

Psychology 15—Spring 2012

Unobtrusive Research

Unobtrusive Methods

- Measuring behavior without intruding on a situation; includes observing public behavior and analyzing content or archival data.

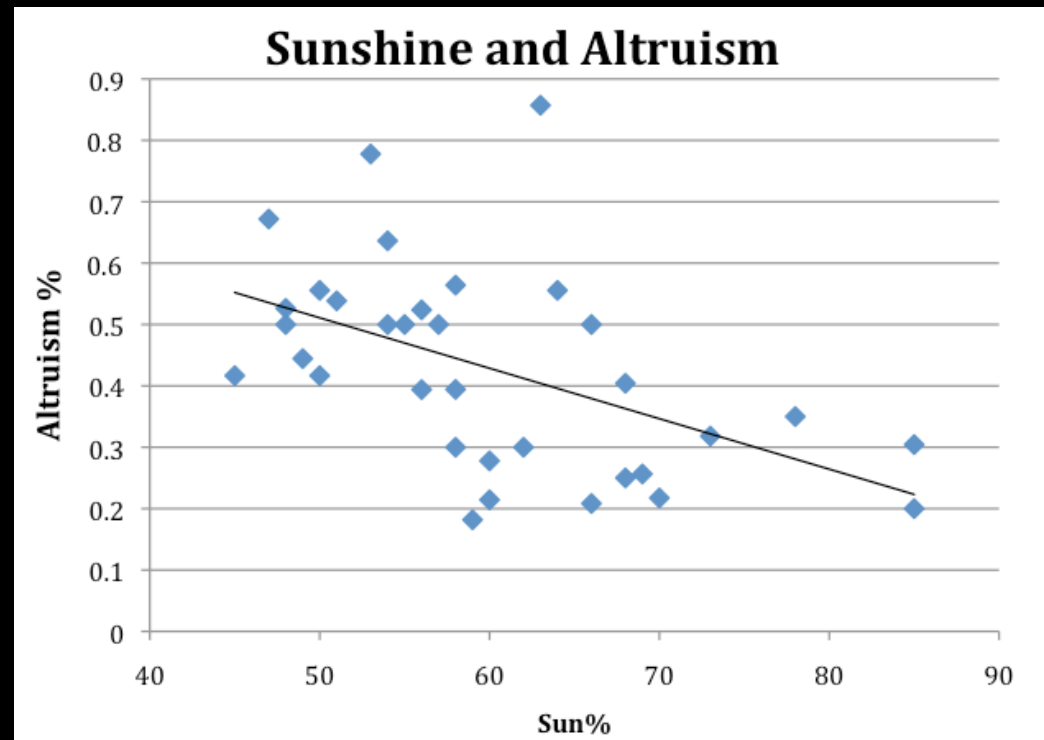
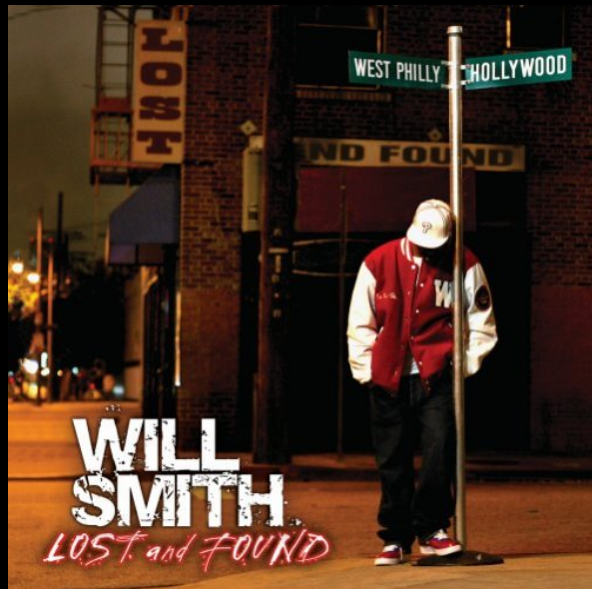
Benefits

- **High external validity:** Real people behaving in their natural habitats
- **Low bias:** Subject motives not an issue
- **Ethically sound:** Minimal intrusion means few ethical concerns
- **Fun and interesting:** Real-world behavior is rarely boring

Ground Rules

- **Don't interact with the humans!**
 - No online chatting
 - No surveys
- **Any observed behavior must be public**
- **Any manipulation must be:**
 - Harmless
 - Non-deceptive (e.g., no fake Craigslist ads)

