

Lab Exercise 1: Ethics in Behavioral Research

Prior to the meeting of your section, prepare brief written responses for each of the following cases. Bring these to the section meeting.

Case 1. An investigator wants to explore variables affecting stress. He proposes to ask students from the Psychology Department subject pool to take part in an anagram task, which involves making words from scrambled letters.

Students will be asked to participate in pairs, one member of whom is randomly chosen as the Experimental Subject and the other is the Control. The Experimental subject is told that solving anagrams is a measure of intelligence (IQ). The Control subject is told that the task has nothing to do with IQ. Unknown to the subjects, the version of the anagram task given to the Experimental subject is always more difficult than that given to the Control subject. This ensures that the Control subject scores more points. The experimenter measures the blood pressure of Experimental and Control subjects before and after each anagram competition.

Question. What APA ethical principles are most relevant to this proposal? Be sure to address the following principles: risk, informed consent, deception, and privacy.

On a scale from 1 (low) to 10 (high), rate (a) the costs or risks to the participants: **and** rate (b) the potential benefits from the study.

Make your decision based on the information provided; don't assume that procedures not described are part of the research design. (Adapted from Zechmeister & Shaughnessy)

Case 2. **Question.** As a member of the UCD Institutional Review Board (IRB), how would you evaluate the following proposal?

Topic: Response of Cell Phone Users to an Invasion of Personal Space.

Subjects: 50 people in public locations using cell phones.
Investigator: A UCD graduate student in psychology with a faculty sponsor.

Method. 25 cell phone users (randomly selected from the total of 50) would have their space invaded, i.e. the student would sit within two feet of the user. For the remaining users, the student would remain over 6 feet away. In each case, the student would time how long the user remained in the same location and note shifts in body orientation.

On a scale from 1 (low) to 10 (high), rate (a) the costs or risks to the participants: **and** rate (b) the potential benefits from the study.

Make your decision based on the information provided; don't assume that procedures not described are part of the research design.

Case 3. Alice, a UCD undergraduate with a faculty sponsor, proposes to study bike injuries in Davis, using records at the UCD Health Center and the Davis Police Department.

Questions:

- a. Whose permission should Alice obtain before beginning the study?
- b. If the study is approved, what information should the Davis Police Dept. & the UCD Health Center release to Alice?
- c. If the study is approved, what safeguards should be established to protect the privacy of people named in the records?
- d. Are there conditions that should be established regarding publication of the findings?

On a scale from 1 (low) to 10 (high), rate (a) the costs or risks to the participants: **and** rate (b) the potential benefits from the study.