



Blind Procedures

MyJoVE Corp,
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Material Projectable

Ideally, the people who observe and record the children's behavior are unaware of who was assigned to the experimental or control group, in order to control for experimenter bias. Experimenter bias refers to the possibility that a researcher's expectations might skew the results of the study. Remember, conducting an experiment requires a lot of planning, and the people involved in the research project have a vested interest in supporting their hypotheses. If the observers knew which child was in which group, it might influence how much attention they paid to each child's behavior as well as how they interpreted that behavior. By being blind to which child is in which group, we protect against those biases. This situation is a single-blind study, meaning that one of the groups (participants) are unaware as to which group they are in (experiment or control group) while the researcher who developed the experiment knows which participants are in each group. In a double-blind study, both the researchers and the participants are blind to group assignments. Why would a researcher want to run a study where no one knows who is in which group? Because by doing so, we can control for both experimenter and participant expectations. If you are familiar with the phrase placebo effect, you already have some idea as to why this is an important consideration. The placebo effect occurs when people's expectations or beliefs influence or determine their experience in a given situation. In other words, simply expecting something to happen can actually make it happen. The placebo effect is commonly described in terms of testing the effectiveness of a new medication. Imagine that you work in a pharmaceutical company, and you think you have a new drug that is effective in treating depression. To demonstrate that your medication is effective, you run an experiment with two groups: The experimental group receives the medication, and the control group does not. But you don't want participants to know whether they received the drug or not. Why is that? Imagine that you are a participant in this study, and you have just taken a pill that you think will improve your mood. Because you expect the pill to have an effect, you might feel better simply because you took the pill and not because of any drug actually contained in the pill; this is the placebo effect. To make sure that any effects on mood are due to the drug and not due to expectations, the control group receives a placebo (in this case a sugar pill). Now everyone gets a pill, and once again neither the researcher nor the experimental participants know who got the drug and who got the sugar pill. Any differences in mood between the experimental and control groups can now be attributed to the drug itself rather than to experimenter bias or participant expectations. This text is adapted from OpenStax, Psychology. OpenStax CNX

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