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THE MOST UNETHICAL PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPERIMENTS

1. Uwagi ogólne

Zestaw materiałów opatrzony wspólnym tytułem *The most unethical psychological experiments* jest adresowany do studentów uzupełniających studiów magisterskich lub jednolitych studiów magisterskich studiujących kierunki humanistyczne. Ze względu na swoją tematykę przedstawione ćwiczenia mogą być wykorzystane przede wszystkim do pracy z grupami studentów psychologii.

2. Poziom zaawansowania: B2+ oraz C1 i C1+

3. Czas trwania opisanych ćwiczeń

Ćwiczenia zaprezentowane w tym artykule są przeznaczone na dwie jednostki lekcyjne (180 minut). Czas trwania został ustalony na podstawie doświadczenia wynikającego z pracy nad poniższymi ćwiczeniami w grupach na poziomie B2+ i (słabsze) C1.

4. Cele dydaktyczne

W swoim założeniu artykuł ma rozwijać podstawowe umiejętności językowe, takie jak mówienie, słuchanie, czytanie oraz pisanie.

5. Uwagi i sugestie

W zbiorze przewidziane są ćwiczenia na interakcję student–nauczyciel, student–student oraz na pracę indywidualną. Ćwiczenia w zależności od poziomu grupy, stopnia zaangażowania studentów w zajęcia i kierunku mogą być odpowiednio zmodyfikowane. Zadania tu zamieszczone możemy omawiać na zajęciach lub część przedstawionych ćwiczeń zadać jako pracę domową, jeżeli nie chcemy poświęcać na nie zbyt dużo czasu na zajęciach.

Materiały obejmują pytania, informacje, artykuły i zadania dotyczące bardziej kontrowersyjnych eksperymentów w psychologii (jest ich znacznie więcej i tu może być pomocna wiedza studentów). Rozpoczynamy od wymagań klasyfikujących eksperyment jako etyczny/nieetyczny/nieważny, a następnie przechodzimy do filmiku wyjaśniającego kryteria etyczności eksperymentu i studenci mogą skonfrontować je ze swoimi wcześniejszymi wypowiedziami. Kolejne zadanie jest na słownictwo i ma na celu ułatwienie studentom późniejsze przeczytanie ze zrozumieniem kilkunastu krótkich artykułów na temat nieetycznych eksperymentów. Ze względu na to, że artykuły są krótkie, ale jest ich dużo, zostały podzielone na sekcje. Studenci w grupach 3–4-osobowych czytają 3–4 artykuły – mogą też robić notatki. Następnie dzielą się tym, czego się dowiedzieli, z pozostałymi członkami grupy, którzy również mogą robić notatki. Jeśli pozwala na to czas, studenci mogą obejrzeć filmiki z YouTube'a na temat eksperymentów. Ostatnie zadanie zawiera trzy nagrania, które studenci powinni obejrzeć, jeśli nie znają eksperymentów (i nie oglądali tych nagrań wcześniej podczas zajęć), których dotyczą pytania zawarte poniżej. Po obejrzeniu nagrań studenci odpowiadają w grupach lub parach na pytania z ostatniego zadania.

THE MOST UNETHICAL PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPERIMENTS

1. Answer the questions below in pairs/groups of three:

A) What makes a psychological experiment unethical?
B) What conditions have to be met for an experiment to be valid?
C) What unethical experiments do you know of?

2. Watch the video (0:00–1:43) from a YouTube channel called SciShow and make notes – what three requirements have to be met for a psychological experiment to be approved?

You can find the video here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zZ3l1jgmYrY [accessed: 22 June 2020].

The rules were established in . . . . . .
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A) . . . . . .
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B) . . . . . .
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C) . . . . . .
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3. In pairs, try to explain the phrases below. Which experiment do you think they go with?

diffusion of responsibility – . . . . . .
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to conform to the norms – . . . . . .
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infant dependency – . . . . . .
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diversity training – . . . . . .
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to be desensitized to phobias – . . . . . .
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stuttering – . . . . . .
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a sex reassignment surgery – . . . . . .
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to obey authority figures – . . . . . .
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solitary confinement – . . . . . .
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4. Work in groups of three and read about the most famous psychological experiments that could not be repeated today. Person A reads about experiments 1–4, Person B reads about experiments 5–8 whereas person B focuses on experiments 9–12. As you are reading, prepare to tell your partner about your part of reading. You may make short notes in the space provided, if necessary.

