

Journal #3

What are ethics?

What makes something ethical or unethical?

Explain and use examples

Unit 2: Research Methods

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Notes: Ethics in Sociological Research

Issues in Sociological Research

- Most sociologists believe that they should not allow their personal beliefs to influence their research.
- **Max Weber** wrote the classic sociological statement on this issue.
- He coined the phrase ***value-free sociology***, an ideal whereby researchers identify facts without allowing their own personal beliefs or biases to interfere.
- How likely is this?

Issues in Sociological Research

- Ethics: rules and standards of behaviors governing the conduct of a person or group
- The American Sociological Association has developed its own set of ***code of ethics*** to assist researchers avoid bias, adhere to professional standards, and protect respondents from harm.
- [ASA Code of Ethics](#)
- Why is a code of ethics necessary?

Ethics

Principle A: Professional Competence

- maintain the highest levels of competence in their work;
- they recognize the limitations of their expertise;
- they undertake only those tasks for which they are qualified by education, training, or experience

Ethics

Principle B: Integrity

- Sociologists are honest, fair, and respectful of others in their activities
 - in research, teaching, practice, and service.
- Sociologists do not knowingly act in ways that jeopardize either their own or others' welfare.
- Sociologists conduct their affairs in ways that inspire trust and confidence
 - they do not knowingly make statements that are false, misleading, or deceptive.

Ethics

Principle C: Professional and Scientific Responsibility

- Value the public trust in sociology and are concerned about their ethical behavior
- Never let the desire to be impactful outweigh their shared responsibility for ethical behavior.
- Consult with colleagues in order to prevent or avoid unethical conduct

Ethics

Principle D: Respect for People's Rights, Dignity, and Diversity

- Respect the rights, dignity, and worth of all people.
- Strive to eliminate bias in their professional activities.

Ethics

Principle D: Respect for People's Rights, Dignity, and Diversity

- Do not tolerate any forms of discrimination based on age; gender; race; ethnicity; national origin; religion; sexual orientation; disability; health conditions; or marital, domestic, or parental status.
- Be sensitive to cultural, individual, and role differences in serving, teaching, and studying groups of people with distinctive characteristics.
- Acknowledge the rights of others to hold values, attitudes, and opinions that differ from their own.

Ethics

Principle E: Social Responsibility

- Be aware of their scientific responsibility to the communities and societies in which they live and work.
- Apply and make public their knowledge in order to contribute to the public good.
- When undertaking research, they strive to advance the science of sociology and to serve the public good.

Issues in Sociological Research

- Most universities where research is conducted also have an ***institutional review board***, a group of scholars within a university who meet regularly to review and approve the research proposals of their colleagues and make recommendations for how to protect human subjects.

Rules of Thumb

- Privacy/Confidentiality - Do not use real names or allow people to be identified
- Informed Consent – Inform subjects about their expected roles in the study, the potential risks of participating, and their freedom to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences.
- Do not use deception
- Do not harm anyone
- Do not judge anyone

Stanley Milgrim Experiment

- Measured the willingness of men to obey an authority figure who instructed them to perform acts conflicting with their personal conscience.
- Participants were led to believe that they were assisting an unrelated experiment, in which they had to administer electric shocks to a "learner."
- These fake electric shocks gradually increased to levels that would have been fatal had they been real.

