

031:010 Research Methods in Psychology

This is related to the cancer-screening article (Sieverding et al., 2010) on the website, which you should read before your section meeting for the week of April 16-20.

The article reports the results from a tricky combination of a survey and experiment. It looked like a typical convenience-sampling survey to the subjects, but it was really an experiment. It's a cool method, IMO, which is why I chose it for section. Very outside-the-box.

The experiment concerns the effects of providing people with information about participation rates in cancer screening. There were three conditions: a low-prevalence condition, a high-prevalence condition, and a control condition that provided no information. Note that the low- and high-prevalence conditions both provided the subjects with true information. In the low-prevalence condition, the subjects were told that “only one fifth of men (only 18%!) have undergone a standard early-detection cancer examination in the last year.” In the high-prevalence condition, the subjects were told that “two thirds of all men (indeed 65%!) have undergone a standard early-detection cancer examination.” These are both true. Only 18% underwent a screening in the preceding year, while 65% have undergone a screening at some point previously (which includes more than just the previous year, of course, which is why it's a much higher number). The key difference to the researchers conducting this study is that the low-prevalence condition mentions a rather low percentage (18%), while the high-prevalence condition mentions a much high percentage (65%). That's what defines the conditions. But, again, both statements are true, so there's no confound between the number and whether it is true.

They used three measures of the effects of condition. The first two were both verbal reports of intention: (1) “Do you intend to participate in a cancer-screening examination within the next 12 months?” and (2) “How likely is it (from 0 to 100) that you will attend a cancer-screening examination within the next 12 months?” The third measure was relatively subtle and behavioral: (3) whether the subject provided his address so that screening information could be mailed to him later.

Before section, first make sure that you either understand exactly what the researchers did, both in terms of what they manipulated and what they measured, or have questions on the parts that are not clear to you ready. Second, think about why the researchers had three different measures (DVs). Most of all, why did they include that third measure (whether or not the subject gave his address)? Why weren't the first two measures enough?

These and a few other things will be discussed in section. Then, after everyone in the course has had their section (i.e., late on Friday, the 20th), the actual final assignment will be posted and you'll have a week to upload your answer to ICON.

Note that you are completely free to discuss the article with anyone up until Friday the 20th at 2 pm, but as soon as the final assignment is posted, you may only discuss this with your section TA or the instructor of the course.