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# **Week 4 Lecture - Research Ethics**

Undergraduate Research Methods in Psychology

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# 1 Overview

## 1.1 Why Do We Discuss This?

- Psychology, and other sciences, have an unfortunately \_\_\_\_\_ history - filled with \_\_\_\_\_ behavior that has harmed both willing and un-willing participants. We cannot \_\_\_\_\_ this history, as it informs us as to **why** this subject is relevant at all.
  - E.g., Eugenics movement, forced sterilization, continuation of various segregation practices, etc.
- However, just because we discuss \_\_\_\_\_ examples, does not mean that modern studies are not also threatened by ethical \_\_\_\_\_. **All** modern research must be reviewed by multiple parties tasked with \_\_\_\_\_ participants and ethics in any given study.
  - Most studies cannot even be \_\_\_\_\_ conducted before there has been a thorough review of the planned procedures.
- In our proposed research design and procedures, we can *never* \_\_\_\_\_ ethical principles. No research findings are worth completely abandoning \_\_\_\_\_ and respectful behavior of those who participate in our studies.

# 2 Historical Examples

## 2.1 The Tuskegee Syphilis Study

- In 1932, the U.S. Public Health Service (PHS) and \_\_\_\_\_ Institute engaged in a study which, at the time, was meant to bolster public health knowledge surrounding syphilis in Black men. Instead, its historical significance is that of being the \_\_\_\_\_ for a massive research ethics overhaul in the United States, due to its numerous negligent procedures.
  - The study proceeded in intentional \_\_\_\_\_, deceiving both its participants, and the broader American public. The researchers ignored well-founded \_\_\_\_\_ from whistleblowers and failed to respect the autonomy and well-being of its participants.
  - Though this was a \_\_\_\_\_ study, the downstream effects and lessons learned from this study are immediately \_\_\_\_\_ to psychology and all social science and human subjects research.
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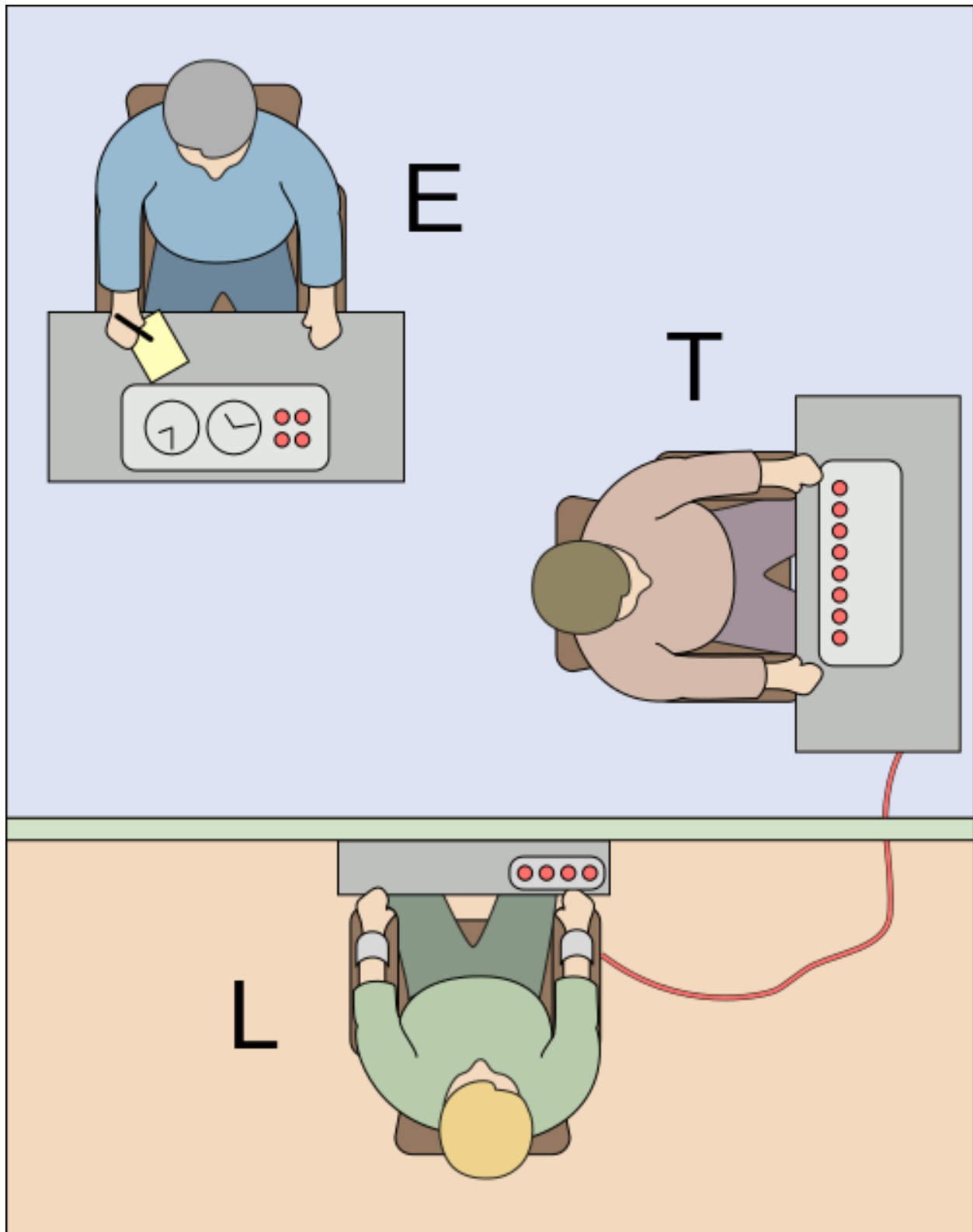


