Overview – Topics

- Social science research and the press
- Social science research and political/social agendas
- Sensitive behaviors and social research
- Human subjects research and ethical considerations

Social Research in the Press

- What is the difference between social science and social journalism?
- What are some major problems with the way that social research is portrayed in the press?
  - Tendency to treat as fact – ignore the many caveats – Example: Kinsey reports and 10% homosexuality
  - Tendency to portray sensationally: Example: Marriage for college educated women and the likelihood of being killed by a terrorist

Social Research and Political/Social Agendas

- Who conducted the survey
  - Conservative institution?
  - Liberal institution?
  - Especially relevant for polls
- Controversial results
  - e.g., childcare and problem behaviors, the Bell-curve

More on politics and science

- Politics can have strong influence on science
- Projects have been canceled or not funded due to political rather than scientific reasons
- Particularly problematic when values or vested interests are involved.
  - Sex research
  - Climate research

Sensitive topics and social research

- Much social science research focuses on "sensitive" behaviors such as crime, sex, domestic violence, hatred/prejudice, etc.
- Based on what you have learned in this class about social research, do you think social scientists can meaningfully study these subjects?
- Is it worth studying these things given the many limitations that researchers face?
- How do you feel/would you feel about answering sensitive questions in a survey or interview if asked?

Objectivity and Ideology

- Some people have argued that social research must be objective – value free.
  - Do you think this is possible?
- Do you think it is possible to be value free when studying other countries?
- How do you feel about the social science writings you have read for other classes?
  - Do you feel that most work is objective or value free? Examples?

Social Research and Social Action

- Not all social scientists believe that research should be value-free, but that the work of researchers should be to bring about social change. Marxist sociologists and feminist sociologists in particular feel this way.
  - How do you feel about this?
  - If you were are social researcher, which approach would you adopt?

Human Subjects Research and Ethical Considerations

- Impetus for laws and codes of conduct – grossly unethical practices conducted in the name of "research"
  - Nazi atrocities
  - Japanese war atrocities
  - Tuskegee experiment
- Recognition that social research has same potential for harm to subjects
  - Possibility of psychological harm is a particularly difficult issue in social science research (example of sexual abuse)

Ethical Concerns – What do you think?

- What do think about the research done by Humphreys? Okay? Unethical?
- How about the research on obedience by Milgram?
- What other questions of interest to social scientists do you feel would pose serious ethical considerations?
- How can ethical problems be minimized in social research?

Codes of behavior

•Most professional associations have formal codes of conduct that describe acceptable and unacceptable professional behavior

•ASA

- Principle A: Professional Competence
- Principle B: Integrity
- Principle C: Professional and Scientific Responsibility
- Principle D: Respect for People's Rights, Dignity, and Diversity
- Principle E: Social Responsibility

Institutional Review Boards

- Local organization to review research proposals to ensure that the risk faced by human subjects is minimal
- Cannot conduct funded research without approval
- Key is that "funded research" encompasses pretty much everything

Conflict of interest

- **Personnel Information**
- **Conflict of Interest Questions**
- Does ANY member of the study team involved in the design or conduct of the research study, or their immediate family (this includes spouse and dependent children) have interests related to the research that meet or exceed one of the following thresholds:

- Yes No
- If yes, identify the personnel who have this interest and include copies of any management plans or documentation of exceptions granted by the UW-Madison Conflict of Interest Committee to allow the personnel to participate in this study:
- Does ANY member of the study team involved in the design or conduct of the research study, or their immediate family (this includes spouse and dependent children) have a financial interest that requires disclosure to the sponsor or funding source?

  Yes No
- If yes, identify the personnel who have this interest:
- Does ANY member of the study team receive incentives for recruiting human subjects or for any other purpose directly related to the study?
  Yes No
- If yes, please identify the personnel and describe the nature of the incentives.

Subject protection

- **Questionnaire**
- Please answer *all* of the questions below.
- 1) Does the research involve genetic testing or DNA samples collected from, e.g., blood, saliva, hair, nail clippings, or bodily fluids?
  Yes No
- 2) Does the research involve **the collection of data** concerning:
- a) Prisoners?
  Yes No
- b) Fetuses, neonates or pregnant women?
  Yes No
- c) Participants with impaired decision-making capacity, e.g., the cognitively impaired?
  Yes No
- If yes to Question 2.c., are there
- -------
- d) Participants who are institutionalized (e.g., in a mental health facility, nursing home, or halfway house)?
  Yes No
- 3) Will the study elicit data about participants engaged in illegal or stigmatizing behaviors (e.g., illicit drug use, child abuse, alcoholism, or gambling)?
  Yes No
- If yes, provide an explanation in the study description.
- 4) Does the research involve deception of the participants by the researcher?
  Yes No
- If **yes**, upload a debriefing statement explaining the deception under the Documents tab.
- 5) Does the research involve:
- a) Observations of behavior of participants under the age of 18 outside of an established educational setting?
  Yes No
- b) Survey or interviews of subjects under the age of 18?
  Yes No
- **Note: If you answered YES to any part of questions 1-5, your research is subject to full review by a human subjects committee. Please check Full Review above.**

Informed consent

- **Informed Consent**
  Consideration should be given to the most appropriate method of obtaining informed consent, taking into account the literacy level of the subjects and confidentiality concerns. In some cases, oral consent may be more appropriate than written consent because signing a consent form would put the participants at greater risk. Consent should always be obtained in the native language of the participants.

  The consent form should contain no language through which the potential participant or legally authorized representative waives or appears to waive any of the participant's legal rights or releases or appears to release the investigator, sponsor, institution, or its agent from liability or negligence.

  Note: The IRB encourages the use of the Consent Form Wizard.
- a) Will written consent be used?
  Yes No
- b) Will oral consent be used?
  Yes No
- If yes to Question a or b, please upload the consent form and oral consent form script.

Risk – Benefit assessment

- **RISK/BENEFIT ASSESSMENT**
  Participants should be protected against injury and invasion of their privacy, and their dignity should be preserved. Risks fall under the following categories: physical, psychological, social, economic, legal, and other.
- **Risks**
  Are there risks to the participants?
  Yes No
- If yes, please assess the types and level of each type of risk involved in the research.
- **Steps to Minimize Risks**
  Describe the steps that will be taken to minimize risk.
- **Medical or Professional Intervention**
  Discuss provisions for ensuring necessary medical or professional intervention in the event of adverse effects to the participants or additional resources for participants.
- **Alternative Treatments**
  If appropriate, describe alternative treatments and procedures that might be advantageous to the participants.
- **Possible Benefits to the Participants**
  Describe the possible benefits to the participants. Note: Compensation paid to participants is NOT a benefit.
  There is no benefit to the participants of our secondary analysis of data that has already been collected.
- **Benefits to Society**
  Describe the possible benefits to society.
  A better understanding of the geographically non-random pattern of population aging in different societies. Insights into the ways in which local area characteristics may be associated with health trajectories at older ages.