Introduction
Nowadays, the American Psychological Association has a Code of Conduct in place when it comes to ethics in psychological experiments. Experimenters must adhere to various rules regarding everything from confidentiality to consent to overall beneficence. Review boards are in place to enforce these ethics. But the standards were not always so strict, which is how some of the most famous studies in psychology came about.

1. THE LITTLE ALBERT EXPERIMENT
At Johns Hopkins University in 1920, John B. Watson conducted a study of classical conditioning, a phenomenon that pairs a conditioned stimulus with an unconditioned stimulus until they produce the same result. This type of conditioning can create a response in a person or animal towards an object or sound that was previously neutral (see: Ivan Pavlov).
Watson tested classical conditioning on a 9-month-old baby he called Albert B. The young boy started the experiment loving animals, particularly a white rat. Watson started pairing the presence of the rat with the loud sound of a hammer hitting metal. Albert began to develop a fear of the white rat as well as most animals and furry objects. The experiment is considered particularly unethical today because Albert was never desensitized to the phobias that Watson produced in him. The child died of an unrelated illness at age 6, so doctors were unable to determine if his phobias would have lasted into adulthood.

You can watch the experiment here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FMnhyGozLyE [accessed: 22 June 2020].

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2. ASCH CONFORMITY EXPERIMENTS

Solomon Asch tested conformity at Swarthmore College in 1951 by putting a participant in a group of people whose task was to match line lengths. Each individual was expected to announce which of three lines was the closest in length to a reference line. But the participant was placed in a group of actors, who were all told to give the correct answer twice then switch to each saying the same incorrect answer. Asch wanted to see whether the participant would conform and start to give the wrong answer as well, knowing that he would otherwise be a single outlier. Thirty-seven of the 50 participants agreed with the incorrect group despite physical evidence to the contrary. Asch used deception in his experiment without getting informed consent from his participants, so his study could not be replicated today.

You can watch the experiment here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TYIh4MkcfJA [accessed: 22 June 2020].

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3. THE BYSTANDER EFFECT

Some psychological experiments that were designed to test the bystander effect are considered unethical by today's standards. In 1968, John Darley and Bibb Latané developed an interest in crime witnesses who did not take action. They were particularly intrigued by the murder of Kitty Genovese, a young woman whose murder was witnessed by many, but still not prevented.

The pair conducted a study […] they would give a participant a survey and leave him alone in a room to fill out the paper. Harmless smoke would start to seep into the room after a short amount of time. The study showed that the solo participant was much faster to report the smoke than participants who had the same experience but were in a group.

The studies became progressively unethical by putting participants at risk of psychological harm. Darley and Latané played a recording of an actor pretending to have a seizure in the headphones of a person, who believed he or she was listening to an actual medical emergency that was taking place down the hall. Again,

participants were much quicker to react when they thought they were the sole person who could hear the seizure.

You can watch the experiment here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OSsPfbup0ac [accessed: 22 June 2020].

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4. THE MILGRAM EXPERIMENT

[…] Stanley Milgram hoped to […] understand how so many people came to participate in the […] Holocaust. He theorized that people are generally inclined to obey authority figures, posing the question, "Could it be that Eichmann and his million accomplices in the Holocaust were just following orders? […]" In 1961, he began to conduct experiments of obedience.

Participants were under the impression that they were part of a study of memory. Each trial had a pair divided into "teacher" and "learner," but one person was an actor, so only one was a true participant. […] the participant always took the role of "teacher." The two were moved into separate rooms and the "teacher" was given instructions [and] pressed a button to shock the "learner" each time an incorrect answer was provided. These shocks would increase in voltage each time. Eventually, the actor would start to complain followed by more and more desperate screaming. […] the majority of participants followed orders to continue delivering shocks despite the clear discomfort of the "learner."

