Student’s Name September 13, 2015

Social Psychology Professor’s Name

Reading Question: Kelman

I was taught in my Introduction to Psychological Research class that the code of ethics the Institutional Review Board (IRB) uses for psychologist looking to do a research study involving people, states that the welfare of the participants must be maintained. Along with protecting research participants' welfare the IRB also makes sure that all participants are fit to give consent and are sufficiently debriefed once the study is concluded. This is relevant because for much of what Social Psychologist want to study there needs to some secrecy from the participants. If participants know too much information about the study the results and observations the researchers collect as data could be tainted by participates consciously, or unconscious having self-fulfilled prophecies, placebo effects, or modified behaviors that is counter to their natural behavioral inclinations. However, Herbert C. Kelman; a Social Psychologist has taken on the task of questioning the necessity of this practice and highlighting the potential adverse effects it could have on the field of psychology and on the participants themselves.

There are three main concerns that Kelman has with deceit being used by researchers and they are the ethics behind it, belief that deceit is becoming too engrained into research designs just for it for fun of it, and finally; that as society (i.e. social psychologists' study participants) become more aware of the deceitful ways of psychology researchers it could negatively affect the publics' image of psychologists and ultimately the reliability of any data they collect during their studies. Kelman illustrated his concern through using well known studies from the past as evidence.

With the combination of my knowledge on the basic ethical guidelines the Internal Review Board holds as their standards along with Kelman's argument against using/ limiting deceit in social psychology studies, "Would I approve Milgram's study on obedience"? I would. What would be an alternative method? lf Milgram and his team were completely forward with participants that they were studying obedience to see whether Nazi soldier were really evil or just following orders, would that have yielded reliable results? Who wants to find out/ let the world know that they could have been convinced by Hitler to help kill millions of people? That information would make participants in the study modify of their conduct to give people the best impression of themselves as possible. The design of Milgram's study didn't inflict harm on the participants ...it may have merely hurt their egos. Social Psychologists' job is to understand human behavior as it is influenced by society. Milgram's study design accurately mimicked on a small scale how someone could be convinced to inflict harm on others in a realistic situation.

Either way people will be offended by findings or find some way to deny the reliability of the study's conclusions because of lack of hard evidence showing how your average citizen could fall into the trap of being convinced to intentionally inflicted harm on others. Should we as a society remain ill-informed on the true nature of humans in order to maintain the false belief many have of themselves as being perfect? I personally think that in this particular study the knowledge gained is more important than coddling egos. There are some issues I agreed with Kelman on, such as the Mulder and Stemerding study. This is because it had true harmful implications on peoples' livelihood, which is about as far as my ethical concerns for the use of deceit goes. In my opinion as long as participants are adequately warned about the risks of the study prior to consenting and are debriefed after the study is done, the use of deceit is okay if honesty could skew results. I am a strong advocate for Aaron T. Beck's Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and challenging clients thoughts, so I would utilized that and thoroughly explain the importance of the study and why accurately replicating the situation is necessary along with sincerely insuring them that I as a researcher had no ill intentions when I withheld some information.