

Chapter 10 – Data Ethics

As the text states, “Most of these exercises pose issues for discussion. There are no right or wrong answers, but there are more and less thoughtful answers.” We have not tried to supply answers for exercises that are largely matters of opinion. For that reason, only a few solutions are provided here.

10.1 Answers will vary. Many students will consider that option (a) qualifies as minimal risk, and most will agree that option (e) goes beyond minimal risk.

10.2 Yes, the professor should seek institutional review board approval before proceeding, because he is conducting research on human subjects.

10.3 Many students will see both situations as coercive. Losing a job and feeling as if there is no alternative to earn money would induce most subjects to agree to participate. Likewise, pressuring a new employee to participate may be viewed as a threat toward continued employment.

10.4 Options (a) through (c) are listed in increasing order of undue influence. Student opinions of which options constitute undue influence will vary.

10.10 It is good to state the purpose of the research plainly (“To study how childhood experiences are related to risk of depression”). Stating the research thesis (that people who are abused as children tend to be more prone to severe depression as young adults) would cause bias.

10.11 Most students will see option (a) as allowable, option (b) as questionable even though the meetings are public, and option (c) as not allowable due to the psychologist “pretending to be converted.”

10.13 Confidential, if survey responses are only given in aggregate; that is, if a subject’s name or other identifying information is not attached to his or her response. The subject is not anonymous to the interviewer.

10.14 This offers anonymity because names are never revealed. However, there may be some risk of being identified if someone is seen entering the health clinic for the screening or the results.

10.17 For example, prisoners may consent to participation simply to obtain better meals and a better paying job (undue influence). Additionally, this is a non-randomized clinical trial that does not necessarily put the “interest of the subject ahead of the interests of science and society.”

10.18 For example, informed consent is lacking. (Although most students might express shock or dismay at this research approach, they may struggle with identifying exactly what is wrong with these studies.)

10.20 Most students will see Yale's posture in cancelling the study as totally warranted. Few, however, will think of ways that the Tanzanian government's objections about being unable to provide care might be overcome. Charities, such as the Gates Foundation and Bono's Product Red, have contributed hundreds of millions of dollars to fight HIV and AIDS in Africa. Perhaps Yale could have partnered with one of these organizations to treat individuals who were found to be infected.