

ETHICAL CONTROVERSIES REGARDING THE USE OF DECEPTION IN THE PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH

*Andrei Holman**

Abstract

The deception of participants – implying the transgression of the informed consent norm, essential in the biomedical research – has generated numerous critiques in all the research fields which involve human participants. In Psychology, it has been accepted upon certain conditions inspired by the utilitarian calculus of the costs versus the scientific gains of the study in all the versions of the research ethics code elaborated by the American Psychological Association. This code represents the main reference point in setting the acceptability limits of the worldwide empirical research methodologies. This acceptance of deception stems, at least partially, from its frequent use in the studies developed in the dominant trend of psychology, even from the beginnings of its elaboration. These political aspects of psychological science with consequences on ethical regulations are accompanied by an empirical level of debating between the critics and the defenders of the practice of deception. Thus, the specificities of the field created the circumstances in which all ethical debates regarding this practice are accompanied by empirical arguments, derived mostly from studies investigating its psychological consequences on participants. The article presents a synthesis of these empirically based ethical controversies, concerning, among others, the benefits of the deceiving procedures and their negative effects on participants, the limitation versus the promotion of their autonomy, the decrease or increase in validity of the studies using it. Given the relative ambiguity, induced by the plurality of ethical stances and empirical arguments as well as the conditioned legitimacy of this practice – instituted by the psychological research ethics code – the final decision concerning its use represents the psychologist's responsibility, who has the complicated task to estimate the parameters of the costs / benefits balance in each particular case.

Keywords: *deception, psychological research, experiment.*

* University of Medicine and Pharmacy "Gr. T. Popa", Iasi, Center for Ethics and Public Healthcare Policies, Department of Psychology, "Al. I. Cuza" University, Iasi, andreiholman@yahoo.com

Argument

As in any research field involving human participants, researchers in psychology can confront with important ethical dilemmas when planning and carrying out their investigations. The boundaries of research on human participants are drawn in a common set of rules, at the foundation of the research ethical codes in all fields. Research is regulated by national legislations (1), allowing for variations from one country to the other (2, 3). Therefore there is a common area which currently constitutes the core of the international regulations of each specific research field, especially concerning the rights of study participants and the researcher's obligations towards them (4). On the other side, the scientific internationalization, responsible for this homogenization of the ethical codes specific to each field, brought the progressive specialization of each science. The building of specific identities has created the conditions for certain differences in the permissiveness of the research ethics standards between fields. Psychology is one of those sciences that illustrate the phenomenon, particularly concerning the transgression of the rule of informed consent.

The distinctive trait of psychological research in this regard is that it allows the ethical arguments invoked in the disputes on such transgressions to pass through the filter of empirical testing. In what follows we will synthetically present the ethical controversies generated by the practice of research deception and illustrate the empirical support of the arguments invoked in these disputes. These refer to a set of fundamental checkpoints – such as the benefits and negative consequences, autonomy and ethical principles; in all these respects,

the pros and cons bring forth contradictory empirical results, evaluated in a utilitarian perspective. As such, shifting the dialogue about the acceptability of this practice from the ethical to the empirical level led to the impossibility of reaching a universally valid conclusion. Consequently, the responsibility of respecting the ethical rules of the investigation is always left to the researcher in psychology, who has to estimate the benefits and costs that would be brought by deception in his/her specific study. The article offers a grid of the relevant dimensions for this ethical evaluation procedure, indicating the main problems which could be raised by the aforementioned practice in any psychological research. The analysis of the architectures of the discourses on this topic highlights the complexity of the psycho-social phenomena the researcher has to include in his/her personal calculus concerning the acceptability of this practice in the study. Thus, the decision on its use should be thoroughly informed, involving the anticipation of the various consequences of deception in the methodological context of that particular study as well as their ethical assessment. The grid of the relevant dimensions and their empirical referents, presented in this article, could facilitate these evaluations.

