

Quasi experiments & group comparisons

PSYB2 & PSYB1

You are learning how to...	In the context of...
- Distinguish between true experiments, quasi experiments and group comparison studies - Consider the effect research design has on the validity of research studies	Studies of social & cognitive psychology and individual differences.

There are many psychological studies that resemble experiments but don't really count as **true experiments**. In a true experiment an IV is manipulated in a systematic and controlled way by a researcher, who measures a DV whilst trying to hold all extraneous variables constant. There are many studies that initially look as if they follow these criteria but actually don't. For example, suppose a researcher compares the scores of men and women on a verbal reasoning task. We might regard this as an experiment where the IV was sex (male or female) and the DV was verbal reasoning scores. Right? No. An IV is a variable that is *manipulated* by the researcher and it is difficult to see how we might claim that the sex of the PPs was manipulated – it's not as if the researcher could randomly assign them to be male or female. A related example would be where a researcher gave out a questionnaire to workers in a company to determine whether they had high or low stress and then compared these two groups on another measure, like how much time off sick they had. Although there are two groups being compared here, there isn't an IV because the researcher didn't manipulate the PPs stress level. There are several research designs that resemble experiments but aren't. Two important ones are:

Design	What it involves	Example
Quasi experiment	A researcher uses pre-existing groups as the basis for the conditions/comparison.	A comparison of the sociability of day and night workers at a company.
Group comparison study ⁱ	A researcher assigns PPs to groups based on some measurement or characteristic.	A comparison of the reactions of introverts and extroverts to social stimuli.

Decide whether each of the follow research studies would be classed as true experiments, quasi experiments or group comparison studies. A researcher conducted a study in which she...

- Compared the test performance of psychology students who were assigned to sit an assessment either alone or in a room with other students.
- Compared the preferences of male and female psychology students for social or cognitive psychology.
- Compared the number of in-lesson contributions given by students who regularly used the college VLE with those who didn't.
- Compared the AS results of students who were assigned at the beginning of the year to a group to be taught 'actively' and a group to be taught 'passively'.
- Compared the thinking skills of a group of students who study psychology with a similar group of students who don't.
- Compared the research methods skills of a group of students who scored high on a measure of logical thinking with a group that scored low on the same measure.

ⁱ It may appear that these two designs are the same but they are not. In a quasi experiment the groups to be compared have been exposed to different 'treatments' as in a true experiment. In a group comparison study, whilst the groups are *different* they have not been exposed to different *treatments*.