Ethics in Psychological Science

Week 4

Ethics

Ethics – people should be treated as ends, not means

Ethical Responsibilities in Research

Two basic categories of ethical concerns:

- Need to consider the rights of our participants in our research
- Need to behave ethically as scientists and practitioners

Ethical Responsibilities in Research

Consider ethics at each step:

- What measurement techniques will be used?
- How are participants selected?
- What methods may be used on the participant population?
- What design is appropriate?
- How are the data analyzed?
- How are the results reported?

Using humans in research

For the most part, the researcher has the power

- You know what is going to be done to the participants
- Participants may feel like they have to do it

Monitoring of ethics

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Criteria

- Minimize risk
- Benefits $>$ risk
- Equal opportunity sampling
- Informed consent
- Documentation of consent
- Data monitoring
- Privacy and confidentiality

IRB protocol hints

There are two key things to remember when you complete a protocol:

- Purpose section must explain *why* you are wanting to put people through your experiment
  - Don't put "To complete my thesis" or something similar!
  - Best to appeal to how your thesis attempts to solve some problem from the literature
- Procedure section must be very explicit; list all events (in chronological order) that will be experienced by participants

APA Code of Ethics

- Respect for persons
  - Basic courtesy
  - Informed consent
  - Debriefing
  - Avoid deception
- Beneficience
  - Protection from harm
  - Cost/benefits analysis
  - Confidentiality
- Justice
  - Freedom from coercion

Informed consent

Information to allow a person to decide if they want to participate

- Basic purpose of the study
- Participation is voluntary
- Risks involved
- Benefits involved
- Rights to refuse or terminate participation
- Assent - desire to participate even when consent cannot be obtained
  - Children
  - Developmentally disabled people

Using deception in research

Passive vs. active deception

- Passive deception – withholding information about the study
- Active deception – deliberately misleading participants

Using deception in research

Avoid it when possible

- Alternatives: role playing

When not possible to avoid

- Make sure you are up front with all possible risks
- Potential results must be worth it
- Must debrief participants as soon as possible

Cost/Benefits analysis

Costs: all potential risks to the participants

- Physical harm
- Psychological harm
- Loss of confidentiality

Benefits: the "good" outcomes

- Direct benefits to participants
- Benefits to knowledge base
- Benefits to world at large

Scientific Integrity

"You are completely free to carry out whatever research you want, so long as you come to these conclusions."

Scientific Integrity

Fraud prevention

- *Replication* – repeat a research study to validate results
- *Peer review* – critical analysis of research by peers in the same area
- *Plagiarism* – taking credit for another's work or ideas
  - Avoid this by citing the ideas or words of others

Ethics in Science Quiz

Rules:

- **Dirty tricks** (DT) – these will get you thrown out
- **Questionable tricks** (QT) – these are a little fuzzier, but be wary
- **Neat tricks** (NT) – accepted as OK, and sometimes necessary

Ethics in Science Quiz

1. Fabrication of results DT
2. Little or no attempt to minimize demand biases QT
3. Reformulating your theory as you go NT
4. Falsifying credentials DT
5. Plagiarism DT
6. Little or no attempt to minimize confounds QT
7. Deliberately hiding (significant) errors in published work DT
8. Throwing out data QT or DT – depends on reason
9. Violations of underlying statistical assumptions QT
10. Strategic graphing of data QT
11. Duplicate publications (presented as new) DT
12. Selective reporting of results QT