Testing Folk Wisdom

It is common for cultures to pass along folk wisdom in the form of proverbs or common sayings. This assignment requires thoughtful analysis of one such saying and a short paper describing an experiment meant to empirically test it. Choose a saying or proverb and design a fictional study that tests that saying in one psychological context. You don’t have to set out to test the GENERAL truth of the saying, just the truth of it in one particular context (choose a context that interests you!) You may choose to apply the saying to any branch of Psychology (social, cognitive, clinical, etc).

** This is a theoretical study: you will not actually conduct it. **

Components & Deadlines:

1. Proposal (Submit by 5pm on 10/12 via Moodle):
The one paragraph proposal should include the proverb/saying you plan to test, a basic description of how you will test it, and how it relates to class material. Describe a specific study from an article or the textbook that you will relate to your study. I will give you feedback about your proposal and make suggestions as needed.

2. Outline (Submit by 5pm on 10/26 via Moodle):
The outline should include a more detailed plan of your experiment (following the outline structure given on page 1). It should include a description of your study (but should not be in sentence form – use the outline format). These outlines will be used for in-class peer review.

3. Final paper (Submit by 5pm on 11/5 via Moodle):
The final paper will likely be 4-7 pages (double spaced with 12 point font). You do not need to follow strict APA style and it is fine to use the first person (To test this hypothesis, I will . .). You will be graded on clarity of writing, experimental design, and your ability to relate the experiment to a finding or concept (see grading rubric).

Submit to Moodle in .doc, .docx, .rtf, or .txt format.

Find proverbs to inspire you by googling “English Proverbs” or visiting:

http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/English_proverbs
http://homepage.smc.edu/reading_lab/american_english_proverbs.htm

If you have questions, need help, want advice on a draft or an idea, or just want to talk about what a fun assignment this is, come to office hours, schedule an appointment, or email me!
The final paper should include:

- **Intro**
  - What saying did you choose and what does it mean? If you choose a saying in a language other than English, please include both a literal translation and a figurative translation.
  - Why is this topic interesting or important? Why should we spend our time studying it?
  - What research has already been conducted on this topic?
  - What do you hypothesize the outcome will be? Why? What will this tell us that we don’t already know?

- **Methods:**
  - How will your study be conducted? What will subjects do? How will they be selected? Will there be multiple groups? What materials are needed? Where and where will subjects be tested / observed? What order will they perform the tasks in? For all these questions, why did you choose the answer you did? What are the variables you are manipulating and measuring?
  - The methods should include enough detail that someone else could replicate your study using only the details you include.

- **Results:**
  - **Analysis:** What are the numbers/variables that you would compare? Don’t include statistics, but include statements like “I will compare the scores of Group X and Group Y to determine if they differ.” Be explicit – if someone else had your data, they should be able to analyze it the same way as you did, given only your description.
  - **Possible outcomes:** What patterns might the data show? Which would support the hypothesis and which would fail to support it? What are the theoretical implications of each outcome? It is not necessary to exhaustively list all possible outcomes – list one that will support the hypothesis and one you think may also be likely that fails to support the hypothesis.

- **Discussion**
  - **Connection to literature:** A description of how your experiment relates to a Psychological finding or concept covered this term. You must include at least two citations, one of which may be the textbook. Do not cite or refer to lecture material.
  - **Ethical considerations:** is anything about this experiment ethically questionable? Justify your choices.
  - **Potential confounds:** Is there something else that you might inadvertently measure instead of what you’re intending to measure? How are your internal and external validity (keep in mind that no study does both perfectly)? If you’re limiting your sample to college students, do you think this will influence your results?

Please divide your paper into sections with the headers above (Introduction, methods, etc).

See “Folk wisdom grading rubric” for more details and writing examples