



A Reply to Horvath, Pury, and Johnson (2006)

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Educational Value

The educational value of the study to the participants is decreased when an online study is conducted because:

- Participants must initiate contact
- The debriefing is inadequate



Our Rebuttal:

Educational value is not solely dependent on the adequacy of the debriefing. In fact it has been shown that debriefing and educational value are not even correlated.

In addition, it is the participant's responsibility to contact the researcher for further information if necessary.

Also, the paper itself conceded that there was no evidence that these sessions would increase the educational value of a study.

Their Solution:

In-person education sessions increase the effort to participate in online studies in an attempt to equalize the number of "less motivated" people in these studies.

This in turn makes the sample population in any given research study more representative to the participant pool as a whole. This would result in an increase of the external validity of the studies.

External Validity

The sample of participants attracted to online research may not accurately represent the population. For example, because of the inherent simplicity of online studies, perhaps less-motivated people would participate at a disproportionate rate.



H P & J Claims About Internet Research

Their Solution:

If all students are required to attend "in-person education sessions" ...

The debriefing given when the participants are physically present is superior to a web page online.

The researcher is able to use interpersonal cues in order to determine if more explanation is necessary.

Let's Imagine...

You are a freshman in college and are planning to be a participant in a psychological study for a few extra credit points in your psychology 100 class.

You come to the sign-up board and see a few different sheets of paper with just dates and times on them. Apparently you just put your name and contact information down, and you'll be contacted about the study. You sign your name on a sheet of paper which the subsequent date and time fit into your schedule.

After showing up at the specified time and place, you are told the study involves aversive shock...

You'd like to withdraw from the study, but you walked all the way there!



Not Knowing Study Name or Description

Knowing Study Name and Description

Alternatively...

You come to the sign-up board and see numerous sheets of paper with titles and descriptions of different studies.

Here you find there are studies that can be taken online that have an appeal because of the relative little work you'd have to do, but also there are other studies that would require a little more work, and also provide monetary compensation of \$5.

Also, you see that there are studies that seem to be a little scary to you (such as one involving aversive shock) so you stay away from those.

Eventually you decide that \$5 can buy you 5 double cheese burgers and that's 5 meals, so you sign up for one that will reward you with \$5.



Access to Participant Pool

The allure of online studies is taking participants away from the researchers conducting in-person studies. It is the University's ethical responsibility to allow equal access to the participant pool for all researchers.



Our Rebuttal:

This paper claims to have increased external validity in online studies by eliminating the chance of participants choosing one study over another based on their level of motivation.

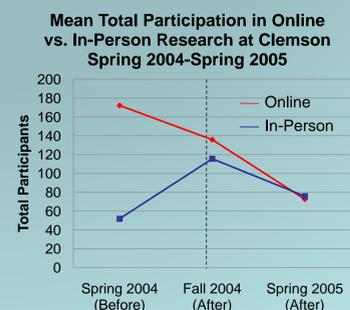
However, the paper neglected to define motivation, making it difficult to understand how it may play a role in choosing a study.

Also, there was no research supporting this hypothesis. In fact, recent research suggests that the idea that less motivated individuals are more likely to choose online studies is a myth.

Our Rebuttal:

Offering incentives such as money or food would endear participants without decreasing the number.

Requiring in-person education sessions alienated participants as shown by the graph below.



Their Solution:

If all students are required to attend "in-person education sessions" ...

It would make online studies require as much effort as the in-person studies. This would begin to equal out the disparity in the access to the participant pool.

Researchers with more pressure to find participants would be offered an equal opportunity to attract potential participants.