In what concerns the frequency of deceiving participants in psychology, most meta-analysis indicate that this practice had the most frequent use during the 60's - 70's decade, being employed in almost a fifth of the researches published in the main psychological journals (5). Due to the increasingly intense ethical controversies – briefly presented below – as well as to the changes in the dominant paradigms of international psychological research, its frequency decreased after this moment and has undergone a variable evolution, with a new significant

decline after 1994 (6).

In time, it has been more often employed in social psychology, an area in which researchers have been interested in phenomena which are strongly affected by participants' social desirability, such as aggression, conformism, obedience, discrimination etc. Hiding or deforming the truth about the situations they would be placed in was, for many psychologists interested in these topics, the only method which would prove efficient in allowing natural behavior to be produced, avoiding its alteration by the participants' tendency to project positive images of themselves. The consequences of this choice, beyond this hypothetical protection of the validity of the phenomena under scrutiny, have been the main focus of their critics, as we will show in what follows.

We will frame deception in the historical context of the evolution of ethics codes in psychological research, presenting the specifics and the types of this practice and analyzing the arguments invoked by its supporters and critics.

The evolution of the codes of ethics in psychological research

The contemporary reference point of the national ethics regulations in psychological research is represented by the code developed by the American Psychological Association, due to two reasons. Firstly, this organization was the first to articulate, in 1953, such a set of ethical rules, followed, in time, by nine successive revisions; the last edition of the code was published in 2002. The second reason concerns the international evolution of Psychology, which has gradually placed American psychology as the gravitational center of international scientific production, in terms of dominant paradigms, research fields,

methodological approaches and journals. As such, the adoption of the ethical principles elaborated and imposed by this association has become mandatory in order to integrate the local scientific production in the dominant, U.S. – driven research.

The time when the American Psychological Association began the development of its ethics code was one of intense expansion of the psychologist profession in the U.S.A. The set of rules concerning the treatment of human participants started to be elaborated in 1966, being published in 1973. This endeavor was approached in an empirical fashion, not in a deductive – theoretical one. The association created the so-called “Cook Committee”, which consulted 18 thousands psychologists about their personal stances on the ethical dimension of psychological investigations, eliciting from them examples of practices that could be regarded as ethically suspicious (7). These answers were integrated in a matrix inspired by biomedical research ethics regulations, which has generated objections concerning the legitimacy of adapting biomedical research rules to human behavior sciences (8). Beyond this paradigmatic choice, the ethical norms of psychological research are largely based on the limits and freedoms assumed, on their own initiative, by psychologists in their research practice (5). The successive revisions of the code have modified certain regulations, thus generating other objections highlighting the relativism of ethical norms, the risk of sacrificing potentially valuable research ideas in order to attend to the ethical “fashions” of the scientific community (9). Yet, there is an ethically questionable aspect, especially as it creates a contrast to the biomedical regulations, which has remained almost unchanged in all the successive versions

of the psychological research code, namely the permissiveness of deceiving participants (10). The topic of deception was one of the six on which the sample of psychologists was consulted by the Cook Committee (7) and its toleration reflects its high frequency in the research endeavors of that period.

The current version of the ethics code of the American Psychological Association (10) has two sections: the principles and the standards which derive from them. The five principles are: beneficence and non-maleficence, fidelity and responsibility, integrity, justice and respect for people's dignity and rights. The standards are divided in ten categories, concerning the various area of the psychologist profession, the rules regarding psychological research being included in one of these categories. Another area regulated by these standards, very important for this profession, is that of applied psychology (11). The research standards concern the protection of participants from potential negative consequences of the study, ensuring confidentiality, offering them the possibility to decline participation in the research and to withdraw at any moment without any penalties, as well as informing them about the aim of the investigation and their part in it, specifically about the requests they would be addressed and the behaviors to be under scrutiny. The topic of negative consequences is also sensitive for the psychological research, since some areas of psychology – mainly the clinical one, but not only – entail the induction or actualization of negative emotional states – anxiety, stress, negative emotions etc (5). Yet, the controversies concerning the acceptability of such practices are less intense, due, on one side, to their quasi-universal acceptance as indispensable for the scientific progress in these areas, and,

on the other, to the mandatory rule of removing these negative consequences at the end of the study. Thus, the fact that they only represent transitory states tips the cost / benefits balance in favor of their acceptance.

