report
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On Random Acts of Kindness, Among Other Things

Engaging in "random acts of kindness" (RAK) is thought to improve one's mental health by reducing stress and making one's mood more positive. Our study investigates one of the cognitive mechanisms underlying the RAK phenomenon by comparing participants' self-reported mood after they have engaged in a variety of tasks. These tasks vary in terms of their Focus (Mindfulness vs. Kindness), Target (Self vs. Other), and Intensity (Low vs. High). The combinations of these variables, along with examples of corresponding tasks, are provided below.

Focus	Target	Intensity	Task Examples
Mind	Self	Low	Think about making your bed
Kind	Self	Low	Make your bed
Mind	Self	High	Think about listening to an encouraging song
Kind	Self	High	Listen to an encouraging song
Mind	Other	Low	Think about putting something away for someone
Kind	Other	Low	Put something away for someone
Mind	Other	High	Think about complimenting someone on their work
Kind	Other	High	Compliment someone on their work

Over the course of eight days, participants will be asked via email or SMS to perform one of each of the eight possible tasks; the order of the assigned tasks will be randomized for each participant. After completing each task, the participant will describe their emotional response in terms of mood and intensity using the following scale:

Extremely Negative		Negative		Slightly Negative	Neutral	Slightly Positive		Positive		Extremely Positive
-5	**-4**	**-3**	**-2**	**-1**	**0**	**+1**	**+2**	**+3**	**+4**	**+5**

We predict that participants will report more positive and/or more intense moods in response to Kindness-focused, Other-directed, and High intensity tasks compared to their Mindfulness-focused, Self-directed, and Low intensity counterparts, including main effects for each independent variable (IV) and a 3-way interaction among the IVs. In addition, we will consider the influence of demographic covariates such as gender identity, age, family size, race/ethnicity, and nationality, as well as personal covariates such as degree of extraversion and typical mood, on participants' responses to the tasks.

Preliminary Survey: Task Evaluation. To facilitate statistical comparison, our tasks will be generated in matched pairs across the Focus variable (e.g., Think about making your bed (Mindfulness/Self-directed/Low intensity) vs. Make your bed (Kindness/Self-directed/Low intensity). In addition, we will have two complete sets of eight tasks (Sets A and B) that are matched for mood and intensity. Tasks will be assigned to participants so that they will only experience one task in each matched pair for a given set. As in the example below, participants in Group 1 would be assigned the tasks in **bold**, whereas those in Group 2 would be assigned the tasks in *italics*.

Focus	Target	Intensity	Set A	Set B
Mind	Self	Low	**Think about making your bed**	*Think about washing your hands*
Kind	Self	Low	*Make your bed*	**Wash your hands**

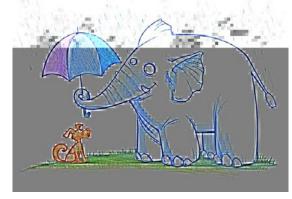| Mind | Self | High | *Think about listening to an encouraging song* | **Think about reading a motivational article online** |
| Kind | Self | High | **Listen to an encouraging song** | *Read a motivational article online* |

For the first part of our study, we will conduct a survey to gather baseline mood and intensity data for five sets of four core task types (e.g., *making your bed*, *listening to an encouraging song*, *putting something away for someone*, *complimenting someone on their work*) as well as five additional tasks intended to encourage full use of the rating scale (i.e., *forgetting to pay a bill*, *being late for a meeting*, *losing your wallet*, *ending a romantic relationship*, *being lied to by a friend*). Respondents (approximately $n = 25$) to this survey will rate each of the tasks on the mood/intensity scale. The two complete sets of eight tasks used in our experiment will be selected based on these ratings. In addition, the survey respondents will answer the same demographic and personal questions as the experiment participants in order to facilitate a comparison between the two samples. Our goal is to administer this survey via email using the Qualtrics software package between March 6-12. Note: We will target other Spring 2020 w241 students for this survey, because they are not naïve to the goals of our experiment and thus are ineligible to participate in it; however, their pre-existing knowledge should not impact their ability to classify different tasks in terms of mood or intensity.

The Experiment. We will recruit participants for our experiment (approximately $n = 50$) from the general MIDS and MIMS student population present on Slack, as well as from members of our personal and professional social networks between March 12-19. The experiment will be conducted via email or SMS using Qualtrics between March 19-April 2. To encourage study completion, all participants who submit all eight days of data will be eligible to receive $10 gift cards to Amazon, Starbucks, or another appropriate national retailer (**Budget item: ~$500**).

During the experiment, participants will experience the following: 1) After volunteering, the participant will receive an email message to their preferred account with a link to the demographic survey. 2) Once the experiment period has begun, the participant will receive an email or SMS message describing their task for the day, as well as a follow-up link to use after they have completed the task. 3) When the task is complete, the participant will return to the email or SMS message and click the response link; this will take them to an online survey where they can rate the mood and intensity of their experience. Participants will rate their task-related mood and its intensity *before*, *during*, and *after* completing the task (although all three scores will be reported after the fact). In total, we expect participants will spend approximately five minutes each day on their participation.

What We Need Help With. We would appreciate the instructor's help addressing the following concerns:

- The Qualtrics software has an option to administer surveys via SMS (https://www.qualtrics.com/support/survey-platform/distributions-module/mobile-distributions/sms-surveys/), but it does not appear that this feature is activated for the UC Berkeley Qualtrics account (https://dlab.berkeley.edu/data-resources/qualtrics). If it is possible to activate this feature for an additional fee, is this something our budget can cover? Are there other ways that students in previous sections of w241 have implemented SMS survey distribution that you could share with us?

- We would like some advice about doing power analyses. Do we need to do power analysis for both the survey and the experiment, or just the experiment?

- Are there any other aspects of the study that you have concerns about, given this overview?

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