



## **An Introduction to Social Psychology**

### *Field Experiments*

#### **Narrator (vo):**

Experiments may also be conducted in field settings.

Experiment

#### **Daisy brooks:**

And if you can take yourselves to one corner of the room, so you just spread out of it as groups and I'll come round and explain what I want each group to do.

#### **Prof Postmes:**

In Daisy's study what we've chosen to do, consciously, is to design a study as much as we could that is close to practice, close to the kind of thing that these athletes would be doing in their normal every day activities.

So we tried to design as much as we could in an ecologically valid study.

Experiment

#### **Daisy Brooks:**

What I want you to do is imagine that you're gonna produce a plan for a video, for a group of athletes, that's you three together.

#### **Prof. Jetten:**

The work that Daisy does is also nice bringing together some of the interest that Tom and I have been working on for a little while, which is really how people perceive them self as a member of a group, or whether they perceive them self as an individual, and how it affects their relationship to the group. And in this particular situation we're looking at performance -- when you think of yourself as an individual in a particular context, but at the same time performance occurs in a group setting, how does that affect performance of the group as a whole?

#### **Daisy Brooks:**

The aim is to find out how to make groups more effective. So how you can get people to, in my case, win more Olympic medals, win more medals at world championships. But it's applicable to all groups, because groups are in every sphere of life, it's how you make those groups more effective.

Yeah, and this is the final finding which just shows that group identity influence is performance ...

#### **Prof. Jetten:**

And what she found was that when people, when not only their group identity is being acknowledge, but also their individuality within that, that performance was much higher than in the other two conditions. The conditions where were people either only told: think of yourself as an individual or a condition where people were told: think of yourself as part of a team.

#### **Daisy:**

... and the best performance was in the group where combine personal identity and social identity.

#### **Prof Postmes:**

The kind of field experiment that Daisy has done is still quite experimental, quite interventionist. So the task is still somewhat artificial.

**Prof Haslam:**

I think the issue of artificiality is an important one to address, okay. I think traditionally people have the view: oh, experiments, they take place and it's a very rarefied situation that has no bearing on what goes on in the world at large. So you've got experimental situations and then you've got the real world. The first thing I wanna say is that experiments are part of the real world. A bit like say a dinner party, okay. If you have a dinner party, it's a constrained situation, but that doesn't mean that what goes on there doesn't give you important insights into people's behaviour. It does.

You've set it up in a particular way, to look at or investigate particular kinds of issues. I think that the standard or the typical research method for the experiment of social psychology is the experiment, as the sort of name suggests. But I think the point is that if you're interested in the relationship between variable and the world, then actually there's two things: you can use lots of different methodologies and you can also conduct that research in different sort of locations. For example, there's a survey research, where again, you can manipulate variable's, you can measure then in those kinds of ways. There's also case study research where again you can look at a particular case with a view to getting a particular handle on a particular phenomenon. The point there too is they can have qualitative as well quantitative measures that you're interested in. The strength of social psychology as a whole is that you have an array of methodologies at your disposal and that's true particularly I think of experimental research. And again, the challenge is to find the methodology that suits or is adapted to the question that you're answering.

So I think you should always start from the question and say what's the methodology that's appropriate, rather than slip into what you might call methodolitary, where you say I'm an experimentalist and all I do is experiments.

**Prof Postmes:**

For me personally, the value of experimentation is not intrinsic to the methods, and there's nothing sacred about experimentation or the result it yields. But I think it makes a forceful impact when you're communicating the results of your research. So in the case of performance for example, being able to say to other researchers or to end users, to companies, that the performance in one condition was 30 percent higher in one condition. That kind of thing is something that people wanna know about, it's something that people think is valuable.

**Prof Haslam:**

You can see examples of ways in which social psychological enquiry, experimental social psychology work in particular, has been used to understand social behaviour at large, and I think a lot of the core questions that we ask as we go about our every day lives, about issues of social conflict, social cooperation, of helping, of obedience, of influence, all these big kind of issues I think are there, they're spoken to by social psychology in kind of very big, very direct ways. So I think when you're asking big questions about if you like, large scale human behaviours, turn on the news, what's on the news today, extremism, influence, conformity, citizenship, all of those kinds of issues, the issues that really concern us as people, as human beings, those are I think routinely questions to which social psychology provides firstly in answers, but secondly, I think unique answers, important answers, relevant answers.