Deception in the psychological research

Beyond these principles and rules – common with those of other ethical codes inspired by the biomedical perspective – the psychological research code (elaborated by the American Psychological Association, but internationally adopted (5)) puts forth a utilitarian paradigm in the evaluation of the ethical acceptability of research practices (12). The general ethical question about any such practice is, according to this code, whether it generates negative effects on participants that the importance of the research doesn't warrant. Although this risks/benefits ratio is not specific to the psychological research ethics, it has created the circumstances for a significant transgression of one of its most important principles: the informed consent. The practice conflicting with this principle, legitimized even from the first version of the psychological research ethics code due to its high frequency, is the deception of participants.

According to this code, the recruitment of participants for research should be done solely on the basis of their expression of informed consent to all aspects of the study. Nevertheless, disguising information or revealing false information is accepted, under some circumstances. Firstly, such procedures must be justified by the value of the anticipated results of the study. Secondly, they are allowed only when there are no

alternative procedures which would not entail deception and which could provide valid answers to the research questions addressed in the study. In addition, deception is not permitted when the investigation could cause physical or emotional harm to participants and they have to be allowed to withdraw at any moment (in this case the information concerning them should be removed from the research database). A very important and mandatory stage is the final one (the debriefing), when participants should be completely informed about the nature, results and conclusions of the study; similarly, all necessary actions must be taken in order to alleviate all its negative consequences (including those of previous deception) (10).

One of the important reasons for the high frequency of deception in the psychology research has been its supposed utility for the prevalent research method employed by the representatives of the dominant approach in the American psychology of that period – the experiment. In most of the psychology studies, participants are given correct and complete information on the tasks they will be required to undergo and about the purpose of the research, thus creating the circumstances for their informed consent (5). In experiments, the aim of the methodological strategy is to motivate participants to display a spontaneous, sincere behavior in response to a set of stimuli controlled by the psychologist. In order to attain this objective, the experimental context should appear to participants as realistic, so that the impact of the stimuli on them would be identical to the one they have in real life; paradoxically, experimental realism can be built through falsity when necessary (13). This is also the distinctiveness of

the psychological experiments: the concern for the elaboration of an artificial situation, attentively controlling its important factors, but which would appear sufficiently realistic to participants so that they would display the natural, spontaneous behaviors determined by these factors.

The core elements of deception are: the researcher's intentionality and the explicit character of the false information being presented (14). Beyond these common traits, it has proved its versatility along the history of psychology, being employed in various ways, depending on the specificities of the experimental designs including it. Thus, the types of deception have varied less according to the moment of their use in the historical context of psychology as a whole, but mostly according to the particularities of the phenomena being investigated and to the methods of investigation (5).

There are two major categories of this practice: active deception – through the provision of false information – and passive deception – through the omission of some relevant information. The most frequent types in the first group are (15):

- the misrepresentation of the research purpose; for instance, in a study on stereotype use, participants were told that its objective is to investigate how people fill in incomplete words; in fact, the true aspect under scrutiny was the degree in which the words filled in reflect stereotypes of certain social categories that participants had been previously exposed to (16);

- false information about the materials distributed to participants during the study; a famous study on emotion (17) illustrates this type of deception: participants were injected with adrenalin, being told that the injection contained vitamins with effects opposed to those of

adrenalin. In other cases, the false information concerns the experimental situation as a whole; for instance, in an investigation (18) on the influence of stereotypes for the elderly on behavior, participants were told that the task they would have to undergo was solving an anagram; on its completion, the psychologist informed them that the experiment was over, although, in fact, one of his colleagues was measuring their walking speed when leaving the laboratory;

- using confederates – people who assume the position of participants, but have the task of playing a certain role in relationship to the real participants; for instance, in a study (19) on helping behavior, on the participants' way between two buildings of the university campus there was a confederate feigning being hurt and in need of immediate help;

- false feed-back about oneself (for example, on one's intelligence level or personality, as in a study (20) in which upon the completion of a fake personality test some participants were told that they possessed a set of negative traits – immature, maladapted etc.; in other studies, participants were given false feed-back on other people;

- presenting two stages of the same study as two separate investigations, having nothing to do with one another. This procedure has been often employed in the studies on the effects of emotion on information processing: in the first phase, participants are put into various emotional states through certain tasks – such as the exposure to movie clips with specific affective charges, and in the second – presented as a separate study – they are required to work on some tasks, such as making a decision or getting an impression about a previously unknown character.

