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RESEARCH METHODS I

Week Two: Ethics in Psychological Research

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Trigger Warning

Some videos shown in this session may contain sensitive, uncomfortable or upsetting scenes

If you do not feel comfortable watching the videos or engaging in discussion relating to ethical issues in psychological research, you are not expected to stay.

RESEARCH ETHICS....

WHY???



Research Ethics

- **British Psychological Society Code of Human Research Ethics**
 - The moral principles by which we conduct ourselves as psychological researchers
- As researchers, we have a moral obligation to...
 - *Our participants*
 - *The academic / professional field*
 - *Employers / funding bodies*
 - *Ourselves*

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Part of psychology students learning outcomes is to demonstrate an awareness of appreciation and important of ethical standards in research

Why do we need ethics?

- We deal with people in many different contexts
 - Students;
 - participants in sensitive research settings,
 - patients undergoing therapy,
 - employees in business settings,
 - Etc, etc

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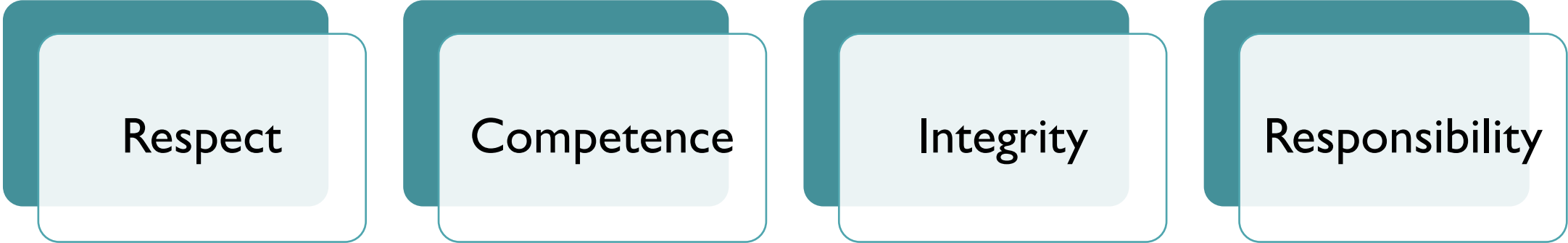
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Human beings are thinking creatures, capable of feeling guilt, embarrassment etc.

Human beings and animals are sentient living things
(i.e. they can experience pain, fear, etc.)

Four main values/principles

(BPS, 2018: Code of Ethics and Conduct)



Respect

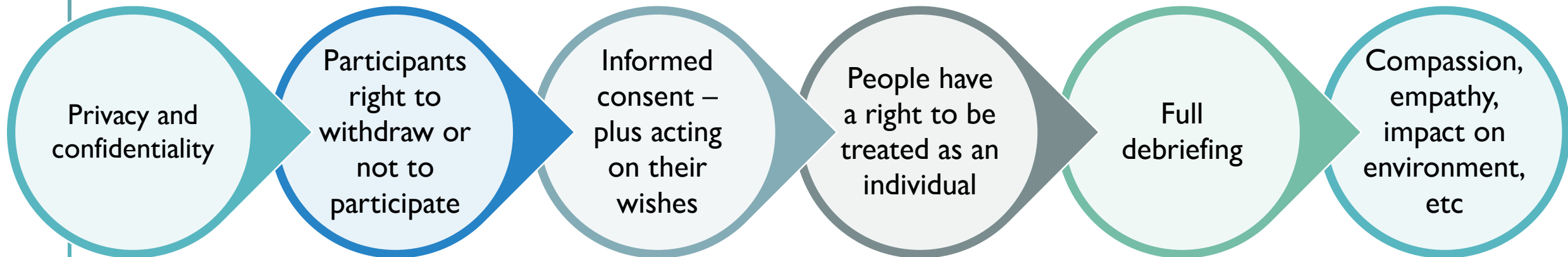
Competence

Integrity

Responsibility

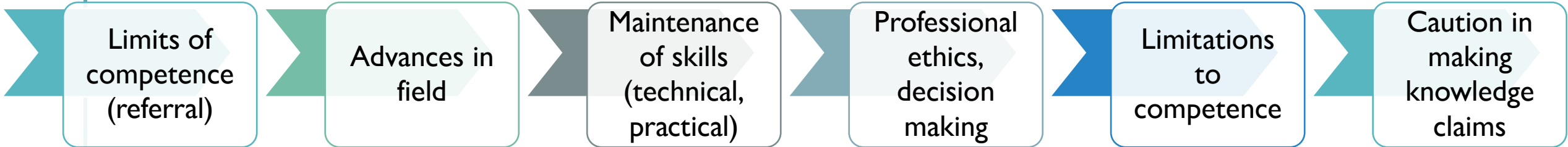
1. Respect

- Recognising the importance of your participants.
- “sensitivity to the dynamics of perceived authority or influence over people, with particular regard to peoples rights”
- Considerations:



2. Competence

- Ability to provide specific professional services
- Services should not be provided outside of psychologist's areas of knowledge/skill, etc
- Considerations:



Limits of competence (referral)

Advances in field

Maintenance of skills (technical, practical)

Professional ethics, decision making

Limitations to competence

Caution in making knowledge claims

3. Integrity

- Honesty and accuracy in how research is conducted and published.
- Remaining objective and open-minded in challenging own behaviour/beliefs
- Considerations:

Transparent and honest research
– lack of deception

Professionalism
– professional relationships

Respect others works, even if we don't agree with it

Fairness in data collection and reporting findings

Addressing misconduct

Accurate unbiased representation

4. Responsibility

- Awareness of responsibility ensures that trust of others is not abused, influence is properly managed and duty towards others is always paramount
- Considerations:



Professional
accountability

Responsible use of
skills and knowledge

Respect for welfare
of participants
(humans, non-human
animals, living world)

Potentially
competing duties

Risk in research

“Risks attend us every moment in life, and to say that research should involve no risks would be inappropriate” (BPS).

BUT

Research ethics form should convince the ethics committee that the researcher:

- Is aware of the potential harms/consequences
- Has ensured the participants know their rights as participants
- Has put steps in place to minimise such harms occurring (with follow-up procedures if necessary)
- Demonstrates a commitment to relevant ethical and professional standards

Key ethical considerations in any project



Written **informed**
consent – at
appropriate levels



Clarity and
comprehension of
research materials
Appropriate for target
audience?



No potential coercion



Right to withdraw



Debriefing



Potential for
harm/discomfort/
distress



Confidentiality
/Data
Protection

Informed Consent

- What will participants be expected to do?
- How long will it take them?
- Rights of the participants (confidentiality, withdrawal, etc)
- Any foreseeable risks to taking part?
- Benefits of the research?
- Researcher details for contact