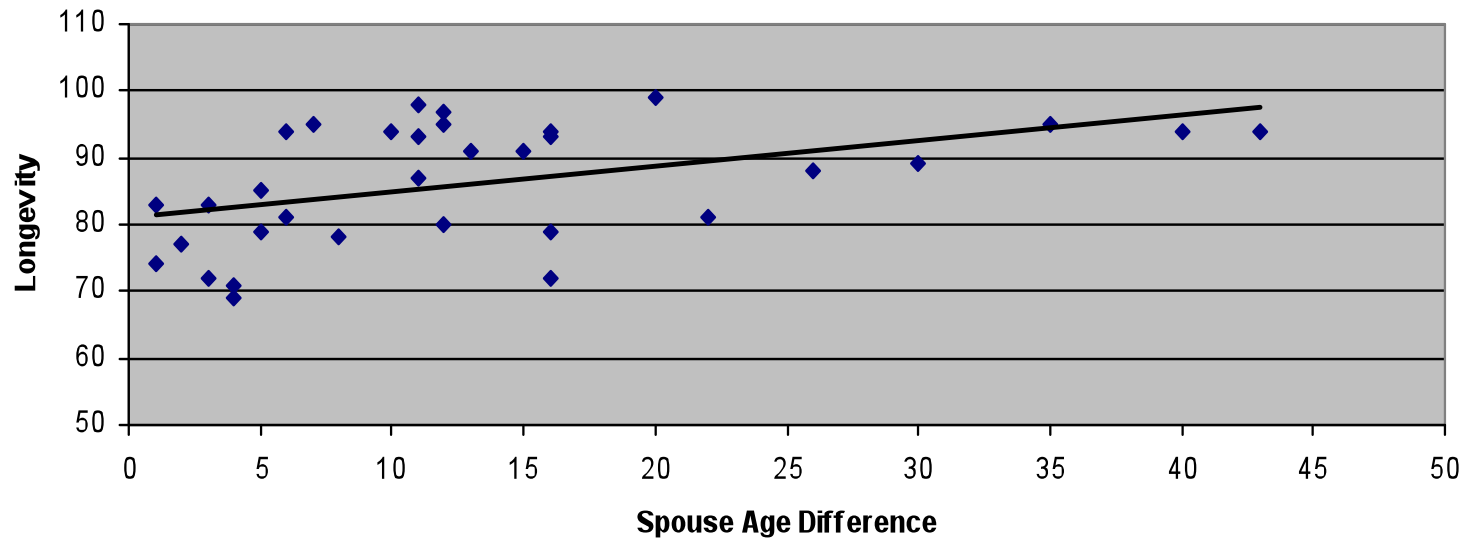
The Sunshine-Altruism Relationship: The Negative Correlation and Why Houston Is So Selfish



- Sunnier U.S. cities have lower ratios of found items to lost items posted on Craigslist

Marrying a Younger Spouse: The Secret to Longevity?

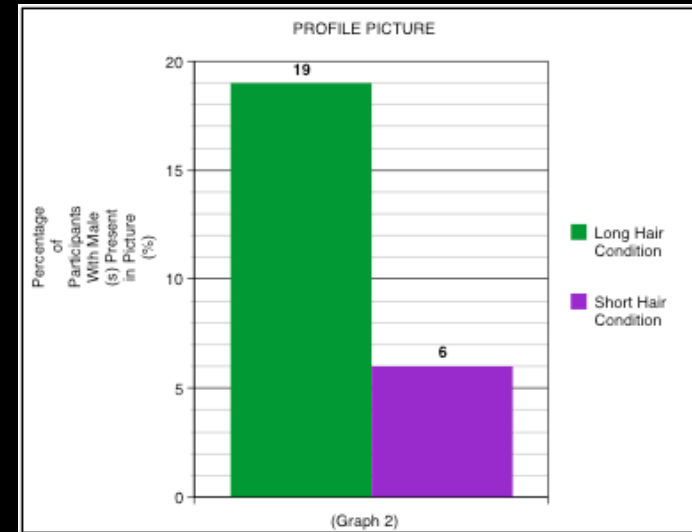
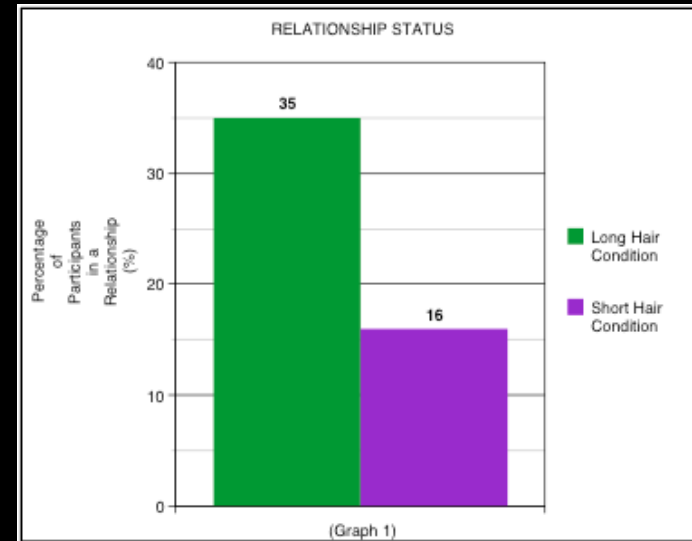
- Male billionaires with younger wives live longer