The second category – passive deception – includes:

- concealing the real nature of some elements of the experimental situation which could have significant psychological effects, like in the studies on subliminal exposure, where certain stimuli are projected in the participant's visual field too fast to be consciously detected, but significantly affect their successive mental activity,;

- concealing behavioral recordings – the participants not being aware that they were recorded in that specific moment of the research, as they expected to be investigated in a subsequent stage of the research (15).

Pros and cons on research deception

The spirit of the psychological research ethics code enforces a cost – benefit analysis of the procedures to be used, admitting the legitimacy of deception when its usefulness grants it. The tolerance towards such transgressions of the principle of informed consent is assumed as a consequence of the interest for scientific progress, as what is ethically perfect is not the best way to do research (21). There is also a deeper source of this tolerance, identifiable in the implicit perspective of psychological researchers on their participants. Stark (2010) (7) pinpoints an implicit optics of the “resilient Self” which would explain the openness of psychologists' ethics code, even from its beginnings, towards deceiving participants. This optics implies the belief that any negative emotional state which participants would go through during the study, either because of the false information they are given, either when discovering them at the end of the research, will be quickly

overcome, as their psyche is resilient enough to get over such negative episodes in the name of science with no major turbulences. The adherence to this perspective has stemmed from the argument of the majority, since it was shared by most psychologists during the elaboration of the ethics code, but it ignored warnings from minority areas of psychology, such as those from child developmental psychology. Researchers in these fields put forth counterarguments to the dominant thesis (7), inspired by the opposite optics on the participants in psychological studies: the “fragile Self”, emphasizing the emotional dangers of false information. Thus, the ethical controversies have accompanied deception even from the beginnings of the development of the psychological research code of ethics.

In what follows, we will present the main topics which can be extracted from the debates between the defenders of and the objectors to deception, synthesizing the relevant arguments and counterarguments on each topic.

a. the scientific and social benefits

The main argument brought by the defenders of deception (e.g. Bortolotti & Mameli (22)) is that the information that can be gathered when it is employed is much more valid than when the psychologist is completely honest to participants. There are several potential origins of the data invalidity in this last scenario. On one side, participants would adapt their behavior to the researcher’s expectations, as they are deciphered from the study purpose, a phenomenon called “the Hawthorne effect” (23). Moreover, psychological studies often deal with certain socially undesirable behaviors, which people are motivated to hide from various reasons; as such, the psychologists’ complete honesty would

make these behaviors – such as aggression or social discrimination – not to be displayed during the study (22). Participants would try to project a positive image about themselves, thus playing a role and assuming a false identity. Deception would be useful, in these circumstances, in order to counteract the tendency of participants to deceive the researcher. This idea is supported by studies (24) which reveal that in certain experimental situations the full and honest description of the methods employed, of the purpose and of the hypothesis can completely eliminate the psychological phenomena under scrutiny.

Additionally, certain studies could not assume the validity of the information given by participants about their own behavior – either from the past or the one intended, potential – even when they are completely honest (25). Such self-descriptions are often biased, affected by various tendencies which deform the self image. Thus, their real behavior could be different from their beliefs about the way they would behave in that situation. In these contexts, deception intends to avoid any attempt at behavioral self-control, at conduct alteration as a result of this deformed self image, creating the circumstances for a spontaneous, unplanned and, consequently, fully sincere expression. Lastly, deception offers the opportunity for experimental situations which rarely appear in a natural manner, but which deserve to be explored due to their high social importance. An illustration is the helping behavior in crisis situation (26); the only available way for an in-depth investigation of such phenomena is to elaborate an artificial scenario – especially through the use of confederates playing certain roles – placing participants and recording their

reactions.

