

Chapter 3 Research Methods

Topic 3 Experiments

Answers to QuickCheck Questions on page 112

1. The cause.
2. So that we can use it to compare with the experimental group. Any changes in the latter as compared with the control group must then be an effect of the independent variable to which the experimental group has been exposed.
3. Because the original experimenter can specify precisely what steps were followed in the original experiment, so other researchers can repeat these in future. Because it is a detached or impersonal method: the researcher merely manipulates the variables and records the results; their personal feelings and opinions have no effect on the conduct or outcome of the experiment.
4. If people know they are being studied, they may behave differently and this could ruin the experiment, which depends on the subjects responding to the variables that the researcher introduces into the situation, not to the fact that they are being observed.
5. Milgram's findings alert us to the dangers of blindly obeying authority figures.
6. Humans have free will, consciousness and choice; our behaviour cannot be explained in terms of cause and effect, which is what laboratory experiments aim to do.
7. Any two of the following: compared with laboratory experiments, field experiments allow less control over the variables; we cannot be certain that the causes we have identified in field experiments are the correct ones; field experiments are unethical, since they involve carrying out an experiment on their subjects without their knowledge or consent.
8. (a) Milgram's obedience study; Mayo's Hawthorne study; (b) Rosenhan's pseudo-patient study; (c) Durkheim's study of suicide.
9. Any two of the following: it avoids artificiality; it can be used to study past events; it poses no ethical problems.
10. It gives the researcher even less control over variables than do field experiments, so we can be even less certain whether a thought experiment really has discovered the cause of something. Statistics may not be available on the relevant variables e.g. suicide rates of different religions.