Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Ethics in Psychological Research reading guide

CHECKING THE ESSENTIALS-Use the reading to answer the questions below. (if more room is needed, please attach additional piece(s) of paper)

**1.** When should a researcher consult with the proper authorities about the appropriate procedure for institutional review of a research project?

**2.** What role does the risk/benefit ratio play when an Institutional Review Board (IRB) considers a research proposal?

**3.** Describe how researchers should treat the information obtained from participants in their research in order to protect the participants from social injury.

**4.** Under what conditions is it absolutely essential to obtain written informed consent from the participants in a research study?

**5.** Identify and briefly describe the three major dimensions that researchers should consider in deciding what information is private.

**6.** What three elements should be included in the debriefing that follows a research study in which deception has been used?

**7.** Under what conditions is it *always* unethical to deceive research participants?

**8.** Explain how the use of debriefing is beneficial for both the participant and the researcher.

**9.** When trying to learn participants’ perceptions of the experiment, what type of questions should a researcher/investigator ask? Why should these types of questions be used?

**10.** Summarize & explain the steps for ethical decision making.

**Minimal risk**

For each of the following research situations;

(A)Explain whether you think only “minimal risk” (i.e., risk not greater than that of everyday life) is present, or is more than minimal risk present? Explain your decision.

If you determine that more than minimal risk is present, then participants are judged to be at risk, and you should:

(B)Think of safeguards researchers could use to reduce risk.

1. College students complete an adjective checklist describing their current mood. The researcher seeks to identify depressed students so that they can be included in a study examining cognitive deficits associated with depression.

A-

B-

1. A psychologist administers a battery of achievement tests to elderly adults in the dayroom at their nursing home. The psychologist seeks to determine if there is a decline in mental functioning with advancing age.

A-

B-

1. Students in a psychology research methods class see another student enter their class room in the middle of the class period, speak loudly and angrily with the instructor, and then leave. As part of a study of eyewitness behavior, the students are then asked to describe the intruder.

A-

B-

1. A researcher recruits students from introductory psychology classes to participate in a study of the effects of alcohol on cognitive functioning. The experiment requires that some students drink 2 ounces of alcohol (mixed with orange juice) before performing a computer game.

A-

B-

**Informed consent: what do you think**

Although the APA Code of Ethics suggests that informed consent is not necessarily required in studies involving naturalistic observation of public behavior or “similar research”

deciding what is public is not always easy. Consider the following research scenarios and

(A)Explain whether you think the participants’ informed consent should be required or not.

(B)You might feel like you need more information from the researcher. If so, explain what additional information might you want before deciding.

1. In a study of the drinking behavior of college students, an undergraduate working for a faculty member attends a fraternity party and records the amount drunk by other students at the party.

A-

B-

1. As part of a study of the gay community, a gay researcher joins a gay baseball team with the goal of recording behaviors of the participants in the context of team competition during the season. (All games are played outdoors and may be watched by the public.)

A-

B-

1. The public bathroom behavior (e.g., flushing, hand washing, littering, graffiti writing, etc.) of men and women is observed by male and female researchers concealed in the stalls of the respective washrooms.

A-

B-

1. A graduate student investigates the cheating behaviors of college students by concealing himself in a projection booth in an auditorium during an exam. From his vantage point, he can see with the aid of binoculars the movements of most students. He records head movements, paper switching, note passing, and other suspicious exam behaviors

A-

B-

DEALING WITH ETHICAL ISSUES

For each ethical issue in the top chart, identify the correct way to deal with an issue, or the limitations on the way psychologists have to handle the ethical issue (or both, as the case maybe)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Issue** | **How to deal with it** | **Limitations** |
| **Informed consent** | Participants are asked to formally agree to take part in a study (usually with a consent form) after being given comprehensive information about the nature and purpose of the study, and their role in it. |  |
| **Right to withdraw** |  | Participants may feel like they cannot leave as they don’t want to spoil the study. |
| **Deception** |  |  |
| **Risk** | Studies should be designed so that participants come to no more harm than they would do in their day to day lives. |  |
| **Confidentiality** | Researchers should use fake names or numbers instead of participant names. |  |
| **Privacy** |  | There is no universal agreement on what a public place is. Some people may still object to being observed in public. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Researchers cannot always predict any potential harm that may occur until it happens, by which point it is too late. | Sometimes it may be possible to work out who participants were on the basis of information contained in the study (geographical location for example) |
| Researchers make it clear that participants are free to leave at any time during a study. If participants are being paid, they will still receive payment even if they withdraw | If a participant has suffered stress or anxiety during a study due to deception, a debrief may not undo the damage which has already been done. |
| Gain prior consent for observations where appropriate. Observations in public places are generally ok. However retrospective consent should be sought. | If participants are given too much information, it may invalidate the results of the study. Participants may agree to take part in the study, but still not completely understand what they have let themselves in for. |
| If participants are deceived, they should be fully **debriefed** after the study. This is a short interview after where participants are told the full aims of the study and are given the opportunity to ask questions |