Besides the scientific benefits, the defenders of deception (22) also invoke a social gain brought by this procedure, through the valuable information that psychological experiments using it can reveal. The importance of deception is impossible to neglect when taking into consideration the data concerning the negative aspects, the behaviors which could affect the participant or those close to him. Deception can ensure the identification of such “latent dangers”, so that those in question could become aware of them and, possibly, develop the appropriate self-control abilities. Therefore, in this layer of the analysis, taking into account only the ethical price of deception and forbidding it in order to respect the universal research principles could be, itself, an ethically blamable act, as it would neglect such potential behavior dangers. In other words, in such a scenario the psychologist would not really solve the ethical problem of deceiving his participants, but merely replace it with another (27).

The main reply of the critics of deception is that these social and scientific gains could be also brought by more carefully designed studies which would avoid this procedure. Following an initial period of unanimous acceptance of deception by psychologists, an article written by Herbert Kelman (1967) (28) pointed out a set of ethical problems raised by it. His argument relies on the observation that this procedure tends to become a routine, being preferred by psychologists even when they have the possibility of testing their hypothesis through studies in which participants would receive all relevant information, thus in informed consent settings. In the same line of reasoning, some critics of deception (e.g. Lindsey (29)) accuse researchers using it that it actually

represents an easy way to mask their lack of creativity in finding methodological solutions which would be honest to participants, and, consequently, fully ethical.

There are also voices which deny the alleged spread of these benefits brought by deception, stating that it actually diminishes the validity of results (28). The phenomenon responsible for this effect is participants’ suspicion towards the psychologist and the stimuli they are required to react to. Given the general lack of honesty, they would suspect that the scenario presented to them is an artificial one and they would try to decipher the real purposes of the study. Consequently, the suspicion would deform their behavior, rendering it completely different from their natural one or, at least, raising serious doubts concerning its real cause (the experimental stimuli or suspicion) (28). Yet, a synthesis of the comparisons between participants who manifested suspicion and the naïve ones (21) indicate that the differences between them on the research – relevant behaviors are negligible.

Another methodological warning regarding the use of deception is that it could “contaminate” the group of participants (30), making them mentally relate and behave in a suspicious manner in the future research that they would take part in, as well. Moreover, it could lead to a bad reputation of psychologists among the general population, diminishing the public trust in psychological practice as a whole, beyond the specific area of research in this field (31). This idea is, however, contradicted by the results of a study (32) which compared the attitudes towards psychological research shared by samples of the general population of participants in such research in two moments: 1979

and 1990. The results suggest that the quite long and popularized history of deception did not have negative effects on the attitudes towards psychological research.

b. the topic of the fundamental ethical principles

Most critics of deception claim that it defies certain ethical principles, fundamental for the research in any area. It was accused to violate the principles of rightfulness and reciprocity which should characterize the relationship between the researcher and the participant (33), as well as the essential rule of respect for the latter (25), not only as the participant is lied to, but also given the risk of including him in a study with certain objectives which he/she might not approve. The defenders of deception accept these ethical sacrifices it implies, but they claim its legitimacy when the costs (including those of transgressing basic ethical principles) / benefits balance recommends it.

b. the topic of negative psychological consequences on participants

Another neuralgic issue of deception in research is the potential negative consequences it could have on the deceived participants. Those raising this problem often invoke Milgram's study (1974) (34) on obedience to authority, in which participants administered intense electric shocks to a confederate, after being deceived about the research purpose and their part in it. The argument which is relevant here regards the negative emotional effects on participants, which were noticed after the study, and that had been amplified by the "experimental realism" brought by deception. Yet, the validity of these observations is disputable (23). Nevertheless, there are other results

warning not only about the negative effects of deception but also about the relative inefficiency of the final debriefing procedure, precisely designed to eliminate any such negative states, thoughts or behaviors in participants (35). Such intense residual effects of deception mainly appear when participants are given false information about themselves, which could strongly affect their self image.