Does Female Hair Length Affect Interaction with Males?



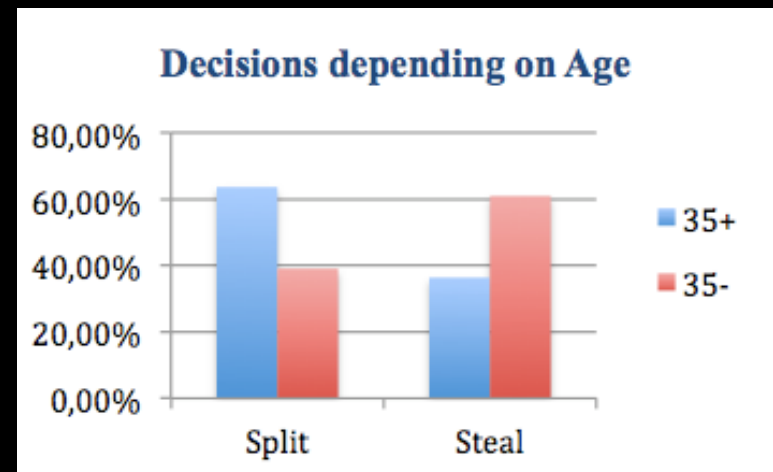
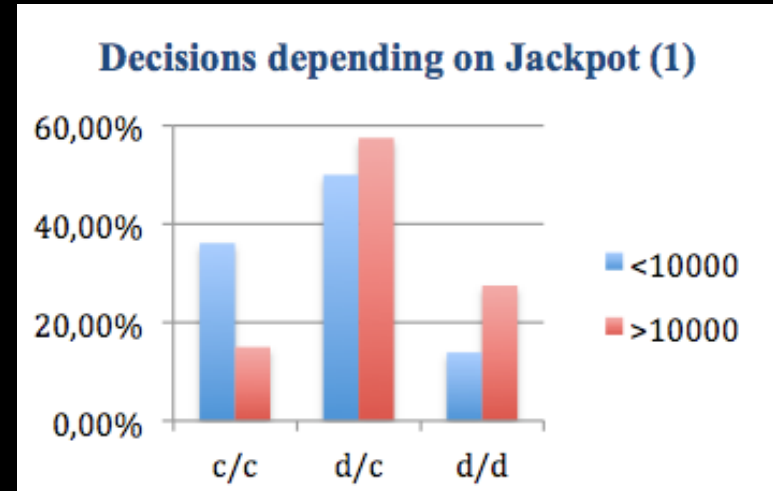
- Females with longer hair are more likely to be in relationships with males and more likely to have males in their Facebook profile pictures