- Lessons learned:
  - Participants were not treated with \_\_\_\_\_, autonomy, and dignity. They were \_\_\_\_\_, intentionally un-informed of risks and treatments, prevented from finding information that would aid them in making decision about study participation
  - Participants were intimately and immensely \_\_\_\_\_. They were allowed to suffer with the effects of the disease, despite the development of valid \_\_\_\_\_ that would have cured the disease. The study prioritized the possible results over the safety of its participants.
  - Participants were purposefully sampled as members of a vulnerable and \_\_\_\_\_ socioeconomic group. The Black men in this study were likely to be poor and have little formal education. Rather than take measures to respect and \_\_\_\_\_ each participant, this was exploited to keep participants unaware.



## 2.2 Milgram's Obedience Studies

- In summary, Stanley Milgram's \_\_\_\_\_ (which came in many variations) were focused on examining how people respond to authoritative commands to inflict punishment and follow orders. These experiments were, in part, born out of questions surrounding \_\_\_\_\_ of citizens and soldiers in the Nazi regime, in Germany.
- Participants often would have some role in inflicting a perceived pain or \_\_\_\_\_ on to an actor. No actual harm was actually inflicted to the actor (a confederate), *but* participants did believe that they were inflicting the pain, usually a \_\_\_\_\_ of some degree. If they pushed back against the demand to administer the punishment (even at extreme levels), an authoritative figure would instruct them to \_\_\_\_\_ over and over.



- In this case, the flaw does not lie in harm done to the actor - the shocks weren't real, and were merely simulated. However, think about the emotional \_\_\_\_\_ in the participants - feeling "forced" by authority to perform



inhumane actions.

- Though participants were \_\_\_\_\_ at the end of the study and met the actor who assured they were fine - there are questions as to whether they were truly told that those shocks were faked. Some participants \_\_\_\_\_ for weeks.



- Lessons learned:
  - Milgram continued the studies, even after learning a staggering 65% of participants would continue the shocks to the end - usually accompanied by extreme distress of the participants.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ While the Tuskegee study showed us physical harm to the participants, this study showed us emotional \_\_\_\_\_ inflicted on the participants. Both are reasonable \_\_\_\_\_ we must consider in psychological research.
  - Was it worth it? Did we learn something so \_\_\_\_\_ that made it worth the pain those people felt...

## 2.3 Other Studies?

- There are no shortage of older psychological studies that follow procedures that would never be authorized today

– e.g., Zimbardo's \_\_\_\_\_ experiment



- Just because historical studies tend to have more readily identifiable examples of ethics violations, doesn't mean \_\_\_\_\_ studies are innocent of similar errors.
  - A [recent example](#) from biology research. Remember no study is perfect, but an ethics violation is perhaps the greatest of all sins - because it \_\_\_\_\_ the very people kind enough to put their trust in us, in the \_\_\_\_\_ first place.
- An unknown number of unethical experiments have also occurred under the direction of \_\_\_\_\_ regimes (see [Unit 7.3.1](#))

## 3 Ethical Principles

### 3.1 Overview

- We may look to multiple sources to guide our \_\_\_\_\_ to creating ethical research. While no one source is the definitive guide, we make use these to craft a \_\_\_\_\_ at the core of our research ethics and treatment of participants.



- Much of these guidelines were created in response to \_\_\_\_\_ study and other failures in ethical research.

