

Ethics

PSY 4433

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2022-02-07

Agenda

- General Ethics
- Ethical Issues & Human Participants in Research
- Nonhuman Subjects in Research
- Ethical Issues and Scientific Integrity

Introduction to Ethics

- **Research ethics** is the general approach of making sure researchers are honest and respectful to all individuals that take part in research studies and/or are included in study findings
- basic categories of ethical responsibility are:
 - ensure welfare of individuals, both human (participants) and nonhuman (subjects)
 - ensure public reports of research are accurate and honest

Ethical Issues - Human Participants

- **Nuremberg Code** are a set of guidelines for ethical treatment of participants in research
 - due to inhumane treatment of prisoners used as "participants" for "medical" experiments
 - didn't stop all instances
- Tuskegee study - Black male participants left with untreated syphilis
- Milgrim - having participants shock/punish others for errors in learning task
- **National Research Act** mandated regulations to protect participants
- **Belmont Report** summarized the basic ethical principles, which are used as the basis for protecting participants

Nuremberg Code

1. Voluntary consent
2. Should be good for society
3. designed to test problem where findings will justify the experiment
4. Experiment should avoid unnecessary physical and mental injury
5. No experiment should be conducted when death/disabling injury will occur
6. Degree of risk should not be greater than importance to answering problem
7. Proper preparations made should protect injury and/or death
8. Experiment conducted by qualified personnel
9. Participant can end experiment at any time
10. Experimenter should be prepared to stop experiment if risks outweigh benefits

Belmont Report

- **principle of respect for persons (autonomy)** requires that participants should consent to participate in studies
 - this also means that participants should know what they are consenting to
- **Principle of beneficence** requires that researchers do not harm participants, minimize risks, and maximize potential benefits
 - while benefits are difficult to interpret, studies should still limit risks



Belmont Report

- **principle of justice** requires fair and nonexploitative procedures for *selection* and *treatment* of participants to risks and benefits are distributed equally



American Psychological Association *Guidelines*

- **APA Ethics Code** contain ethical standards that were created and constantly updated for participant research by the American Psychological Association (APA)
- Major Ethical Issues
 - No Harm
 - Privacy & Confidentiality
 - Institutional Approval
 - Competence
 - Record Keeping
 - Informed Consent to Research
 - Dispensing with Informed Consent
 - Offering Inducements for Research Participation
 - Deception in Research
 - Debriefing

No Harm



- psychological research does not often have physical harm
 - psychological harm can be just as harmful to participants
- **clinical equipoise** is a concept that clinicians have an ethical responsibility to provide the best treatment for patients

Informed Consent Forms

- **informed consent** is that participants given complete information about the research to make a rational decision to participate
 - information about the study could keep participants *blind* to the purpose of the study --> deception
 - understanding the study means that participants know what they are getting themselves into
 - voluntary participation in the study means that at any time, participants can leave the study without any negative consequences



Informed Consent

- **Consent forms** provide all necessary information about the study with a section for participants to sign to show they read and understand every part of the study
- Overview
- Description of Procedures
- Risks
- (Potential) Benefits
- Costs
- Confidentiality
- Alternative Treatments
- Voluntary Participation
- Questions and Contact Information (IRB & Principal Investigator)
- Signature Line
- Copy for participants

Deception



- **Deception** is when a researcher withholds information or misleads participants about the study to see an effect
 - **Passive deception/omission** is withholding information; researchers don't tell participants something important about the study
 - **Active deception/commission** is presenting misinformation; researchers mislead participants to the actual purpose of the study

Confederates?