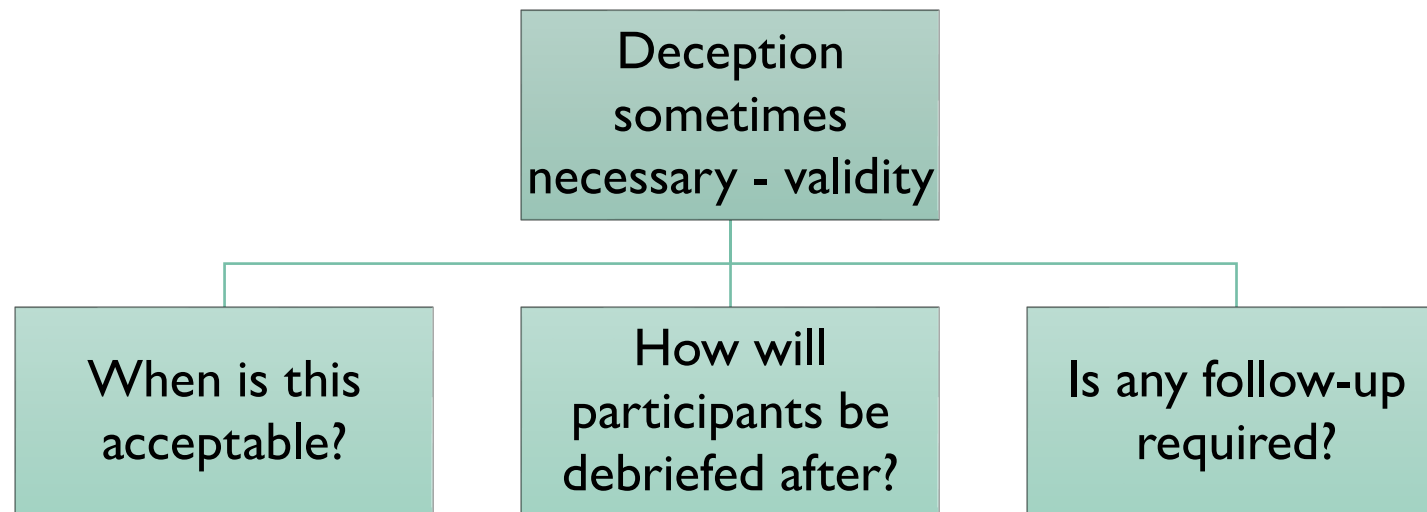
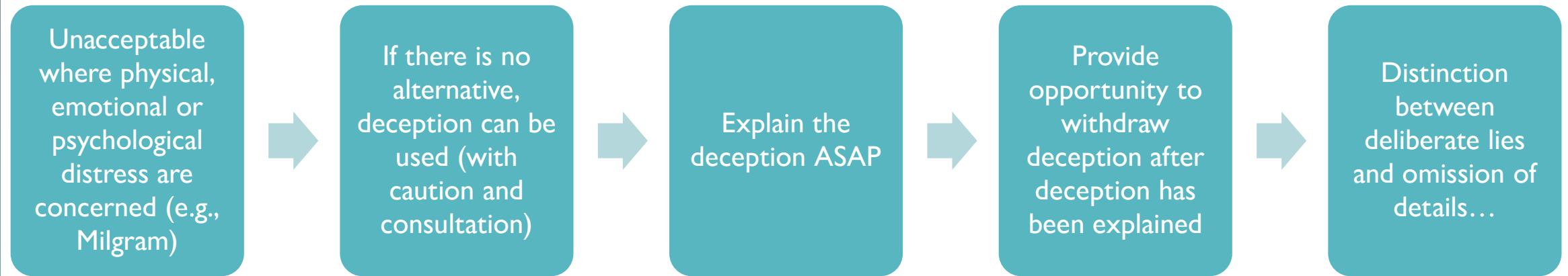
Informed Consent

- Participants should be presented with an information detailing key information about the study prior to being presented with a consent form.
- This allows them to make an informed decision about whether they want to go on to provide consent or not.
- Participants must give **fully informed consent** to take part in any research.

Informed consent can be obtained as written consent or as online consent

When completing an ethics approval form, it is important that you **make it clear** whether written consent will be obtained and, if not, what will you be doing to ensure appropriate informed consent