Had the shocks existed and been at the voltage they were labeled, the majority would have killed the "learner." Having this fact revealed to the participant after the study concluded would be a clear example of psychological harm.

You can watch the experiment here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yr5cjyokVUs [accessed: 22 June 2020].

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If interested in the issue, see also: *The Third Wave* (1967) "How was the Holocaust allowed to happen?" was the question that this experiment was supposed to answer.

Source: http://www.online-psychology-degrees.org/10-bizarre-psychology-experiments/ [accessed: 22 June 2020].

5. HARLOW'S MONKEY EXPERIMENTS

In the 1950s, Harry Harlow of the University of Wisconsin tested infant dependency using rhesus monkeys in his experiments rather than human babies. The monkey was removed from its actual mother which was replaced with two "mothers," one made of cloth and one made of wire. The cloth "mother" served no purpose other than its comforting feel whereas the wire "mother" fed the monkey through a bottle. The monkey spent the majority of his day next to the cloth "mother" and only around one hour a day next to the wire "mother," despite the association between the wire model and food.

Harlow also used intimidation to prove that the monkey found the cloth "mother" to be superior. He would scare the infants and watch as the monkey ran towards the cloth model. Harlow also conducted experiments which isolated monkeys from other monkeys to show that those who did not learn to be part of the group at a young age were unable to assimilate and mate when they got older. Harlow's experiments ceased in 1985 due to APA rules against the mistreatment of animals as well as humans. However, Department of Psychiatry Chair Ned H. Kalin, M.D. of the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health has recently begun similar experiments that involve isolating infant monkeys and exposing them to frightening stimuli. He hopes to discover data on human anxiety but is meeting with resistance from animal welfare organizations and the general public.

You can watch the experiment here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_O60TYAIgC4&t=46s [accessed: 22 June 2020].

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6. THE MONSTER STUDY

At the University of Iowa in 1939, Wendell Johnson and his team hoped to discover the cause of stuttering by attempting to turn orphans into stutterers. There were 22 young subjects, 12 of whom were non-stutterers. Half of the group experienced positive teaching whereas the other group dealt with negative reinforcement. The teachers continually told the latter group that they had stutters. No one in either group became stutterers at the end of the experiment, but those who received negative treatment did develop many of the self-esteem problems that stutterers often show. Perhaps Johnson's interest in this phenomenon had to do with his own stutter as a child, but this study would never pass with a contemporary review board. Johnson's reputation as an unethical psychologist has not caused the University of Iowa to remove his name from its Speech and Hearing Clinic.

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7. BLUE-EYED VERSUS BROWN-EYED STUDENTS

Jane Elliott was not a psychologist, but she developed one of the most famously controversial exercises in 1968 by dividing students into a blue-eyed group and a brown-eyed group. Elliott was an elementary school teacher in Iowa, who was trying to give her students hands-on experience with discrimination the day after Martin Luther King Jr. was shot, but this exercise still has significance to psychology today. The famous exercise even transformed Elliott's career into one centered around diversity training. After dividing the class into groups, Elliott would cite phony scientific research claiming that one group was superior to the other. Throughout the day, the group would be treated as such. Elliott learned that it only took a day for the "superior" group to turn crueler and the "inferior" group to become more insecure. The blue-eyed and brown-eyed groups then switched so that all students endured the same prejudices. Elliott's exercise (which she repeated in 1969 and 1970) received plenty of public backlash, which is probably why it would not be replicated in a psychological experiment or classroom today. The main ethical concerns would be with deception and consent, though some of the original participants still regard the experiment as life-changing.

You can watch the experiment here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X97JTH7UCq4 [accessed: 22 June 2020].

