APPLICATION FOR REVIEW OF COURSE PROJECTS BY PSYCHOLOGY COMMITTEE ON ETHICS OF UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH ON HUMAN SUBJECTS

This application applies to all courses requiring undergraduate research projects involving human subjects as part of the course, excluding thesis (4D6) or individual lab study (4Q3, 4QQ3) or research projects associated with a practicum (3I06).

Please complete, and submit 6 paper copies or 1 paper copy plus email attachment to Chair of Ethics Committee, D. Maurer, PC-306, maurer@mcmaster.ca

DATE: Dec.20/99

Course Name: Intellectual Development

Course No.: Psych 3II3

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<tr>
<th>INSTRUCTOR(S)</th>
<th>ADDRESS</th>
<th>PHONE NO.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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Please refer to the Human Ethics Guidelines for Undergraduate in Psychology (http://www.science.mcmaster.ca/Psychology/ethics/guidelines) prior to completion of form.

Has the protocol of this course project been approved by McMaster University Research Ethics Board, the Psychology or other Ethics Committee where the course will occur? (YES / NO) √

Name of Instructor who received approval: ____________________________

Ethics Board: ____________________________ Date of approval: ___________

Contact Person: ____________________________ Approval Number: ___________

Address: ____________________________ (if any)

Phone: ____________________________ Email: ____________________________

(YES / NO)

Is this a renewal request? √

For Ethics Committee only:

Course ____________________________ Instructor ____________________________

Course Protocol Approval number ____________________________

Signature of Psychology Ethical Committee Chair ____________________________

In submitting this application, I certify that the information accurately describes how the class projects will be conducted.

SIGNATURE: ____________________________

Instructor
Instructors must provide a written statement of instructions that will be given to student researchers for each type of project (or set of projects) that the students will be conducting.

These instructions should include the following information:
1. the purpose of the project
2. recruitment method including relationship of subjects to student researchers;
3. procedure for obtaining subjects’ consent (append model consent form);
4. procedure for dealing with subjects who wish to withdraw from research project;
5. the research protocol;
6. the debriefing procedure (append any debriefing statement);
7. description of possible risks (physical, psychological or social) to subjects and ways to minimize them;
8. provisions to guarantee data confidentiality;

Describe the procedures that will be followed to promote compliance with these instructions (e.g., lecture on ethical issues, instructor’s approval of each student protocol, sanctions for noncompliance).

If relevant, Instructor must also provide written evidence granting approval to carry out student research projects involving agencies other than those within McMaster University (e.g. a school, daycare center).

1. Do any of the procedures involve contact of the body (e.g. touching, attachment to instruments, collection of bodily substances)?
2. Do the procedures involve the administration of any substance?
3. Is there any physical risk?
4. Is there any psychological risk? (Might a subject feel demeaned, embarrassed, worried or upset?)
   Could the subject become fatigued or distressed?
5. Is there any social risk? (Possible loss of status, privacy, and/or reputation?)
6. Are the risks similar to those encountered by the subjects in every day life?
7. Are the subjects competent adults freely-living in the community-at-large?
8. Are the research methods non-invasive?
9. Is any deception involved?
10. Are subjects informed of the right to withdraw at any time during the research project?
11. Are the data anonymous?
   If not, will the data be treated as confidential?
12. Will subjects be fully debriefed at the end of the procedure?

Please Note
It is not necessary to prepare a separate protocol for projects with similar risks to subjects and similar methodology (e.g. recruitment, consent procedures, research tools and protocols).
I. **Purpose.** To give students direct experience with young children’s understanding of conservation and with the sensitivity of different testing methods. Conservation is the realization that physical properties of objects (such as their number and weight) are unchanged by transformations like pouring and rearrangement.

**Recruitment.** Each pair of students is responsible for recruiting one child for the project. The appropriate age range is 4 to 8 years of age, depending on the type of conservation the students decide to test. Students will be instructed to first approach the parents with an explanation of the project, and, only if the parents agree, to ask the child whether he or she wishes to participate. The project may go forward only if both the parent and the child agree. The instructions for the project also warn students that a friend or relative might feel obliged to agree and suggest approaches to reduce that feeling of obligation.

**Consent.** The procedure for obtaining consent is described above. The parent’s consent will be documented on a signed consent form. The model form to be given to the students is attached.

**Withdrawal.** Students will be instructed to immediately discontinue the testing if the child or parent requests it.

**Research Protocol.** Each project will involve a pair of students. They will be responsible for designing their own research protocol and having it approved by the teaching assistant or instructor in advance of testing. In every case, the protocols will involve presenting an array of objects to the child and asking questions about the array as it undergoes various transformations. A typical protocol might involve testing conservation of number by asking the child whether the number of objects in two rows are equal when they are lined up in 1:1 correspondence and whether the number remains the same when one of the rows is lengthened by the experimenter or by a naughty teddy bear who likes to mess things up. Testing will take place in the child’s home with the parent present, unless the parent prefers that the testing be in another location. Testing will take approximately 1 hour and may be distributed over more than one session.

