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Ridofranz/Getty Images At some point in one of your psychology classes, you may be asked to write an example of a person. What is an example? In fact, it is an in-depth psychological study of one person or group of people. Research topics often focus on people who experience symptoms of the disease or people who have had experiences that cannot be replicated in the lab. The format of your study may vary depending on the requirements of the job and the expectations of your instructor, but most of them include a detailed background of the person, a description of the problem faced by the person, the diagnosis, and a description of the intervention using one or more therapeutic approaches. Of course, the first step in writing a study is to choose a subject. In some cases you may be allowed to set an example on an actual volunteer or on someone you know, such as a friend or family member. In other cases, your teacher may prefer that you choose a less personal subject, such as a person from history or a well-known literary figure. Looking for a good subject for your research? Here are just a few ideas that can inspire you: Famous or exceptional people can make excellent topics to explore. There are many fascinating figures in the history of psychology that would make for interesting research. Sigmund Freud, Harry Harlow, Erick Erickson, B.F. Skinner and many other famous thinkers led an interesting life that offers a lot of materials for excellent research. Studying their upbringing, experience and life can give an idea of how they developed their theories and approach the study of psychology. Some of the most famous people in psychology are sometimes not psychologists at all. Instead, patients, clients, and cases studied by psychologists can prove even more interesting. Think of people like Anna O., Phineas Gage and Jean. Other individuals whom you may want to consider include Kitty Genovese, Little Albert and David Reimer. By looking at the lives of these patients, you can get a deeper understanding of their experiences. It may also be interesting to see how mental health treatments have been different in the past compared to those that may have been used today. Other well-known historical figures can also make excellent themes for exploring examples: Eleanor Roosevelt, Napoleon, Adolf Hitler, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln and many other famous (and infamous) people could potentially serve as a subject for your research. Obviously this will include some reading and research on the life of the chosen subject and achievements, but this can certainly make for an interesting paper. Another interesting and interesting approach is to research one of your favorite fictional characters. You can choose to tackle a classic character such as Shakespeare's Macbeth or Romeo or Jane Austen Bennett or Fitzwilliam Darcy. Or instead, you can about a more modern literary character, such as Suzanne Collins' Katniss Everdeen or J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter. In some cases, your instructor may allow you to write your example to a person you know. Such a project, however, may require special permission from the Institutional Review Board for your school. You may also be obliged or simply prefer to use a pseudonym in order to protect the identity and privacy of your subject. This type of project often requires an interview of your subject and perhaps talk to other sources who know the topic, such as friends and family members. As you can see, there are many great options out there when choosing a subject for your research. First of all, always start by paying attention to the instructions given by your instructor. In many cases, there will be specific guidelines on what and what you can write about. Talk about your research theme, idea with your instructor before you start making sure that you have permission to proceed with your project. Thank you for your feedback! What do you care? Verywell Mind uses only high-quality sources, including peer-reviewed research, to support facts in our articles. Read our editorial process to learn more about how we verify facts and maintain the accuracy, reliability and credibility of our content. Rolls, G. Classical case studies in psychology. New York: Routledge. One of the key aspects of any scientific study is that, against all costs, its results are questioned and tested again. A number of popular psychological studies like the idea that a smile makes you happier or that willpower is a limited resource has not held up this control. They are not completely bogus, but they are not definitive either. That's what's really going on. Researchers can manipulate the results to meet various theories back in 1998, researchers published an article titled Ego Depletion: Is Active Self a Limited Resource? In the journal Personality and Social Psychology, that changed how we thought about willpower completely. The idea was simple: put the cookies on a plate next to a bowl of radish. Tell the participants to hang out in the room, and then check them out with impossible puzzles afterwards. People who ate radishes gave up the puzzle in front of people who ate cookies, which suggested to the researchers that the use of willpower (not eat cookies) taps into some supply of willpower. The more self-control you use at the moment, the less you will have to use in the future. Since this landmark study in 1998, ego exhaustion, which involves self-control or willpower, has been a huge subject of research. We mentioned this idea of limited willpower a couple of times, because at its core, it is true. In fact, many similar studies have followed over the years that seemed to reinforce this idea. In 2010, a meta-analysis of 83 studies in the journal Experimental Psychology, published in the Psychological Bulletin, found that in the vast majority of cases the depletion of the ego's ego Thing. Then, in a strange twist, another set of researchers analyzed most of the exact same data in an article in Frontiers in Psychology and found no evidence to deplete the ego. The same researchers did follow-up meta-analyses in the journal Experimental Psychology that added to unpublished studies and again found no evidence of ego depletion. We've talked before about the bias that comes with data analysis, and that's very obvious here. Researchers can manipulate data to satisfy any end. So what does all this mean to you as a normal person? This means that scientists are not quite sure how willpower or self-control work. Self-control may be escras, but we don't know exactly why. We may have