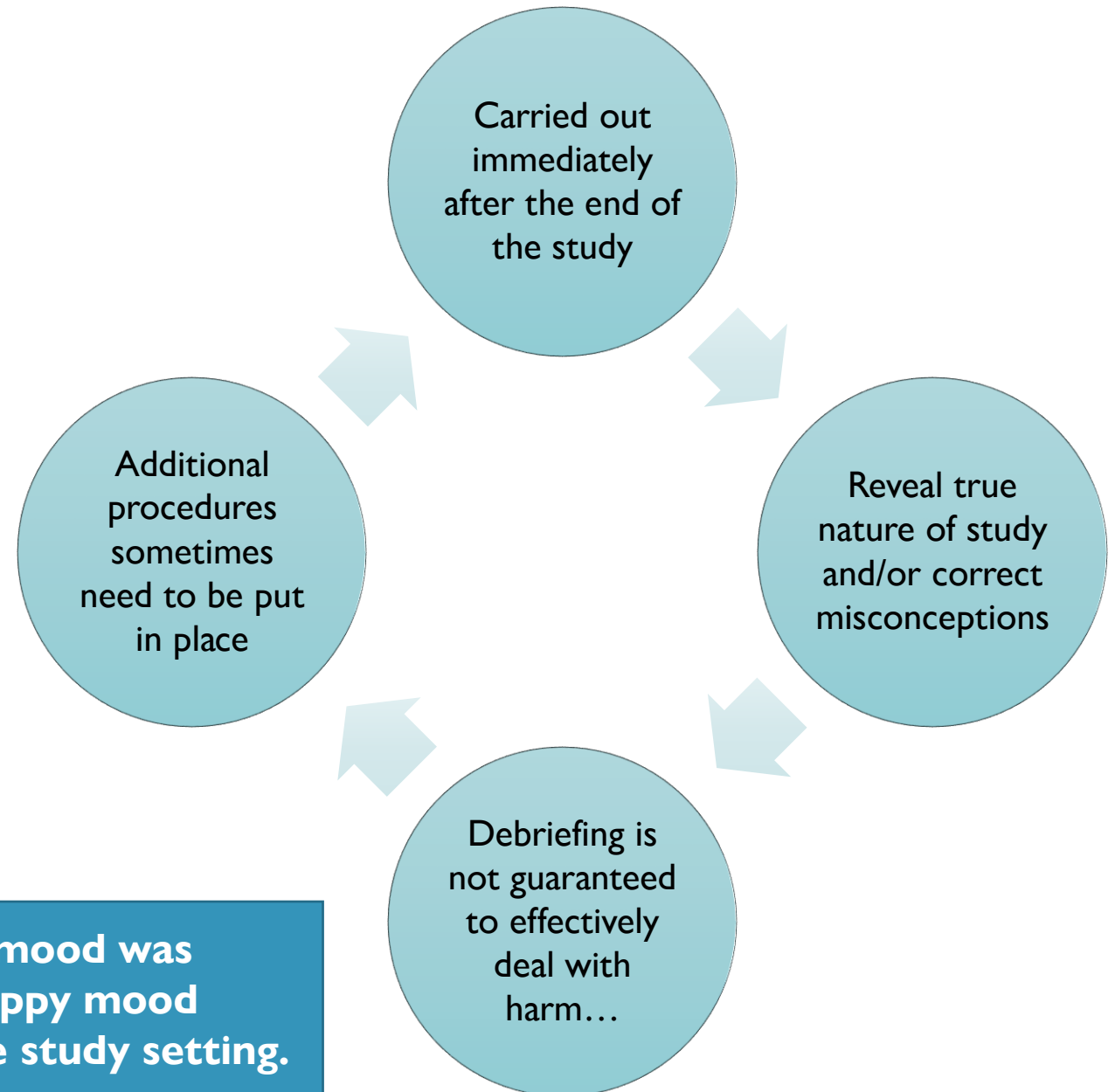
Deception



Debriefing

- Full disclosure of the nature of the study must always be given
- In some circumstances, the verbal description of the nature of the investigation may not be sufficient to eliminate all possibility of harmful after-effects.

For example, a study in which negative mood was induced requires the induction of a happy mood state before the participant leaves the study setting.



Right to Withdraw



Acts as a failsafe for informed consent

The right to withdraw at any time without penalty



From the start of the study, participants should be informed of their right to withdraw