The defenders of this procedure argue that the two issues – deception and negative consequences – should be separated in the ethical assessment of the studies, in the sense that the researches which imply intense negative effects on participants should be banned irrespective of their use of deception. Moreover, they bring forth a set of results of the investigations directly focused on the emotional experiences of participants during and after their participation in psychological studies employing this procedure, which seem to indicate that the risk of negative consequences is overrated (16). The observations supporting this position are (14): the participants in these studies don't manifest negative emotions as a result of being deceived; they are convinced of the usefulness of this procedure for the scientific progress; they seem to experience more positive emotional experiences and to perceive a higher personal educational benefit than those participating in studies which don't employ deception. Moreover, they seem to be less worried than the researchers themselves about the dangers of this procedure, focusing mostly on the scientific quality in their evaluation of the psychological studies, and less on the degree of using such ethically disputable methods (36).

d. the topic of participants' autonomy

Another important criticism of deception is that it violates participants' autonomy, in the sense that they are used in a manner and towards an objective which they have not expressed their approval with (23). Consequently, the only option which would fully respect their autonomy is the informed consent.

Other defenders of deception (22) reply that is has not only negative effects, but also positive ones on participants' autonomy. According to them, autonomy should not be limited to giving the information necessary for people to make independent and completely informed decisions, but also that they become aware of the important factors which could influence their decisions. Many of the results of the studies employing deception might offer participants information concerning their own tendencies and biases in thought and action, which they are currently unaware of. Such knowledge could be used by the individual to correct his/her future behavior and to advisedly choose among the options at hand. As such, the price of temporarily renouncing his/her autonomy would provide increased abilities of exercising and developing it for future use (23).

Solutions

The scholars accusing the violation of participants' autonomy by the procedure of deceiving them advance a solution that would preserve the possibility of deception: informed consent by proxy, inspired from the biomedical research. As this allows the expression of consent, under special circumstances, by a legal representative of the patient, it would be acceptable in Psychology as well for someone else – a person whom the future participant trusts – to receive all information concerning the experiment

that he/she would take part in, to assess the acceptability of the settings and the research aim and, if this is the case, to express his/her consent to the participation of the respective individual (37). In this case, participants' autonomy would not be any longer violated.

Another suggestion is one that might be coined as "partially informed consent". Participants are told at the beginning of the study that the information they receive during the research may not fully correct and / or complete (23) and that they will be informed upon its completion on the details previously presented in a deformed or incomplete manner.

Among the other methodological solutions suggested by the critics of deception is role playing, where participants are informed on all the aspects of the study but to simulate naivety (38). Another possibility which would minimize the risk of ethical transgressions is the development of reciprocal relationships between the psychologist and the participants, so that the latter accepts certain situations when they would be deceived during the studies (35). Furthermore, some authors recommend the method of assumed consent (39), involving the consultation of a sample from the same population as that of the study on the topic of the acceptability of the scenario through which future participants would be deceived. The research could be legitimately carried out only if at least 95% of the sample agree with the deceiving method being described to them.

Conclusions

The arguments defending deception reveal the utilitarian paradigm which supports the psychological research code

of ethics, still legitimizes it in the contemporary studies and inspires the replies to its critics. The progressive revisions of the psychological research codes of ethics have not imposed stricter limits of its use and one of the origins of this tolerance could be identified in the specifics of the ethical debate regarding the methodology of psychological research. Specifically, any criticism complaining about the ethical transgressions of deception could be shaped by the supporters of this procedure into empirical hypothesis, concerning the negative consequences on participants, the violation of their autonomy or the decreases in research validity and, consequently, the cancelation of the scientific benefits of deception. Shifting the dialogue from the theoretical to the empirical realm offered the chance to reply to its critics in manners that are persuasive enough for it to be kept in the methodological toolbox of the field. Moreover, the arguments stemming from empirical explorations of the psychology of the deceived participants have counteracted the ethical doubts far to their opposite extreme, arguing that deception also has some intrinsic, direct advantages – such as those of promoting autonomy – besides those derived from the costs – benefits balance. As an effect of this empirically – focused logic of the ethical dialogue, it becomes very likely that any future attempt to limit the use of this procedure would need a strong support, brought by the conclusions of some extensive studies on this topic, in order for it to be taken into consideration. Although, as we mentioned above, such results which could be interpreted as “warning signals” regarding the consequences of deception have not affected its legitimacy; they have only induced a certain degree of ambiguity concerning its real dangers.

