

Research Methods in Psychology

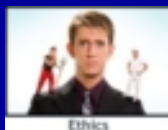
Chapter 3: Ethical Issues in Psychological Research

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Ethical Standards

■ APA Ethics Codes

- All psychologists must follow (including psychology students).
- These ethical standards are considered for:
 - ✓ Research
 - ✓ Therapy
 - ✓ Teaching
 - ✓ Administration



- They also help researcher to solve **ethical dilemmas**.

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Ethical Organizations Before Doing Research



Humans

■ Institutional Review Board (IRB)

- ✓ Protect rights and welfare of human participants
- ✓ Committee members



Animals

■ Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC)

- ✓ Protects rights and welfare of animal subjects
- ✓ Committee members
- ✓ Care and housing of animals

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Risk / Benefit Ratio



- Subjective evaluation
- Costs and benefits of a research project
 - Participants
 - Society
 - The researcher and institution
- Questions
 - Is the research worth it?
 - Are the benefits greater than the risks?
 - Will the study produce valid and interpretable results?

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Risks



- Different types
 - Physical injury (e.g., crossing street).
 - Psychological injury or emotional stress (e.g., asking Abuse).
 - Social injury (e.g., embarrassment/personal information).
- Ethical obligation
 - Protect participants from all risk.

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Minimal Risk



- Definition:
 - When harm or discomfort is not greater than that experienced in daily life or during routine physical or psychological tests.
- Minimal risk differs across individuals.



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“At Risk” Situation!

- When risk is greater than minimal = “at risk”
- Increases researchers’ ethical obligation to protect participants’ welfare
- Consider alternative methods with lower risk



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Dealing with risk: Confidentiality

- Social risk
- “confidential” ≠ “anonymous”
- To increase confidentiality
 - Remove identifying information
 - Report results in terms of statistical averages
- Internet research
 - Confidentiality is a special problem
 - Less able to monitor distress and harm of hacking!



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Is Risk Present?

- Consider whether participants are at risk in the following situations.

College students complete an adjective checklist to describe their current mood. The researcher seeks to identify depressed students so they can be included in a study that examines cognitive deficits associated with depression.



YES or No?

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Is Risk Present?

A psychologist administers a battery of achievement tests to elderly adults in the dayroom of a nursing facility. The psychologist seeks to determine if there is a decline in mental functioning with advancing age.

YES or No?



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Is Risk Present?

Students in a psychology research methods class see another student enter their classroom in the middle of the class period, speak loudly and angrily with the instructor, and then leave. As part of a study on eyewitness behavior, the students are then asked to describe the intruder.

YES or No?

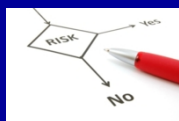


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Is Risk Present?


A researcher recruits students from introductory psychology classes to participate in a study of the effects of alcohol on cognitive functioning. The experiment requires that some students drink 2 ounces of alcohol (mixed with orange juice) before performing a computer game.

YES or No?



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Informed Consent



Is a person's explicitly expressed willingness to participate in a research project based on a clear understanding of:

- Nature of the research (what they will do)
- Possible risks.

- Indeed is a social contract.
- Written informed consent is:
 - Required when risk is greater than minimal risk.
 - Not required when researchers observe public behavior.

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Informed Consent




- Informed consent requires
 - Inform participants of all aspects of research that may influence their decision to participate.
 - Allow to withdraw at any time without penalty.
 - No pressure.
- Some are unable to provide legal consent
 - Young children, mentally impaired
 - provide assent to participate
 - Obtain legal guardians' consent

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Is Informed Consent Necessary?

- Consider whether informed consent is necessary in these situations.

In a study of the drinking behavior of college students, an undergraduate working for a faculty member attends a fraternity party and records the amount of alcohol consumed by students at the party.



YES Or NO?

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Is Informed Consent Necessary?

As part of a study of the gay community, a gay researcher joins a gay baseball team with the goal of recording behaviors of the participants in the context of team competition during the season. All the games are played outdoors and may be watched by the public.



YES Or NO?

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Is Informed Consent Necessary?

Public bathroom behavior (e.g., flushing, hand washing, littering, graffiti writing) of men and women is observed by male and female researchers concealed in the stalls of the respective washrooms.



YES Or NO?

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Is Informed Consent Necessary?

A graduate student investigates cheating behaviors of college students by concealing himself in a projection booth in an auditorium during an exam. From this vantage point he can see with the aid of binoculars the movements of most students. He records head movements, switching papers, passing notes, use of cell phones, texting, and other suspicious exam behaviors.



