

Social Influence - Experimental Methods Practice

For each of the following experiments:

- Identify the IV and DV.
- State the aim and suggest an alternative hypothesis.
- Identify the experimental design used and give one advantage and disadvantage of using it.
- Identify one potential confound and explain how it might affect the results if not controlled.
- Identify one ethical issue in the study and outline how it could be dealt with.

Experiment 1

A researcher wanted to investigate audience effects in children. She recruited two Year Five classes from a local school. Over the course of several weeks, all the children were taught to juggle. Subsequently, all the children were asked to juggle, one by one, in front of an audience. The researcher timed for how long each child juggled continuously before dropping one of the balls. For both classes the audience consisted of other children from the school but for one of the classes the researcher arranged for some confederates, dressed as clowns, to stand at the back of the room as the children were juggling.

Experiment 2

A researcher wanted to investigate conformity. She recruited two groups of university students and arranged them into pairs so that each pair of students were both in the same year on university and studying the same course. One PP from each pair did each condition of the experiment. The participants did a series of estimation tasks where a maths problem involving the multiplication of two large numbers was flashed briefly on a screen. The participant was with three confederates who on certain critical trials gave an obviously-too-low estimate. The estimate given by the PP was recorded. In one condition the confederates were all people who wore glasses. In the other condition they all had perfect eyesight.

Experiment 3

A researcher wanted to investigate factors influencing obedience. Sixth-formers from a local college were recruited to be participants. They were given the task of balancing one object on top of another. The task was impossible but the PPs were not told this. The PPs attempted the task twice. The first time their instructions were issued by a researcher wearing casual clothes. A week later they were tested again, this time by a researcher wearing a white lab coat. On each occasion the students were timed to record how long they persisted at the impossible task before giving up.