a reserve of willpower that we are clicking every time we make a choice. Or maybe not. After all, ego depletion is still a theory that needs testing. It's probably best for most of us to get back to chalkling up bad decisions of general fatigue. Instead of worrying about some imaginary supply of willpower, just try to avoid these tempting situations altogether. Misusing statistics is one of the most powerful ways to lie. Normally, we teach you how to avoid... MoreOur background plays a role that is hard to check forHave you heard that just thinking about money makes you selfish? According to a 2013 article published in the Journal of Experimental Psychology, this is certainly the case. Study participants completed two questionnaires, one with a simple colored background and the other with a weak background on a \$100 bill. They found that participants who saw a \$100 bill were less sympathetic to victims and socially disadvantaged groups and even subtly changed their political views on the free market. Given that we are in a great election year, this idea of why some people are more sympathetic than others is definitely on many minds right now. This study, and those that followed it, the same researchers led to headlines like How Money Makes People Act Less Human, and Just Looking at Cash Makes People Selfish and Less Social. However, when 36 laboratories tried to repeat the tests, they did not get the same results. Their study, published in the journal Social Psychology, was part of the Replication Project Many Laboratories, a project designed to replicate psychological experiments internationally. Of the 36 laboratories, only one reported the same significant effects as the original study. A 2015 study, also published in the Journal of Experimental Psychology, attempted to replicate the same 2013 test on a larger scale with a larger sample size, but failed to produce the same results. In response, one author of the initial study pointed to several other studies on many years that have yielded similar results, namely that just thinking about money makes people selfish and even antisocial. Which, again, is all to say that we still have evidence on both sides. So what's really going on here? Should you avoid looking at \$100 bills? You suddenly become Every time you open your wallet? Does the most act of seeing a \$100 bill turn you into a free market capitalist? Well, it depends. There's an argument here that the biggest influence factor is how important money is to you from the start. If it's important to you, this primer can make you more selfish, if it's not, there probably won't be any change in your responses. Or maybe it's not a factor at all. We don't really know, it's just a theory. Nowadays, you're probably better off ignoring how much money you have and just fixing your habits. Social science is inherently difficult testYou've certainly heard it before: smile and you'll feel better. There are even studies to prove it. A study published in 1988 in the journal Personality and Social Psychology found that people thought Far Side comics were funnier when researchers made them smile. This is what fills the heads of self-help book authors. Similar studies followed up with similar results, including one published in Cognition and Emotion that tested the effect of a furrowed forehead, and another from the Creative Research Journal, which suggests that the same feather between the teeth can make people more creative. Unfortunately, these studies are not as definitive as you might think. Earlier this year, 17 different laboratories tried to replicate the results of the 1988 experiment, and an article published last month in Perspectives on Psychological Science found that their results did not match the original study. In the end, nine of the 17 labs found similar results to the initial study, but the size of this difference was smaller than the original study. The other eight laboratories found neither evidence of higher grades nor results in the opposite direction. It's not the whole story though. There were some differences in how the study was conducted in replication, the largest of which was that the participants were filmed. It can be argued that the participants changed their behavior because they knew that they had a camera installed on them. To complicate matters a little more, it's also worth noting that while it may seem like good practice to use the same Far Side cartoons from the original 1988 study, participants in 2016 certainly have a different sense of humor than people 28 years ago. That in itself could distort the results. Replicating research is difficult, especially with social sciences. Even if you do it by book and replication research accurately, the results can be different. This does not mean that the initial results are false, but it does mean that it is worth looking deeper. In a more recent example, we have recently pointed out that the results of another primer study are being questioned. In this case, it was the idea that the forgery of a certain body language, the power of posing, stress and improves performance. In the case of power posture, one of the co-authors, Dana Carney, came out and said the results were statistically tweaked to get the results the researchers wanted. Wanted, even adds that the study was not so great in the first place, saying that too many participants understood the hypothesis they were testing, which should automatically negate the results. Whether it's the power of posing or smiling, it's really in the air that, if any, the effects these priming techniques can have on behavior. They may fall under if it works for you, then keep doing this mantra, but it is just as important as the reader to remain skeptical. None of these studies, no matter how quirky the headline you read, applies to 100% of people. There are no magic bullets, and there is no such thing as universal advice, so always be careful with any research that suggests that there is one solution to a common problem. A reproduction project with the support of the Association of Psychological Sciences has recently been launched. The aim of the project is to reproduce psychological research, analyze the results and develop more reliable testing methods. Right now, the failure rate for reproduction is quite high, somewhere around 64% of studies fail. This sounds grim, but it means that more testing is needed, and that it is worth challenging our long-standing beliefs as often as new research. Illustration by Angelica Alzona. Images of Bridget Coyle, Sarah, University of Liverpool. Liverpool.

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