



Ver. # 2.0 Effective Date: Apr 2 2014 Last updated: Aug 24 2021	Use of Deception in Research	Supersedes Previous Ver.: Yes
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I. Policy Statement

It is the policy of Ball State University’s (BSU) IRB that all research be conducted in accordance with the tenets of the Belmont Report. This includes maintaining the highest ethical standards and full respect for persons participating in human subjects research.

The use of deception in research poses significant ethical issues and risks to research participants. At the same time, the IRB recognizes that there are times when specific instances where it may be allowable to obtain reliable data.

If deception is to be used in research, then the principal investigator (PI) and the research team must take all due precautions to protect the safety and welfare of the participants and ensure the proper security of the research data and results.

II. Operational Definition(s)

Deception in Research: Deliberately omitting, misleading, or disguising information to research participants, through actions or words, for the purpose of collecting information that would not otherwise be able to be obtained.

Deception study/Deception protocol: Any research protocol that involves deception in research.

Debriefing: Information about the research that is provided to participants after study completion. A debriefing is used to provide important information about the nature of the research and additional information for educational purposes. Debriefing is required when the research involves deception or incomplete disclosure. Debriefing explains any deception or incomplete disclosure, provides information about why it was necessary to use deception or incomplete disclosure to conduct the research, and provides an option to withdraw to participants.

III. Procedures

1. All protocols involving deception in research will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Each deception protocol will be evaluated according to its scientific merits, adequacy of protections and safeguards for the participants and their information, viability of other options for obtaining the necessary data, and in consideration of the tenets of the Belmont Report.
2. No use of deception will be permitted if the deception itself is greater than minimal risk or creates a greater than minimal risk situation.

3. When submitting a deception study, the principal investigator (PI) must explain in clear terms:
 - Why the deception is necessary and why the data could not be obtained without the use of deception;
 - Why pursuit of the research question is essential;
 - Explain why other data collections options are not viable; and
 - What safeguards and protections will be utilized to minimize any negative impact.
4. PI must have a debriefing process. This process must include at a minimum:
 - Debriefing statement that explains why deception was necessary;
 - An updated informed consent process that includes the option for participants to withdraw from the study or withdraw some of their information;
 - When applicable, a list of available resources, contact information, etc. to assist participants out with any possible negative consequences (e.g., mental trauma, distress, embarrassment, etc.) of being deceived; and
 - In some situations, the IRB may require that for student-based research projects involving deception, the faculty advisor must either be on hand or available during the debriefing process. These situations will usually involve studies or situations that require some form of specialized training or expertise.
5. During an IRB review, any deception study request is subject to 45 CFR 46.116(d):

“(d) An IRB may approve a consent procedure which does not include, or which alters, some or all of the elements of informed consent set forth in this section, or waive the requirements to obtain informed consent provided the IRB finds and documents that:

 - The research involves no more than minimal risk to the subjects;
 - The waiver or alteration will not adversely affect the rights and welfare of the subjects;
 - The research could not practicably be carried out without the waiver or alteration; and
 - Whenever appropriate, the subjects will be provided with additional pertinent information after participation.”
6. In some situations, the BSU IRB may require the PI(s) to inform participants that they may not be fully informed about some aspect(s) of the research before their participation begins. When this statement is included in the consent form, the protocol may be approved as exempt.
7. Items/materials created for a research purpose, but that are not part of any deception study are not considered deception for purposes of applying this policy. Examples include role-playing situations, made-up news articles, stories, etc. These items must also be identified as hypothetical, created for the purposes of this study etc. (ex. in the hypothetical situation presented in the news article...) during some phase within the study.