



SHERIDAN
INSTITUTE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

RS292 Research Methods

Research Ethics

Lecturer: Dr Maya Krayneva

Textbook: Gray, D. (2018). *Doing research in the real world*. (4th ed.). Los Angeles: Sage.



Integrity

“Integrity is doing the right thing
even when no one is watching.”

C.S. Lewis

Ethical dilemma

- Baby Jake (critically ill)
- Florence the monkey (can save Jake's life, but will have to die)
- Mom Maggie (wants to save Jake's life)
- Dad Steve (animal rights activist)
- Sister Amber, 12 (animal rights activist)
- Sister Chloe, 8 (wants to save Jake's life)
- New medicine that does not use animals will take another 6 months to be ready



What Do We Mean by Ethics?

Greek word *ethos*:
character or custom

- The appropriateness of *researcher's behaviour in relation to the subjects of the research or those affected by it.*

The moral principles
guiding research

Growth of Ethical Practice Codes

Second World War evidence about Nazi experiments on concentration camp victims

→ Nuremberg Code (1947): set out ten standards to which those conducting human experiments must adhere

(see Table 4.2, p. 72)

Growth of Ethical Practice Codes

→ Declaration of Helsinki: sought to balance the **interests of research subjects** with the **need for scientific research**

Like the natural and medical sciences, the social-sciences are also capable of producing risk-generating endeavors.

Focus of Ethics

- Research involving **vulnerable groups**
- Research involving **sensitive topics**
- Research where subjects can only be accessed via a **gatekeeper** (e.g. ethnic or cultural group)
- Research involving an element of **deception** (e.g. covert observation without participant's consent)
- Research involving access to **confidential** records or information
- Research that would lead to **stress, anxiety or humiliation** among target groups
- Research involving **intrusive strategies** that people would not normally meet in their everyday lives (e.g. administration of drugs)



Ethical Principles



1. Avoid **harm** to participants (physical, mental, emotional)
2. Ensure informed **consent** of participants (participants provided with sufficient and accessible information about a project so they can make an informed decisions as to whether to become involved or not; avoid complex, theoretical language and jargon)
3. Respect the **privacy** of participants (researchers don't intrude into a respondent's personal affairs; respondents have the right to withdraw from an interview or refuse to answer any question)
 - ❖ **Anonymity** and **confidentiality** (ways of collecting, storing and securing the data)
4. Avoid the use of **deception** (researchers don't represent their research as something which is not)

Tuskegee Syphilis Study (1932 – 1972)

- Denying treatment to 400 impoverished rural African American men suffering from syphilis to study the full progression of the disease
- Babbie, p. 63



Image source: https://www.socialworker.com/feature-articles/ethics-articles/The_Tuskegee_Syphilis_Study_and_Its_Implications_for_the_21st_Century/

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Milgram experiment
(1961, 1963 (journal article), 1974 (book))

- Observing human obedience to authority;
- Participants were assigned job of 'teacher' while both 'experimenter' and 'learner' were undercover researchers.
- Gray, p. 73



Exxon Valdez Oil Spill in Alaska (March 1989)

- The impact on resident families → 22 communities sued Exxon
 - A research firm interviewed under the guarantee of absolute confidentiality
- Subpoena by Exxon to turn over the research data and cross-examine the interviewees
- Babbie, p. 66



Image source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exxon_Valdez_oil_spill

Stanford Prison Experiment (1971)

- Students assigned as prisoners or prison guards
- Exhibiting serious sadism; Suffering psychological damage as a result; Participants requiring counselling afterwards
- Gray, p. 81



Image source: <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/06/20/new-stanford-prison-experiment-revelations-question-findings>

Ethical Issues in Research: Analysis and Reporting

- Ethical obligation to colleagues in the scientific community.
- All results must be reported (positive and negative).
- All limitations must be admitted.





Ethics and the Internet

- Sampling may be skewed or unrepresentative: certain social or racial **groups being under-represented** in terms of Internet usage
- Data may not be protected: interviewers can never be sure that comments given by respondents are not accessed and viewed by **computer hackers**
- Participants may not be authentic: some respondents might **fake or alter their identities**, personalities or roles
- See Table 4.6, p. 89

Australian National Statement on
Ethical Conduct in Human Research

Discuss Table 4.7, p. 92 & Table 4.8, p. 93

Putting Ethics into Practice

- Write a **proposal** to be evaluated by the Ethics Committee
- Get written **approval** from research sites (e.g. from the organization's head office)
- Communicate with subjects and participants to explain the project and elicit cooperation (e.g. letters, participants **information sheets**)
- Issue **consent forms**
- Identify any possible harm and take steps to alleviate it

See "Sheridan Research Consent Form" and "Sheridan Research Ethics Obligations Form for an Undergraduate Minor Research Project" on Canvas

Homework



READ SAUNDERS ET AL,
CHAPTER 7 (ON CANVAS)



LITERATURE REVIEW
(ASSESSMENT 1) DUE FRIDAY
5PM WEEK 5



TOPIC WEEK 6:
CHOOSING PARTICIPANTS