

Social Experiments Evaluating Public Programs With Experimental Methods

Experimental psychology

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Experimental psychology is the work done by those who apply experimental methods to psychological study and the underlying processes. Experimental psychologists employ human participants and animal subjects to study a great many topics, including (among others) sensation, perception, memory, cognition, learning, motivation, emotion; developmental processes, social psychology, and the neural substrates of all of these.

Design of experiments

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The design of experiments (DOE), also known as experiment design or experimental design, is the design of any task that aims to describe and explain the variation of information under conditions that are hypothesized to reflect the variation. The term is generally associated with experiments in which the design introduces conditions that directly affect the variation, but may also refer to the design of quasi-experiments, in which natural conditions that influence the variation are selected for observation.

In its simplest form, an experiment aims at predicting the outcome by introducing a change of the preconditions, which is represented by one or more independent variables, also referred to as "input variables" or "predictor variables." The change in one or more independent variables is generally...

Social experiment

field of social psychology and the conducted experiments. While experimental methods were still employed, other methods gained popularity. Social experimentation

A social experiment is a method of psychological or sociological research that observes people's reactions to certain situations or events. The experiment depends on a particular social approach where the main source of information is the participants' point of view and knowledge. To carry out a social experiment, specialists usually split participants into two groups — active participants (people who take action in particular events) and respondents (people who react to the action). Throughout the experiment, specialists monitor participants to identify the effects and differences resulting from the experiment. A conclusion is then created based on the results. Intentional communities are generally considered social experiments as each is a practical application of a theory.

Social psychology...

Evaluation

professional groups that review the quality and rigor of evaluation processes. Evaluating programs and projects, regarding their value and impact within

In common usage, evaluation is a systematic determination and assessment of a subject's merit, worth and significance, using criteria governed by a set of standards. It can assist an organization, program, design, project or any other intervention or initiative to assess any aim, realizable concept/proposal, or any alternative, to help in decision-making; or to generate the degree of achievement or value in regard to the aim and objectives and results of any such action that has been completed.

The primary purpose of evaluation, in addition to gaining insight into prior or existing initiatives, is to enable reflection and assist in the identification of future change. Evaluation is often used to characterize and appraise subjects of interest in a wide range of human enterprises, including the...

Theory-driven evaluation

improve programs and how they are implemented, and help knowledge to accumulate across ostensibly different programs. This is in contrast to methods-driven

Theory-driven evaluation (also theory-based evaluation) is an umbrella term for any approach to program evaluation – quantitative, qualitative, or mixed method – that develops a theory of change and uses it to design, implement, analyze, and interpret findings from an evaluation. More specifically, an evaluation is theory-driven if it:

formulates a theory of change using some combination of social science, lived experience, and program-related professionals' expertise;

develops and prioritizes evaluation questions using the theory;

uses the theory to guide the design and implementation of the evaluation;

uses the theory to operationalize contextual, process, and outcome variables;

provides a causal explanation of how and why outcomes were achieved, including whether the program worked and/or...

Field experiment

Field experiments are experiments carried out outside of laboratory settings. They randomly assign subjects (or other sampling units) to either treatment

Field experiments are experiments carried out outside of laboratory settings.

They randomly assign subjects (or other sampling units) to either treatment or control groups to test claims of causal relationships. Random assignment helps establish the comparability of the treatment and control group so that any differences between them that emerge after the treatment has been administered plausibly reflect the influence of the treatment rather than pre-existing differences between the groups. The distinguishing characteristics of field experiments are that they are conducted in real-world settings and often unobtrusively and control not only the subject pool but selection and overtness, as defined by leaders such as John A. List. This is in contrast to laboratory experiments, which enforce...

Web-based experiments

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increasingly

A web-based experiment or Internet-based experiment is an experiment that is conducted over the Internet. In such experiments, the Internet is either "a medium through which to target larger and more diverse samples with reduced administrative and financial costs" or "a field of social science research in its own right." Psychology and Internet studies are probably the disciplines that have used these experiments most widely, although a range of other disciplines including political science and economics also use web-based experiments. Within psychology most web-based experiments are conducted in the areas of cognitive psychology and social psychology. This form of experimental setup has become increasingly popular because researchers can cheaply collect large amounts of data from a wider...

Impact evaluation

application of experimental methods to a large-scale development program is the evaluation of the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) program Progresa (now

Impact evaluation assesses the changes that can be attributed to a particular intervention, such as a project, program or policy, both the intended ones, as well as ideally the unintended ones. In contrast to outcome monitoring, which examines whether targets have been achieved, impact evaluation is structured to answer the question: how would outcomes such as participants' well-being have changed if the intervention had not been undertaken? This involves counterfactual analysis, that is, "a comparison between what actually happened and what would have happened in the absence of the intervention." Impact evaluations seek to answer cause-and-effect questions. In other words, they look for the changes in outcome that are directly attributable to a program.

Impact evaluation helps people answer...

Social science

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Social science (often rendered in the plural as the social sciences) is one of the branches of science, devoted to the study of societies and the relationships among members within those societies. The term was formerly used to refer to the field of sociology, the original "science of society", established in the 18th century. It now encompasses a wide array of additional academic disciplines, including anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, linguistics, management, communication studies, psychology, culturology, and political science.

The majority of positivist social scientists use methods resembling those used in the natural sciences as tools for understanding societies, and so define science in its stricter modern sense. Speculative social scientists, otherwise known...

Social psychology

field was Norman Triplett's 1898 experiment on the phenomenon of social facilitation. These psychological experiments later went on to form the foundation

Social psychology is the methodical study of how thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others. Although studying many of the same substantive topics as its counterpart in the field of sociology, psychological social psychology places more emphasis on the individual, rather than society; the influence of social structure and culture on individual

outcomes, such as personality, behavior, and one's position in social hierarchies. Social psychologists typically explain human behavior as a result of the relationship between mental states and social situations, studying the social conditions under which thoughts, feelings, and behaviors occur, and how these variables influence social interactions.

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