

Assent Form for Minor (under age 18) Mercer University Students Who Participate in Research in the Department of Psychology

The Psychological major is unique among the sciences in that students can learn about research in the discipline by direct experience. Students who are under 18 years of age need to have permission from a parent or guardian to participate in departmental research projects at Mercer University. Also, the Department of Psychology asks that you provide assent, to voluntarily participate in research projects, once your parents have given permission. When your parents have signed the parental consent form, and you have signed the assent form, return both forms to your instructor. You will then be allowed to participate in all research projects sponsored by the Department of Psychology. Please read the information below to understand what you will be asked to do.

Purpose of the Research

One purpose of encouraging students to participate in research conducted through the Psychology Department is to provide exposure to the methods of psychological research. Research is a critical element for arriving at an understanding of psychology as a discipline as well as understanding the ethical principles associated with human research. Research participation also serves to familiarize undergraduate students with faculty, and the various research programs being carried out within the department.

For this reason, it is the policy of the Department of Psychology that each student enrolled in Introduction to Psychology (PSY 101) is required to participate in department-sponsored research. Students will receive 1 "research credit" for each half hour of participation. For the same reason, each student must participate in at least two of these studies regardless of the number of earned points. Students who complete only one study cannot earn more than 2 credits for the study. *If for any reason a student would prefer an alternative to participating in experiments (e.g., write a scholarly research paper) the option should be discussed with the course instructor who will then approve the alternative form of credit.* This requirement will constitute up to three percentage points of the student's grade in Psychology 101.

Procedures

You will be asked by your class instructor to provide assent before you sign up for any research projects. The term "assent" means that you will be asked to voluntarily participate in the research. If you have no objections to participating, sign the assent form and return it to your instructor. The assent form will be kept by instructor for that semester. Each semester a new assent form will be presented to you for your signature and a parental consent form will be provided for your parents or guardians to sign until you become 18 years old.

When a particular research project begins, the researcher will explain the procedures of the study, and then provide you with a copy of the goals and objects of the research project. The researcher will also explain and provide you with the necessary forms for you to receive your credit. If you have no objections to participating after you have read over the goals and objects of the project, you will sign the informed consent form and return it to the researcher.

After returning the informed consent form to the researcher, you will be given a copy of the form to retain for your records. You should treat this copy as you would any other important document that you have signed.

Some studies will call for information such as attitudes, demographic characteristics, behavioral history that is to be provided by you. In other studies, the data will be collected in an anonymous manner. Most importantly, in all cases data collected will be used only for the purpose of research, and will be held in strict confidence.

Potential Risks or Discomforts

There may also be studies that involve some degree of stress. The researcher will inform the subjects of this at the beginning of the study.

In some studies, students may be misled about the true purpose of the study or some of its procedures. This deception will be explained to them immediately after the study in a process called debriefing. In other studies, they may be recorded on video or audiotape with or without their prior knowledge. In both cases, it is necessary to conduct the research in this

manner because people might act unnaturally if they knew they were being recorded or knew the real purpose of the research project. In all cases, they will be informed immediately after they complete the study and be given the option of having their data, audiotape, or videotape erased.

Potential Benefits of the Research

A major benefit of participating in psychology studies is to provide students with first-hand experiences in the research process while providing an opportunity for the student to understand how psychological research is conducted from beginning to end. The studies are helpful for students who move into our honors program. Their experience in participating in various laboratory research projects provides them with essential background information that can help guide them in determining the kinds of problems they elect to focus on and explore during their undergraduate career, and it facilitates the selection of advisors for graduate projects and thesis. The experience most frequently serves to influence course selection. Students often find certain types of studies intriguing and wish to further pursue their interest by taking courses relevant to this research in psychology.

Confidentiality and Data Storage

The data collected from studies will be stored securely and kept confidential. Authorized persons from Mercer University, members of the Institutional Review Board, and study sponsors, if any may review or audit studies in which your research data are stored. All authorized persons will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law. Much of the data collected will be anonymously given, but in all cases information given will be used only for the purpose of research, and will be held in strict confidence. All publications that may derive from the data collected will exclude any information that will make it possible to identify you as a subject. All data collected will remain in the Department of Psychology for 3 years after the completion of the study.

Participation and Withdrawal

If you do not wish to participate in these experiments when the assent form is presented in class you must inform your class instructor in a sufficient amount of time early in the semester so the instructor has enough time to provide alternate assignments that are equivalent in time and effort and have the same educational benefit as research participation.

When you show up for the experiment the researcher will tell you how to withdraw from the study. In most cases, you may simply leave the room. It is your right to refuse to participate. If you object to participating before the session begins you should not sign the informed consent form. Instead, you must inform the researcher of your decision not to participate and the researcher will ensure that you will receive credit for meeting your appointment. Those who choose not to participate will receive only one (1) research credit, regardless of the regular length of the study.

Any student may feel free to leave any study during its progress and still receive at least partial credit for participation. Those students who have a serious objection to participating in research will not be required to do so. However, such objections do not negate the critical importance of understanding research as it relates to behavior.

Questions about the Research

If you have any questions about the research, please speak with the Keegan Greenier, at 2458. If you have questions regarding human subject research at Mercer University you may contact the IRB Chair at (478) 301-4101.

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and these have been answered to my satisfaction. My signature below indicates my voluntary agreement to participate in the Psychology Department research project(s).

Name (Print) _____

Name Signature _____

Date _____