**Debriefing.** Students will be instructed to give the parent a full oral debriefing, and to give an explanation to the child that is appropriate to the child’s cognitive level.

**Risks.** There are no foreseeable risks. If the child becomes fatigued or appears stressed, the testing will be stopped immediately and resumed at a later time only with the consent of both the parent and the child.

**Confidentiality.** Students will be instructed to keep the data confidential.

For each project, students will be required to fill out an Ethics Statement, and to delay testing until it is approved by the instructor or teaching assistant. Attached are the instructions for students on filling out the Ethics Statement and the description of the project that they will receive.
Instructions to Students

Case Study for Psychology 3II3

You are to work with another member of the class in completing a case study of one child, aged 3 to 6, to determine the child’s understanding of conservation. Your assessment should include, but not be limited to, testing modelled on the classic work of Piaget, which is described extensively in Chapter 4 of the textbook and some of which you will be reading for a tutorial. If you were to limit your testing to Piaget’s methods, however, you would be likely to underestimate the child’s understanding. Therefore, you are to also use alternative methods that decrease memory demands, confusing language, and misleading perceptual cues. Some ideas for alternative methods are contained in the textbook and in the readings for some of the tutorials. These are just a beginning, and you will need to search the literature for other ideas. A useful tool is Psych Index, the computerized index to the psychological literature.

The completed study is to be written up as a case report. It should include: (1) an introduction concisely summarizing the previous literature that guided your choice of methods, (2) a section on method and results describing completely but concisely what you did and how the child responded, (3) and a discussion that draws conclusions about the child’s understanding of conservation that you justify by reference to the results. The discussion should also describe possible alternative interpretations of the results and make suggestions for improving the case study. The entire paper must be typed and double-spaced. You should attach the signed consent form.

Before you begin your testing with the child, you must hand in a typed Ethics Statement following the course guidelines and including the consent form you plan to use. Your Ethics Statement and consent form must be approved by your teaching assistant or Dr. Maurer before you begin testing. Projects for which the Ethics Statement and consent form were not approved in advance will not be accepted for final marking. Guidelines for completing the Ethics Statement and a sample consent form will be distributed in class and posted on LearnLink.

You should work on this project with a fellow classmate, submitting a joint Ethics Statement, planning the project together, and doing the testing together. However, you should write your final report individually. You may brainstorm in larger groups, but there should be no more than two of you present with the child. More than this is likely to be intimidating for the child.

Each group of two is responsible for finding a child for this project and recruiting participation in an ethical manner. This requires describing the project first to a parent so that he/she can make an informed choice about whether or not to allow the child to participate. Because you may have a personal relationship with the parent, it is important to give the parent ways to refuse that are not socially awkward, such as saying that you realize that the child or parent may be too busy and, if so, it’s no problem because you have other options. Once the parent agrees, you also need to explain the project to the child and get his/her assent. You will need to document the parent’s consent with a signed consent form. Most parents and children will enjoy participating in these projects – especially if you approach them sensitively and respectfully.
Guidelines to students for filling out the Ethics Statement
Students will be asked to fill out the parts in plain type. The comments in italics are meant as guidelines.

1. Summary of Proposed Research

a) State the purpose of the research.

One short paragraph about the purpose of your particular case study.

b) Describe in detail what will happen from the subject’s perspective in layman’s terms.

Your plan for testing described from the child’s point of view. In your description, indicate that it may need to be flexible, depending on the child’s response.

Do any of the procedures involve contact with the body (e.g., touching, attachment to instruments, collection of specimens)? Does the study involve the administration of any substances?

Design your procedures so that the answer to both questions is NO.

2. Subjects Involved in the Research

a) Describe the salient characteristics of subjects – age range, sex, institutional affiliation, or where located.

Give the child’s age and sex and indicate whether your contact with them is through an institution such as a day care centre.

b) Describe how the subject is to be recruited.

How did you/will you contact the parent(s) of the potential subject?
What will you explain to the parent(s)?
How will you get permission to test the child?

c) Describe the relationship between the investigator(s) and the subject?

Are they your relatives? Do you coach the child’s soccer team? Are you in the same church?
Are they friends of friends? Is it your own child? If there is a close relationship, what precautions have you taken to be sure the parents do not feel coerced to volunteer?

d) Will subjects be compensated for their participation? If so, how?

You might want to reward the child with a token gift such as stickers, although praise is often sufficient. Avoid food rewards and excessive inducements – an inducement that might lead the child to “play” even though he or she would rather not. If the parent incurs expenses, it is appropriate to offer reimbursement.

3. Estimate of the Risks of the Proposed Research

a) Is there any physical risk?
b) Is there any psychological risk? (Might a subject feel demeaned, embarrassed, worried, or upset? Could subjects be fatigued or stressed?)
c) Is there any social risk? (Possible loss of status, privacy, and/or reputation?)
d) Do you see any chance that subjects might be harmed in any way?
e) Is any deception involved?
f) Are the risks different from those encountered by the subjects in everyday life? If the answer is YES to any of the questions under Section 3, please explain why alternative approaches involving less risk cannot be used. Procedures for reversing reversible harm should be stated.

