

JERHRE NOTES

Skills for Solving Ethical Problems in Human Research

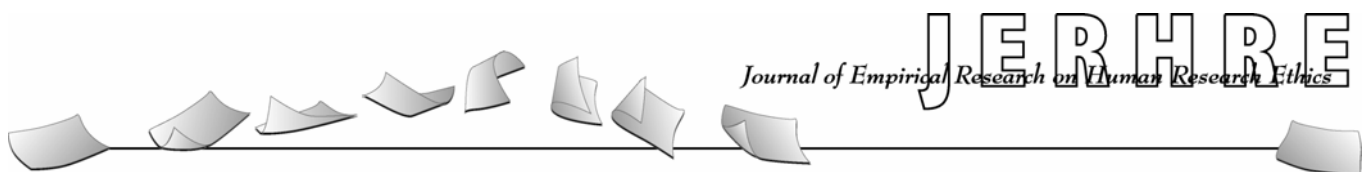
Is It Beneficial to Ask About Trauma?

Are trauma survivors too vulnerable to be studied? Is participation in trauma-related research as upsetting and/or beneficial? Should sensitive details be studied via person-to-person interview or anonymous written questionnaire? Do demographic factors matter?

When 533 adults were recruited for 4 studies (either based on prior trauma history or for “a study on stress and feelings”) and queried about past traumatic exposure, psychological symptoms, and their reactions to participating in the study:

- Community and undergraduate populations rated their research experience as beneficial (e.g., providing closure, insight, good feelings).
- Persons interviewed face-to-face about trauma-related emotions (shame, fear, rage) reported greater benefit than those responding to written questionnaires.
- Higher levels of unexpected emotional reactions were associated with psychological symptoms (e.g., depression, anxiety), but unrelated to number of trauma exposures.
- Degree of negative emotional reaction (e.g., upset, crying) was positively associated with engagement (e.g. perceptions of the value of research, beliefs about ability to stop the research) and personal benefit (e.g., insight, closure) from participation.
- Belonging to an ethnic minority group was positively associated with lower ratings of engagement, but higher personal benefits.
- Younger participants reported less emotional reaction and greater personal benefit.
- Level of education was positively associated with higher engagement, understanding the informed consent, and personal benefit.

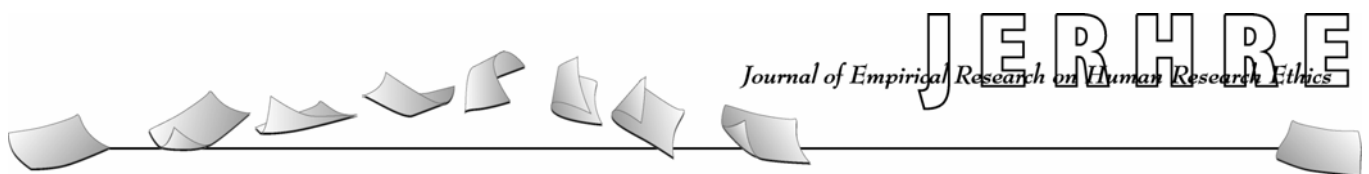
DePrince, A. P., & Chu, A. (2008). Perceived benefits in trauma research: Examining methodological and individual difference factors in responses to research participation, *JERHRE*, 3(1), 35–48. See also Chu, et al, and Schwerdfeger, et al, this issue of *JERHRE*.



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