

How Many Psychologists Does It Take To Change A Light Bulb?

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An exhaustive review of the literature using common databases (eg PsychLit) revealed no previous study into the question: how many psychologists does it take to change a light bulb? A preliminary investigative experiment was carried out using 4 faulty 150 watt incandescent Overhead Projector (OHP) light bulbs with a mean Lumen-per-watt ratio of 15 and 100 psychologists attending paper presentation groups at a recent professional conference.

Method

Subjects

All faulty light bulbs were randomly assigned to one of the following 4 experimental groups (see below).

Experimental Group 1

25 Humanistic-Existential psychologists

Experimental Group 2

25 Cognitive-Behavioural psychologists

Experimental Group 3

25 Behavioural psychologists

Experimental Group 4

25 Neuropsychologists

Procedure

Each group was asked to help change their respective light bulb when it ‘failed’ approximately half way through an OHP presentation. The experimenter recorded responses on videotape which was later analysed by the author and his doctoral supervisor. Responses were collated and are presented below.

Results

The following observations were made:

In experimental group 1 all subjects remained seated and appeared to be waiting silently for something to happen. Many were still waiting as this paper went to press.

In experimental group 2 subjects began a discussion about the likely antecedent cognitions of the light bulb, attributional style, core beliefs and cognitive schema of

light bulbs in general before it was generally concluded that light bulbs may not be suitable candidates for CBT.

In experimental group 3 subjects ignored the light bulb. Refusing to reinforce its behaviour, they carried on regardless and left the room after the allotted session time.

In experimental group 4 subjects insisted that psychologists who were not card carrying members of the College of Neuropsychologists were to leave the room whilst they began the first of their serial assessments of the light bulb.

Conclusions

Unfortunately this study yielded no firm conclusions with respect to the question of how many psychologists it takes to change a light bulb. This vexing issue awaits future empirical research.