The dispute between the two sets of empirical conclusions – those brought by its defenders, respectively by its critics – has been until now solved in favor of its (conditional) legitimacy, thus shifting the responsibility for its use from the level of collectivity to the individual one. Consequently, the estimation of psychological costs and of the ethical transgressions generated by this procedure, on one side, and of its scientific benefits, on the other, should be first carried out by each psychologist deciding on the methodology of the study. The ethical codes regulations offer a general assessment grid of these elements and impose the elimination of any negative consequences upon the completion of the research, in the debriefing session. Nevertheless, in Psychology, the negative consequences – especially the emotional ones – of the various situations which participants are placed in (including those involving their deception) are often difficult to evaluate beforehand, making the methodological precautions essential in order to comply with the boundaries set by the ethical guidelines. Moreover, the breadth of the negative consequences depends of the specific psychological phenomenon under scrutiny; by this token, the decisions concerning the use of deception should take into account both levels of analysis: the ethical and the psychological one. The theoretical and empirical arguments presented here could serve as reference points in the evaluation of the acceptability of deception by the psychologist deciding on the methodology of the investigation. Although they do not solve the dispute one way or another, they could represent reflection areas in relation to the specific characteristics of the psychological dynamics induced to the participants in the respective study. The scientific

collectivity of the researchers in Psychology seems to be aware of the ethical responsibility in this regard: the intense controversies concerning the acceptability of deception, frequently beyond the theoretical level, investing in

empirical research that could answer the interrogations about its consequences and suggest the psychologists' motivation to remain within the ethical boundaries in their research endeavors.

References

- [1]. Raicu G. National legislation on research ethics in Romania. *Rev Rom Bioet.* 2005; 3(4):.
- [2]. Skrydlyak V. A comparative analysis of the United States and Russian guidelines for research on human subjects. *Rev Rom Bioet.* 2005; 2(3):.
- [3]. Famenka A. Ethical review of biomedical research in Belarus: current status, problems and perspectives. *Rev Rom Bioet.* 2011; 9(2): 74-83.
- [4]. Perju-Dumbrava D, Gavrilovici C. Introduction to research ethics: past and present ethical codes of research. *Rev Rom Bioet.* 2005; 3(4):.
- [5]. Kimmel AJ. *Ethical Issues in Behavioral Research. Basic and Applied Perspectives.* 2nd Edition. Malden: Blackwell Publishing; 2007.
- [6]. Korn J H. The reality of deception. *Am Psychol.* 1998; 53 (7): 805
- [7]. Stark L. The science of ethics: deception, the resilient self, and the APA code of ethics, 1966–1973. *J Hist Behav Sci.* 2010; 46(4): 337–370
- [8]. Brainard J. The wrong rules for social science? *Chronicle of Higher Education.* 2001; 47 (26): 21-23.
- [9]. Rosnow R, Rotheram-Borus MJ, Ceci SJ, Blanck PD, Koocher GP. The institutional review board as a mirror of scientific and ethical standards. *Am Psychol.* 1993; 48: 821–6.
- [10]. American Psychological Association. *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct.* *Am Psychol.* 2002; 57: 1060-1073..
- [11]. Enea V, Dafinoiu I. Ethical principles and standards in the practice of hypnosis. *Rev Rom Bioet.* 2011; 9(3): 110-116.
- [12]. Schlenker B, Forsyth D. On the Ethics of Psychological Research. *J Exp Soc Psychol.* 1977; 13: 369-396.
- [13]. Aronson E, Carlsmith JM. *Methods of research in social psychology* (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill; 1990.
- [14]. Hertwig R, Ortmann A. Deception in Experiments: Revisiting the Arguments in Its Defense. *Ethics Behav.* 2008; 18(1): 59-92.
- [15]. Sieber JE, Iannuzzo R, Rodriguez B. Deception methods in psychology: Have they changed in 23 years? *Ethics Behav.* 1995; 5: 67–85.
- [16]. Gilbert DT, Hixon JG. The trouble of thinking: Activation and application of stereotypic beliefs. *J Pers Soc Psychol.* 1991; 60: 509-517.
- [17]. Schachter S, Singer J. Cognitive, Social, and Physiological Determinants of Emotional State. *Psychol Rev.* 1962; 69: 379–399.
- [18]. Bargh JA, Chen M, Burrows L.. Automaticity of social behavior: Direct effects of trait construct and stereotype activation on action. *J Pers Soc Psychol.* 1996; 71: 230-244.
- [19]. Darley JM, Batson CD. From Jerusalem to Jericho: A study of Situational and Dispositional Variables in Helping Behavior. *J Pers Soc Psychol.* 1973; 27: 100-108.
- [20]. Baumeister RF, Cooper J, Skib BA. Inferior performance as a selective response to expectancy: Taking a dive to make a point. *J Pers Soc Psychol.* 1979; 37: 424–32.
- [21]. Kimmel AJ. In defense of deception. *Am Psychol.* 1998; 53: 803–4.
- [22]. Bortolotti L, Mameli M. Deception in Psychology: Moral Costs and Benefits of Unsought Self-Knowledge. *Account Res.* 2006; 13(3): 259-275.
- [23]. Gillespie R. *Manufacturing Knowledge: A history of the Hawthorne Experiments.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 1991.