- not those kind
- **confederates** are fake participants who can help with deception and work for the research team



Deception

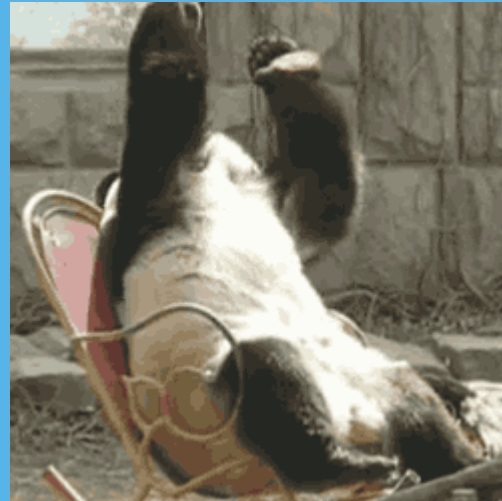
- deception should be justified in terms of benefits outweighing risk to participants
 - researchers should consider other options before deception
- cannot conceal from prospective participants information about research that can cause physical or psychological harm/pain
- participants must be debriefed (most of the time immediately) by providing a complete explanation after participation is completed

Debriefing

- **Debriefing** is the process of explaining the purpose of the study/experiment after the participant has finished participating in the study/experiment
 - especially important if deception was used
- useful for minimizing risks
- explaining the benefits of the study (even if educational contribution to research)
- answering questions

Debriefing

- has been found to be annoying or embarrassing to participants
 - no one likes being embarrassed
- influences of debriefing effectiveness
 - sincerity
 - nature of deception
 - time interval of debriefing
 - suspicions



Debriefing

- Some studies, like **randomized controlled trials** or **RCTs** are experiments where there is a control group and an intervention group chosen at random and put in random groups
 - drug trials
 - deception is provided at the beginning of the study when the control group is a placebo group
- **Placebo** is an ineffective substitute to whatever is being manipulated
 - sugar pills

Is Your Study Confidential or Anonymous?

- **Confidentiality** is when participants' information/data is kept secret and private during a research study
 - participant information could be searched and found
- **Anonymity** is the practice of ensuring participants' information/data is not directly related to the participant
 - don't have any identifying information about participants
- Are SONA experiments anonymous?

Confidentiality

- to keep data confidential, no names or other identification appears on any data records
 - compensation means that researchers would have a separate list of those (surveys --> 2nd survey to sign up information)
- Coding systems
 - hand-written surveys would have a number that would be linked to the consent form with the same number

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

- **Common rule** is based on the Belmont Report principles and provides common set of federal regulations to protect participants
- **IRB** is a committee composed of scientists and non-scientists to determine whether your study is acceptable based on common rule
 - minimization of risks to participants
 - reasonable risk in relation to benefits
 - equitable selection
 - informed consent
 - Documentation of informed consent
 - Data monitoring
 - Privacy and confidentiality
- IRB approval is needed for studies including participants
 - some studies can be exempt --> using public, secondary, or anonymous data

Ethical Issues & Scientific Integrity

- research reporting
 - don't fabricate your research findings
 - if finding significant errors in published data, take steps to correct errors
- plagiarism
 - don't present others' work as your own
 - make sure to cite/reference others or even yourself

Fraud in Science

- errors in research happen
 - make sure to correct and reach out to the appropriate organization (journal publishers)
- **fraud** is when a researcher purposely falsify or misinterpret data
 - happens all the time
 - not always on a large scale
 - visuals often lie
- R1 or research institutions often push faculty to "publish or perish"
 - write papers or you're fired

Safeguards against Fraud

- **replication** repetition of a research study using the same basic procedures used in the original study
 - duplicating the same findings = good
 - finding differing results = bad
- **peer review** is the process of other researchers blindly review another researcher's work
 - don't get paid
 - 2 reviewers that either accept, accept with revisions, reject and resubmit, or reject, also desk reject
 - newer, sharing the original data for others to follow your steps and find the same findings...in theory
- **plagiarism** is the unethical representation of someone's work as your own
 - faculty stealing from grad students
 - results in situations where students retaliate

Ethics are not always easy

- Your treatment is working compared to control group, do you continue your study?
- Asking about religion from individuals that have left or have been ostracized from their religious groups
- Asking about childhood trauma in adults?