

**FOREIGN LANGUAGES DEPARTMENT  
TEST OF ENGLISH PROFICIENCY  
READING 1**

**CONTROVERSIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH METHODS**

1 Whenever research involves human participants, researchers must give special ethical concerns to monitor participant treatment. In general, most people would not support the idea of suppressing an individual's civil rights for the sake of expanding our knowledge of human nature.

2 During psychology's infancy, researchers were indifferent toward ethics because they often based their studies on introspection rather than social manipulations. Initially, in the early 1900s, psychophysics was characterized by the simple recording of participant responses after exposing them to various types of stimuli, such as colored lights or slight pricks on the skin. While participants may not have known what exactly was being studied, they were aware that they were participating in research and usually did not have to be concerned about the possibility of feeling humiliated, embarrassed, or otherwise harmed due to the tests that were administered to them. Despite growing efforts to protect participants, a number of controversial studies have emerged.

**THE LITTLE ALBERT EXPERIMENT**

3 In 1920, Watson and Rayner hypothesized that fear could be conditioned in a baby, which suggested that fear of specific objects or events was not innate and that fears were not the results of adverse sexual experiences. Watson and Rayner created an experimental method to test this, and therein laid the ethical concerns with their work.

4 Using Albert, an 11-month-old boy with a very relaxed demeanor, Watson and Rayner (1920) attempted to create a novel fear of a white rat. Albert initially was not afraid of the rat; but, as soon as Albert touched the animal, Watson hit a large metal bar which yielded a loud, unpleasant noise that was found beforehand to upset the baby. It took only seven rat-sound pairings for the rat alone to elicit a response in the child characterized by withdrawal. The association persisted strongly for one week, and Albert was again tested after about one month – the fear was still present, albeit somewhat weaker. The response had also generalized toward other white, furry objects, including a rabbit, dog, fur coat and Santa mask.

5 Being criticized on moral grounds, Watson and Rayner's (1920) methodologies helped facilitate the growing concern for participant wellbeing, particularly for those unable to give consent, such as infants. To make matters even more controversial, Watson and Rayner failed to conduct the final part of the experiment, which involved extinguishing the fear, because Albert's mother had to move. Watson and Rayner responded to this unfortunate outcome by assuring the reader that Albert, like all babies, would have likely developed a similar association anyway out in the "rough and tumble" world.

**MILGRAM'S OBEDIENCE STUDIES**

6 Stanley Milgram was intrigued by the idea of negative obedience, where people are guided by authoritative demands to commit immoral acts (Milgram, 1963). He was inspired mainly by war crimes and wanted to gather clues about what makes a person obey so blindly – is it an innate character flaw? Or, can anyone be induced to hurt or even kill someone else simply due to authoritative demands? Milgram devised an ingenious setup to test obedience in humans.

7 After gathering a sample of 40 males with various career backgrounds, he told the participants that they were participating in research on the effects of punishment on memory. In each session, the participant was always assigned the role of the teacher while a confederate played the learner and was

ultimately strapped to an electric chair that could be controlled by the teacher in another room. The two communicated via an intercom system.

8 Although all participants believed the setup to be genuine, the learner would never receive any actual shocks. The participant's job was to read to the learner a list of words and wait for him to repeat them in order. If he was incorrect or did not respond he was given a shock. Each time this occurred, the participant had to administer a fake shock that was 15 volts more intense than the last (the maximum was 450 volts). The shock machine was labeled with phrases such as "Danger: Severe Shock". If a participant expressed any concern during the session, the experimenter urged him to continue by saying, for example, "It is absolutely essential that you continue." However, participants were told at the beginning of the experiment that they were free to leave whenever they wished to **do so**.

9 Much to the experimenters'—and later, the public's surprise—30 of the participants continued to follow the procedure and administer shocks until 450 volts was reached. Although Milgram expressed concern for the wellbeing of his participants, he decided not to terminate the study on the basis that each prior participant seemed to recover relatively well after his session ended. Regardless of the apparent lack of permanent harm, Milgram's obedience studies were disconcerting to many psychologists, such as Baumrind (1964). Baumrind felt that Milgram never should have deceived his participants. Regarding this criticism, Milgram noted that he chose not to reveal the true hypothesis because it could have biased the results; indeed, of all the people he explained the study to outside of the laboratory, not one imagined himself or herself giving the 450 volt shock (Milgram, 1963). Because he was unable to conceive of any harm occurring to the participants, he believed that his methods were ethically sound (Milgram, 1965).

