

Windsor Deception Checklist

All of the following items present Yes/No questions. Answering “Yes” to any one of these questions *may* indicate that the particular use of deception raises ethical concerns and the study should be re-examined.

- (1) Researchers must justify their use of a deception procedure. This means they should consider and indicate how the benefits of the deception outweigh the potential costs. *Have all reasonably possible costs and benefits been accounted for in considering whether deception may be justified?(Y/N)*
- (2) If deception is needed for the results of this study, the degree to which research participants are misled should be minimized wherever possible. Again, this has to do with being sure the benefits of the deception outweigh the costs. *Is there any way that this study could be done either without, or with a lesser degree, of deception? (Y/N)*
- (3) Some research paradigms in psychology typically make use of deception and these paradigms are well documented in peer-reviewed literature. If the study makes use of an established or previously used deception-paradigm, the research should:
 - a) Cite research relevant to the procedure, especially research indicating whether there were or were not harmful effects to participants.
 - b) Provide and consider the year of the study on which a procedure is based. *Does this study use a new deception paradigm that is unknown in the literature?*
(Y/N)
- (4) Given that level of risk is one of the key elements for deciding if a research proposal needs to be reviewed more extensively, there should be some explanation of the risks for a study that involves deception (including physical, psychological, and all other

types of risk). *Are there possible risks that may have been overlooked in the description of this study?* (Y/N)

(5) *Is the deception associated with more than minimal risk?* (Y/N)

(6) Research manipulations intended to affect participants' health puts them in a unique place of vulnerability. It may be acceptable to inform participants that they will be randomized between interventions without disclosing which group they will be in. However, it is not acceptable to actively mislead or deceive participants about issues related to clinical or diagnostic interventions. *Does the deception used in this study involve a therapeutic intervention, or other clinical or diagnostic interventions?* (Y/N)

(7) Sometimes deception is used to maximize participants' emotional involvement in a study or to shift their expectations in some way. If a study does this, then before moving on to a debriefing, it is often good practice to:

a) Provide a follow-up (corrective) intervention to help participants return to a positive or at least neutral state after data is collected for the study. This "mood neutralizer", for instance, could be in the form of a relaxation exercise or imagining/remembering some positive experience.

b) After a "mood neutralizer", it is good practice to ask participants to rate their current level of distress or anxiety on a scale of 1 to 10; this is a manipulation check to ensure that participants feel "normal" again before they leave.

As the study is, are there any reasons to believe that, when leaving the study, participants may have lingering bad feelings or high arousal as a result of participating in the study? (Y/N)

(8) A debriefing in which the true nature of the study is disclosed to participants and in which they have an opportunity to ask questions is an important part of concluding data collection from human participants. A good debriefing can be done in several ways but it usually involves at least six points:

- a) Engage the participant as a collaborator to discuss the process he/she was involved in.
- b) Disclose to the participant, in plain everyday language and in sufficient detail, exactly what has happened in the data collection process and the true nature of the study.
- c) Explain the rationale for using deception in this particular study.
- d) Provide an opportunity for participants to ask questions of clarification.
- e) Provide, in writing, resources and/or contacts for participant who may have concerns that have come to bear through the nature of the study.
- f) Explicitly confirm that the individual continues to consent to being a participant in the research; this, in light of his/her new and full understanding of the study's purpose and procedures.

Are any of the six debriefing points, above, inadequate or left out? (Y/N)

(9) In general and especially when deception is part of the design, debriefing must take place immediately after data collection is complete. Delaying debriefing as a way of trying to ensure participants do not disclose the nature of a study is unacceptable practice. (Note: Once the rationale for deception has been made clear then researchers may ask participants to not discuss the study with others. Generally, the better participants understand why they were deceived the more likely they are to cooperate

and keep the study's true nature confidential). *Is there any delay between a participant's involvement and the delivery of debriefing?* (Y/N)

- (10) Ultimately, research participants have volunteered to participate in whatever the study entails. In doing so they entrust themselves to the researcher and the institution that is hosting the research. As part of the effort to protect participants' dignity, it is important to ensure that they do not feel embarrassed or betrayed as a result of research procedures. *When the study and debriefing is complete, is there a reasonable possibility that participants may still perceive the deception as having been a betrayal of trust, somehow unfair, and/or leave them feeling denigrated in any way?* (Y/N)