## 3.2 The Belmont Report

### 3.2.1 Overview

- In many ways, the \_\_\_\_\_ Report is the original and most influential guiding pieces of ethical conduct for *any type of human subjects research in the United States*.
- Though it is very comprehensive and \_\_\_\_\_, it can be summarized by focusing on 3 core principles: Respect for \_\_\_\_\_, Beneficence, and Justice. In your future work in the research proposal and article critique, I want you to be very cognizant of these virtues in your writing and reading.

### 3.2.2 Respect for Persons

- Consists of two applications: \_\_\_\_\_ and respect for limited autonomy
- **All people are autonomous.** In practice, this means that we allow each person to \_\_\_\_\_ their own participation or non-participation in a study. They are entitled to sufficient knowledge to weigh benefits and risks. A person cannot be \_\_\_\_\_, deceived, or offered excessive incentive to obtain consent.
- **Some people are limited in autonomy due to outside factors.** There are \_\_\_\_\_ groups which are, in one way or another, limited in their ability to give informed consent.
  - Examples: those with intellectual/developmental disability, minors, \_\_\_\_\_, those under a medical guardianship or power-of-attorney.
  - In these cases, researchers must act with \_\_\_\_\_ precautions to protect vulnerable individuals.
  - Procedures may involve obtain consent of a guardian and \_\_\_\_\_ of the person under the guardianship.

### 3.2.3 Beneficence

- This principle is critically concerned with *minimization* of harm and acting in the best \_\_\_\_\_ of participants and the broader population represented by the \_\_\_\_\_ sample of the study.
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- Now, studies may, by virtue of the research questions, require some degree of harm. However, it is absolutely \_\_\_\_\_ that researchers do their best to anticipate, avoid, and \_\_\_\_\_ harm wherever it may occur.
  - This often requires that researchers regularly assess the state of participants and ensure they are not \_\_\_\_\_ harmed by study procedures. Studies may need to be changed (with approval) or outright stopped if risk of harm grows \_\_\_\_\_ than expected.
- Within this principle, is the necessity of ensuring \_\_\_\_\_ through completely **anonymous studies** and/or **confidential studies**. Harm can come to individuals in information is leaked or shared. Institutions will have strict data \_\_\_\_\_ to protect the information gathered about participants in studies.

### 3.2.4 Justice

- This principle highlights the importance of considering the larger \_\_\_\_\_ of the study and the potential negative effect on the study participants to achieve such a result.
- We should avoid using a sample that is \_\_\_\_\_ or useful by virtue of their position (e.g., those considered “vulnerable” as stated before) to benefit the broader population.
- Put another way, we should be concerned with \_\_\_\_\_ that there is equity between the groups under study, and the larger group that benefits from said work.

## 3.3 The APA Ethical Principles

### 3.3.1 Overview

- The APA guidelines supplement and apply the Belmont report principles specifically to psychological science and practice. In some ways, it expands and adds further detail to “\_\_\_\_\_” the principals.
  - 5 core principals
    - Beneficence and \_\_\_\_\_
    - Fidelity and responsibility
    - \_\_\_\_\_
-

- Justice
- Respect for people's rights and dignity
- These guidelines provide further definition and \_\_\_\_\_ on a variety of topics, named the **Ethical Standards for Research**:

### 3.3.2 Institutional Review Boards (IRBs)

- The **IRB** is the central \_\_\_\_\_ body overseeing ethics in research at any given institution. They are responsible for carefully inspecting and evaluating the planned methods of any given study, but especially \_\_\_\_\_ subjects studies.
  - The IRB often requests *extensive* documentation on planned studies and procedures well in \_\_\_\_\_ of when they happen. It is not uncommon to have a nearly completed methods section and introduction sections before a study is even approved
  - E.g., Neuropsychological Study at Trinity
- They are a \_\_\_\_\_ step in approving research, prior to conducting a study. Without IRB approval, a study *cannot* proceed.

### 3.3.3 Informed Consent

- Under many studies, a researcher must provide each \_\_\_\_\_ a form that indicates the general goals of the study, likely benefits and risks, as well all procedures for a person to \_\_\_\_\_ participation.
- Regulation do allow for informed consent to be waived under circumstances, such as when data was already gathered (e.g., census data, electronic health record data from routine care) or when a person could “reasonably expect” to be seen by the general \_\_\_\_\_. However, this waiver must be explicitly asked for and explained.
- IRBs carefully \_\_\_\_\_ whether a study must employ informed consent forms based on the risk to individuals and data anonymity.
  - As with any component of a study, and IRB can request changes or outright force a certain course of actions

