

## **Reflection on Research Assistantship Experience**

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## **Introduction**

During the fall semester of 2023 at Old Dominion University, I had the amazing opportunity to participate in the ECHO Lab as an undergraduate research assistant. I got to help work on a study based on industrial/organizational psychology in which the goal was to conduct a team-based study to observe how individual differences influence communication during a murder mystery game. I gained a lot of experience through this opportunity, both in the aspects that were successful in the research and the aspects that unfortunately did not go as planned. Although this research project ended up being halted due to lack of participation, I am still able to reflect on the tasks I completed in preparation of the study and what I have learned over the course of this experience, along with looking towards the future on how I will use what I have learned and what I plan to do next in the field of research.

## **Discussion**

There were many tasks that I completed as a research assistant over the course of the semester. The first task was to look over the pre-game and post-game surveys. I took the surveys myself as if I were a participant while looking at certain aspects such as grammar and ease of use, then posted my critiques in a shared document with the other research assistants. After that, all the research assistants were put into groups of three to play the murder mystery game. In this process, we monitored how long the game took to solve, how the game documents were presented to us, and some possible issues when it came to the Zoom call. The overall goal of these tasks was to catch any problems that participants could run into and remedy them.

Once everything seemed to have been fixed on the participants' side, it was time to start learning how to manage each session. There was a written script that I was given the responsibility of reading over and testing out links to the game's Google Drives within the

document. Then came multiple rehearsals where each participant would take turns individually going through the script as if they were managing a real session, along with discussing any problems they ran into while doing so. One thing I personally noticed was that the script had us tell participants to change their presented names on the Zoom call for the sake of anonymity, but there was nothing reminding them to change their names back once the session was over. This could have led to some confusion for the participants joining future Zoom calls, so I made sure to express my concern and help change the script to accommodate. Once the script was finalized and I had rehearsed it multiple times, I began scheduling my time slots on SONA and assisting people in both signing up and rescheduling if a session could not run. Unfortunately, I was not able to run any sessions due to lack of participation, but I still feel as though the preparation itself was representative of the research process.

The biggest thing I learned from this experience is that research does not always go as planned. I remember when I was first applying for the research assistant position in the first place and having expectations about the process, yet everything ended up being completely different from how I imagined. Despite this being a little bit disappointing, I am still very happy with the experience that I did receive in preparation for the research and getting a closer look into what conducting a study actually entails. It became evident to me how time consuming and uncertain research can be, which makes the field of research even more impressive in my mind because of how many obstacles those conducting the research have to overcome.

The knowledge I have gained from this experience will benefit me greatly in the future because it is a great reminder that it is not the end of the world when certain things do not work out. When I first heard that this study was being discontinued, I felt a little bit of anxiety because I put so much of my expectations for receiving experience in the actual successes of the study.

However, I was exposed to a new perspective about how even projects that do not go as planned provide valuable lessons for those involved. Knowing this will help me deal with similar situations outside of research as well because I can look back with satisfaction about what I gained from the experience instead of mourning what I may have lost.

To be completely honest, I have no idea what I would like to do next in the research realm. I know that being exposed to the process has made me more open minded to participate in it more, and I would like to seek more opportunities. However, I am unable to think of specifics since this whole experience was so new to me. Ideally, I would like to participate in research involving learning disabilities in students, and I hope to be able to find opportunities with that in my future career as a school psychologist. Even if I change my mind about my future career, I know for a fact that I would enjoy any sort of research in the psychology field and that I will always be passionate about learning more on this subject.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, I feel that I have received a lot of valuable experience during this assistantship. While many aspects did not go as planned, I have discovered that those aspects provide great experience as well. It almost feels like I have put together a puzzle of applying for this position, preparing and training for study sessions, and utilizing new tools to manage certain things, and have come out with a final picture capturing my whole experience despite the fact that I had no idea it was even a puzzle at first. As complicated as the field of research is, I feel accomplished that I was able to have any part in it.