

1.09 *Method*

The Method section describes in detail how the study was conducted. Such a description enables the reader to evaluate the appropriateness of your methods and the reliability and the validity of your results. It also permits experienced investigators to replicate the study if they so desire.

Participants or subjects. Appropriate identification of research subjects and clientele is critical to the science and practice of psychology, particularly for assessing the results (making comparisons across groups); generalizing the findings; and making comparisons in replications, literature reviews, or secondary data analyses. The sample should be adequately described, and it should be representative (if it is not, give the underlying reasons). Conclusions and interpretations should not go beyond what the sample would warrant.

When humans participated as the subjects of the study, report the procedures for selecting and assigning them and the agreements and payments made. (If case studies are included, see Appendix C, Ethical Principle 5.08, on informed consent and confidentiality issues.) Report major demographic characteristics such as sex, age, and race/ethnicity, and, where possible and appropriate, characteristics such as socioeconomic status, disability status, and sexual orientation. When a particular demographic characteristic is an experimental variable or is important for the interpretation of results, describe the group specifically—for example, in terms of national origin, level of education, health status, and language preference and use:

The second group included 40 Central American women between the ages of 20 and 30 years, all of whom had emigrated from El Salvador, had at least 12 years of education, had been permanent residents of the United States for at least 10 years, and lived in Washington, DC.

To determine how far the data can be generalized, it may be useful to identify subgroups:

The Asian sample included 30 Chinese and 45 Vietnamese persons

or

Among the Latino and Hispanic American men, 20 were Mexican American and 20 were Puerto Rican.

Even when a characteristic is not an analytic variable, reporting it may give readers a more complete understanding of the sample and often proves useful in meta-analytic studies that incorporate the article's results.

When animals are the subjects, report the genus, species, and strain number or other specific identification, such as the name and location of the supplier and the stock designation. Give the number of animals and the animals' sex, age, weight, and physiological condition. In addition, specify all essential details of their treatment and handling so that the investigation can be successfully replicated.

Give the total number of subjects and the number assigned to each experimental condition. If any did not complete the experiment, state how many and explain why they did not continue.

When you submit your manuscript, indicate to the journal editor that the treatment of subjects (people or animals) was in accordance with the ethical standards of the APA (see Principles 6.1–6.20 in the “Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct,” APA, 1992a).

Apparatus. The subsection on apparatus briefly describes the apparatus or materials used and their function in the experiment. Standard laboratory equipment, such as furniture, stopwatches, or screens, can usually be mentioned without detail. Identify specialized equipment obtained from a commercial supplier by the model number of the equipment and the supplier's name and location. Complex or custom-made equipment may be illustrated by a drawing or photograph. A detailed description of complex equipment may be included in an appendix.