

## Unit 1 Paper Assignment

### Psychology 100-02

This week we have been discussing the nature/nurture debate, with a special focus on the individual differences of personality and intelligence. Your final paper is an opportunity to discover how this debate has played out in published research with respect to another individual difference of your choice. Your Unit 1 paper, **with a target length of 3-4 pages**, should take a stance about the relative contribution of nature vs. nurture in your chosen domain of behavior.

Your first task is to select your individual difference. A good candidate is one that you find fascinating *and* that has a fairly clear definition both conceptually and operationally (the distinction we discussed on Wednesday 9/14). It should be characterized/defined by specific observable behaviors, so it can be measured both validly and reliably. Your paper will also be more interesting to write and read if, historically, there have been plausible cases made for the influence of both “nature” and “nurture,” though the field may now have converged upon a social agreement that the relative influence of one side predominates. Lastly, please try to be creative: I would prefer not to read more than two or three papers on any given individual difference.

You should e-mail me a sentence or two about your individual difference by **September 30<sup>th</sup>** so that I can point you toward any resources I am aware of and confirm that your choice will work.

After identifying your topic, sit down and ask yourself: besides genes (nature), what other factors do you think influence this trait? There will likely be a variety of possible “nurture” factors – some biological, some socio-environmental, etc. Then use your list of factors to search PsycInfo in order to become a “micro-expert” on the literature in this area. You should try to track down *all* of the papers that look both relevant and reasonably reliable (e.g., in high-impact peer-reviewed journals; you don’t need to track down unpublished dissertations). Let me or the science librarians know if you have tried searching PsycInfo repeatedly and keep hitting a dead end; we can probably help you think of additional search terms or search strategies.

Your goal, ultimately, is to draw some conclusions about the current state of the scientific literature. The format of your final paper is a “prospectus” consisting of a short, cogent introductory statement about how your individual difference is usually conceptualized and measured; an annotated list of references (we will discuss what annotation is in class); and a summary statement of what seems, based on your reading of the literature, to be the scientific consensus right now. The paper is due **October 10<sup>th</sup>** and worth 10% of your grade.

*Grading criteria will include selection of the individual difference, choice of papers to review, and taking a stance with a **nuanced** statement about the relative contributions of nature vs. nurture (your argument should not basically come down to “well, it’s both”). Mechanics (spelling, punctuation, APA style) will also count.*

### ***What do you mean by annotated references?***

Annotated references take this form:

Jussim, L., Milburn, M. and Nelson, W. (1991) Emotional Openness: Sex-role stereotypes and self-perceptions. *Representative Research in Social Psychology*, **19**, 3-20. In Lee, Y. T., Jussim, L. J. and McCauley, C. R. (Eds.). (1995). *Stereotype Accuracy: Toward appreciating group differences* (pp. 37-38). American Psychological Association, Washington.

In studies of emotional openness, the authors predicted and found some truth in gender role stereotypes. Women, who are generally perceived to be more emotionally open than men and to express their feelings more, were on average found to do so.

*Actually, the above annotation perhaps contains TOO MUCH SUMMARY and not enough explaining why you chose to include this paper. Make sure that you explicitly tell me how it informed your thinking & your summary statement!*

### ***What does it mean to adhere to APA style?***

Your text and references should be in strict APA style.

*Some resources:*

Online tutorial:

<http://www.apastyle.org/learn/tutorials/basics-tutorial.aspx>

Our writing center also links to this PDF:

<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/instruct/guides/apastyle.pdf>

Do not cite a textbook. Instead, track down whatever they were citing.