

PSY 250

Ethics in Psychological Research

Three Areas of Ethical Guidelines

- Relationship between society and science
 - Extent to which societal concerns and cultural values should direct course of scientific investigation
- Professional issues
 - Issues involving scientific misconduct
 - Competence, accuracy, honesty (public reports)
- Treatment of research participants
 - Welfare and dignity

General Ethical Principles

- **Respect** for persons: Protecting people's privacy and freedom to choose whether to participate in research
- Reflected in guidelines for
 - voluntary participation
 - informed consent
 - freedom to withdraw
 - confidentiality of data

General Ethical Principles

- **Beneficence**: Protecting research participants from harm
- Reflected in guidelines for
 - risk-benefit analysis
 - avoidance of harm
 - confidentiality of data

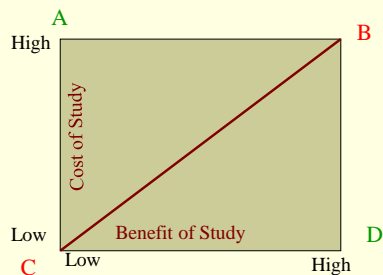
General Ethical Principles

- **Justice:** Ensuring that the burdens of research participation and the benefits of research are shared by all members of society
 - Burden should not fall unduly on certain groups
 - No particular group should accrue benefits
- Justice reflected in guidelines for
 - voluntary participation
 - informed consent

The Need for Ethical Principles

- Psychologists must ask and answer questions such as:
 - Are we putting our participants at risk?
 - Is our experimental treatment harmful?
 - Is the information we will gather from our experiment worth the potential risk and harm to participants that is involved?

Ethics Decision Plane Model



A & D studies easy to decide. C & B studies difficult to decide about.

Ethical Issues in Research Process

- Use of measurement techniques for certain individuals and behaviors
- Selection of participants
- Research strategies and design used
- How data analyzed
- How results reported

Treatment of Research Participants

- Little Albert
 - John B. Watson & Rosaline Rayner (1920)
 - conditioned anxiety response to a white rat
 - conducted 33 years before development of ethical research guidelines
 - Mary Cover Jones - systematic desensitization
 - [Video1](#)
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FMnhyGozLyE>

The Need for Ethical Principles

- Five famous instances that created major concern regarding research ethics :
 - The medical atrocities of World War II (The Nuremberg Trials)
 - The Tuskegee syphilis project
 - 40 year study in the US released in 1972
 - 400 men left to suffer with syphilis long after cure became available
 - The Willowbrook hepatitis project 1955
 - Humphrey's 1970 "tearoom trade" study
 - Stanley Milgram's obedience studies of the 1960's

The Need for Ethical Principles

- Many Nazis who committed medical research atrocities during World War II were prosecuted at the Nuremberg War Tribunal in 1947
- Lead to development of code of guidelines for the ethical treatment of human participants in research (1949)
- Similar to Declaration of Helsinki adopted by World Medical Association in 1964

Nuremberg Code

- Participants should voluntarily consent to participate in research.
- Experiment should yield fruitful results for good of society
- Experiment should be based on animal experimentation – anticipated results will justify the performance of the experiment
- Participants should be fully informed of the nature of the research project.
- Avoid all unnecessary physical and mental suffering and injury

Nuremburg Code cont.

- Risks should be avoided whenever possible.
- Risk, where necessary, should not exceed that determined by humanitarian importance of study
- Proper preparation and adequate facilities
- Experiments should be conducted by scientifically qualified personnel.
- Experimenter must be prepared to terminate exp. at any stage
- Participants have the right to discontinue participation at any time.

Milgram Experiment

- Stanley Milgram grew up during WWII
- Experiment designed to pit the participant's moral beliefs against the demands of authority
- Milgram's experiment began in a lecture on obedience to authority
- Milgram asks audience to imagine the following situation

Milgram Experiment cont.

- Audience members asked to privately record how they would have acted
- All audience members respond similarly
 - Would disobey
 - Psychologists at 120 volts
 - University students at 135 volts

Milgram experiments cont.

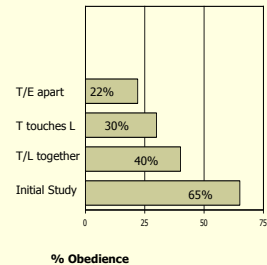
- Why disobey?
- Psychologists predicted only 4% would progress beyond 300 volts
- Students said .1% would reach highest level on generator
 - "pathological sadists"

Milgram Experiments cont.