YES Or NO?

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Privacy



Definition

- The right of individuals to decide how information about them is communicated to others.

Research participants want to know

- How their information is protected
- How their confidentiality will be protected



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Privacy



How can we understand Public or private behavior?

- ✓ For investigating public behavior or information we do not need to get permission.



Three dimensions determine being privacy:

- Sensitivity of the information (sexual practice, religious beliefs)
- Setting role (attending a concert).
- Method of dissemination of the information (group average scores).

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Deception



Occurs when

- Information is withheld from participants
- Participants are intentionally misinformed about aspects of the research

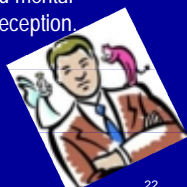
Deception for the purpose of getting people to participate is always unethical.

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Positive and Negative sides of Deception

■ Positive: Why deceive?

- Allows study of people's natural behavior
- Opportunity to investigate behavior and mental processes not easily studied without deception.



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Positive and Negative sides of Deception

■ Negative: Why should we not deceive?

- It contradicts principle of informed consent.
- Relationship between researcher and participant is not open and honest.
- Frequent deception makes people suspicious about research and experts in psychology.



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Deception

■ Deception is justified only when:

- The study is very important
- No other methods are available
- Deception would not influence decision to participate



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Deception



- When deception is used, the researcher must debrief
 - Inform participants of the reason for deception
 - Discuss any misconceptions
 - Remove any harmful effects
- Goal: Participants should feel good about the research experience.

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Research with Animals



- Should animals be used in research?
- APA Ethical Standards and IACUCs
 - Researchers are ethically obligated to protect welfare of animal subjects
 - Justify any pain, discomfort, death by potential scientific, educational, or applied goals



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Reporting Psychological Research

- Publication Credit
 - Acknowledge fairly those who contributed to a research project.
 - Authorship based on scholarly importance of contributions.

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Reporting Psychological Research



Plagiarism

- Don't present substantial portions or elements of another's work as your own.
- "Substantial portion or element" can be 1-2 words if it represents a key idea.
- Ignorance or sloppiness are not legitimate excuses.
- Cite sources appropriately.
- Cut-and-paste from Internet is plagiarism.



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Plagiarism

✓ Example of a Correctly Cited Direct Quote

"Informed by developments in case law, the police use various methods of interrogation—including the presentation of false evidence (e.g., fake polygraph, fingerprints, or other forensic test results; staged eyewitness identifications), appeals to God and religion, feigned friendship, and the use of prison informants" (Kassin & Kiechel, 1996, p. 125).

Kassin, S. M., & Kiechel, K. L. (1996). The social psychology of false confessions: Compliance, internalization, and confabulation. *Psychological Science*, 7, 125-128.

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Plagiarism

X Example of Plagiarism (No citation accompanying paraphrased material!!!)

Research investigations of deceptive interrogation methods to extract confessions are important because police use false evidence (e.g., fake test results) and false witnesses when interrogating suspects. Interrogators also pressure suspects by pretending to be their friends.

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Plagiarism

✓ Example of Paraphrased Material with Correct Citation

Research investigations of deceptive interrogation methods to extract confessions are important because police use false evidence (e.g., fake test results) and false witnesses when interrogating suspects (Kassin & Kiechel, 1996). In addition, Kassin and Kiechel state that interrogators pressure suspects by pretending to be their friends.

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Thinking Critically about Ethical Issues



- How do we decide whether a proposed study is ethical?
- What if people disagree? (they will)
- Is there a right answer? (often, no)
- The best we can do is follow steps for making ethical decisions.

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Steps for Ethical Decision Making



- Find out the facts.
 - Procedure, participants, etc.
- Identify the relevant ethical issues.
 - Risk, informed consent, privacy, confidentiality, deception, debriefing
- Decide what is at stake for all parties.
 - Participants, researchers, institutions, society

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Steps for Ethical Decision Making



- **Identify alternative methods / procedures**
 - Consider ethical implications for each alternative, including not doing the proposed research
- **Decide on the action to be taken**
 - Approve research
 - Conditional approval with modifications
 - Do not approve research

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Ethical Compliance



- **Ethical Compliance Checklist**
 - Goal: ensure ethical compliance throughout the research process
 - Required for research submitted to APA journals
 - www.apa.org/journals

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