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8. THE STANFORD PRISON EXPERIMENT (1971)

[…] Philip Zimbardo of Stanford University conducted his famous prison experiment, which aimed to examine group behavior and the importance of roles. [He] picked a group of 24 male college students who were considered "healthy," both physically and psychologically. The men had signed up to participate in a "psychological study of prison life," which would pay them $15 per day. Half were randomly assigned to be prisoners and the other half were assigned to be prison guards. The experiment played out in the basement of the Stanford psychology department where Zimbardo's team had created a makeshift prison. The experimenters went to great lengths to create a realistic experience for the prisoners, including fake arrests at the participants' homes. The prisoners were given a fairly standard introduction to prison life, which included being deloused and assigned an embarrassing

uniform. The guards were given vague instructions that they should never be violent with the prisoners but needed to stay in control. The first day passed without incident, but the prisoners rebelled on the second day by barricading themselves in their cells and ignoring the guards. This behavior shocked the guards and presumably led to the psychological abuse that followed. The guards started separating "good" and "bad" prisoners and doled out punishments including push-ups, solitary confinement, and public humiliation […]. Zimbardo […]: "In only a few days, our guards became sadistic and our prisoners became depressed and showed signs of extreme stress." Two prisoners dropped out of the experiment; one eventually became a psychologist and a consultant for prisons. The experiment was originally supposed to last for two weeks, but it ended early […]. Despite the unethical experiment, Zimbardo is still a working psychologist today. He was even honored by the American Psychological Association with a Gold Medal Award for Life Achievement in the Science of Psychology in 2012.

You can watch the experiment here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DsWJPNhLCUU [accessed: 22 June 2020].

Source: http://mentalfloss.com/article/52787/10-famous-psychological-experiments-could-never-happen-today [accessed: 22 June 2020].

Your notes: . . . . . .
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9. Bobo Doll Experiment (1961, 1963)

[…] Stanford University psychologist Albert Bandura attempted to demonstrate that behavior – in this case, violent behavior – can be learned through observation of reward and punishment. To do this, he acquired 72 nursery-age children together with a large, inflatable toy known as a Bobo doll. He then made a subset of the children watch an adult violently beating and verbally abusing the toy for around ten minutes. Alarmingly, Bandura found that out of the 24 children who witnessed this display, in many cases the behavior was imitated. Left alone in the room with the Bobo doll […], the children became verbally and physically aggressive towards the doll, attacking it with an intensity arguably frightening to see in ones so young. In 1963, Bandura carried out another Bobo doll experiment that yielded similar results. Nevertheless, the work has since come under fire on ethical grounds, as its subjects were basically trained to act aggressively – with possible longer-term consequences.

You can watch the experiment here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dmBqwWlJg8U [accessed: 22 June 2020].

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10. Homosexual Aversion Therapy (1967)

Aversion therapy to "cure" homosexuality was once a prominent subject of research at various universities. A study detailing attempts at "treating" a group of 43 homosexual men was published in the *British Medical Journal* in 1967. The study recounted researchers M.J. MacCulloch and M.P. Feldman's experiments in aversion therapy at Manchester, U.K.'s Crumpsall Hospital. The researchers' volunteers were shown slides of men that they were told to keep looking at for as long as they considered it appealing. After eight seconds of such a slide being shown, however, the test subjects were given an electric shock. Slides showing women were also presented, and the volunteers were able to look at them without any punishment involved. Although the researchers suggested that the trials had some success in "curing" their participants, in 1994 the American Psychological Association deemed homosexual aversion therapy dangerous and ineffective.

You can watch a former participant talk about his experience: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y6hgVt5le9k [accessed: 22 June 2020].

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11. David Reimer (1967–1977)

Canadian David Reimer's life was changed drastically on account of one Johns Hopkins University professor. After a botched circumcision procedure left Reimer with disfiguring genital damage at six months old, his parents took him to be seen by John Money, a professor of medical psychology and pediatrics who advocated the theory of "gender neutrality" – arguing that gender identity is first and foremost learned socially from a young age. Money suggested that although Reiner's penis could not be repaired, he could and should undergo sex reassignment surgery and be raised as a female. In 1967 Reimer began the treatment that would turn him into "Brenda." However, despite further visits to Money over the next ten years, Reimer was never really able to identify himself as female and lived as a male from the age of 14. He would go on to have treatment to undo the sex reassignment, but the ongoing experiment had prompted extreme depression in him – an underlying factor that contributed to his 2004 suicide. John Money, meanwhile, was mired in controversy.

You can watch a video about the experiment here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SLFGMWoQaCU [accessed: 22 June 2020].

