

**Essay title:** Discuss the ethical implications of research studies and theory, including reference to social sensitivity. (16 marks)

Ethical considerations are involved at every stage of the research process in psychology, not only at the moment of actually conducting the research procedure.

Sieber and Stanley outlined four aspects of the research process that require ethical consideration. Firstly, the research question should not add to any prevailing prejudice or stereotype, for example, the belief (by some people) that homosexuality is abnormal. Secondly, the information obtained should be treated with confidentiality before, during and after the research process. Thirdly, if the research is being funded by the government or an institution, the researcher should ensure that the data is not misused in anyway. Finally, the researchers should ensure that the interpretation of the data or findings has no impact for the participants involved, or the group of people that those participants represent. According to Sieber and Stanley, if researchers follow these considerations then the research is less likely to have any social consequence on the participants involved and the group of people the participants represent.

*A well-detailed paragraph detailing a theory of social sensitivity.*

Because of the problems associated with socially sensitive research, it is not sufficient to simply safeguard the interests of the participants taking part in the research. There is also the potential for an indirect impact on the participant's family and co-workers, and therefore it is important for researchers to consider the wider implications of their research. Current ethical guidelines are focused on the direct effects of research practice on participants, but may not address the other ways that research might inflict harm on people in society. For example, the current ethical guidelines do not require researchers to consider how their findings may be used by other people or institutions to form and/or shape public social policy. Sieber and Stanley recommend that researchers should consider this when interpreting and applying their findings, to ensure that psychological research does no indirect harm to other members of society. Furthermore, because many marginalised groups (such as those with disabilities, the elderly, and the economically disadvantaged) are largely excluded from

*This is a good evaluation point. An example of how public policy might be shaped would have developed this point.*

*While this is a good evaluation point overall, an example of how these marginalised group could be affected*

research, they may in some way be harmed by its conclusions and application.

*would have been useful.*

The issues with conducting socially sensitive research, have led some psychologists to suggest that we should simply avoid conducting such research: that researchers should avoid examining sensitive topics, including: race, gender and sexuality. Some psychologists believe that such research could have a negative impact for the participants. However, this would probably leave researchers with nothing but trivial questions to investigate. A more acceptable solution might be for psychologists to engage more actively with policy makers after the publication of their findings to help reduce the likelihood that data is misused and to ensure that evidence-based research is used in socially sensitive ways.

*An example of where research has had a negative impact would be good here.*

[445 words]

Examiner style comments: **Mark band 3**

While the knowledge is generally well-detailed and accurate, it was limited to just Sieber and Stanley's theory and could have considered other ethical implications/consideration. The evaluation is mostly effective. However further examples would have improved many of the points, and the quantity of evaluation was limited overall.