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Papers:

*Abnormal Psychology (PSYC 2250)*

*Jason Kaufman, Ph.D.*

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The papers are short assignments (a minimum of 4 pages in length) that require you to locate, read, and summarize a research article from a peer-reviewed journal in psychology or a related discipline that is clearly related to the topic of our course. Each paper must be submitted in class by its assigned due date. I recommend that you use the relevant online databases (**EBSCOHost**, **ProQuest**, and **InfoTrac**) offered by the Inver Hills Community College Library to find the articles.

I require you during the semester to complete two papers. You can also rewrite either of the papers for a higher grade. The rewrite is entirely optional. If you choose to rewrite a paper, I will apply the higher of the two grades to your overall course grade. ***Please note that a late or plagiarized paper may not be rewritten. Nor may a paper submitted with a late or absent original article be rewritten.***

To earn a passing grade on a paper (i.e., a C or better), it must meet the following seven basic requirements:

1. The paper must summarize a journal article based on a specific study/studies. The article may not be a literature review, editorial, or any type of article other than an actual scientific study. The article must be no more than 10 years old.
2. The paper must be an absolute minimum of 4 pages in length (this includes a cover page). In other words, you should plan to write more than this if you are aiming for a high grade (i.e., an A or B).
3. The paper must be typed in 12-size font and double-spaced. Yes, this really does matter.
4. The paper must be accompanied by the journal article it summarizes at the time of submission. ***A paper turned in without the original article will earn no better than the grade of D, even if the article is subsequently turned in late.***
5. ***The article must be formatted as a pdf document***, and submitted in class by its assigned due date. In other words, only use those articles in the databases that are readily available as pdf documents. Please see the course syllabus for my late policy.
6. The paper cannot include direct quotations from the article it summarizes. ***Furthermore, it is imperative that you do not copy any part of the original article word for word. Doing so is plagiarism and will automatically result in a grade of 0 (i.e., an F) for the assignment.***
7. The paper must be formatted into the following six sections as demonstrated on the following page.

The required format for the papers involves the following six sections:

**Reference:** The citation in APA format the article you are summarizing.

**Purpose:** The reason identified in the article for the work the article explains.

**Method:** This section is broken down into four subsections:

**Subjects:** The subjects described in the article.

**Materials:** The materials described in the article.

**Procedure:** The way the study as conducted as described in the article.

**Statistical Analysis:** A brief explanation of the types of statistics used to evaluate the subjects described in the article. In the absence of a statistical analysis, this section may be used to describe any other methods used to evaluate the subjects.

**Results:** A summary of the findings described in the article.

**Discussion:** A review of the conclusions presented in the article.

**Personal Conclusion:** Your overall interpretation of the findings or supposition of the article.

An example of a fairly ideal paper follows:

Jason Kaufman

Papers #1

PSYC 1234-56

**Reference:** Kaufman, J. A. (2006). Stress and social support among online doctoral psychology students. *Journal of College Student Psychotherapy, 20(3)*, 79-88.

**Purpose:** Kaufman sought to explore the potential relationship between perceived stress and perceived need for social support among doctoral students studying psychology at a distance education university. He specifically cited as a rationale for the study the lack of previous data regarding the psychological characteristics of such students. Specifically, Kaufman proposed three hypotheses. First, it was hypothesized that ratings of perceived stress would not differ by gender. Second, it was hypothesized that perceived stress would positively correlate with perceived need for social support among the sample. Third, it was hypothesized that perceived stress would also directly correlate with subjects' readiness for counseling.

**Method:**

**Subjects:** The study initially included 41 subjects (7 male, 34 female), all of whom were students attending a single distance education university. However, only the female subjects were included in the analysis due to this difference. Of the 34 female subjects, 33 subjects completed all of the necessary materials. Consequently, the study included data from only those 33 subjects (ages from 27 to 60, mean age = 40.52 years) in the statistical analyses.

**Materials:** Subjects were required to respond to two separate measures. The *Perceived Stress Scale* (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983) is a 14-item scale designed to assess an

individual's current perceptions of stress. The *Adjective Checklist* (Gough & Heilbrun, 1983) is a 300-item, 37-scale instrument intended to measure self-awareness in a manner that does not suppose the presence of psychological disorders. Ten of the needs scales from the ACL were used in the study: *Achievement, Dominance, Intraception, Affiliation, Heterosexuality, Exhibition, Aggression, Succorance, Abasement, and Deference*. The scale, *Counseling Readiness*, was also used in the study.

**Procedure:** Subjects were recruited via printed fliers at a university seminar, as well as online via a series of e-mails. Students who responded in the positive to these requests were mailed a packet containing an informed consent form, a demographic survey, a copy of the PSS, and a copy of the ACL. Subjects then returned their packets via mail.

**Statistical Analysis:** Bivariate correlations were used to explore all three hypotheses. Specifically, Kaufman attempted to identify a correlation between scores on the PSS and the 10 needs scales of the ACL, as well as between PSS score and score on the ACL scale, *Counseling Readiness*. A possible difference between how the genders responded to the materials was tested via the use of a chi-square test.

**Results:** As demonstrated by the results of the chi-square test, there was no statistically significant difference between male and female subjects. Although this confirmed the first hypothesis, it was seemingly irrelevant since the male subjects were excluded from the remainder of the study. Regarding the second hypothesis, significant correlations were found

between PSS score and scores on only the two ACL scales, *Affiliation* and *Aggression*.

*Affiliation* was defined as the need to interact with other individuals. *Aggression* was defined as the need to hurt other individuals. It appeared that subjects who perceived higher stress reported a lower need for affiliation and a higher need for aggression. In other words, the subjects apparently perceived the presence of adequate social support. Conversely, they apparently were more defended against other individuals. PSS score did not significantly correlate with the ACL scale, *Counseling Readiness*. Therefore, the third hypothesis was not confirmed.

**Discussion:** Kaufman concluded that some doctoral students attending a distance education university had difficulty coping with their perceived stress in a healthy manner when that stress becomes too great. He also suggested that such students did not appear substantially different from their peers who attend traditional universities. However, Kaufman admitted that the study relied upon a rather small sample.

**Personal Conclusion:** I agree with Kaufman that one must be careful to draw too many conclusions from a study with so few subjects. Doing so can result in a lack of generalizability of the findings. Nonetheless, I think the study has merit because it sought to explore a category of students about whom very little is known. Online higher education seems to be gaining in popularity, so learning whether there is a difference between students who study online versus in the traditional classroom will be increasingly important. However, the study was quite small, and as a consequence probably does not apply very well to many other students in different

situations. As Kaufman suggested, there remains a major need for more elaborate research regarding online students.