Comparison of research methods for testing psychology hypothesis

Research Paper

Psychology like many other sciences is grounded in the knowledge that is gained through the use of varying hands on research experiments that all help to provide the answers to the differing questions that they each propose. Each one is unique and suited to the findings that the researchers behind it hope to acquire. They require countless hours of dedication from finding subject pools, to collecting and sorting data, forming sound and stable hypothesis, and in the end hopefully being able to formulate a conclusion that aids in the advancement of the communities understanding of the topic at hand. Whether it be a clear answer or a step in the right direction, the progress that each study makes is able to help he efforts of all present and future psychologists, and such is the case in the following studies that were performed. Each having their own individual goals and questions that they sought to resolve in their own manner and process. However, in the end each study seeks the same goal, and that is the advancement of the field. Such is the case in the following research studies I have collected, each taking place in the last year, each was significant enough and able to produce such captivating results that they were published for all to read and bear witness to the insightful and through provoking ideas they all present.

The first experiment I found delves into the social issue of whether or not different forms of social media such as television cause us as individuals, specifically men in this case, to have their perceptions and ideals about the physical attractiveness of women, and their overall appeal to be altered and molded by the concepts of mainstream beauty and allure. The idea stems

from the fact that within differing environments the traits that a person posses' can ultimately define their appeal and worth in the eyes of others. However, " not all environments contain the same environmental pressures: Differences in pressures across environments means that optimal values may vary, resulting in differences in attractiveness preferences (Thornborrow page 4)." Seeing as modernization continues to develop and thrive within not only our own country, but those all around the world it becomes apparent that with it certain views and ideals develop as well. Such was the main point of question within the article " Investigating the link between television viewing and men's preferences for female body size and shape in rural Nicaragua." The reason that the researches behind the paper chose to take their experiment and proceed with their experiment in the rural country of South Africa is because the fact that many societies within the country are fairly underdeveloped and don't have the amenities of being able to watch television, or use social media to the extent that those in the western world do. Therefore, they serve as the best control group, because they have been unaffected by the growth of social media, the trends that many men and women fall into, and the developments of different social norms which many women within the states are forced to fall into. Thus, they took this opportunity to test whether or not this limitation from the mainstream world would impact their perception of what true beauty is in their eyes. By individually taking focus groups of men from three different villages, all of which who had significantly different levels of television exposure and allowing them to generate their ideal women the researchers were able to better assess their hypothesis by providing the participants with a 3D model of women, each time starting at two different extremes of body type from

fairly skinny to fairly full, the researchers then adjusted the model until their subjects were clearly and fully happy with the results of their changes. The reasoning behind having the researchers change the model was to avoid any discrepancies that could have arisen from a lack of access to technology or understanding of how it properly functioned, thus to avoid any possible confusion the researches took the matters into their own hands, and instead merely waited till their participants were satisfied with their alterations to the female model. It was through this study that the researchers were able to find a fairly unanimous result to their findings. The men who were from villages that were more predominantly able to have access to television were seen leaning towards the appeal of a far thinner woman, while the men from villages that had less access to the media and television opted for women who were seen as having heavier builds, which can be attributed to the cultural views of less civilized countries where those who are larger are seen as healthier, as well as more fit to bare children. Furthermore, the other men from the last village were an intermediate between the other two extremes, rather than desiring an entirely slim woman or a full-bodied beauty, these individuals opted for a curvier woman. In addition, a second study was done using focus groups with the hopes of determining how each group of men felt about the specific features they preferred on a woman, and here the reference to mainstream media and celebrities such as " Nicki Minaj, Rihanna and Halle Berry, [came into play] when discussing their ideal female body." Therefore, by the end of the study the researchers were able to quantify their data in such a way as to formulate a conclusion to their hypothesis. That "[television] access is linked to rural Nicaraguan men's perceptions of ideal female body weight and breast size, but preferences for

a curvaceous lower body shape may be driven primarily by judgments of female sexual promise (Thornborrow page 7)."

