

Ethics in Psychology

OVERVIEW

In this lab, you will become familiar with the ethical issues of research. You will be introduced to various ethical dilemmas as well as standards and principles established by the American Psychological Association and other organizations to protect the rights of participants and to maintain the integrity and quality of research. You will also be introduced to available resources to find current information on the topics of ethics and psychological research.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of the laboratory, you will be able to

- Identify and explain the ethical issues and guidelines regarding research.
- Identify and correct ethical problems with research designs.
 - Find and utilize available resources providing ethical information regarding research.
 - Create your own research design beneficial to both psychology and the community by following ethical principles and guidelines.

EQUIPMENT

- *Research Methods I* text
- American Psychological Association (APA) website

BACKGROUND MATERIAL

Psychology Terms and Topics

- Animal research
- APA “Ethics Code”
- Confidentiality

- Debriefing
- Deception / alternatives to
- Experimenter's obligations
- Human research participants
- Informed consent
- Physical stress / harm
- Psychological stress
- Special populations

Introduction to Ethics

Imagine being lied to, manipulated, embarrassed, physically harmed or mentally disturbed in some way. Obviously, these are all unpleasant, but do you know what they have in common? Research. That's right, these are issues that psychologists and other researchers deal with on a daily basis. Many of you may not realize it, but ethics make up a gigantic portion of the research process. There are ethical issues to deal with in every step of developing a research design. Various institutions and organizations such as the American Psychological Association and The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects in Biomedical and Behavioral Research have developed guidelines and standards to protect research participants. Although the standards and guidelines of research have improved over the years, the problem is by no means conquered. Researchers must be extremely careful and well educated in order to avoid ethical dilemmas within their research design. This lab is intended to familiarize you with the ethical standards and guidelines established to protect the well-fare of participants as well as the community, and also to prepare you to create your own research design free of ethical problems and violations.

The following are the three ethical principles and six norms of scientific research identified by the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects in Biomedical and Behavioral Research (1978) in the *Belmont Report* (as cited in Merten, 1998).

THREE ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

1. *Beneficence*: Maximizing good outcomes for science, humanity, and the individual research participants and minimizing or avoiding unnecessary risk, harm or wrong
2. *Respect*: Treating people with respect and courtesy, including those who are not autonomous (e.g., small children, people who have mental retardation or senility)
3. *Justice*: Ensuring that those who bear the risk in the research are the ones who benefit from it; ensuring that the procedures are reasonable, nonexploitative, carefully considered, and fairly administered

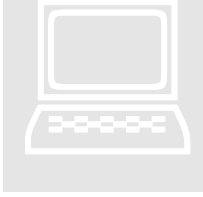
SIX NORMS OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

1. Use of a *valid research design*. Faulty research is not useful to anyone and is not only a waste of time and money but cannot be conceived of as being ethical in that it does not contribute to the well-being of the participants.
2. The *researcher must be competent* to conduct the research.
3. *Consequences of the research must be identified*: Procedures must respect privacy, ensure confidentiality, maximize benefits, and minimize risks.
4. *The sample selection must be appropriate* for the purposes of the study, representative of the population to benefit from the study, and sufficient in number.
5. The participants must agree to participate in the study through *voluntary informed consent*-that is, without threat or undue inducement (voluntary), knowing what a reasonable person in the same situation would want to know before giving consent (informed), and explicitly agreeing to participate (consent).
6. The researcher must inform the participants *whether harm will be compensated*.

The following are the four steps intended to “undo” the effects of deception in research.

1. *Debriefing* the research participants after the research study. This means that the researcher explains the real purpose and use of the research.
2. *Dehoaxing* the research participants in which the researcher demonstrates the device that was used to deceive the participants. The researcher’s responsibility is to attempt to allay a sense of generalized mistrust in educational and psychological research.
3. Guarding the *privacy and confidentiality* of the research participants.
4. Obtaining *fully informed consent*.

Mertens, D. M. (1998). Research Methods in Education and Psychology. London: Sage Publications.



Computer Exercise

Please go to the American Psychological Association web-site at

<http://www.apa.org/ethics/code.html>

This exercise is intended to familiarize you with the available resources provided by the American Psychological Association. The APA web-site provides helpful information regarding many aspects of psychology. Today we will be using the web-site to find information on ethics in research. The following is a list of topics which you will be discussing and reviewing with help from the APA web-site:

TOPICS

APA General Principles

- A: Competence
- B: Integrity
- C: Professional and Scientific Responsibility
- D: Respect for People's Rights and Dignity
- E: Concern for Other's Welfare
- F: Social Responsibility

APA Ethical Standards

- 1.09: Respecting Others
- 1.10: Nondiscrimination
- 1.14: Avoiding Harm
- 5.02: Maintaining Confidentiality
- 5.03: Minimizing Intrusions on Privacy
- 6.10: Research Responsibilities
- 6.11: Informed Consent to Research
- 6.15: Deception in Research
- 6.18: Providing Participants with Information about the Study
- 6.19: Honoring Commitments
- 6.20: Care and Use of Animals in Research



Ethical Scenarios

Please read the following scenarios carefully. Within each scenario is an ethical problem or dilemma. Using the resources of your Research Methods I textbook and the APA web-site, identify and discuss the ethical problems with each scenario. Once you have identified the ethical problem within the scenario, explain how you would change or revise the design to make it ethically acceptable. Please think carefully about each scenario and if possible, provide a solution.

DR. SNEAKY.

An experiment was conducted to test a new drug for depression. For the experimental group, Dr. Sneaky wrote a new prescription for depression without discussing it with the patients. For the control group, Dr. Sneaky prescribed their normal prescription. What is wrong with this scenario?

DR. MAD.

Dr. Mad conducted a study entitled “Emotion in the Media” to test the effects of anger. The participants were shown a video containing infuriating materials. The participants were then given a questionnaire to complete. Participants were told they could leave upon completion of the questionnaire. Dr. Mad thanked the participants for their time. What is wrong with this scenario?

RESEARCH IN A CLASSROOM SETTING.

In an introductory psychology course, students were offered extra credit for their semester grade. In order to receive the credit, they had to participate in a Research Methods II research project. They were not given any other alternative opportunities to receive extra credit. What is wrong with this scenario?

Note:

Most of the remaining laboratories will have an ***Ethics Box*** at the end of the lesson. You may want to refer back to this lesson or the APA website.