    Design a procedure so that the answer to all of the questions listed above is NO. It is possible that a child might become fatigued or appear stressed, in which case you will stop your testing immediately and resume at a later time only with the consent of both the parent and the child.

4. Estimate of the Benefits of the Proposed Research

a) What are the likely benefits to the student researcher, the subjects, the scientific community, and/or society that would justify asking subjects to participate?

    An appropriate approach would be: There are no personal benefits to the child and no benefit to the scientific community or society because my research will be based on well-known findings. The research will contribute to my education by...... It may also contribute to the parent’s understanding of their child’s development.

5. Plan for Obtaining Informed Consent

a) Attach a description of the verbal explanation to be given to subjects before they consent to participation. Attach the consent form (see instructions.).

    I will explain to the parents that...
    I will explain to the child that...

b) Are the subjects minors or for other reasons not competent to consent?

    Yes.

If so, describe the alternate source of consent.

    Consent will be obtained from a parent or guardian. The child’s assent will also be obtained.

c) Do the subjects have the right to withdraw at any time during the research project? If so, explain below.

    Design your procedure so that the answer to c is Yes.

d) How and when are subjects to be informed of this right?

    Model answer: Before I start the testing, I will explain to the child that we are going to play a game and if at any time he/she wants to stop, just say so, and we will stop immediately.

e) What procedures will be followed for subjects who wish to withdraw at any point during the study?

    Testing should be stopped immediately. Explain what else you will do to make the child and parent comfortable about having stopped the testing: Will you thank them? Give the child the same prize as if the testing had been completed?
6. Steps to be Taken to Ensure Confidentiality of Data

a) Will the data be treated as confidential? If yes, explain the steps that will be taken to ensure confidentiality of the data.

   You should answer YES. Steps you might mention: The subject’s name will not be used in discussing the results orally or in the written report. Notes from the testing will not include the subject’s name.

b) If the data are not anonymous, where will the data be stored, and who will supervise access to the data?

   The data will be stored in our rooms. No one besides my teaching assistant and instructor will be given access. (The only data that will be identifiable are the signed consent forms.)

7. Subject Debriefing

Will subjects be debriefed fully at the end of the research project? If yes, explain how this will be done. If no, explain why not.

   The parents will be fully debriefed; the child will not, because he/she would not be able to understand a full debriefing. Nevertheless, I will offer an explanation to the child that is appropriate for his/her cognitive level. Specifically, I will tell the parents……. I will tell the child……...

In submitting this form, I certify that the information provided accurately describes how the research will be conducted.

Signature__________________________
Dear Parent/Guardian:

In fulfillment of a requirement for a course on Intellectual Development, we are conducting a case study of one child’s understanding of conservation (e.g., the concept that the quantity of liquid in a glass does not change when it is poured into a different container). We would like to observe your child. We will be using a variety of games to test his/her understanding of …(e.g., liquid quantity). For example, we will show him/her…(e.g., two glasses with the same amount of liquid) and ask him/her to tell us about… (e.g., whether they are the same, which has more, which a puppet would prefer to have). The tasks should take about… and can be distributed across more than one session. Testing will take place in your home at a time that is convenient for you and your child.

There is no direct benefit to you or your child from participating, but it will help us to better understand child development. There are no known risks or discomfort associated with performing the tasks and we believe that your child would enjoy playing these games. Your child can choose to stop playing at any time. In appreciation for participation, we will be giving your child … (e.g. a sticker), even if he/she decides to stop playing the games before they are complete. All responses will be kept confidential and your child’s name will not be included in our notes or our write-up of the results. (If you plan to make any kind of recording, mention that here.)

If you have any questions or concerns, you may contact us or our research supervisor, Dr. Daphne Maurer, at the numbers listed at the top of this page.

If you wish to assist us by allowing your child to take part in the study if he/she so wishes, please sign the consent form below. A copy of this form will be yours to keep.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Sign your name here

I have read the description of the case study and as the parent/guardian of ____________- consent to his/her participation.

Date____________________________                    Signature__________________________
II. Procedures to be Followed to Promote Compliance with the Instructions

The written instructions for the case study and Ethics Statement contain commentary on ethical recruitment of subjects, obtaining and monitoring consent, avoiding risks, debriefing, and keeping data confidential. Students are required to write an Ethics Statement and consent form for each individual case project. The teaching assistants are to approve the Ethics Statement and consent form before any project can begin. The project of any student who does not follow this procedure will not be accepted for marking.

The instructor will also devote 1-2 hours of class time to the ethical issues germane to this project. As well, students are required to work in pairs, in the hope that any student who is weak in ethical sensitivity may be working with a student who is stronger in this domain.