Moving forward the next journal article I found was centered around the idea of cooperation among individuals of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and how the differing social influences that individuals are placed under can affect their overall actions and attitudes when placed in environments in which they are forced to cooperate. Thus, Lucas Mollerman and his fellow researchers developed " Societal background influences social learning in cooperative decision making" on how the " cultural organizationof societies shapes the influence ofsocial informationondecision making(Mollerman page3)," and the concept of collectivist values tending to lead individuals towards the will of the majority. Each society's individual characteristics and attributes are shown to be the cause of their resident's willingness or lack of to lean towards the majority. The researchers behind the experiment tested their theories by comparing two societal extremes of cooperation by looking at individuals from China, an entirely cooperative centered society, and the United Kingdom which represents a purely individualistic and independent country. Their theory hopes to test how the concepts of cooperation can vary among individuals who are exposed to varying cultural and social environments, and whether or not the concept of cooperation is a natural human characteristic that is true in all parts of the world, or can be impacted by the way differing influences on a person's individual life. However, after their participants were put through a social dilemma and a coordination game they found that their results tended to oppose their consensus. They found that Chinese individuals were more

individualistic, and merely tended to lean towards the collective in situations in which there were far greater benefits. However, the British test subjects were found to give into the collective measure when it was the decision of the majority. This was found to be attributed mainly to the fact that those within collectivist nations are more prone to help the collective when they have a more personal connection to the individuals that they are trying to help, whereas individualistic countries appear to show a more willing nature to help those that they don't personally know. Moreover, after accounting for their data they were able to resolve to come to the conclusion that " in different societies social learning can play diverging roles in the emergence and maintenance of cooperation (Mollerman page 6)." Therefore, even though their hypothesis was disproven by the data that they had collected the researchers were still able to find quite concrete data to help develop their claims regarding cooperation trends among people from countries of differing cooperative behavior.

Lastly, the final article that I found to be an extremely informative and well established piece of research material was " The true trigger of shame: social devaluation is sufficient, wrongdoing is unnecessary," which tested the concept behind the mental rational of shame being experienced by innocent individuals, or those that under normal circumstances have no true definitive reasoning behind this feeling as opposed to those who have committed wrong doings. Some individuals have reasoned that it is " triggered when a person attributes a negative outcome to their self, rather than to a particular act or circumstance (Robertson page 4)." Therefore, the researchers behind the article chose to test the validity of this theory by placing groups of

individuals in hypothetical situations that could be construed to be seen as causing them to feel shame by making them appear to be seen in a negative light by their fellow participants. However, their shame was ill-warranted by their true actions within the hypothetical situation in which the participants were viewed by their coworkers as stealing money from them, but instead a mere misconception brought on by the perceptions of others. Thus, what the researchers were testing was whether or not this false sense of wrongdoing by others would still elicit a response of shame by the participants whether they personally knew they had done nothing wrong within the situation, but were perceived by others to have done so. This in fact ran parallel to the prior hypothesis regarding the origin of shame being cast on individuals who have in their own eyes and views not done anything of significant wrong doing; however, instead because they are viewed by the perception of others around them they are still a victim of the underlying shame for the actions they are believed to have committed. Therefore, a second test was also placed on a group of participants who participated in a face to face interaction in which they played a public good game, and then were told randomly whether or not the other members of the exercise had chosen to include them going further, or instead chose to exclude them entirely from the rest of the experiment. The participants were told that the decisions were made by the amount of participation they expressed, but in fact was chosen by the researchers. In addition, within each group of participants all those who were excluded expressed great feelings of shame, independent of the amount they participated within the experiment itself. Therefore, the researchers were able to come to the conclusion that the real trigger of shame was the concept of " being devalued by others (Robertson page 2)."

Therefore, the researchers were able to come to a conclusive answer to the reasoning behind the origin of true shame experienced by individuals regardless of whether or not they are deserving of the feeling.

In conclusion, by examining all of these research projects we are able to see the resolve behind each and every single one of the researchers who decided to take the initiative of testing their hypothesis in order to try and find either an answer or some sort of evidence to help lead their testing towards the answers they hope to find. It is because of their resolve and their actions that psychology has been able to thrive so greatly and make the progress that it has, and as these studies continue to grow and more and more questions are asked the knowledge that comes with them further develops.

<u>Works Cited</u>

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