Alternative to HPR/Sona Participation
Psychology 200 – Cognitive Psychology – Spring 2017

Due Date:
➢ By 5PM on April 26th, email your paper as a word attachment to the UA Molly Dassance at dassanc4@msu.edu. Please put "psy 200-HPR alternative" in the subject.

Format: Your assignment should be typed, double spaced with 12 point font, and about 3-4 pages. All papers should be well written in complete paragraphs and should be free of grammatical and spelling errors.

Assignment: Given that the course investigates the way people perceive, think, make decisions, and remember, much of what we covered has real life implications. To encourage you to discover these links to real life, the final paper will require you to find something in popular culture (e.g. song lyrics, news article, cartoon, television, film, art) that relates to a topic that was discussed either in the textbook or in class. You should also describe the real world situation that you have identified and discuss how the psychological topic maps onto or helps explain the situation you have identified. In your write-up you should discuss the topic from cognitive psychology and the research that was performed investigating this topic. You may use any topic from the term.

This assignment is intentionally open ended. However, on the next page I will provide an example that would have made a great paper topic (If I hadn’t blown it by using it as the example). I consider the example a good one because it allows me to discuss a number of cognitive psychology findings. HINT: It is worth spending a bit of time thinking about/finding a good real world example. If the example is a good one, it should make connecting it to the cognitive psychology principles easy. When we get to expert problem solving, I will mention that one of the differences between experts and novices is that experts spend more time analyzing problems before implementing a solution. I would recommend the same thing here. Don’t just go with the first idea that pops into your head and spend a ton of time trying to make cognitive psychology fit a poor example. Take the time to think of /find a good example.
AN EXAMPLE THAT WOULD MAKE AN EXCELLENT PAPER.

The Issue & potential opening:

A Newsweek poll in June of 2007, found that 41% of Americans believed that ‘Saddam Hussein’s regime in Iraq was directly involved in planning, financing, or carrying out the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001’ (Catone, 2007). Despite the fact that no evidence for this relationship has been found, and despite the fact that administration officials have admitted that there is no link, this figure is 5% higher than a similar poll conducted in September 2004. While this increase in a belief which is almost certainly wrong may baffle some in the media, cognitive psychology may be able to explain both the original source of the misconception and why the misconception has continued to grow.

Within cognitive psychology there is a model of long term memory (LTM) organization that might help explain why so many Americans hold this false belief.

AT THIS POINT I WOULD EXPLAIN THE PSYCHOLOGICAL PRINCIPLE
I would then describe the view of LTM as an associative network and provide the experimental evidence that supports the theory. Among my evidence I would discuss Hebbian learning (things that fire together wire together) and the false memory experiments (e.g., the experiment where people mistakenly believe “sleep” was on a list). I would also use the context dependent memory experiments to argue that all sorts of things that co-occur may become associated.

THEN I WOULD MAP THE THEORY ONTO MY EXAMPLE
After thoroughly discussing the associative network model of memory, I would point out how the persistent pairing of Saddam Hussein, and the war on terror could create a strong association between Hussein and terrorism. Then I would argue that since the September 11th attacks are also closely associated with Terrorism, the link between Hussein and September 11th might be established through the terrorism node.

A SECOND POSSIBILITY (NOTE: Your example need not have two possibilities, but if there are two things that might be related to your example, a good paper would mention them both).

Then I would write something like “This associative network model predicts that the mistaken belief might increase as more pairings of Hussein and Terror are presented. However, a second phenomenon within cognitive psychology might also explain why the belief is increasing.” I would then point out that 3 years ago the public figures who were suggesting that Hussein was directly involved were either discredited or thought to be biased. Thus, people might have discounted the information coming from these sources. I would then point out that the source of information may become disassociated from the information itself. I would launch into a discussion of the “sleeper effect” and the difference between episodic memory and semantic memory. Finally, I would point out how this type of dissociation might help explain why more people believe in Hussein’s 9-11 involvement as time progresses.

Finally, I would have some pithy concluding paragraph.