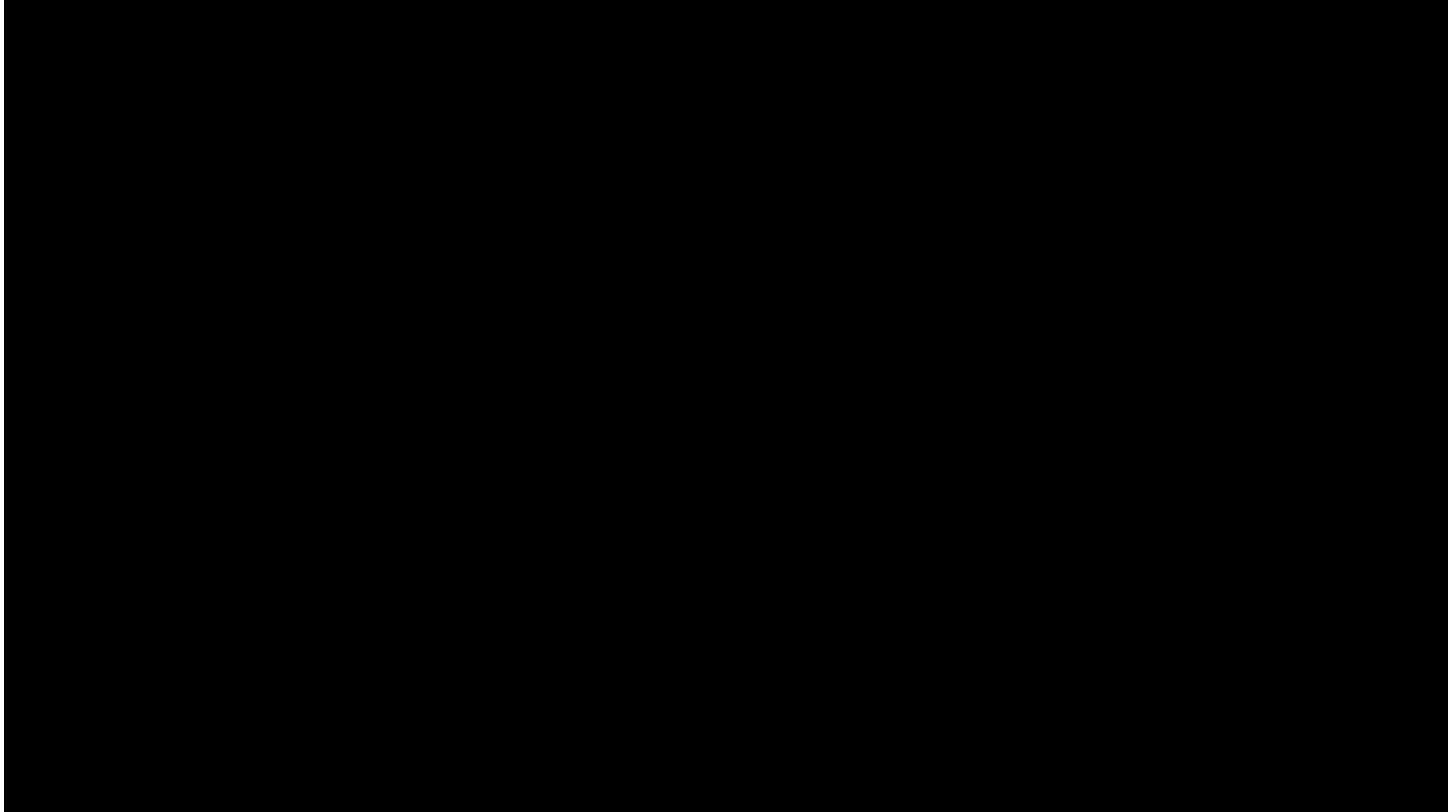
Stanley Milgrim Experiment

- The experiments began in July 1961, in a basement at Yale University, three months after the start of the trial of German Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem.
- Milgram devised his psychological study to answer the popular contemporary question:
 - "Could it be that Eichmann and his million accomplices in the Holocaust were just following orders? Could we call them all accomplices?"
- The experiment was repeated many times around the globe, with fairly consistent results.

Stanley Milgrim Experiment

- The Milgram Shock Experiment raised questions about the research ethics of scientific experimentation because of the extreme emotional stress and inflicted insight suffered by the participants.
- Some critics argued that participants were not properly debriefed

Stanley Milgrim Experiment



Stanford Prison Experiment

- Attempted to investigate the psychological effects of perceived power, focusing on the struggle between prisoners and prison officers.
- It was conducted at Stanford University in 1971 using college students.
- In the study, volunteers were randomly assigned to be either "guards" or "prisoners" in a mock prison, with the professor himself serving as the superintendent.

Stanford Prison Experiment

- Several "prisoners" left mid-experiment, and the whole experiment was abandoned after six days.
- Students quickly embraced their assigned roles
 - Some guards enforcing authoritarian measures and ultimately subjecting some prisoners to psychological torture,
 - Many prisoners passively accepted psychological abuse and, by the officers' request, actively harassed other prisoners who tried to stop it officers' request

Stanford Prison Experiment

- The experiment was perceived by many to involve questionable ethics
- The most serious concern being that it was continued even after participants expressed their desire to withdraw.
- Despite the fact that participants were told they had the right to leave at any time, Zimbardo did not allow this

Stanford Prison Experiment

