Alternative Assignment

Walk Through Script for Dysphoria and Theory of Mind

In previous research, we have found that people who are in a chronic negative mood or dysphoric are better at identifying complex emotions or mental states than are people who are nondysphoric. In this study, we were interested in determining what they are doing differently that might lead them to perform better on the task. So if you had been in this study, you would have completed several tasks on a computer. First would have completed some demographic information, and then we would have introduced what is known as the Eyes Task or more formally the "Reading the mind in the eyes" task (Revised Version: Baron-Cohen et al., 2001). The Eyes task is comprised of 36 black-and-white photographs. These photographs depict only the area of the face between the eyebrows and halfway down the nose and were edited to be 15 cm x 6 cm in size. Each photograph is accompanied by four adjectives. Three of the words are distracters and one of the words is the correct response. For each picture, you would select the adjective that you believe is the best description of the emotional state of the person in the photograph.

Show student a sample item: **What do you think is the**

Why do you think that is? What would happen if it was too far away or too close?

Because if you are too far away, then it is harder to accurately determine where your eyes were fixated. For example, it would be harder to judge if you were looking at say the top of the stimuli vs. the top of the computer. We also don't want you to be too close because that wouldn't feel natural and wouldn't allow you to look at the whole picture.

Before we can collect data using the eye tracker, we first need to calibrate it. To do this, we use a test

the picture – so you would click on upper right, upper left, lower right, or lower left. In between each picture, you would see a dot in the center of the screen. We use that for drift correction. That is, we want to make sure that you haven't moved. If we find that you have, then we would do another calibration.

Would you like to try one trial? I won't be keeping your response.

You would continue for all 36 trials (*go through some more examples*). To eliminate various other explanations for any group differences in Eyes task performance, we also would interweave two control tasks: The first control task ("Animal task") consists of 12 black-and-white pictures of various animals that were presented in a similar manner as the eyes stimuli. You would make a forced choice between four adjectives that you believe best describe the animal (*show a sample item*).

What would you say is the right answer for this one?

The second control task ("Gender task"), like the Eyes task, also employs various pictures of eyes. However, rather than decoding the emotion depicted in the eyes, participants determine the gender of eyes. Twelve pictures from the eyes task were randomly selected and presented with the response choices (i.e., male, female) at the bottom corners of the screen (*show a sample item*).

What would you say here? Male or female?

The three experimental tasks (Eyes, Animal, and Gender tasks) are presente

running this experiment for some time. Sometimes if people know what the study is about, that knowledge will affect their responses even when they don't mean for it to**,** SO WE WOULD REALLY APPRECIATE IT IF YOU WOULD NOT TALK TO ANYONE ABOUT THE STUDY.

Do you have any questions?

If you are interested in this area of research, you may wish to read the following references:

Harkness, K. L., Sabbagh, M. A., Jacobson, J., Chowdrey, N., & Chen, T. (2005). Sensitivity to subtle social information in dysphoric college students: Evidence for an enhanced theory of mind. *Cognition and Emotion, 19*, 999-1026.