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Philosophy

PROPOSAL Proposal Approval and Rejection Word Count: 513 (2 pages)

Approve or disapprove each proposal and provide your reasons such as costs, benefits and ethical issues raised in relation to your recommendation to Approve or Disapprove.

Psychologists commonly confront ethical issues related to the treatment of participants in research projects. Federal law mandates that behavioral and biomedical research be reviewed by either an Institutional Review Board (IRB) in the case of research with human subjects or an Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) if the research involves animal subjects. This exercise is to heighten awareness of ethical issues posed by psychological research assuming the role of an IRB or IACUC. Discuss the costs, benefits, and ethical issues raised byhypothetical research proposals and deciding whether to approve or reject the research.

I. Introduction

If anyone has ever heard of the Tuskegee experiment, or the human experiment performed on Guatemalans by infecting them with STD’s, one knows the dangers that can be inherent upon experimenting on people—which may abound. This research will delve into whether the proposed research and cost, the experimental group and benefits, and the control group and ethics are balanced in experimenting with human subjects.

II. The Proposed Research and Cost

Your committee is the State University IRB. Dr. Jones is interested in the effect of stress on performance on the McCord Intelligence Test. She feels that the test, which is very widely used in public schools, gives misleadingly low scores to kids under stress.

The proposed research is about how stress affects student performances on the McCord intelligence test. However, one of the difficulties with such a test is the way in which the experiment was conducted. In order to measure stress—instead of having one group told they had failed and having one group told they had passed—that would not have factored in to stress as much as other ways of testing this. For example, the experimental group could have been given various stressing tasks to do before the test—such as writing a timed essay—while the other group, the control group, would not have to write such an essay before being tested. This would more effectively test the results of stress on students taking tests, some of whom may either underperform on assessments or might have anxiety problems. These people tend not to score well.

III. The Experimental Group and Benefits

She wants to divide her subjects (college students) into two groups of 20 each. All subjects will take a bogus pretest and will be given their " results." The experimental group will be told that they failed the test and that it is surprising that they were able to do well enough in high school to get into college.

The benefits of the study do not outweigh potential psychological harm to the experimental group. According to Blaxter et al. (2006), “ At its most basic, the experiment consists of an experimental group which is exposed to the intervention under investigation…” (pp. 75).

IV. The Control Group and Ethics

The control group will be told that they passed the test with flying colors. All of the students will then be given the real McCord IQ test. Dr. Jones

hypothesis is that the experimental group will not do as well on the IQ test as the control group.

The control group is a group which is not affected in the experiment. According to Iversen and Gergen (1997), “ In experiments on human beings, the goal is still to assign people randomly to experimental and control groups…” (pp. 47). Of course, as with any controversial experiment, using people to test out theories is risky and comes with consequences—in this case, some of which might be psychological harm to the participants. According to Bailey (2008), “ There are ethical issues in experiments on people and animals that simply do not arise in experiments on plants or on industrial processes” (pp. 124). For this study, the people are able to be debriefed at the end, ut some people are never told about their participation in such experimentation. According to Banyard and Flanagan (2005), in some experiments, there is “…no possibility of gaining prior consent, nor [is] it possible after the experiment to inform people about the study. This challenges the participants right to autonomy” (pp. 66). Thus, the ethics of giving both groups the same test but telling them that they had performed poorly would not be a good indicator of measuring stress.

V. Conclusion

At the end of the experiment, all students will be debriefed and told that the pretest was not real and explained the true purpose of the study. What issues are raised by this study? Approve or reject.

This proposal was summarily rejected due to the fact that the study would not measure what it is supposed to measure (i. e., stress on the outcome of a test)—and because it had the potential to harm participants

psychologically. Here, a proposal and the cost, the experimental group and the benefits of such a test, and the control group and the ethics of the experiment—were all examined in an attempt to decide whether to approve or reject the proposal.

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