Lab 3

Psychological questions

Lab class

Evaluating the empirical feasibility of the research questions

The table below displays the list of the psychological questions generated in Lab 1, each accompanied by a rating and a justification (displayed when clicking on an arrowhead). The purpose of this analysis is to evaluate how easily each question could be investigated empirically; that is, answered through systematic data collection via methods like experiments, surveys, or observations.

The **Rating** column scores each question on a scale from 0 to 10:

- **10 (Very Easy):** The question can be readily investigated using standard, well-established research methods.
- **1 (Very Difficult):** The question could be investigated in theory but faces major practical or ethical challenges.
- **0 (Not Empirical):** The question cannot be answered through scientific data collection, as it is primarily philosophical, metaphysical, or based on a non-falsifiable premise.

AI-generated content: Please note that the scores in the **Rating** column and the justifications were generated by an AI to provide a preliminary assessment of each question's research feasibility.

This section contains interactive content which is not available in the PDF version. Please visit the online version to see it.

Ethics

Lab class

Chapter 4 in Beth's book lays out a number of ethical principles psychological research should adhere to. The overall principles are of course similar, but if you're interested in the specific UK guidelines available from the British Psychological Society, you can access these on the BPS guidelines and policies page.

An example that is mentioned in Beth's book chapter is Milgram's research into obedience. While Beth does mention Perry's (2013) book, please note that a recent publication by Turowetz & Hollander (2018) questioned some of Perry's conclusions. If you'd like to read more about Milgram's research, you might also be interested in a relatively recent meta-analysis by Haslam et al. (2014).

As discussed by Beth, with studies like Milgram's (or Zimbardo's Stanford prison experiment, for that matter), there is a **goal conflict**. On the one hand, these studies might lead to relevant insights, on the other hand, they violate ethical principles. While attempts have been made to make Milgram's study less ethically questionable (Burger, 2009), Miller (2009) has argued that the stress and coercion were perhaps key ingredients to Milgram's experiment.

A frequent issue with psychological research is **deception**. Often it is necessary to mislead participants to some degree as it would not be possible to study certain phenomena if participants were aware that these phenomena are being studied. So, when is deception appropriate and when is it inappropriate? For the BPS, the main factor is the reaction of the participant when being told of the deception. The *BPS Code of Human Research Ethics* states:

> Deception or covert collection of data should only take place where it is essential to achieve the research results required, where there are no alternatives, where the research objective has strong scientific merit and where there is an appropriate risk management and harm alleviation strategy.
>
> The experience of deception in psychological research may have the potential to cause distress and harm and can make the recipients cynical about the activities and attitudes of psychologists. However, since there are very many psychological processes that are modifiable by individuals if they are aware that they are being studied, stating the research focus to a participant in advance of the collection of data would make some psychological research impossible. There is a difference between withholding some of the details of the hypothesis under test and deliberately falsely informing the participants of the purpose of the research, especially if the information given implies a more benign topic of study than is in fact the case.
>
> This Code of Human Research Ethics expects all psychologists to seek to supply as full information as possible to those taking part in their research, recognising that providing all of that information at the start of a person's participation may not be possible for methodological reasons. If the reaction of participants when

deception is revealed later in their participation is likely to lead to discomfort, anger or objections from the participants then the deception is inappropriate. If a proposed research study involves deception, it should be designed in such a way that it protects the dignity and autonomy of the participants.

BPS Code of Human Research Ethics (p. 23)

Explore, apply, reflect

Lab class

Ethics activity

Please download the ethics activity document to see the instructions for the activity.

Click here to download the ethics activity document.

You can use the BPS Code of Human Research Ethics to help you identify ethical issues with the scenarios described in the ethics activity document.

The following document is password-protected. We will tell you the password in the lab class.

Click here to download the ethics activity document (with ethical issues).

Self-study

Good measurement

We would like you to think a bit more about what good measurement constitutes and how reliability and validity are related to good measurement. For this reason, we would like you to complete the below activities from Beth's book. They are formative and will not contribute to your overall module mark. You can complete the activities on your own, as a pair or as a small group.

Activity 1

Educational psychologists use teacher ratings of classroom shyness (on a nine-point scale, where 1 = "not at all shy in class" and 9 = "very shy in class") to measure children's temperament. Indicate which kinds of reliability would need to be evaluated. Then, draw a scatterplot indicating that the measure has good reliability and another one indicating the measure has poor reliability.

Activity 2

Consider how you might validate the nine-point classroom shyness rating scale.

- First, what behaviours might be relevant for establishing this rating's criterion validity? Draw a scatterplot showing the results of a study in which the classroom shyness rating has good criterion validity.
- Second, come up with ways to evaluate the convergent and discriminant validity of this rating system. What traits should correlate strongly with shyness? What traits should correlate only weakly or not at all? Explain why you chose those traits. Draw a scatterplot showing good convergent validity and a scatterplot showing good discriminant validity.

Feedback

We previously asked some students to submit their answers on Moodle. The feedback below is based on these submissions. Please complete the activities before downloading the file - doing so will be much more beneficial for your learning progress!

Click here to download the feedback.

References

Burger, J. M. (2009). Replicating Milgram: Would people still obey today? *The American Psychologist*, *64*(1), 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0010932

Haslam, N., Loughnan, S., & Perry, G. (2014). Meta-Milgram: An empirical synthesis of the obedience experiments. *PloS One*, *9*(4), e93927. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0093927

Miller, A. G. (2009). Reflections on "Replicating Milgram" (Burger, 2009). *The American Psychologist*, *64*(1), 20–27. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0014407

Turowetz, J., & Hollander, M. M. (2018). From "ridiculous" to "glad to have helped": Debriefing news delivery and improved reactions to science in Milgram's "obedience" experiments. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, *81*(1), 71–93. https://doi.org/10.1177/0190272518759968