

Are you a systemiser - survey

Appendix 3 - Participant information sheet

Are you a systemiser?

Before you decide to take part in this study it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. A member of the team can be contacted if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Purpose of the study

The aim of the study is to determine whether it is possible to measure a person's drive to systemize using a new task that has been specially developed. Systemising is the drive to analyse or build a system. A system is anything that contains rules of the form if-and-then. When we systemise we typically identify patterns linking the input (if), the operation (and), and the output (then). Systems are very varied, from mechanical systems (e.g., a car engine), natural systems (e.g., the weather), abstract systems (e.g., mathematics), motor systems (e.g., a golf swing), social systems (e.g., a dance routine), collectible systems (e.g., a library), musical systems (e.g., a piano), but they all follow if-and-then rules. We are interested in whether there are differences between autistic and non-autistic people, with and without Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), on this task, as well as between males and females.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been invited to participate because you are registered to hear about new studies being conducted at the Autism Research Centre at the University of Cambridge, or because you have seen an advertisement for this study from your college/University department or on Twitter and have an interest in the topic.

Do I have to take part?

Taking part is entirely voluntary and you may choose to withdraw from the study at any time by exiting the browser.

What do I have to do?

We will ask you some questions about your background to start with, including your age, your education and your job (if applicable). After this, we will ask you to fill out five questionnaires online, which ask you about your thoughts, behaviours and feelings. Next, we will ask you to complete the new systemising task. This contains 20 items of varying levels of difficulty. Don't worry if you don't know any or all of the answers. At the end of the study, you will receive feedback about your scores on the questionnaires and the systemising task. It should take you no more than 30-45 minutes to participate in the study.

Are there possible disadvantages and/or risks in taking part?

There will be no disadvantages experienced due to your participation in this study. You can stop taking part at any point by exiting the browser.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There is no direct benefit to you for taking part in this study. However, you will receive instant feedback about your scores on the five questionnaires and the new systemising task, which may be of interest. This research will help us better understand systemising and will lay the foundation for further research in systemising.

Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

Your responses in the survey will be stored completely anonymously. Once you have finished participating, all of your data will be recognised only by an assigned arbitrary numeric code.

Please see the following link to general information about how the University uses personal data: <https://www.information-compliance.admin.cam.ac.uk/data-protection/research-participant-data>.

What will happen to the results of the research project?

Your responses may be used in research articles and presentations. If you would like to receive a copy of the published results, please email David Gudjonsson (dg533@cam.ac.uk). We will also post the results of the study on our website (www.autismresearchcentre.com). Results will be presented at conferences and written up in journals. Results are normally presented in terms of groups of individuals. If any individual data are presented, those data will be totally anonymous, without any means of identifying the individuals involved. The data collected during the course of the project might be used for additional or subsequent research. The anonymised data may be shared with collaborators both within and outside the UK.

Who is organising and funding the research?

This research is organised by the Autism Research Centre (ARC) at the University of Cambridge and funded by existing grants to the ARC by the Autism Research Trust.

Ethical review of the study

The project has been reviewed by the University of Cambridge Psychology Research Ethics Committee.

Contact for further information

If you have any questions, you can contact David Gudjonsson
(dg533@cam.ac.uk)

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Introduction

In this study we will first ask you some questions about your background. Then we will ask you to complete three questionnaires, followed by the new systemising task. After this, we will ask you to complete two more short questionnaires before we show you your score. Taking part in this study should take approximately 30-45 minutes, from start to finish.

The systemising task will start with instructions followed by a couple of example questions. Your responses will be scored, and you will receive your scores for each of the questionnaires and the systemising task once you have completed everything.

For the systemising task, we will ask you to choose the single correct answer out of several possible answers for each question. Although there is no time limit, we will measure how long everyone needs to complete the task. Please therefore complete the task as fast and accurately as possible. We would like you to have a go at every question, but if you do not know the answer, either pick the option "I don't know", or pick your best guess. You can stop taking part at any time by exiting the browser. If you have exited the browser, you will not be able to go back to the same place in the study if you change your mind.
