

Discuss the scientific benefits measured against the ethical costs within psychol...

[Sociology](#), [Ethics](#)



Discuss the scientific benefits measured against the ethical costs within psychology. The ethical issues when working with humans is that participants have the right to withdraw, not to be deceived, confidentiality, protection from physical and psychological harm and the right to be debriefed after the study. There are also a number of ethical issues when working with non-human participants within psychology. The first set of ethical issues when working with non-human participants within psychology is the 'three R's' which is to (Refine the study, Reduce the number of animals used and to replace the use of animal with something else). The second set of ethical issues for working with non-human participants within psychology is Bateson's cube; this refers to reducing the degree of suffering for the animal, how effective the quality of the research is and the potential medical benefit that is gained from the research. Aronson argues that all proposals for research should be done on a cost-benefit basis-weighing how much good society will come from the research and how much 'bad' will happen for the participants. The term ethical cost can mean a cost to an individual taking part in research. Examples of this include Milgram's study on obedience. There was a number of ethical costs within Milgram's research, for instance one major ethical cost within Milgram's research is that he failed to protect his participants from both physical and psychological harm. Milgram failed to do so as the participants that took part within Milgram's study experienced severe amounts of physical and psychological harm; two of which had seizures due to the stress. The participants experienced great harm as they were made to believe that they were actually giving the confederate within Milgram's study real electric shocks, when in fact the confederate 'Mr

Wallace' was in fact in on the study. However it can also be argued that there was a number of scientific benefits that were gained from Milgrams study. For instance the main scientific benefit of Milgrams study is that it proved the hypothesis that ' the Germans are different' wrong due to the fact that people will obey a powerful leader when under pressure to do so no matter what. Although a great deal of physical and psychological harm was caused to Milgrams participants, within Milgrams defence it can be argued that Milgram did not anticipate the great deal of stress that was caused and Another example of a study in which a great deal of ethical costs was caused is Zimbardos prison stimulation experiment. Within zimbardos study a great deal of stress was caused to zimbardos participants as zimbardo deceived his participants by not telling them the true aims of the study and also a great deal of physical and psychological harm was caused to zimbardos participants. Zimbardo deceived his participants as zimbardos participants were unaware that they would be ' arrested' during the night which as a result could have been very distressing to the participants and their families. Another ethical issue that was a major concern within zimbardos study was the fact that the participants wanted the study to end due to the fact that they was under so much stress, however zimbardo was so concerned with his role as a prison superintendent that he treated it as if the participants were real prisoners. In addition to this the participants within Zimbardos study was made to do humiliating and degrading tasks such as cleaning toilets. However there was no major scientific benefit that was gained from zimbardos study which in turn shows that the study should have never taken place within the first place. However although a great deal of ethical issues

was experienced from zimbardos study, within zimbardos defence, the study was stopped after 6 days when in turn the study was supposed to last 2 weeks which shows that zimbardo didn't intentionally mean to cause so much stress to his participants. Also within zimbardos defence he debriefed each participant after the study to ensure that they were ok and also offered counselling to his participants to ensure that no permanent harm was caused. Another example of a study where a great deal of ethical issues was caused was within Brady's study on executive monkeys. Brady (1958) conducted a study where he paired 8 rhesus monkeys who he then strapped in chairs, and both of those monkeys receive a 5 milli-amperes electric shock to their feet for half a second unless the conditioned monkey pressed a lever which delayed the shock for 20 seconds. The experiment lasted 6 to 7 months and each day 6 hours would be when the monkeys were being administered the shocks, the other 6 hours the monkeys would be have off periods where they received no shocks. The conditioned monkeys from all 4 pairs died between the 9 to 48 days of the experiment due to developing ulcers from the stress of having to pull the lever. However the control monkeys who were not in charge of pressing the lever did not die. The research found that high levels of stress are dangerous and that there are possibilities that gastrointestinal problems can develop. Although the findings were very successful and showing the effects of stress, we must consider the ethical issues associated with this experiment. The ethical guidelines for research with animals all state that harm is allowed if you have enough of a justification, and if it is necessary to finding the goal of the experiment (Batesons cube), however you're not allowed to keep an animal

in great distress and that particular animal should be euthanized immediately to ensure that no long term permanent problems are caused to the monkeys. Brown argues that researchers sometimes conduct research which appears to be ethical in terms of the costs to the individual, but in fact is harmful to the wider society. An example of this is Jensen's work into IQ and race. Jensen found that black people were on average scoring 15 points less on IQ tests than white people. From these results Jensen concluded that black people were genetically inferior in comparison to white people. However Jensen ignored various problems with the test material he used when he came to the conclusion that black people had lower IQ's. Brown says that the publication of such conclusions was highly damaging to black Americans. Also the costs and benefits of treating people have also been considered. Psychiatrists and psychologists have responsibility to their patients. But therapies such as aversion therapy tend to devalue the patients, as if they were 'helpless victims'. This also applies to Freudian therapy and drug therapy. It leads to the patient conforming to a stereotype of the 'mentally ill'. Some have debated whether it is even ethical for the therapist to have any influence at all over their patients. However, others would argue that patients' lives are immensely benefitted by the therapies that they receive. In conclusion the relative ethical costs and scientific benefits within psychology will continue to be hotly debated. Current concerns include those about genetic research-how ethical is it to know one's chance of contracting a mental disorder and to what use might such knowledge be put? What is clear however is that Psychologists must be eternally vigilant against the chances of the scales tipping too far towards

the 'cost end', people whether individuals in research or society at large matter.