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Examining correlates of research participant's attitudes and ethicality ratings of deception studies

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Key Concept

- To explore how attitudes about deception research and styles of ethical decision making are related to the perceived ethicality of deception studies.

Overview of Presentation

- Background of ethicality studies and examination of the purpose of deception in research
- Present research question
- Methods used to assess ethicality and selection of participants
- Analysis of future results
- Summary
- Future research

What is deception and why do we use it?

- Intentionally omitting information or misleading the participant to obtain accurate responses.
- Need to keep participants as accurately informed as possible.
- Certain information may change the responses, which could confound result and distort results.
- Necessary because it is sometimes only the way to get an accurate response from a participant. (Ex. Milgram Study)

Method

Participants

- 212 volunteer psychology subject pool participants
- 108 male, 103 female, 1 transgender
- 182 Caucasian, 14 Black/African American, 5 Latino, 5 Multiracial
- Ages 18-38

Procedure

- Participants were obtained using the SONA sign-up system
- Received research credits as compensation
- Provided with a general overview of study, informed consent document, and an online link to the survey questions
- Participants responses were anonymous
- IRB certified

Procedure

- Participants filled out the following information:
- Demographic Information (Age, race, etc.)
- Social Desirability Scale
- Ethics Positions Questionnaire (EPQ)

Measure

- Participants presented with 12 vignettes used in deception studies taken from published studies.
- Used a scale of 0-10 in terms of perceived ethicality (0=definitely unethical, 10=definitely ethical) applied to each of the 12 vignettes.
- Scores of 0-4 were rated as unethical, scores 6-10 were rated as ethical. Scores of 5 were omitted.
- Participants also replied to yes-no sample indicating if they would participate in the study.

Sample Vignettes

- The Boring Task (Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959). Subjects complete boring task. Just before “dismissed” from experiment, subjects were asked for \$1 or \$20 to tell next waiting subject (interviewer) that the task was interesting. Attitudes toward task measured by interviewer.
- Conformity (Asch, 1955). Subjects in a group with confederates viewed three lines and reported which was longest. Went last in group. Answer was obvious, but confederates all reported incorrect line. Subject correct judgment or following judgment recorded.
- The Electrician (Clark & Word, 1974). Subjects, alone or in groups, think they are leaving finished study. Confederate technician appears to be heavily shocked and falls to floor. Reactions noted.
- Obedience (Milgram, 1963). Experimenter orders subject to give high voltage shocks to confederate “learner” when questions are missed. Shocks not really being received. Subject obedience recorded.

Measure

- The Ethics Position Questionnaire (EPQ) is two 10-item scales used to measure the participants degree of idealism and relativism in their ethical ideology.
- Idealism- Doing the right thing will lead to ideal results.
- Relativism- Social and cultural cues determine what's right
- Questions rated on an 11 point scale (0=Strongly Disagree 10=Strongly Agree).
- Main goal is to show the process of ethical decision making.

Sample Results

Study-Vignette	M	SD	Percent Ethical	Percent Unethical	% willing to participate
The Boring Task(1959)	7.13	2.36	77.4	22.6	84.91
Conformity (Asch, 1955)	8.04	2.03	82.2	11.8	89.62
The Electrician (Clark & Word)	5.84	2.54	56.6	43.4	73.11
Obedience (Milgram, 1963)	4.36	2.90	36.3	63.7	39.62

Implications/ Future research

- Provides a historical view of deception in psychological research.
- Could generate further discussion about the use of deception in research.
- In a classroom setting, could stimulate discussion among students about ethicality in research.

Other Research

- Aschelman, P. L. (2012). *Ethical Judgments of Deception in Psychological Research* Doctoral dissertation, Iowa State University, Ames

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