Ethics in Research

BUS 230: Business Research and Communication

Goals and Learning Objectives

- Goals of this chapter:
  - Learn how to ethically conduct research using human participants.
  - Learn how to ethically conduct research methods.
  - Learn how to ethically report research results.
- Learning objective: LO2.A: Recognize the ethical responsibilities of conducting human subjects research.

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Informed Consent

- **Informed Consent:** *Informing* potential participants about your research project, then asking them for their written consent to use them for research.
- An informed consent form should include all of the following:
  1. Statement of the purpose of the research.
  2. Description of how the information will be collected from the subjects.
  3. A description of the risks involved, and proper assurances against risks if appropriate.
  4. Possible benefits from participating in the research.
- Informed consent is not simply a legal maneuver.
  - Allow questions and discussion any time.
  - Allow person to discontinue participation at any time.

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- Every project involving human subject poses risks, even if risk is minimal.
- **Minimal risk:** Minimal risk means that the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.

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Risks

- Informed consent should describe all risks, and steps that have been taken, or could be taken by the researcher to mitigate risks.
- Confidentiality: treat all information collected from individuals confidentially.
  - Do not report enough information on a single individual that might allow someone to figure out the identity of the participant.
  - Do not suggest participation is anonymous.
- Treat subgroups (age groups, race and ethnicity groups, gender) fairly in allocating risk
  - Be sure sample is representative of population.

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Benefits

- Describe any benefits in participating in the research.
- Does the act of participating yield any benefits?
- Might the findings from the research benefit the participants? Inform them of the findings afterward.
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- NIH: Payments for participating should not be viewed as benefits.
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Deliberately Fooling Subjects

- Sometimes the research design requires deliberately keeping information away from the human subjects.
- Sometimes, being too specific about the purpose of the research project will alter the answers participants give to survey questions.
- **Placebo:** something that appears to be a treatment applied to the participant, but in actuality does nothing.
  - **Placebo effect:** it has been documented, that often times simply receiving a placebo causes a change in an outcome variable.
- Informed consent: participants should be told the chances they will be receiving a placebo versus the actual treatment.
- Lying to participants: taste of organic fair-trade coffee.
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Ethical Methodology and Reporting

- Multiple ways to measure?
  - Are there multiple variables that measure the same item of interest?
  - Are there multiple ways of estimating cause and effect?
  - Conduct and report all of them! Not just the results that "look good."
- Questionnaires
  - Carefully consider wording.
  - Consider multiple questions with different wording.
- Report all results.
  - Even those that suggest criticisms of your managers or your audience.
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Drawing Conclusions

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- Use confidence intervals to report on the size of an effect.
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In-class Exercise / Homework Assignment

- This is an individual assignment, each person must complete it.
- You can work collaboratively with your group members.
- Go to http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php to complete the National Institute of Health (NIH) course on *Protecting Human Research Participants* (PHRP).
- At the end, you will be able to print out an official NIH PHRP certificate. Print to a PDF (can do this on campus), and upload to D2L dropbox.
- This is something that can go on your resume!