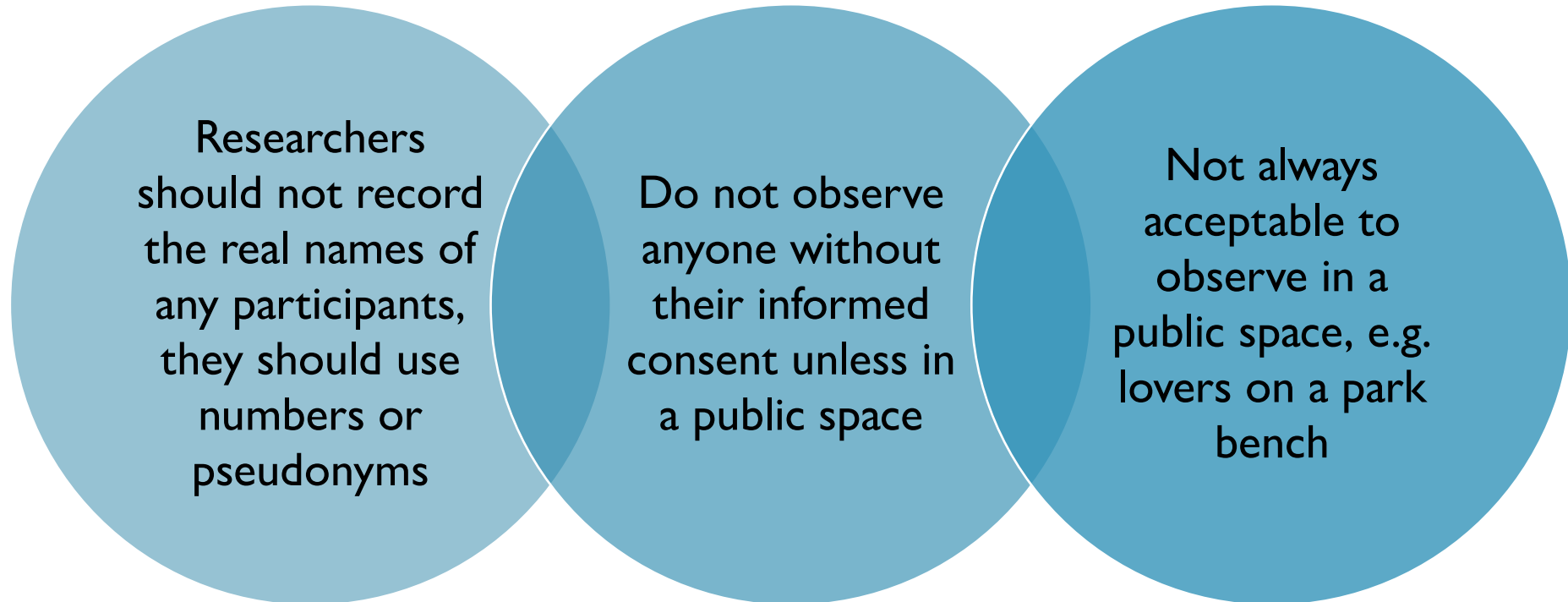


Right to withdraw should also be included in the debrief



Participants can withdraw their data following the study if they are uncomfortable following the debrief

Privacy – Confidentiality – Data Protection



Confidentiality



Subjects to requirements of legislation, including the Data Protection Act, information obtained from or about a participants is confidential unless otherwise agreed in advance



Participants have the right to expect that information they provide will be treated confidentially and, if published, will not be identifiable as theirs



Data will be stored, so participants CAN ask for data to be removed/destroyed at any point after the study

Anonymity

Participants must be guaranteed they will be anonymous at all times.

A participant's identity should never be revealed (to other people or when data are published)

The participant's name should NOT be associated with their data – instead, the data is assigned a code

However, researchers must also consider whether other information could make it obvious who they are (even if they are not named).

A participant's data cannot be destroyed after they have left the study as there is no way to tell which is their data!

Anonymity / Confidentiality

Is your data:

- a) confidential?
- b) anonymous?

Confidential

How will you ensure any hard copies or electronic data is stored confidentially?

Locked filing cabinets, password-protected files, cloud storage, etc

Anonymous

Any identifiable information from questionnaires, transcripts, etc should be removed – replaced with a unique ID number

Consent forms should be stored separately from main data (if applicable)

Qualitative data must use pseudonyms or ID numbers in place of real names

Potential for discomfort, distress, and anxiety

Protection from harm – physical, mental/psychological, including embarrassment, fear, offense, etc
The risk of harm should be no greater than would be encountered in their everyday life



Does your research have any potential for making people more anxious, worried or distressed?



If so, what efforts are you making to minimise this risk?



What will you do if someone does report distress as a result of taking part in your research?

Ethical Review Process and Obtaining Ethical Approval



Prior to data collection commencing, a research study must obtain ethical approval from a relevant ethics committee.



‘Research Ethics Committee (REC)’: a multidisciplinary, independent body responsible for reviewing research proposals involving human participants to ensure that their dignity, rights and welfare are protected.



An ethics form will be completed by the researcher and submitted to the REC, where the panel will review and judge the suitability and safety of the research and decide whether it can be conducted.



Responsibilities of the REC

- Reviewing all research involving human participants conducted by individuals employed within or by that institution;
- Ensuring that ethics review is independent, competent and timely;
- Protecting the dignity, rights and welfare of research participants;
- Considering the safety of the researcher(s);
- Considering the legitimate interests of other stakeholders;
- Making informed judgements of the scientific merit of proposals;
- Making informed recommendations to the researcher if the proposal is found to be wanting in some respect.

Other important considerations..

Research with children



- Must take care if using children under 18 for research
- Some 16+ may be judged competent to give consent; others will need parental consent
- Need to obtain assent from children



Conducting research online

- BPS Ethics Guidelines for Internet-Mediated Research

Additional ethical approval



- NHS ethics
- External organisations (funding requirements, using employees as participants, etc)
- Government approval

Potential for distress



"I wasn't worried until I completed this questionnaire"

**ANY
QUESTIONS?**

