Volunteer Science: An Online Laboratory for Experiments in Social Psychology

SPQ Snaps

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Part 1 Discussion Guide: These questions help frame the central questions motivating the paper.
1) What are the advantages and disadvantages of replication?
2) What are the strengths of large samples and diverse populations? When might large and diverse samples actually hinder drawing conclusions from an experiment?
3) What selection effects may be at play in online studies and how might selection influence the results of different kinds of experiments?

Part 2 Discussion Guide: these questions help students discuss the theory behind each study and can be used for leading discussion after running students through the studies themselves at https://www.volunteerscience.com/experiments/validation.

Study 1: Reaction Times
1) In what ways could implementing these experiments online prevent reliable measurement of how quickly people respond to stimuli?
2) If you participated in flanker or Stroop, do you think you could have improved your reaction time to point that there was no difference in your reaction time between congruent and incongruent stimuli?

Study 2: Cognitive Biases and Heuristics
1) Do you think people who show more bias on one question would also likely to show more bias on other questions?
2) If your results indicated you were biased on one of these tasks, how might you go about reducing your bias on that task? How might you reduce your bias across tasks?

Study 3: Five Factor Personality Survey
1) Why might we need to ask different questions or the same question in different ways in order to measure a single phenomenon? What other phenomena could we measure with multiple questions?
2) If you took the survey, could you guess which individual attributes were part of the same factors?
3) If you had taken the survey a year ago, do you think you would have received the same scores?

Study 4: Justice and Group Influence
1) How might peer pressure work differently in online versus offline social situations?
2) In the group influence study, what signals, if any, did you pick up from other participants during the reflection period in which players shared their solutions?
3) What are some real-world cases where the tendency to desire complementary justice may influence people’s sense of right and wrong (e.g. jury trials, government welfare policy, political campaigns)?

4) How did you respond to the vignette about Joseph and Mitchell? Did you feel sorry for one or the other? How strong was your response to the vignette? Which vignette did you see: rich and happy/poor and miserable or rich but miserable/poor but happy?

Study 5: Problem Solving:
1) What were the most difficult parts of solving the TSP for you? (Finding a good solution, optimizing on good solution, finding the perfect solution?)

2) What factors might influence the difficulty of a puzzle like the Travelling Salesperson? (Or, what factors besides the number of cities in the interior hull might make the TSP more or less difficult?)

Study 6: Social Dilemmas
1) Do you believe that people will play the same strategy across dilemmas? For example, do you think someone who cooperates all the time in a Prisoner’s Dilemma game will always cooperate in the Commons or Public Goods game? What about someone who cooperates only if other people cooperate?

2) How influential are the payoffs to individual’s strategy? Do you think people respond to little changes in the pay-offs or will they only change strategy only if the payoffs change substantially?

3) If you played one of the games, what was your strategy?

4) What do you think your partners’ strategies were? What did you think of your partners? Would you want to play with them again?