8.9 Ethical Implications of Research Studies and Theory: 30-minute Pack

AQA 7182 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

1 A team proposes studying historical psychiatric case notes from the 1950s to investigate past diagnostic practices for homosexuality. Identify one institutional context concern from Sieber and Stanley that applies to this archival study, and explain it briefly.

(Total for Question 1 is 4 marks)

2 Outline one ethical issue from Sieber and Stanley about the treatment of individual participants that goes beyond standard consent procedures, illustrated with a study on the incarceration experiences of a minority group.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

3 A researcher finds a weak correlation between childhood nutrition and adult cognitive test scores in a large population data set. State three cautions the researcher should include in public communications to avoid misinterpretation.

(Total for Question 3 is 3 marks)

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4 Apply Sieber and Stanley's four categories to the following novel study prompt: a proposed survey asks adults in a city whether they believe members of a named immigrant community are more likely to commit petty crime, and then publishes group-level prevalence estimates. Identify three separate ethical concerns from three different Sieber and Stanley categories, explaining each briefly.

(Total for Question 4 is 6 marks)

5 Explain how historic misuse of psychiatric classification, for example labelling homosexuality as a disorder, illustrates Sieber and Stanley's concern about how findings may be interpreted and applied.

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

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Mark scheme · 8.9 Ethical Implications of Research Studies and Theory: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

identifies an institutional context concern, e.g. that institutional records may reflect past bias and institutional power structures oe	**M1**
explains how this applies: archives may contain biased diagnoses that were produced within discriminatory institutions, not objective truth oe	**A1**
adds consequence: using such records without contextualisation risks legitimising historic abuse or misleading modern readers oe	**A1**
suggests briefly that researchers should acknowledge institutional origins and historic context to avoid harm oe	**A1**

Answer: The institutional context is a concern because psychiatric records reflect the values and power structures of past institutions. Using 1950s case notes without contextualising the institutional bias risks legitimising discriminatory diagnoses and misleading readers; researchers must make the institutional origins explicit to avoid harm.

Question 2

identifies an issue about treatment of participants beyond consent, e.g. retraumatisation, power imbalances, or risks to participants' communities oe	**B1**
applies it to the example: discussing incarceration experiences may retraumatise participants and risk exposing sensitive community details that increase stigma oe	**B1**

Answer: A key concern is retraumatisation and the risk that research reveals sensitive details about individuals or their communities. Studying incarceration experiences may reopen trauma and could expose information that increases stigma for the minority group.

Question 3

states a caution, e.g. note that correlation does not imply causation oe	**M1**
adds a relevant statistical caution, e.g. state the effect size is small and much variance remains unexplained oe	**A1**
suggests a practical caution, e.g. warn against using the finding to generalise to individuals or to justify policy without further evidence oe	**A1**

Answer: E.g. emphasise that correlation does not imply causation, report that the effect size is small and that most variance is unexplained, and warn against using the finding to make claims about individuals or justify policy without more evidence.

Question 4

identifies first ethical concern from one category, e.g. research question itself: asking whether a community is more criminal may legitimise prejudice oe	**M1**
explains consequence: the question frames the community as suspect and may increase stigma or hate, even before data are collected oe	**A1**
identifies second ethical concern from another category, e.g. interpretation and application: publishing prevalence estimates could be misused by media or policymakers to justify discriminatory measures oe	**M1**
explains consequence: officials might use the figures to target policing or restrict services, and the public may generalise from group statistics to individuals oe	**A1**
identifies an additional procedural institutional or participant-treatment concern, e.g. the institutional context might be a police funded study raising conflicts of interest oe	**M1**
explains why this matters: police funding could bias study aims or dissemination, and participants or communities may be harmed by institutional motives oe	**A1**

Answer: Examples: 1) Research question itself: asking whether a named immigrant community is more likely to commit petty crime frames them as suspect and can legitimise prejudice, increasing stigma. 2) Interpretation and application: publishing prevalence estimates risks misuse by media or policymakers to justify discriminatory policing or exclusion, and the public may unfairly generalise to individuals. Also the institutional context matters if the study is funded by police, which could bias aims and increase harm to the community.

Question 5

identifies that past psychiatric classifications were used to justify discrimination and policy against groups oe	**M1**
explains that such classifications were framed as scientific authority, which made public and institutional discrimination seem justified oe	**A1**
links this to Sieber and Stanley: shows how interpretation and application of findings can create social harm beyond the study itself oe	**A1**
may note the lasting consequences, e.g. stigma, legal restrictions, and slow social change even after scientific reclassification oe	**A1**

Answer: Labelling homosexuality as a disorder was interpreted as scientific endorsement of discrimination, helping to justify legal and social exclusion. This exemplifies Sieber and Stanley's worry that research and classification can be applied in ways that harm groups, producing long lasting stigma and policy consequences beyond the original research.

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