





# Social influence - discussing studies

You are learning how to...	In the context of...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Look at psychological research from a range of points of view including aims and conclusions, external validity, internal validity and ethical issues.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Studies of social influence</li> </ul>

We can discuss psychological studies in a number of different ways. One way of thinking about this is as if we had several pairs of spectacles, each of which allows us to focus on only one thing.

-  Aims and conclusions
-  External validity
-  Internal validity
-  Ethical issues

## Social facilitation

Paulus & Murdoch (1971) trained male undergraduates to perform a task involving recognition of nonsense words that were briefly flashed on a screen. This was done so that the students could easily recognise some of the words but not others. The PPs carried out the task either alone or in front of an audience. In the 'audience' condition, they were told either that the audience consisted of psychology undergraduate students or that the audience consisted of Psychology professors. They found that the audience affected performance on the task only when the PPs thought that the audience was of professors.

## Conformity

Milgram et al (1969) carried out a study on passers by in a crowded New York City street. Researchers, dressed in ordinary clothes, would look up at the sixth floor window of an office on the opposite side of the street. The number of researchers was varied so at different times there were 1, 2, 3, 5, 10 or 15 people looking up at the window. Observations were made of the people walking past and it was recorded whether they also looked up at the window. With one researcher only 4% of passers by looked up. With five, this rose to 16%, with ten to 22% and with fifteen it increased to 40%.

## Obedience

Gamson et al (1982) set up a fake public relations firm called MHRC. They recruited student participants with the story that they were carrying out research into moral standards, for which the PPs would be paid \$10. PPs were asked to engage in a videotaped discussion. The discussion focused on Mr C, who had been sacked from his job managing a service station because of 'immoral behaviour' (he was living with a woman but they were not married). Mr. C was suing the oil company for unfair dismissal and had publicly spoken out against them. The PPs were asked to discuss their attitudes toward Mr C's behaviour and 'community standards'. Every so often, the researcher switched off the cameras and instructed the group to argue as if they were offended by Mr C's lifestyle. It became clear to the PPs that they were being manipulated into providing evidence against Mr. C that would be used in the court case. In most groups at least one person rebelled against the instructions and they were usually quickly joined by others. In 16 out of 33 groups the participants collectively refused to sign the permission for the videotape to be used in court and in nine others some refused to sign. In only four groups were there no signs of rebellion.