

# Ethics in psychology on 3 famous experiments listed below

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Ethics in Psychology Experiments American Psychological Association, commonly abbreviated as APA, adopts certain ethical guidelines in psychology experiments. Failure to align one's professional undertakings with these ethical guidelines may result in legal action for unethical conduct. In the past, certain psychological experiments have blatantly violated the APA's Ethics Code. Example of such experiments include, but not limited to; the Milgram Obedience Experiment, the Blue Eyes and Brown Eyes Experiment, and the Little Albert Experiment.

After watching the Obedience to Authority video of Milgram's Experiment, it emerges that there was lack of informed consent among the experiment's subjects. APA's Ethical Code asserts that participants of any psychological experiment must possess accurate description of an experiments risks and outcomes prior to an experiment (Lindsey and Smith 17). However, Milgram subjected his participants into stressful situations without informing them. With respect to John Watson's Little Albert Experiment, it emerges that the experiment caused psychological harm to the subject. Actually, the boy developed an artificial fear of rats and furry animals. APA asserts that psychological experiments should safeguard both the physical and psychological welfare of participants, thus the resultant phobia in Wanton's experiment was an outright violation of APA's ethical guidelines (Lindsey and Smith 20). Finally, Elliott's Blue Eyes and Brown Eyes experiment instilled self-contempt on white children. In an effort to discourage racism, Elliott made white children in the experiment to believe that dark-skinned brown-eyed students where smarter and better than white-skinned blue-eyed students. This kind of misinformation is prohibited by APA code of ethics, and

amounts to lying.

Undeniably, psychology experiments are not surgical procedures. Adherence to all ethical guidelines is not only almost impractical but also compromises on objectivity of results. Therefore, potential harms caused by violation of certain ethical guidelines are often offset by the benefits of an experiment's results. For example, Milgram's Obedience Experiment is paramount in predicting the behavior of persons under authority. In Milgram's experiment, situational stress complemented with lack of informed consent was the only means of safeguarding reliability of the findings. With respect to Watson's Little Albert Experiment, artificial phobia on the subject was an inevitable outcome of the experiment. In this case, the benefits of learning phobia development outweighed the inevitable effect of the experiment on the little boy. Finally, Elliott's experiment involved a substantial amount of deception. However, the noble purpose of her experiment outweighed the explicit harm of self-contempt among her subject (Lindsey and Smith 35). In this regard, strict adherence to all ethical principles will cripple the benefits of research and experiments in psychology; hence the need to disregard some codes. In case I was to replicate the three experiments, I would employ specific practices in order to safeguard ethical standards advocated for by APA. In Milgram's experiment, I would provide compensation for any psychological harm experienced by subjects. APA upholds the need for compensation whenever an experiment's subjects are implicitly or explicitly harmed (Lindsey and Smith 28). With respect to the Little Albert Experiment, the participant should have been sourced through volunteer means. In this case, I would ask literate and informed parents to willingly present their child for

the experiment, being fully aware of the depth and breadth of the experiment's effects. Such cases involving voluntary selection of participants coupled with advanced informed consent are favored by APA. Finally, I would source community consent prior to performing Elliott's experiment. Before deceiving minor participants, I would secure communal consciousness on the importance of the research in furthering education and welfare in the community.

#### Work Cited

Lindsey, Weather and Smith, Bart. Ethical Guidelines: Research Methods for the Behavioral and Social Sciences. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, 2010. Print.