

Social Psychology – Notes from 16/01/04

Key Words

- Methodology: The way people go about investigating things
- Variables: Anything that changes
- Independent variable: Anything the experimenter deliberately changes
- Dependent variable: What the experimenter measures
- Extraneous variable: Anything else that changes not deliberately
- Confounding variable: An extraneous variable that alters the results of the experiment

Experiment Equation (using Asch's study as example)

IV	+	EV	=	DV
(people say line A)		Bad eyesight Cultural background Friends in group Mental disorders Size/age of group Environment Distractions Arrangement Size of lines Personality type Educational background		

Ways of Controlling Extraneous Variables

- Eye test
- Choose sample carefully
- Questionnaire assessing age/background/education
- Neutral environment
- Seats arranged in straight line
- Mental disorder test
- Same gender/profession
- Obvious line size

Experimenter Bias

Key person: Rosenthal

During the 1960s, there began to be a reaction to the behaviourist way of carrying out experiments. Psychologists suggested that participants could not be treated or expected to behave in the same way as rats or pigeons. Rosenthal conducted an experiment which showed that the investigator's behaviour could have an unintended effect on the experiment's outcome. This is known as experimenter bias.

Demand Characteristics

Key person: Orne

Demand characteristics are anything about the experimental situation which gives a clue to the participant about how to behave.

Ways of Coping with the Experiment as a Social Situation

- Single blind – prevent the participants knowing the true aims of the study; even better, lie to them about them. Participants form innocuous expectations.
- Double blind – neither the participant nor the investigator are aware of the true aims of the experiment.
- Placebo – some participants think they are receiving experimental treatment, but they are not.

Point of Evaluation for Experiments

To what extent has the experiment taken account of the "Social Situation" effect, i.e. what controls have been introduced for experimenter bias and demand characteristics?

Participants and Individual Differences

Some of the most important extraneous variables are "participant variables". There are three ways of dealing with participant variables – here are two of them:

- Independent Measures Design – two groups of participants, different people in each group. Each group performs a different experimental task (where the experimenter has manipulated the independent variables). One disadvantage is that the participant variables could end up being confounding.

- Repeated Measures Design – participants complete both conditions. One advantage is that because the same people are completing the experiment, individual characteristics are eliminated. One disadvantage is that the participants could deliberately change because they realise they are experimental subjects.

Order Effects – Practise and Fatigue

Counterbalancing:

- Task A another task Task B
- Task A days break Task B
- ABBA – random split, group one performs task A and then task B, group two performs task B and then task A.