Golden Balls: Impacts on Behavior in the Prisoner's Dilemma



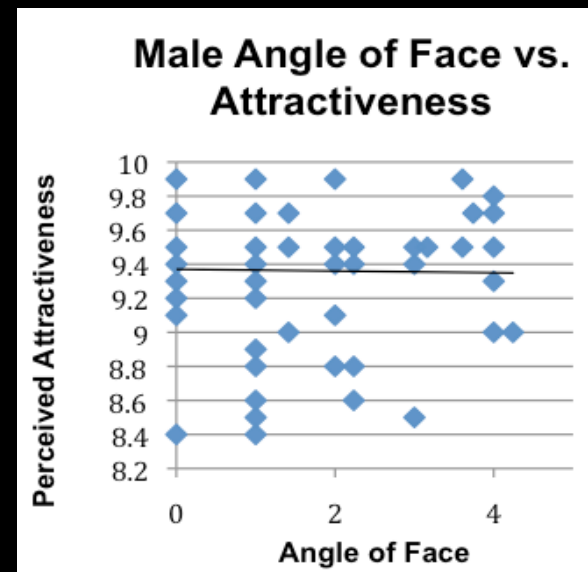
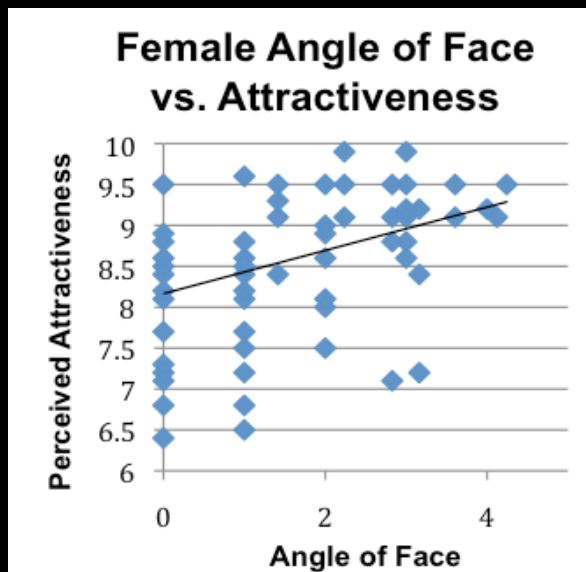
- In a prisoner's dilemma game, people cooperate less when the stakes are high
- Older people cooperate more



Work Those Angles!: How Angling One's Face in Photos Affects Perceived Attractiveness



- For females, but not for males, having a more angled picture is related to higher attractiveness ratings



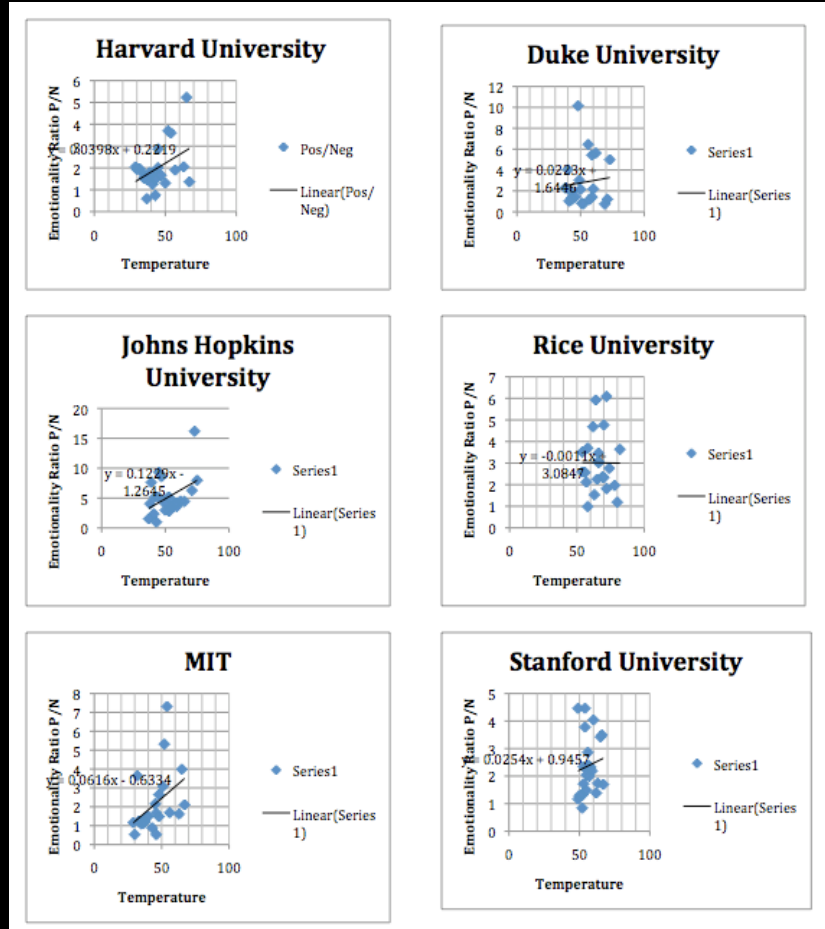
Best Method

The Effect of Temperature and Time of Year on the Unconscious Emotions of College Students

- Analyzed emotional content of student newspaper articles at three cold and three warm schools using LIWC



