IB Psychology: Biological Level of Analysis

Discuss ethical considerations related to research at the biological level of analysis

* **Use of patient cases** 
  + HM; memory, naturally occurring brain damage; ethical issues related to true participant understanding of research
  + Sperry (1968); severing corpus callosum, irreversible brain damage; even with informed consent, risky to patient welfare
  + Heath (1950): electric stimulation of pleasure center; B-19; had to be disconnected 🡪 is it ethically correct to create artificial, temporary pleasure only to be removed? Foster reliance?
* **Animal harm/sacrifice** 
  + Olds (1950s): electric stimulation rats brains/pleasure centre; electric grids 🡪 causing harm to animal welfare
  + Hetherington & Ranson (1942); invasive techniques with weight gain in rats; sacrifice of lab animals for human gain; to what extent is this acceptable for human gain?
  + Rosenzweig & Bennett (1972); brain plasticity; sacrificing lab rats for research yet the benefit from this research outweighs harm, arguably.
* **Genetic focus in research** 
  + Bouchard et al (1981), Minnesota Twin Study; research into intelligence; twin studies 🡪 matching of reunited twins inconsistently, impact on how results are interpreted, shared, used, applied
    - Use of media recruitment 🡪 question of bias? Ethical issue of appropriate recruiting
  + Contrary view...Wahlstein (1997) claims about socio-economic status impact on IQ; moving infants from lower to higher classes; what message does this send to lower socio-economic families?
  + Disgust research 🡪 emotion; Fessler inducing nausea in pregnant women; even with consent, slightly risky to safety of fetus.
  + Application of correlational findings in genetic research
    - Evolutionary questions impossible to isolate IV/test upon experimentally; how are results interpreted and used? Question of researcher bias? Discredit of cultural/social elements?
  + Hereditary issues 🡪 link between genetic findings and risk to life; mental distress in finding out about likelihood of developing hereditary illness; stigma; issues of confidentiality with findings, impact on livelihood, unrevealed adoptions 🡪 basically stress caused through genetic findings
    - Issues of culture with genetic testing, not appropriate for all cultures to genetic study
    - Investigations into sexual orientation as ‘genetic’ – does trying to isolate a ‘gay gene’ contribute to systemic discrimination, a ‘reason’ to discriminate? (Bailey & Pillard, etc)
* **Investigations into emotion** 
  + Schachter & Singer (1962); injecting unknown stimulant (adrenaline) that may cause participant harm (heart rate variations; state they leave study different than when they enter); safety of participant welfare; protection of wellbeing; no full access to informed consent.