

Research Methods (HDFS 3390), Alan Reifman, Texas Tech University

Research Ethics

Principle

Voluntary participation

- Informed consent (in writing)
- Freedom to withdraw without penalty

Protection against harm

- If possibility of harm, must be outweighed by benefit

Privacy

- *Anonymity* (no name or other identifying info)
- *Confidentiality* (researcher has identifying info, but will not disclose it)

Some social-psychological experiments use **deception**, because you could not observe participants' **spontaneous** behavior if they knew the real purpose of the study. However, deception can make it **difficult to uphold** some of the above principles (e.g., how can the researcher obtain informed consent when the participant is not given full, accurate information?). This [document](#) reviews guidelines for using deception.

Three Historic Behavioral Research Studies Raising Ethical Concerns

Study	Resources
Conformity (Asch)	Summary (here and here), Video
Obedience to Authority (Milgram)	Summary (here and here), Video
Prison Simulation (Zimbardo/Stanford)	Summary , Video

As you watch the videos, think about the deception of participants in the line-judging and teacher-learner "shock" experiments.

- How do you weigh the deception against the claim that the experiments couldn't have been done if participants knew their real purposes?
- In all the studies, think of the apparent harm done to participants (stress, anxiety, hostility, etc.). How do you balance this harm against the knowledge obtained from the studies?

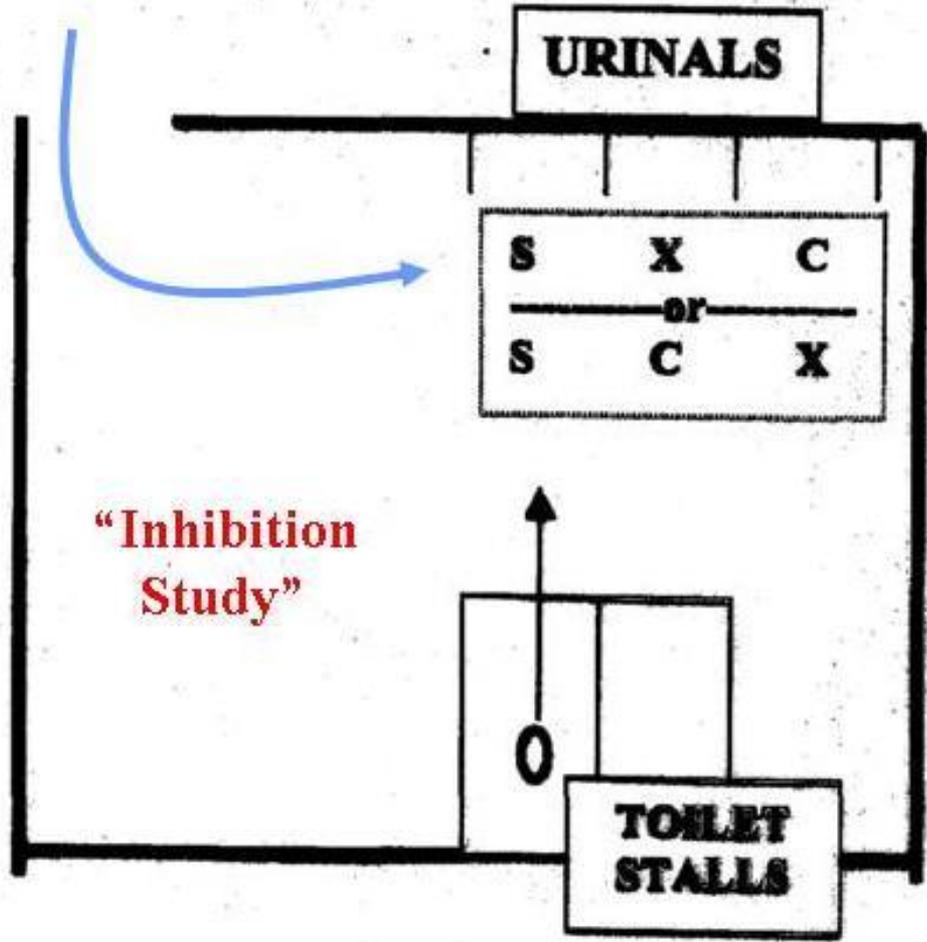
Further Resources and Examples on Research Ethics

- [American Psychological Association Guidelines](#) (contains ethical standards for therapy practice, as well as research)
- [American Association for Public Opinion Research](#) (for public opinion pollsters)
- Texas Tech's [Human Research Protection Program](#), which handles Human Subjects approvals
- Research with Minors
 - [“The Challenges of Conducting Surveys of Youth”](#) (Pew Research, 2013)
 - TTU guidelines of parental consent and minors’ assent, proposals reviewed by two committee members instead of the usual one
- Biomedical examples
 - Tuskegee Syphilis Study ([here](#) and [here](#))
 - *USA Today* article on the [controversy](#) over survey asking participants to report on other family members' medical histories (issue is that these family members had **not consented** to this info being disclosed)
 - Heart-wrenching [article](#) on the ethics and scientific rationale of randomized placebo studies (i.e., where half the participants with a serious disease receive a sugar pill instead of actual medicine).
 - Article on [early termination of federal hormone-replacement study](#) because a comparison of disease incidence in women receiving hormones versus placebo revealed that, "**on balance the harm was greater than the benefit.**"

Class Activity

- Each group gets a published study.
- One person should read the methods section to the other members (or you can all read them on your phones).
- Group should then discuss the study to determine the **costs** and **benefits** of it, and whether they would find the study ethically acceptable. It is OK to conclude that you would approve a study only if parts of it were changed.
- Each group then presents back to the rest of the class (brief summary of what study did, benefits vs. harms, group's conclusion on whether or not to approve).
- **Articles to discuss (can obtain from TTU Library or from Dr. Reifman)**
 - Grunberg, N. E., & Straub, R. O. (1992) The role of gender and taste class in the effects of stress on eating. *Health Psychology, 11*, 97–100.
 - Liebert, R. M., & Baron, R. A. (1972). Some immediate effects of televised violence on children's behavior. *Developmental Psychology, 6*, 469-475.
 - Middlemist, R., Knowles, E., & Matter, C. (1976, May). Personal space invasions in the lavatory: Suggestive evidence for arousal. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 33*, 541-546.
 - Shotland, R. L., & Heinold, W. D. (1985). Bystander response to arterial bleeding: Helping skills, the decision-making process, and differentiating the helping response. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 49*, 347–356.
 - Stringer, D. (2001, February). "A piece of meat": One man's odyssey at the U-M Anxiety Clinic. *Ann Arbor Observer*. pp. 33, 35.
- **Websites to supplement the stress and eating article ([here](#) and [here](#)).**
- **Diagrams to help visualize two other experiments on following slides.**

Ordinary male
walks into bathroom



S = Subject

C = Confederate

X = "Do Not Use" Sign

O = Observer (Unknown to Subject)