- Milgram actually conducted study
- 65% of participants administered shocks up to 450 volts
- [VideoM](#)
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W147ybOdgpE&feature=related>
- Participants rated electric shocks as 14 on a scale of 1 to 14 (where 14 is the most painful)
- Wouldn't happen today?

Milgram Experiments cont.

- Several follow up studies
- Teacher and learner seated together
- Teacher holds learner's hand down on shock plate
- Experimenter communicated to teacher via telephone



Milgram Experiments cont.

- 1962 - APA put Milgram's membership application on hold
- 1963 - First published criticism by a newspaper
- 1970s - US government enacted formal guidelines for research with human participants
- The APA adopted and published the original code of ethics in 1973; it was revised in 1982, and again in 2002.

APA Principles in the Conduct of Research with Humans

1. No Harm
2. Privacy and confidentiality
3. Institutional approval
4. Competence
5. Record keeping
6. Informed consent
7. Dispensing with consent
8. Inducements for research participation
9. Deception
10. Debriefing

APA Principles in the Conduct of Research with Humans

- Some APA principles have proven to be controversial:
 - Placing research participants “at risk” or “at minimal risk
 - Informing participants of such risks
 - Securing “informed consent” from participants
 - Use of “deception” in research

- Why??

APA Principles in the Conduct of Research with Humans

- Deception
 - Passive Deception/Omission
 - Withhold info about study
 - Active Deception/Commission
 - Deliberately present false or misleading info.
 - Use of confederates to produce false environment

APA Principles in the Conduct of Research with Humans

- Is Deception in Research Necessary?
 - Providing a *complete* explanation or description of the project may influence the participants’ responses.
 - It is arguable that deception may be justified in some cases if our results are to be unbiased or uncontaminated by knowledge of the experiment and the expectancies that such knowledge may bring.

APA Principles in the Conduct of Research with Humans

- Informed Consent Document

Read this consent form. If you have any questions ask the experimenter and he/she will answer the questions. The Department of Psychology supports the practice of protection for human participants participating in research and related activities. The following information is provided so that you can decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time, and that if you do withdraw from the study, you will not be subjected to reprimand or any other form of reproach. In order to help determine the relationship between numerous personality characteristics, you are being asked to complete several questionnaires. It should not take more than 10 minutes for you to complete these materials. These questionnaires will be completed anonymously. *I have read the above statement and have been fully advised of the procedures to be used in this project. I have been given sufficient opportunity to ask any questions I had concerning the procedures and possible risks involved. I understand the potential risks involved and I assume them voluntarily. I likewise understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time without being subjected to reproach.*

Participant and/or authorized representative _____ Date _____
- Informed Consent
 - The informed consent form should:
 - Give a general description of the project in which they are going to participate.
 - Inform the participants that no penalties will be invoked if they choose not to participate.
 - Clearly state that participants have the right to withdraw their participation at any time they desire.

Informed Consent

- Securing informed consent from participants at risk is a mandatory condition.
 - What about those participants at risk who are participating in a study involving deception?
 - How do we satisfy the ethical guidelines in such a case?

APA Principles in the Conduct of Research with Humans

- Clinical Equipoise
 - Clinician must provide best possible treatment
 - Thus can only compare equally preferred treatments
 - Problems???
 - Uncertainty about which is best
 - Honest professional disagreement among experts
 - Can not use “no treatment” controls or placebo groups

APA Principles in the Conduct of Research with Humans

- Continued monitoring of patient well-being
 - Obligation to anticipate and remove any harmful elements
 - E.g. Haney, Banks & Zimbardo (1973)
 - Male undergraduates played roles of prisoners and guards
 - Within days “prisoners” were depressed and helpless and “guards” were engaging in aggressive, dehumanizing behavior towards “prisoners”
 - [Prison Video](#)
 - <https://mail.googlehttp://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b8McGyYAwcU&feature=related>

APA Principles in the Conduct of Research with Humans

- Vulnerable populations
 - Researchers need to consider factors such as:
 - Health of participants
 - Age of participants
 - Ability of participants to understand what participation in a project may entail (e.g. children, patients with physical or mental disorders; persons with lower intelligence, low literacy, or English as a second language)

APA Principles in the Conduct of Research with Humans

- The Debriefing Session:
 - Is usually the final step in conducting the research project
 - Involves:
 - Explaining to the participants the nature and purpose(s) of the project.
 - Counteracting or minimizing any negative effects
 - Explaining nature of and justifying any deception
 - Answering any questions

APA Principles in the Conduct of Research with Humans

- The Debriefing Session:
 - Aronson and Carlsmith (1968) proposed the following guidelines for effective debriefing:
 - The researcher's integrity as a scientist must be conveyed to the participants.
 - If deception was used, the researcher should reassure the participants that it was not wrong or a reflection on their integrity or intelligence to feel that they have been tricked or fooled.

