

Introductory Psychology: Unit 2 Research Paper Assignment

The point of this assignment is to relate your personal experience or opinions to research on some topic of interest from the current unit of study. Choose one topic to discuss from those listed below. You have some liberty to modify the question or come up with your own, but get instructor approval in advance. It's often the case that students try to tackle a question that is way beyond the scope of these short papers, so I can help narrow your focus. In so far as some of the material you will be presenting will come from personal experience or reflect personal opinions there are no right or wrong answers concerning those. Grading will be based on two criteria. One will be the overall quality of your presentation, clarity being the most important aspect. The other involves your use of logical arguments and supporting materials to explain the phenomenon you are describing or bolster any claims you are making. Overall, just try to write a clear and concise paper.

1. Elaborate on your strongest episodic memory. Feel free to describe it in detail, especially the unique aspects. Then analyze it in terms of what makes it such a strong memory. Does it fit with the information from lecture and the text regarding what makes for a vivid memory? That is to say, is it a memory of a novel event? Were strong emotions experienced at the time? Did the event have major importance, perhaps even life-changing effects?

2. It is not uncommon for people to have vastly different memories of the same event. Has this ever happened to you, where your memory of an event contradicts someone else's memory of the same event? How do you account for the differences? Perhaps it was better remembered by one of you because it was a novel experience or generated strong emotions for only that individual. Did you ever reach a consensus as to what actually happened?

3. How much influence do you think scenes of violence depicted in movies and television actually have on our society? Are people in modern western societies more prone to violence than were people in the past? More so than people in areas of the world that seldom if ever see movies or television, or at least not those produced in Europe and the United States? Note that there is a big difference between short-term transitory effects that may occur immediately after exposure versus long-term far-reaching effects that may influence an entire culture.

4. Describe your experiences in trying to learn a foreign language. What aspects were the most difficult for you? Was your age at the time related to how easy it was to learn another language? Were you able to achieve fluency? How does your experience compare with what was discussed in lecture and the text regarding the nature of language and language development?

5. Have you ever been totally wrong about a person, and then realized your initial assessment was way off? Discuss what led to your initial assessment of that person and what led you to change your perception of him or her. Was it difficult for you to change that perception? Compare your experience with what was discussed in lecture and the text regarding social schema.

6. Describe a situation wherein you went along with the group despite knowing that doing so was really against your better judgment. What motivated you to do this? Were the results what you expected, both in terms of the consequences of your actions and your acceptance by the group members? How did you feel? Did you experience cognitive dissonance? Examine your experience with respect to what was discussed in lecture and the text concerning conformity, social influence and cognitive dissonance.

7. Have you ever witnessed or been party to an altruistic act? Describe what happened. Then examine the events closely and try to determine what may have motivated the act. Is it possible the benefactor gained something from the act as well, or was it a truly altruistic act on his or her part?

8. What is the nature of intelligence? How do you perceive it in others? Do you find it to be a general overriding characteristic of an individual or a hit and miss quality specific to a certain set of abilities? In the latter case, are the markedly intelligent possessed of greater ability in a number of areas, more so than other persons? Finally, do you believe that intelligence is, in and of itself, a good thing? Try to back up your opinions with factual information derived from lecture, the text, or other sources.

9. Elaborate upon any stage of development derived from any of the developmental theories discussed in the lecture and text. Do you find it to be a correct assessment of what one normally encounters with individuals at that stage of development? Remember that some of these theories encompass the entire lifespan, not just early childhood development. Those later life stages are often more interesting, and more likely to be argued and debated.

10. Is personality a fixed and immutable thing? Are certain personality characteristics present at birth or is one's personality constantly being shaped throughout life? What are the arguments for each view? Have you ever noticed major personality changes in yourself or in others, perhaps after a major life-changing event like becoming a parent?

11. This option actually harkens back to the last unit, but it also applies to the area of mental illness. What experiences have you had with phobias or obsessive-compulsive behaviors? Have you first hand experience, or dealt with friends or family with such problems? How intrusive was it on normal day-to-day living? Was your experience in line with the descriptions offered in lecture and the text? Finally, was the problem resolved, and if so, how?