

Patrick Southern

Psychology **Coursework**

Eyewitness **Testimony**

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Project Brief

Statement of hypothesis

Significantly more RPs who are asked leading questions will state they saw a smashed headlamp than those who are not asked leading questions.

Direction of Hypothesis

A directional, or 'one tailed' hypothesis has been given. This means that it predicts specifically what will happen. This type of hypothesis has been given because looking at Loftus' 1975 study into eyewitness testimony (which is in ways similar to this study) we can predict the results. By doing this, validity is increased if the hypothesis is proved to be correct.

Research Method

The research is carried out using the independent measures design. This is because the disadvantages of the other designs made this the most suitable – the repeated measures design would increase order effects and the matched pairs design would be inefficient as it would take too long.

It is the simplest design, making it easy to analyse or to explain to RPs when debriefing. It is also the quickest design to carry out as each RP takes part in only one of the groups. A disadvantage of this design though is that there is greater scope for participant variability – for example if 50% of the RPs in one group have been in a car crash, their feelings towards the subject matter could affect the results.

Bias / Confounding Variables

~~Distractions~~: Such as other people, noises, etc. To minimise these distractions I will conduct my research in a quiet room.

~~Light Conditions~~: This could affect what the RP will see in the photo as they only get a short amount of time to look at it. So that each RP gets a good look at the photo, the room must also well lit, and this must be constant.

~~Psychology Students~~: Other Psychology students or those who have studied psychology in the past might recognise a leading question, so they cannot take part as RPs.

~~People who have already taken part:~~ Someone who has already taken part in someone else's study cannot take part in another as this will increase order effects, or they might just repeat answers given previously without really looking at the photograph.

~~Location:~~ To keep validity at a maximum, each RP must take part in the research in the same room. This keeps conditions (distractions, lighting, etc.) at a constant.

Statistical Significance

A Statistical Significance of 1, 5 or 10% can be chosen. 1% is used when the researchers have to be absolutely certain of their results, and 10% when a researcher only has to be 90% sure that their hypothesis is correct. I have chosen 5% because it minimises type 1 and 2 errors, which are:

~~Type 1 (10%)~~ – Greater chance of error in hypothesis.

~~Type 2 (1%)~~ – Rejecting hypothesis when it is correct.

Ethical Considerations

~~RP is uncomfortable taking part:~~ All RPs must be made aware before taking part that they can withdraw at any time.

~~RPs wishing anonymity:~~ All RPs taking part must be kept anonymous.

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