## STANFORD'S PRISON EXPERIMENTS

10 Zimbardo and his research assistants, Haney and Banks, were also curious about criminal behavior. They wanted to know if the actions of prisoners and guards are the result of personality flaws or the prison situation itself. The experimenters created a simulated prison environment at Stanford University and carefully selected 24 middle-class, white male college students who scored high on assessments of stability and maturity and low on crime involvement. They randomly assigned each person to be a prisoner or a guard and gave them considerable monetary compensation for each day they stayed in the study (it was originally planned to last for two weeks). Participants were given no guidelines for how to behave, with the exception of the guards who were told not to use physical abuse under any circumstances.

11 Within only two days, the participants literally became the roles they were assigned. The guards began to act very harshly and sometimes even cruel to the prisoners, forcing them to earn their privileges with good behavior; the definitions of good behavior varied from guard to guard, however. While no one was physically hurt during the study, a few of the prisoners displayed extreme emotional reactions that warranted termination of the study after only six days. After the experiment was over, the researchers went to great lengths to inform participants of the nature of the study as well as allow them to communicate with each other about their feelings. As in Milgram's studies, none of the participants considered, in retrospect, that the study adversely impacted their lives, and **many** found the experience to be beneficial. Furthermore, after psychological examinations, none were found to have suffered lingering psychological problems.

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**NAME & SURNAME:**  
**STUDENT NUMBER:**  
**ID/PASSPORT NO:**  
**SIGNATURE:**

**READING 1: CONTROVERSIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH METHODS**

**Answer the following questions according to the reading text. The questions are in the same order as the relevant information appears in the text. For all of the questions, you just need to copy directly from the text; you do not need to paraphrase or change the form of any words. Give precise answers and write the answer only; do not write anything else.**

**QUESTIONS**

1. When psychology initially emerged as a field, not much attention was paid to \_\_\_\_\_ since \_\_\_\_\_ was/were not adopted much in research.
2. As little Albert began to fear the white rat, upon seeing the animal, he reacted by \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Watson and Rayner's (1920) study was problematic from an ethical point of view: The participant was not asked for his consent and the researchers ended the study without \_\_\_\_\_ Albert's fear of the white rat.
4. Milgram's study on obedience was driven by his aim to find out whether it was \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ that led people to do harm to others in war.
5. The participants in Milgram's (1963) study were manipulated into believing that the study aimed to investigate \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Milgram felt that if he had not deceived the participants, this would possibly have \_\_\_\_\_ . That was why he had not informed them about the real aim of the study.
7. In the Stanford Prison Experiment, the participants were forbidden from engaging in \_\_\_\_\_ no matter what.
8. In the Stanford Prison Experiment, \_\_\_\_\_ by some of the participants required that the study be ended earlier than previously planned.

**References:**

What does each of the following words refer to in the text?

9. do so (par. 8): \_\_\_\_\_

10. many (par. 11): \_\_\_\_\_

## ANSWER KEY

1. When psychology initially emerged as a field, not much attention was paid to **ethics** since **social manipulations** was/were not adopted much in research.
2. As little Albert began to fear the white rat, upon seeing the animal, he reacted by **withdrawal**.
3. Watson and Rayner's (1920) study was problematic from an ethical point of view: The participant was not asked for his consent and the researchers ended the study without **extinguishing** Albert's fear of the white rat.
4. Milgram's study on obedience was driven by his aim to find out whether it was **an innate character flaw** or **authoritative demands** that led people to do harm to others in war.
5. The participants in Milgram's (1963) study were manipulated into believing that the study aimed to investigate **the effects of punishment on memory**.
6. Milgram felt that if he had not deceived the participants, this would possibly have **biased the results**. That was why he had not informed them about the real aim of the study.
7. In the Stanford Prison Experiment, the participants were forbidden from engaging in **physical abuse** no matter what. ,
8. In the Stanford Prison Experiment, **extreme emotional reactions** by some of the participants required that the study be ended earlier than previously planned.

## References:

What does each of the following words refer to in the text?

9. do so (par. 8): **leave**
10. many (par. 11): **participants**