### 3.3.4 Deception

- Intentional \_\_\_\_\_ and vagueness as part of a study's methodology are fairly common and can be done ethically, *with caveats*.
    - Examples: Milgram's shocks, confederates (actors), etc.
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- Lie by leaving information out is called **omission** where \_\_\_\_\_ giving false information is called **commission**. Deception should only be used to the point that it is absolutely necessary to the goals of the study.
- First, the deception must be \_\_\_\_\_ as necessary to the goals and validity of the study. It must be done intentionally to protect specific goals and threats to the study.
  - For example, a participant who knows a study is about implicit bias towards and out-group may act \_\_\_\_\_ their normal self in order to appear “better”
- Second, this deception must be thoroughly \_\_\_\_\_ and explained to the IRB, with appropriate debrief planned for after completion of the study.
- Deception isn't a universally loved \_\_\_\_\_, but many recognize it as a necessary part of studies to isolate psychological effects from bias in participants.

### 3.3.5 Debriefing

- Debriefing sessions occur with participant \_\_\_\_\_ their participation in the study, in which the methods used are explained, and any deception is revealed.
- Researchers may share results with people, so they are aware of findings, and can possibly benefit from the research. Functionally, we debrief for the same reason we share \_\_\_\_\_ procedures in published work: to increase trust in the process and science.

### 3.3.6 Research Misconduct

- This term is mostly related to the \_\_\_\_\_ practices of **Data fabrication and/or falsification**.
- Fabrication: When data is \_\_\_\_\_ to support certain conclusions
- Falsification: When data is \_\_\_\_\_ pruned, filtered, or treated to bias it towards favorable conclusions. This is also relevant when procedures are used that bias participants in their reactions.
- Both of these acts of research misconduct may have wide and longstanding effects on professional \_\_\_\_\_ of researchers, as well as public effects

### 3.3.7 Openness and Transparency

- As a general rule, one should \_\_\_\_\_ share the procedures, analyses,
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and data used to complete research (see Merton's openness norm) - unless to share these would jeopardize the security and privacy of subjects.

- Not all data \_\_\_\_\_ is allowed by certain organizations - sometimes this decision is somewhat out of the researcher's hands
- Pre-registered hypotheses, data sharing agreements, and code-sharing can all be \_\_\_\_\_ practices to allow research practices to be better inspected by interested parties. It can also be useful in catching small errors, leading to **corrections** or **retractions** when necessary.

### 3.3.8 Plagiarism

- Plagiarism is said to be passing another person's work or words off as your own. It is especially easy to do in research \_\_\_\_\_, when we rapidly state claims and evidence from prior literature.
- Plagiarism can be both un-intentional/accidental or fully \_\_\_\_\_
  - however, the implications of both types are largely the same, and the \_\_\_\_\_ tend to be equally severe.
- It is also possible to **self-plagiarize**. This may seem paradoxical, but the reuse of the same sentences as part of a \_\_\_\_\_ work implies that the sentence originated in the new work, when it did not. When submitting graded or publishable work, it is expected that the piece is \_\_\_\_\_ and unique to other work.
- The two strategies for avoiding plagiarism are to use good \_\_\_\_\_ and proper APA 7th citations and references. We covered this earlier in our workshop introducing APA style.

### 3.3.9 Animal Research

*This will be less of a focus for this class, but you will need to have some general notions of the nuance in this area. Generally, animals should be used sparingly, and should be treated with the utmost respect for their contributions to studies.*

- Lab animals (those kept explicitly for research purposes) have specific ethic \_\_\_\_\_ governing their care, habitat, and treatment.
  - Lab animals are governed by \_\_\_\_\_ Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), a sort of IRB-for-animals
  - 3 Rs
    - Replacements: try to find \_\_\_\_\_ to using animals, wherever possible
    - Refinement: minimize harm to animals with better, less intrusive lab procedures
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- Reduction: Try to use as \_\_\_\_\_ animals as possible
- Public opinion on animals can be very mixed, and certain advocacy groups seek to outright \_\_\_\_\_ the use of animals in lab studies. However, many also recognize that use of animals is tightly governed (just like with humans) and critical to some areas of research especially \_\_\_\_\_ for humans (like early stage clinical trials).

### **3.4 Making Decisions Ethically**

- Just like with the 4 validities we discussed, there is no one, clear way to \_\_\_\_\_ all the ethical considerations a researcher must make.
  - The Belmont Report and APA Ethical Code are good starting points, and universities should have Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) office, as well as IRB(s). Most organizations \_\_\_\_\_ the completion of ethics certifications programs through the CITI program, prior to being part of formal research teams.
  - Ethical decision-making will combine with what we've learned about crafting and evaluating claims so that we can \_\_\_\_\_ balance the many components of a good research project. Your research proposal and will need to \_\_\_\_\_ ethical concerns around research, in addition to the already established validities and claim types.
-