

Ethical implications in sociological field research assignment

[Sociology](#)



Ethical Implications in Sociological Field Research Abstract Ethics, derived from the Latin “ethos” meaning truth, is simply a set of moral principles one uses to guide his or her life decisions and actions. Sociologists follow guidelines set forth by the American Sociological Association or ASA to safely, respectfully, and accurately conduct sociological research. This assignment poses two hypothetical situations; the first dealing with college alcohol consumption, the second involving a research questionnaire amongst a university registration document.

This paper examines and provides references regarding the ethical implications of researchers in the field and their findings. Is it ethical for the researcher to keep quiet on violation of alcohol consumption rules even if will cause a furor on campus? Absolutely not. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) has studied college-drinking issues and found them to be detrimental to the physical, mental, and academic lives of students. “1, 825 college students between the ages of 18 and 24 die from alcohol-related unintentional injuries, including motor vehicle crashes, “ Between 1. and 1. 5 percent of students indicate that they tried to commit suicide within the past year due to drinking or drug use”, and “ About 25 percent of college students report academic consequences of their drinking including missing class, falling behind, doing poorly on exams or papers, and receiving lower grades overall”(1). The effects of alcohol are dangerous and can endanger not only your academic career, but also your life and the lives of people around you.

If the researcher in question was a member of the ASA he would be professionally bound by both the Preamble “ It has as its primary goal the <https://assignbuster.com/ethical-implications-in-sociological-field-research-assignment/>

welfare and protection of the individuals and groups with whom sociologists work” and Appendix E: Social Responsibility “ Sociologists are aware of their professional and scientific responsibility to the communities and societies in which they live and work. They apply and make public their knowledge in order to contribute to the public good”(2).

Observing these behaviors first hand, it is irresponsible to fail to report actions that may cause harm, regardless of how it may portray the university. While it is understandable that this was not the pursuit of his research, it is something that deserves immediate attention by school administrators. The opportunity affords the researcher a brand new hypothesis. One might be able to prove, using the scientific method that students who abstain from underage and binge drinking perform better academically and lead a healthier happier life.

The second situation questions whether or not it is ethical to put include in a registration packet a research questionnaire that is not mandatory to fill out. Personally I see nothing wrong with this. It doesn't' cause harm to any of the people participating in the survey and it would probably yield a larger field of response vice if they were asked, “ Would you like to participate in a survey? ” The National Institute of Health monitors and publishes ethical guidance for the observation and experimentation on living human subjects.

While it is a generally believed notion that all subjects should be made aware of their participation the National Institute of Health does make certain exceptions: “ The general rationale behind the six categories of exemption is that although the research involves human subjects, it does not expose them

to physical, social or psychological risks”(3). If a case study were to address the response rate in questionnaires or surveys amongst voluntary and involuntary subjects, one might argue it is better to question unknowing subjects.

Using an interactionist perspective you place more value on your questionnaire by placing it amongst “ meaningful objects” in the registration package. While it is not necessary to fill out the form, it causes the subject no harm, and provides the researcher with a larger pool of results. The suppositions proposed in this paper, while exact, can represent a myriad of issues one might come across while conducting sociological experiments in the general public. An ethical pursuit of information must remain at the forefront of research and publishing, even if the result is unintended or not favorable. References 1. College Drinking: A Snapshot of Annual High-Risk College Drinking Consequences. (2010, July 1). Research about Alcohol and College Drinking Prevention. Retrieved 2. American Sociological Association: Code of Ethics. (n. d.). American Sociological Association. Retrieved March 7, 2011, from <http://www.asanet.org/about/ethics.cfm> 3. Office of Human Subjects Research. (2004, September 1). OHSR. Retrieved March 7, 2011, from <http://ohsr.od.nih.gov/guidelines/index.html>