



## INTRODUCTION TO ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

Activity type Starter

This is an excellent demonstration of ethical issues displayed by Derren Brown. He explores de-individualisation by manipulating an audience into making group decisions that ultimately lead to increasingly more severe negative consequences for the star contestant in a hoax gameshow in which they are participating. The anonymity of the audience is further increased by them making collective decisions whilst wearing masks that hide their faces. At the end of the show they are led to believe that they have contributed to the contestant's potential death so there is an excellent opportunity to discuss the ethics of the show as well.

The programme can be found on 4 On Demand under

Derren Brown/the experiments/remote control (season one episode 2). It is 52 minutes long.

Before watching the programme, ask the students to identify all of the key ethical guidelines (i.e. deception, lack of informed consent, privacy, confidentiality, psychological harm).

After watching the programme, ask the students to write a comment underneath each heading as to how the study broke each of the guidelines.

Also ask the students also consider the wider implications of results to society – e.g. positive and negative consequences of the results.

### Practical use

This can be used as an introduction to socially sensitive research or a consolidation at the end of the topic.

### Additional notes

A suitable follow-up activity would be to have the students practise their research methods skills by writing a debriefing statement for the study.

## SOCIALLY SENSITIVE RESEARCH

Activity type Idea

Give the students a definition of socially sensitive research and then ask students to explain how the topic areas below are socially sensitive by focusing in particular on three factors:

- (i) The implications for the groups of people the results represent.
- (ii) What would the research be used for?
- (iii) Potential issues with the validity of the research.

### Topic areas

Research into homosexuality that classified it as a mental illness.

Research into the genetic basis of intelligence such as Sir Cyril Burt's (1955) research which suggested that intelligence was hereditary.

Research into race differences in intelligence, e.g. Jensen's (1969) finding that black people scored 10–15 points lower on IQ tests.

### Practical use

This is best done as an introductory discussion activity. Students are given a topic area and then work in groups and explain how the research is socially sensitive.

### Additional notes

A suitable extension activity would be to have students think of their own studies and explain why they are socially sensitive.

#### References

- Burt, C. L. (1955). The evidence for the concept of intelligence. *British Journal of Psychology*, 25, 158–177.
- Jensen, A. R. (1969.) How much can we boost IQ and scholastic achievement? *Harvard Educational Review*, 39, 1–123.



## Answers

Homosexuals could be discriminated against as they are viewed as clinically abnormal. Results could be used by psychiatrists or homophobes to attempt to cure them through things like electric shock treatment. The research would lack temporal validity as it was based on previous versions of the classification systems.

The 11 plus test was devised to ascertain who was intelligent enough to go to grammar school. This test disadvantaged a generation of children and was based

on flawed methods of assessment (IQ tests assess experience as much as intelligence and students can be trained to pass). The research lacked validity as Burt was found to have falsified his results.

This was used by racists to justify discrimination against black people in terms of jobs and education opportunities. There were other factors that could have explained their lower scores aside from genes, such as social disadvantages and cultural unfamiliarity with tests. Thus the scores lacked validity.

## WHERE WOULD WE BE IF IT WEREN'T FOR ... ?

**handout number****4.13**

Activity type    Evaluation

Students work in groups to explain how society would have been different if one of the pieces of research on the accompanying handout had not been carried out. In order to do this, they need to think of both the positive and negative consequences on society that the research

has produced. See model answers to the activity in the Answers section below for examples of how they would do this.

The students could also do the extension task to explain why the research would be classified as socially sensitive.

## Practical use

This can be done as a group activity or as an individual or pairs activity where all of the questions on the handout are completed as opposed to just one.

## Additional notes

This provides a good foundation to exam questions where students will have to discuss ethical implications of socially sensitive research. It provides a good counterpoint to the view that the research should not have been carried out given how unethical it was.

Students can find out a little more about Rosenhan's research from this 7-minute clip [www.youtube.com/watch?v=D8OxdGV\\_7lo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D8OxdGV_7lo) and about Selye's research on page 254.

## Example answers

**1. Bowlby's maternal deprivation hypothesis** – the idea that a child needs a continuous relationship with a mother figure in the first five years of life in order to develop normally. Disruption to this bond through separation from the mother figure can have a negative effect on later social, emotional and intellectual development.

People would not have recognised the negative effects of hospitalisation on a child's emotional well-being. Today parents stay in hospital with their child and this aids the child's recovery.