- [24]. Resnick JH, Schwartz T. Ethical standards as an independent variable in psychological research. *Am Psychol.* 1973; 28: 134–139.
- [25]. Crano W, Brewer M. Principles and methods of social research, 2nd edition. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates; 2002.
- [26]. Darley JM, Latane B. Bystander intervention in emergencies: Diffusion of responsibility. *J Pers Soc Psychol.* 1968; 10: 202–214.
- [27]. Rosenthal R. Science and ethics in conducting, analyzing, and reporting psychological research. *Psychol Sci.* 1994; 5: 127–133.
- [28]. Kelman HC. Human use of human subjects: The problem of deception in social psychological experiments. *Psychol Bull.* 1967; 67: 1–11.
- [29]. Lindsey RT. Informed Consent and Deception in Psychotherapy Research An Ethical Analysis. *Couns. Psychol.* 1984; 12(3): 79–86.
- [30]. Epley N, Huff C. Suspicion, affective response, and educational benefit as a result of deception in psychology research. *Pers Soc Psychol B.* 1998; 24(7): 759-768.
- [31]. Lawson E, Informational and relational meanings of deception: Implications for deception methods in research. *Ethics Behav.* 2001; 11(2): 115–130.
- [32]. Sharpe D, Adair JG, Roese NJ. Twenty years of deception research: A decline in subjects' trust? *Pers Soc Psychol B.* 1992; 18: 585–590.
- [33]. Baumrind D. IRBs and social science research: The costs of deception., *IRB: A Review of Human Subjects Research.* 1979; 1: 8–10.
- [34]. Milgram S. *Obedience to authority: An experimental view.* New York: Harper/Collins; 1974.
- [35]. Wax M. Research reciprocity rather than informed consent in fieldwork. In J. Sieber, editor. *The ethics of social research: Fieldwork, regulation, and publication.* New York: Springer-Verlag; 1982, p. 33–48.
- [36]. Fisher CB, Fryberg D. Participant partners: College students weigh the costs and benefits of deceptive research. *Am Psychol.* 1994; 49: 417–27.
- [37]. Clarke S. Justifying deception in social science research., *Journal of Applied Philosophy.* 1999; 16(2): 151–166.
- [38]. Geller DM. Alternatives to deception: Why, what and how? In J. E. Sieber, editor. *The ethics of social research: Surveys and experiments.* New York: Springer-Verlag; 1982, p. 39–55.
- [39]. Cozby PC. *Methods in behavioral research.* Palo Alto, CA: Mayfield, 1981.

