

A researcher is interested in studying the development of social status and friendship in elementary school age children. She has presented a study in which she asks children in 3 different grades to name the popular and the unpopular children in their class and to rank order their classmates according to how well they are liked (among other measures).

One IRB member has raised concerns about the effects on the unpopular children of being labeled as such by their classmates (knowing that children will talk to each other afterwards). What other ethical concerns might be raised regarding this study? What suggestions can you offer to deal with concerns raised? Outline what you see are the risks and benefits of this research.

A researcher is interested in studying the phenomenon of catastrophic events in Alzheimer's patients. These are sudden, somewhat unpredictable, physical and emotional outbursts that have potential for harm to patients and staff in nursing home facilities. The researcher has an hypothesis that these events might be related to pre-morbid (before the disease onset) personality characteristics. In addition to monitoring and recording catastrophic events, the researcher proposes to interview and administer personality tests to Alzheimer's patients living in a nursing home, review prior history records for the research subjects kept by the nursing facility, and interview family members.

The nursing home administrators are concerned about opening their records to strangers (researchers are strange). They have expressed other concerns also. What do you think are some of these ethical concerns? What suggestions can you offer to deal with the concerns raised? Outline what you see are the risks and benefits of this research.

A researcher is studying attachment in 11 month old infants. She wants to look at the relationship between attachment and level of education and socioeconomic status of the parents. She plans to use the standard Ainsworth attachment paradigm in her research. This paradigm, "The Strange Situation", involves 8, 3 minute episodes in which the mother and baby and a "stranger" (research assistant) are alternately in and out of a play room. The entire session is videotaped for later data coding and analysis.

One IRB member is concerned about the episodes in which the mother leaves the baby, particularly when the baby is left alone for three minutes followed by 3 minutes with the "stranger". She admits that her baby would cry hysterically upon her leaving the room, would be very upset with a stranger, and wouldn't settle down until her return and even then, only after some time. Address these and any other ethical concerns of this research. What suggestions can you offer to deal with the concerns raised? Outline what you see are the risks and benefits of this research.

A researcher has discovered a new drug to treat Parkinson's Disease. This drug seems to slow down or possibly even prevent the progressive, irreversible, motor decline associated with the disease, in rats. It may also allay some of the cognitive decline associated with this disease. The researcher proposes to do a controlled drug study with people who have the disease, including appropriate control groups (1 who gets a placebo and 1 group who gets nothing but is tested and monitored).

Many concerns are raised in the IRB meeting on this study. Discuss the ethical concerns you think are, or should be, raised. What suggestions can you offer to deal with the concerns raised? Outline what you see are the risks and benefits of this research.

There is a lot of research discussing the importance of touch or physical contact to many measures of psychological and physiological health. One researcher suggests that this is a particularly important issue with potential impact on the care of premature and very sick infants. She hypothesizes that premature infants and infants born with AIDS will show more medical improvement and will show it faster if they are held for a certain amount of time each day. She is proposing a study in which different amounts of holding time will be manipulated (none, 10 min/day, 1 hr/day, 3 hr/day) and medical progress of the infants will be monitored. She plans to use premature infants and infants diagnosed at birth with AIDS.

The IRB has some concerns about this study. What might these be? What suggestions can you offer to deal with the concerns raised? Outline what you see are the risks and benefits of this research.

A researcher at a college in a small town is interested in looking at certain aspects of emotional development in children who have been physically and emotionally abused. He is interested in looking at development over a 2-3 year period. He proposes a longitudinal study in which he will interview and administer tests, every 4 months, to a group of children who have been identified as having been emotionally abused, a group who has been identified as having been physically abused and a control group who has experienced no abuse.

The IRB at this small college is very concerned about a number of ethical issues, while recognizing the merit of the research. What suggestions can you offer to deal with the concerns raised? Outline what you see are the risks and benefits of this research.

A researcher has proposed a study to examine homosexual encounters of men in public restrooms. In this study, the researcher will pose as a lookout who keeps watch for the police or strangers entering the restroom while observing sexual acts. Though the men will be unaware that they are being studied, the investigator will ask questions of some of the men and record their license plate numbers. With this information he will locate their names and addresses and later, go to their home residence posing as a health service worker and request information regarding their family, occupation, and social life.

Discuss the ethical concerns you think are, or should be, raised. What suggestions can you offer to deal with the concerns raised? Outline what you see are the risks and benefits of this research.

A researcher is interested in the kinds of self-attributions people make about their own behavior and how those attributions govern behavior. She proposes a study in which college students will be brought into a small seminar room for testing during which they will be unknowingly videotaped. The experimenter will tell them that they will be given several intelligence tests -- the better they do the greater the amount of credit they will receive for participation. Although the questions on the test will be extremely difficult, half the subjects will be told not to worry about the difficulty because the questions were devised for potential members of Mensa (an elite group of people with high IQs). The other half of the students will be told that the test is a new version of a test to be used for admission to college. After scoring the test, the researcher will assess how students attribute their failures and success. For a second aspect of the study, students will be made aware that the scoring manual for the test is in a book case in the testing room. The number of students in each group who cheat will be determined.

Suppose you are on the IRB for this study. What would you say are the ethical aspects of this research? What would you recommend this investigator do to address your concerns? Outline what you see are the risks and benefits of this research.