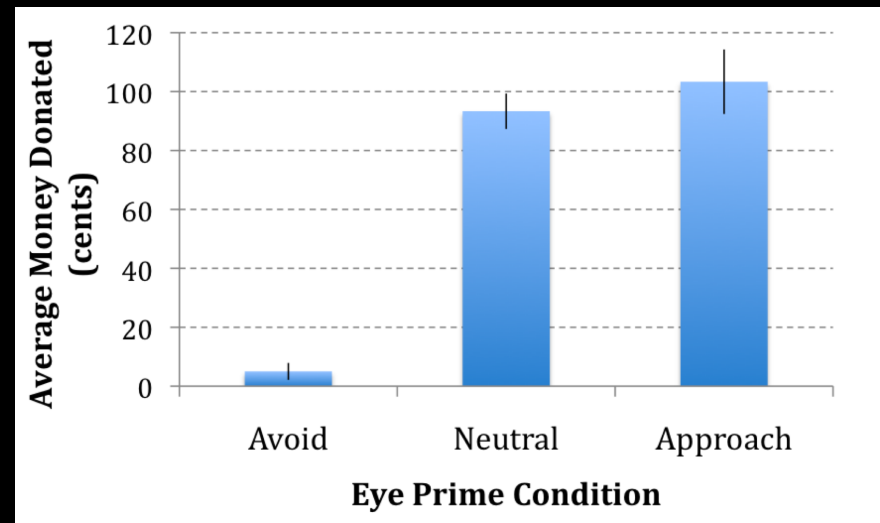
- Emotional content fluctuates with temperature at cold schools, but not at warm schools





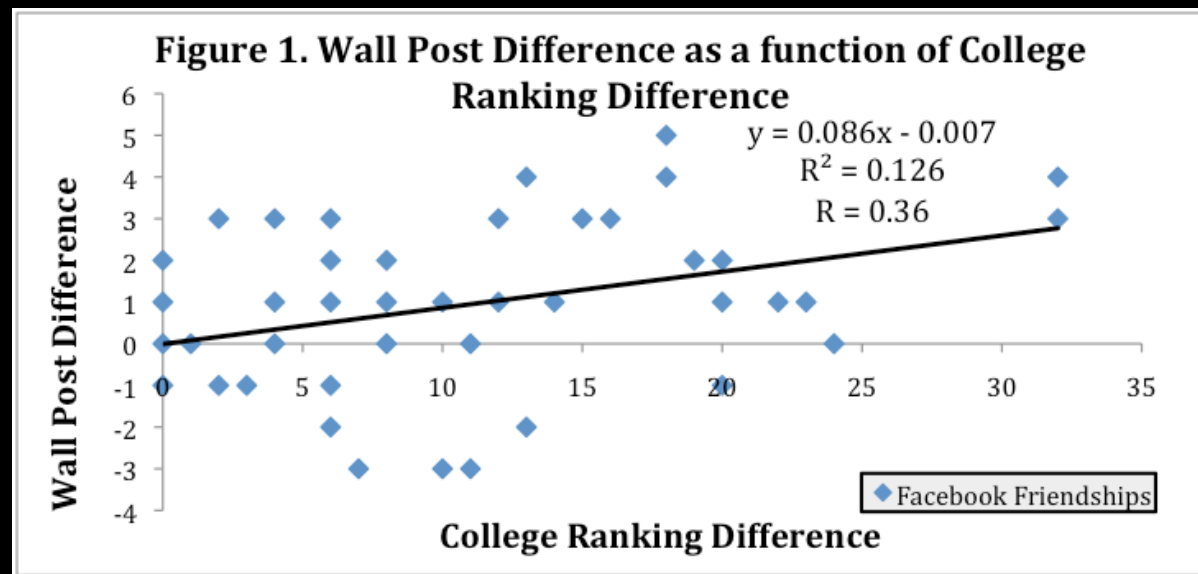
Reading the Eyes: Pro-Social Behavior Is Influenced By Implicit Social Cues

- Left a donation box for people to donate to an eye cancer charity
- Used different kinds of eyes
- Hostile eyes: Not so good for eliciting donations



Most Unsettling Result

Facebook, Power, and Reciprocity



- Facebook relationships are asymmetrical among high school friends attending lower vs. higher ranking colleges
- The ones at lower rankings schools are more likely to post on the walls of their friends at higher ranking schools

Project Proposals

- Due March 9 at 5 p.m. in the drop box
- What to include in your 2-3 pages:
 - Background info/theoretical motivation
 - Hypothesis
 - Method
 - Predicted results and implications
 - Backup proposal
- **Do not begin collecting data until you have received approval**

For more information

- In “Section Materials” on the course website:
 - Brief Tour of Unobtrusive Methods
 - Guidelines for Project Proposals
 - All the award-winning papers from last year