

# METHODS OF RESEARCH IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

SECOND EDITION

Elliot Aronson

University of California, Santa Cruz

Phoebe C. Ellsworth

University of Michigan

J. Merrill Carlsmith

Late Professor of Psychology  
Stanford University

Marti Hope Gonzales

University of Minnesota

**McGRAW-HILL PUBLISHING COMPANY**

New York St. Louis San Francisco Auckland Bogotá Caracas Hamburg  
Lisbon London Madrid Mexico Milan Montreal New Delhi Oklahoma City  
Paris San Juan São Paulo Singapore Sydney Tokyo Toronto

---

# CONTENTS

---

FOREWORD	xiii
PREFACE	xv
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1 An Introduction to Experiments</b>	<b>8</b>
WHY METHODOLOGY? WHY EXPERIMENTS?	8
THE NATURE OF EXPERIMENTS	10
NONEXPERIMENTAL METHODS OF RESEARCH	27
THE ADVANTAGES OF EXPERIMENTATION	32
<b>2 Some Problems with Experimentation in Social Psychology</b>	<b>40</b>
IMPACT AND CONTROL	42
MULTIPLE MEANING AND SYSTEMATIC REPLICATION	50
SUCCESSFUL AND UNSUCCESSFUL REPLICATIONS	65
EXPERIMENTAL REALISM VERSUS MUNDANE REALISM	70
TRIVIALITY: THE ARTIFICIAL, THE OBVIOUS, THE IRRELEVANT, AND THE NONGENERALIZABLE	75
<b>3 Ethical Issues</b>	<b>83</b>
PAIN AND SUFFERING	85
DECEPTION	89
ALTERNATIVES TO DECEPTION	94
DEBRIEFING	103
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SUBJECT AND THE EXPERIMENTER VIEWED AS A CONTRACT	104
ETHICS IN THE FIELD	106
ETHICS IN EXPERIMENTS WITH CHILDREN AS SUBJECTS	111
INSTITUTIONAL GUIDELINES	112

<b>4</b>	<b>Experimental Design</b>	<b>114</b>
	ASKING THE QUESTION	114
	CONTROL GROUPS	118
	FACTORIAL DESIGNS	123
	THE NUMBER OF CONDITIONS	130
	THE ANALYSIS OF CHANGE SCORES: PROBLEMS OF PRETESTING	138
	WITHIN-SUBJECTS VERSUS BETWEEN-SUBJECTS DESIGNS	143
	A FEW WORDS ABOUT DATA ANALYSIS	153
	IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED	154
<b>5</b>	<b>Alternatives to the Controlled Experiment</b>	<b>157</b>
	WHEN NONEXPERIMENTAL METHODS ARE DESIRABLE	158
	CORRELATIONAL STUDIES	161
	PSEUDOEXPERIMENTAL (PREEXPERIMENTAL) DESIGNS	164
	QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL DESIGNS	170
	GENERAL TECHNIQUES FOR IMPROVING NONEXPERIMENTAL DESIGNS	176
<b>6</b>	<b>Finding and Creating Settings</b>	<b>183</b>
	EFFECTIVE RESEARCH SETTINGS	185
	FIELD STUDIES: CHOOSING A SETTING	190
	LABORATORY EXPERIMENTS: CREATING A SETTING	194
	FACTORS THAT MAY AFFECT THE VALIDITY OF DECEPTION EXPERIMENTS	198
	SUMMARY	204
<b>7</b>	<b>The Independent Variable</b>	<b>205</b>
	TYPES OF INDEPENDENT VARIABLES IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPERIMENTS	205
	THE BASIC REQUIREMENT: RANDOMIZED ASSIGNMENT	210
	CREATING AN EMPIRICAL REALIZATION OF THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLE	218
	THE ISSUE OF STANDARDIZATION	226
<b>8</b>	<b>The Dependent Variable</b>	<b>240</b>
	VERBAL MEASURES	244
	BEHAVIORAL MEASURES	266
	CHOOSING A MEASURE	277
	RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF MEASUREMENT	280

<b>9</b>	<b>On the Avoidance of Bias</b>	<b>292</b>
	BIAS DUE TO DEMAND CHARACTERISTICS	292
	TECHNIQUES FOR MINIMIZING THE EFFECTS OF DEMAND CHARACTERISTICS	295
	BIAS DUE TO THE UNINTENTIONAL INFLUENCE OF THE EXPERIMENTER	304
	TECHNIQUES FOR MINIMIZING THE EFFECTS OF EXPERIMENTER BIAS	307
<b>10</b>	<b>The Postexperimental Interview</b>	<b>314</b>
	CONDUCTING THE POSTEXPERIMENTAL INTERVIEW	315
	DEBRIEFING FOLLOWING FALSE FEEDBACK TO SUBJECTS	324
<b>11</b>	<b>Writing It UP</b>	<b>326</b>
	BEFORE SITTING DOWN TO WRITE	327
	WRITING THE ARTICLE	329
	AFTER WRITING THE ARTICLE	343
	GLOSSARY	346
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	352
	NAME INDEX	369
	SUBJECT INDEX	374