

Moral and Adolescent Psychology Lab

How to Present an Article to the Lab

The Task

One of the core activities of any research lab is a disciplined study of the relevant scholarly literatures. Members of the lab take responsibility for presenting these articles to the team for discussion.

The Goal

There are at least two reasons why lab discussion of articles is important:

- The articles are selected to provide context to present lab research: to provide insights about measurement and methodology; suggestions about the evolution of current research; and ideas for future studies.
- It is an important professional development activity for everyone: to learn more about recent research; to get experience at critical appraisal of published articles; to hone presentation skills.

Preparation

Generally, there will be one to two articles discussed during each lab meeting. Articles will be posted on the MAP Lab blog site (<http://blogs.nd.edu/lapseylab/>). Everyone should come to the lab meeting having read the article(s) and being prepared to lead or participate in the discussion.

Leading the Discussion

If you are leading the discussion, then you must present the article(s) in a way that covers the main points without exhaustive summary. Indeed, you should not take more than 10 minutes to walk us through the main points. What, then, are the main points?

1. Tell us who the authors are, and where the paper was published.
2. Give us some background on the “introduction”, i.e., what is the study about? Why was it conducted? What is the theory under test? What is the rationale? Begin your presentation by answering Why this study was done and Why it is important to do so.
3. What are the hypotheses under test?
4. Who were the participants? How many? What ages? How were they sampled?
5. How did the authors carry out the study? Here I am interested in assessments—what measures were used? If the study was an experiment, what was the procedure?
6. What did they find? What were the results? I am not asking you to become experts in statistical analytical procedures, and you should not slog through every detail---but you can read through the results section and summarize the findings. **Try drawing our attention to at least one table in the results section.**
7. Summarize the take-home message---what did we learn?
8. Note an implication for the lab---was there a new measure we should look at? Is there an idea for a new study?

Generally then, your presentation should address why, what, who and how.

Participating in the Discussion

But the presenter is not doing all the work. The rest of the lab team also has a job to do, which is to lead the critical appraisal of the study.

- What did you like or not like about the project?
- What finding is of interest?
- Was everything OK with the methodology?
- Do you buy the interpretation of the data?
- Are there notions, ideas, suggestions that you would like to follow-up on, e.g., was there citations you would like to read? A literature, assessment, procedure, author that you want to learn more about?
- What ideas interest you as a source of a paper, a senior thesis, a line of research to undertake in the lab?