

Ethical Principles of Psychology

You are working on a research project designed to determine what factors affect long-term memory in mice. Because mice and humans learn in much the same way, you hope the knowledge gained from your experiment can be used to help individuals with memory problems. The mice are all well cared for and kept in cages in a pleasant, well-lit room. At the end of the experiment, the mice will be put to sleep by being placed in a jar filled with poisonous gas.

- Do you think it is ethical to use animals in such an experiment?
- Would you feel differently if larger animals, such as dogs, were used instead of mice?

Ethical Questions in Research

1. What right does a researcher have to expose subjects to such stress?
2. What activities should be or not be allowed in marketing research?
3. Does the search for knowledge always justify such "costs" to subjects?
4. Who should decide such issues?

Deception

- Deception has been fairly common in psychological research since the 1960s, especially in the area of social psychology (ex: Asch's line study)
- Deception is used to reduce problems associated with the placebo effect

Animal Research

- Do the laws of behavior apply to both humans and animals?
- Animals are sometimes exposed to treatments that would be “unthinkable” to perform on humans



Famously Unethical Experiment

- Project MK-ULTRA: The CIA's Program of Research in Behavioral Modification
- The Stanford Prison Experiment
- Aversion Therapy for Curing Homosexuality
- The Monster Study
- Little Albert

Guidelines for Ethical Research

- In 1979, the federal government developed regulations of ethical principals underlying the current regulations and standards that are contained in the **Belmont Report**
- It outlines the ethical principals upon which the ethics of a research study are evaluated in the United States and embodies the moral consensus upon which stand our present US Federal regulations governing the ethics of human subjects research.
- the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was formed to protect the rights and welfare of individual research subjects.

Experiment Safeguards

The IRB assure that the following requirements are satisfied:

1. risk to subjects are minimized
2. risk to subjects are reasonable in relation to anticipated benefits
3. selection of subjects is equitable, i.e. fair
4. informed consent is sought form each subject or his/her legally authorized representative,

Experiment Safeguards

5. informed consent is appropriately documented
6. when appropriate, the research plan makes provisions for monitoring data collection
7. privacy and confidentiality of research subjects is appropriately protected
8. when some or all of the subjects are likely to be vulnerable to coercion or undue influence, additional safeguards have been included