

Suggestions for Encouraging Students to Participate in IARR Members' Online Studies and Ways to Enhance Their Learning Experiences

There could be various ways to encourage students to participate in one or more of the studies posted at the IARR website. This can be a great learning experience for your students (both undergraduate and graduate), and in various types of classes (Personal Relationships, Methods, Social Psychology, Sexuality, Family, Interpersonal Communication). Even if you have a built-in system for students to earn extra credit by participating in research conducted by local colleagues in your department or university, it is also a learning experience for students to participate in research conducted by others, including from other countries. Also, if you do not have colleagues doing research on relationships, you might want to have your students complete studies more specific to relationships.¹

There can be various ways to encourage student participation in the IARR-posted studies, and we offer these four ways only as suggestions.

Approach 1: Encouragement to Participate (no credit)

One possibility is that you just encourage a class or lab group to participate in one or more of the posted studies, and send them the link to the IARR location of the studies. You could point out the value of participating, including learning more about research methodology, topics being investigated in the relationship area, etc.

Approach 2: Participation for Extra Credit (nothing else required)

A second possibility is that you encourage a class to complete one or more surveys, and offer extra credit for doing so. Instructors who offer extra credit often need various activities that students can do to earn the extra credit. Note that if you offer students extra credit for participating in one or more studies, you will need to make sure that the students do not feel pressured to participate. You will likely want to list this research option along with other possibilities (and this needs to be emphasized to the students).

For the purpose of documentation for extra credit, there can be various ways to confirm that the student completed one or more studies. For example, you could ask them to take a screen shot of the final page and send to you, or have them give the title and a brief description. We know from experience that some students will say they did the survey but haven't actually done so and there may be no way of preventing this (although asking for a screen shot of the last page helps a bit).

¹ Note that it is possible that some universities require their own IRB/ethics board to approve of seeking participation of students at their universities if conducted by researchers from other locations. Susan Sprecher checked with her own university IRB, and they stated it is permissible to provide a link to online studies in the format suggested here (and no need to request local approval). However, Melissa Curran mentioned that her university (Univ. of AZ) may have stricter guidelines.

Approach 3: Participation for Extra Credit (more required)

You could also give them extra credit for participation in one or more studies, but also require more than a screen shot or a simple title or description. For example, you could ask them to answer questions about the research that you would create, or you use some of the questions listed below.

Approach 4: Participation for Assignment Credit

A fourth possibility is that you ask for student participation in the research as an official assignment in the class (for assignment credit). However, if you require the assignment (and don't give them an option for a non-research assignment), then you would need to make it clear that the students have the option of viewing survey for the purpose of answering the assignment questions but not actually complete the survey questions or submit their data. Alternatively, some instructors have multiple assignments, with the option for students to select a subset of the assignments to complete.

If you decide to have the students answer questions as part of what they turn in (for example, if you are choosing Approach 4), below is adapted assignment that Susan Sprecher has used in the past (using another site's online surveys, as IARR didn't have posted studies at the time).

Example Assignment

Directions to Students:

Important: If you do not want to engage in research, be sure to contact your instructor for other options to receive credit.

For this assignment, you will participate in [two²] online studies posted at the website ([link](#)). Choose the studies that interest you and for which you are eligible. Note that you may determine your interest and eligibility by the brief description after the title, but you may also need to click on the title and read more (an informed consent page) before you commit to participating. Do not participate in any study that you would find upsetting or too personal. Also, make sure you have the time to complete the study before you agree to participate (the informed consent page will indicate how much time it will take). Finally, be sure to be honest and thoughtful in your responses, as the researchers (including student researchers) count on your data being valid. Note that your data are anonymous and no one (including your instructor) can link your responses to your identity.

² Decide how many they should complete, and the number may depend on what else you are requiring them to do.

To get credit for completing the two online studies, take a screen shot of the last page of each study and submit to [fill in]³.

Questions:

For each of the studies you completed, please respond to the following questions.⁴

- 1) What was the title of the study? Who were the researchers and where were they from?
- 2) What was the purpose of the study according to the researchers' informed consent page?⁵
- 3) Describe some of the measures and items you were asked to complete. What concepts that we have studied do you think these items are measuring? Give at least three example items and what they likely measure.
- 4) Where in the textbook or readings would the findings from this study be likely summarized in a future edition of the textbook/readings? Be very specific. Provide the page number and/or section, and indicate how the study relates to specific material in the text.
- 5) What was your reaction to participating in this study? Did you enjoy participating? What did you learn?
- 6) What suggestions would you have for improving the study? (Provide at least one suggestion.)
- 7) If you were to conduct a study on a similar topic, indicate what hypothesis you would want to test and what additional measures you would include.

This assignment should be 3-4 pages, double-spaced. Answer the questions for each of the two studies, one study at a time (and # each of your answers).

Finally, if you are an instructor with ideas to add to these general directions or questions that you have used for students to answer about surveys they complete, feel free to send to either: Susan Sprecher (sprecher@ilstu.edu) or Julie Verette Lindenbaum (lindej2@sage.edu).

³ Some instructors may want to have the students submit the screenshots to them over email, and some may prefer that the students upload to a location in a website for the class.

⁴ Again, these are only example questions you might ask. You could even ask the students to choose a subset to answer.

⁵ In the past, I (Sprecher) have also asked the students to speculate about the researchers' hypotheses or research questions, but IARR members who evaluated this assignment suggested that this could lead participants to have a certain mind-set when they complete the study and might enhance desirable responding.