It challenged women's emancipation because it suggests their place is in the home and they can't have a career.

**2. Milgram's study of obedience** – research found that under certain circumstances people will obey orders to cause someone else harm if instructed to by an authority figure.

People would not have recognised how mindlessly obedient people can be. This has led to society having a different view about why genocide occurs as it not necessarily down to acts carried out by evil people but rather those who are just following orders.

However, it perhaps has also led to people being less inclined to take responsibility for their own actions and instead, blaming those in authority who are responsible for them. For example, teachers receiving the blame when the results of their students are poor.

**3. Loftus's research on eyewitness testimony** – research that found that people's ability to recall crime events accurately was poorer than people thought and was also affected by leading questions and anxiety.

More people would be wrongly convicted due to mistaken eyewitness testimony.



The research would have encouraged police forces to use other more reliable means of evidence such as DNA testing.

4. Rosenhan's 'sane in insane places' study – research that found that a group of normal people who acted like they were mentally ill were all admitted to psychiatric institutions and were kept there from 19 to 52 days despite acting normally as soon as they were admitted.

The classification systems used to diagnose mental illness would not have been as extensively revised so that psychiatrists are now far more thorough when deciding whether somebody should be classified as being mentally ill.

A negative consequence would be that people are potentially less trusting of mental health professionals and are more likely to question the judgements they make.

5. Selye's research on the General Adaptation Syndrome – research that found that rats exposed to stressful situations eventually became ill.

There is a greater recognition in society that stress can lead to illness so people are more likely to have medical check-ups if they do particularly stressful jobs.

A negative implication is that workplaces may experience more employee absence due to doctors signing people off work with stress.

6. The bobo doll study – Bandura found that children exposed to role models being aggressive to a bobo doll also became aggressive themselves.

People would not have recognised that exposure to violent images on TV/films/video games could encourage impressionable young people to imitate them. Nowadays there are age restrictions on aspects of the media that are deemed to have unsuitable content.

A negative consequence of this research is that people are less likely to take responsibility for their own actions if they perform an antisocial act – instead blaming the role models in their lives for acting in a way that could 'lead them astray'.

## SOCIALLY SENSITIVE RESEARCH LADDER WORD

handout number

4.14

Activity type Consolidation

Students need to read the clues and work out what the missing word is or read the sentence and work out what

word has been missed out from the sentence and then write the answers in the grid.

### Practical use

This could be used as a plenary or as a revision exercise or could be set as a piece of homework. An alternative way you could use the sheet is to put the students into

groups and get them to complete against each other with the winner being the group that finish the quickest.

### Additional notes

This could be as an extension activity for students who have finished. Alternatively, you could have the students complete the activity in groups and get them to complete

against each other with the winner being the group that finish it in the fastest time.

### Answers

#### Across

- 1 Who made up the finding that when adverts for Coca-Cola, etc., were flashed up on cinema screens quickly, the sales increased significantly? (7 letters) **Packard**
- 4 Who was publically discredited for doing fraudulent research on IQ that influenced the 11+ exam being introduced? (4) **Burt**
- 6 What kind of testimony has social sensitive research helped by reducing the risk of a miscarriage of justice in the legal system? (10) **Eyewitness**

- 7 & 3 What two psychologists said social sensitive research is described as 'studies in which there are potential consequences or implications either directly for the participants in the research or for the class of individuals represented by research'? (6,7) **Sieber**
- 9 Who said that psychologists may have a social responsibility to carry out research that may be social sensitive? (7) **Aronson**



- 10 & 5 One of the criticisms of socially sensitive research is that has given 'scientific' credence to P\_\_\_\_\_ and D\_\_\_\_\_, e.g. examining racial basis of intelligence. (9,14) **Prejudice**
- 11 & 2 What two psychologists noted that research on 'alternative relationships' had been guilty of a form of heterosexual bias where relationships were compared and judged against heterosexual norms? (9,5) **Kitzinger**
- Down**
- 2 See 11 across **Coyle**
- 3 See 7 across **Stanley**
- 4 Who was an advisor to the World Health Organisation who said in infants, mother love was as important in mental health, as vitamins are in physical health? (6) **Bowlby**
- 5 See 10 across **Discrimination**
- 8 In the race and IQ controversy, who criticised research on race and intelligence on account of its scientific racism? (5) **Gould**