APA Principles in the Conduct of Research with Humans cont.

- The debriefing session should progress slowly. Do not rush.
- Researchers should make every effort to return participants to the same state they were in at the beginning of the project.
- The researcher should repeat all guarantees of confidentiality and anonymity that were made at the beginning of the project.
- For maximum effectiveness, the researcher should conduct the debriefing session immediately following the experimental session.

The Institutional Review Board

- The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is a campus review panel for the use of human participants in research projects.
 - The typical IRB is composed of a cross-section of individuals.
 - IRB's might contain faculty members from history, biology, education, psychology, and economics, as well as one or two members from the community who are not associated with the institution.
 - The IRB serves to ensure that the experimenter treats research participants, whether they are humans or animals, according to the established ethical guidelines.

The Institutional Review Board cont.

- 7 Basic IRB Criteria:
 1. Minimization of risk to Participants
 2. Reasonable risk in relation to benefits
 3. Equitable selection
 4. Informed consent
 5. Documentation of informed consent
 6. Data monitoring
 7. Privacy and confidentiality

IACUC

- At some institutions the IRB also reviews research projects that utilize animals.
- Many institutions have an Animal Care and Use Committee that reviews research projects that utilize animals.
 - IACUC – Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee
 - A veterinarian must be a member of any panel that reviews animal research proposals.

The Ethical Use of Animals in Psychological Research

- Here is a brief summary of the APA (1985) guidelines for the use of animals:
 - **Justification of Research.** the research should have a clear scientific purpose.
 - **Personnel.** Only trained personnel who are familiar with the animal-care guidelines should be involved with the research. All procedures must conform to appropriate federal guidelines.
 - **Care and Housing of Animals.** Animal housing areas must comply with current regulations.
 - **Acquisition of Animals.** If animals are not bred in the laboratory, they must be acquired in a lawful, humane manner.

The Ethical Use of Animals in Psychological Research cont.

- **Experimental Procedures.** Humane consideration for the well-being of the animal should be incorporated into the design and conduct of all procedures involving animals, while keeping in mind the primary goal of experimental procedures – the acquisition of sound, replicable data.
- **Field Research.** Field research must be approved by the appropriate review board. Investigators should take special precautions to disturb their research population(s) and the environment as little as possible.
- **Educational Use of Animals.** The educational use of animals also must be approved by the appropriate review board. Instruction in the ethics of animal research is encouraged.

Researcher's Ethical Obligations Once The Research is Completed



"These days, it's publish or perish."

- Avoid Fabrication of Data
 - Refers to situations where the experimenter either deliberately changes or alters data or makes up data to suit his or her needs.
 - Some researchers feel a pressure to publish and thus will fabricate data to support their hypotheses.
- Avoid Plagiarism
 - Do not plagiarize (use someone else's work without giving credit to the original author)

The Department of Psychology at Bishop's University (1994) has suggested the following:

- Any part of your paper that contains the exact words of an author must appear in quotation marks, with the author's name, and the date of publication and page number(s) of the source attached.
- You should not adapt material with only minor changes, such as combining sentences, omitting phrases, changing a few words, or inverting sentence order.
- If what you have to say is substantially your own words, but you took the facts or ideas from a particular author, then omit the quotation marks and reference with a parenthetical citation such as (Jones, 1949).
- Always acknowledge secondary sources.
- You must reference every statement of fact and every idea or opinion not your own unless the item is part of common knowledge.
- Do not hand in for credit a paper that is the same or similar to one you have handed in elsewhere.

Researcher's Ethical Obligations Once The Research is Completed

- Avoid Lying with Statistics
 - Results should be presented in an unbiased manner.
- Cite Your References Correctly
 - It is the researcher's responsibility to cite and list *only* those articles that have been read.
 - The least you should do is cite the *secondary source* you are using.
 - It is allowable to cite an article that is *described and referenced* in another article.
 - If Smith and Davis (1999) described and referenced a research project conducted by Brown (1984), you can cite it as follows:
 - Brown (as cited in Smith & Davis, 1999) found that.....
 - In your reference section you would list only the Smith and Davis reference (the one you actually read).

Ethical Dilemmas

- Seek consultation
- Have the institutional review board (IRB) review your research proposal