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12. UCLA Schizophrenia Medication Experiment (1983–1994)
From 1983 psychologist Keith H. Nuechterlein and psychiatrist Michael Gitlin from the UCLA Medical Center commenced a now-controversial study into the mental processes of schizophrenia. Specifically, they were looking into the ways in which sufferers of the mental disorder relapse and were trying to find out if there are any predictors of psychosis. To achieve this, they had schizophrenics, from a group of hundreds involved in the program, taken off their medication. Such medication is not without its nasty side effects, and the research may hold important findings about the condition. Nevertheless, the experiment has been criticized for not sufficiently protecting the patients in the event of schizophrenic symptoms returning; nor did it clearly determine the point at which the patients should be treated again. What is more, this had tragic consequences in 1991 when former program participant Antonio Lamadrid killed himself by jumping from nine floors up – despite having been open about his suicidal state of mind and supposedly under the study's watch.

Source: http://www.online-psychology-degrees.org/10-bizarre-psychology-experiments/ [accessed: 22 June 2020].

Your notes: . . . . . .
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5. In pairs/groups of three, discuss the questions below. You can ask the teacher to play the videos of the bystander effect research, the Asch conformity experiment and Milgram's experiment to better answer questions C–F.

The videos:
The bystander effect: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OSsPfbup0ac [accessed: 22 June 2020].
Asch conformity experiment: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TYIh4MkcfJA [accessed: 22 June 2020].
Milgram's experiment: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yr5cjyokVUs [accessed: 22 June 2020].

A) Did we learn anything useful from these experiments? Can the researchers be justified in their relentless quest for knowledge?
B) Choose the most controversial 1– 3 experiments together. Why do you consider it/them the "worst" out of the ones featured?
C) Have you ever seen any events you could classify as the bystander effect in action? What happened? How did you feel? Did you do anything?

D) Can the bystander effect be modified by the way the victim is dressed (well or shabbily)?
E) Do you think you could resist the urge to conform in a situation similar to the Asch conformity experiment?
F) Why do you think so many of the participants of Milgram's experiment "killed" the learner? Are we that susceptible to what we are told by people in white coats (figures of authority)?
G) Is gender identity something you are born with? What about sexual identity? Can these aspects of one's makeup be experimented with?
H) Can cruel experiments involving animals be conducted if we learn something about humans from them?
I) What kind of experiment would you like to conduct if you could? What would you like to learn from it?

KEY

2.
The Belmont Report established rules by which contemporary experimenters must abide.

A) Respect for persons – it means that the subjects have to give informed consent. They need to know the risks and benefits before signing up.
B) Beneficence – the researchers should try not to have any negative impact on the wellbeing of the participants and do no harm.
C) Justice – making sure the subjects aren't exploited. Researchers should also make sure that the burdens of the study and the benefits of the results are distributed fairly. In earlier experiments, the subjects would be poor and the wealthier patients would benefit from the findings.

3.

diffusion of responsibility – *a socio-psychological phenomenon whereby a person is less likely to take responsibility for action or inaction when others are present. Considered a form of attribution, the individual assumes that others either are responsible for taking action or have already done so. to conform to the norms – the bystander effect*

infant dependency – *the vital, originally infantile needs for mothering, love, affection, shelter, protection, security, food, and warmth… On the other hand, it was not well known until the middle of the 20th century that infants also required the presence of warmth and affection, known as "maternal warmth", diversity training – Harlow's monkey experiment*

to be desensitized to phobias – *be freed from a phobia or neurosis by gradually exposing them to the thing that is feared – the baby Albert experiment*

to stutter – *talk with continued involuntary repetition of sounds, especially initial consonants – the monster study*

a sex reassignment surgery – *a treatment for gender dysphoria which changes the physical appearance and function of a person's genitals to align them with their gender identity. Also called gender confirmation surgery – David Reimer*

to obey authority figures – *following orders of those we perceive as figures of authority – Milgram's experiment*

solitary confinement – *is a form of imprisonment in which an inmate is isolated from any human contact, often except for members of prison staff, for 22–24 hours a day, with a sentence ranging from days to decades – Stanford experiment*

Tasks 1, 4 and 5 do not require the key.