



Ethics in Social Work Research

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Ice Breaker

- What is Ethics?
- Why is Ethics a concern when conducting Social Work Research?

Start @ 0:30 secs



Belmont Report

- Principle 1 : Respect for Human Beings
 - Participants acting voluntarily and their rights are respected
- Principle 2 : Beneficence
 - Research is done holistically and doesn't solely benefit researcher
 - Research doesn't put participants at risk
- Principle 3: Justice
 - Research is inclusive & the burdens of research doesn't outweigh the benefits
- AU: Principle 4 : Research Merit and Integrity Principle
 - Researchers must be experienced and competent
 - Research should be well designed, and outcomes are clear to everyone involved

Not a principle of U.S. Belmont Report but noteworthy

5.2 Specific ethical issues to consider

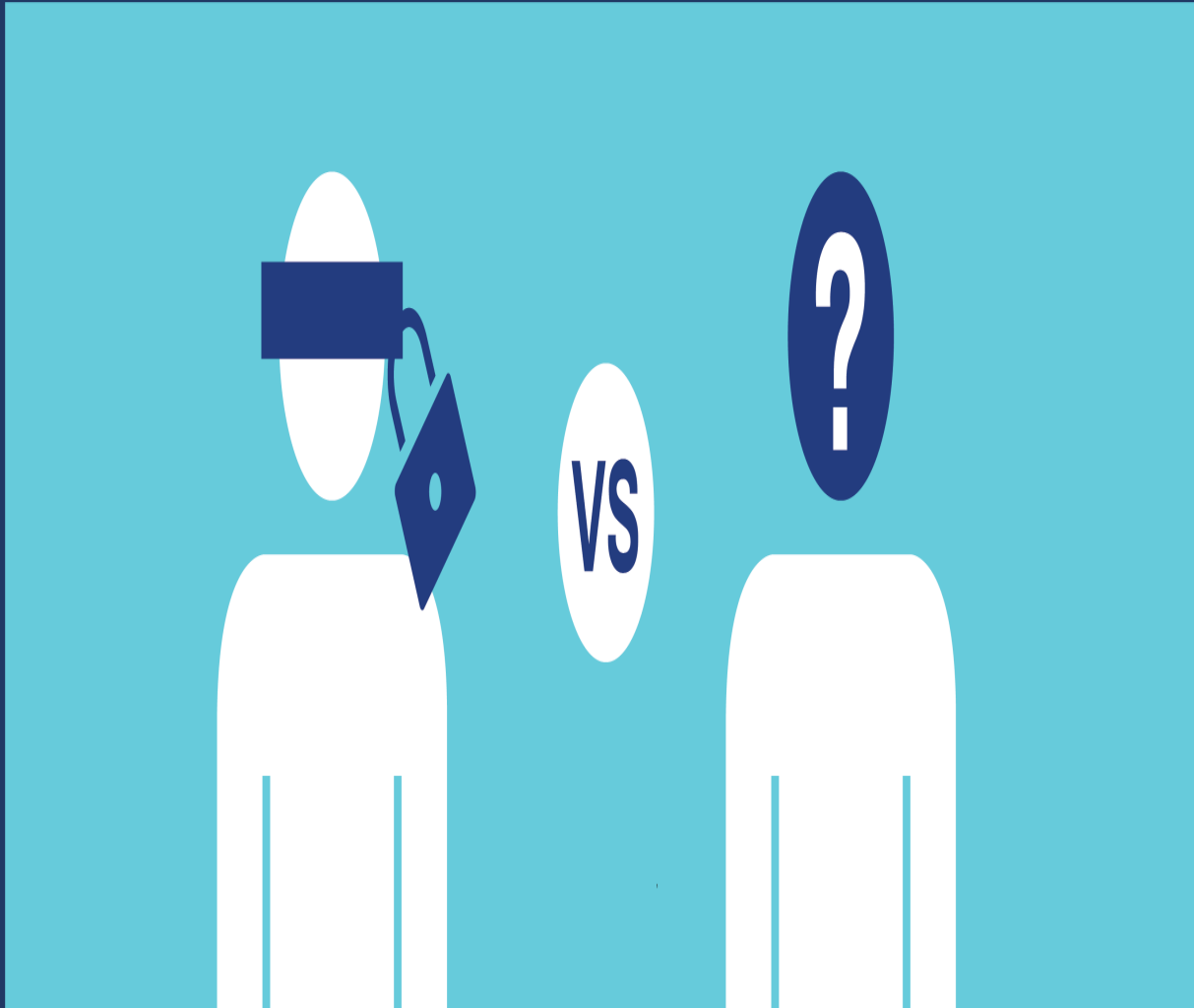
What is Informed Consent?

The basic elements of the consent process includes:

- A person voluntarily agrees to participate in a research study
- Participant is informed of all aspects of the study
- Individual has full understanding of what their participation entails
- The risks and benefits to participating in research study are clear
- Individual can withdraw at any time



Protecting Identity



❖ Anonymity

Research participant does not provide identifying information

Ex: Surveys , where you do not ask participants for their names.

❖ Confidentiality

Research participants identity is known only by the researcher and protected from public exposure.

Ex: Maintain session notes in a drawer or on a desk away from visitors to the agency.

5.3 Ethics at micro, meso and macro levels

As social workers, we are constantly looking at the bigger picture while working with smaller details

- Micro (individual): consider your own conduct and the rights of research participants
 - Knowing your identity and purpose of research
 - What rights do participants have in your research?
- Meso (group) : consider the expectations of the profession, any organizations that may have funded the research, and the communities affected by the research
 - Be aware to not fall into confirmation bias or perpetuate negative stereotypes
 - Results should identify important areas for social workers to intervene NOT damage communities/groups - how do the results impact the target population(s)?
- Macro (society): consider the duty to and the expectations of society with respect to social scientific research
 - How will this research live on?

Questions to Ask Yourself

Table 5.1 Key ethics questions at three different levels of inquiry

Level of inquiry	Focus	Key ethics questions for researchers to ask themselves
Micro-level	Individual	Does my research impinge on the individual's right to privacy? Could my research offend subjects in any way? Could my research cause emotional distress to any of my subjects? Has my own conduct been ethical throughout the research process?
Meso-level	Group	Does my research follow the ethical guidelines of my profession and discipline? Could my research negatively impact a community? Have I met my duty to those who funded my research?
Macro-level	Society	Does my research meet the societal expectations of social research? Have I met my social responsibilities as a researcher?

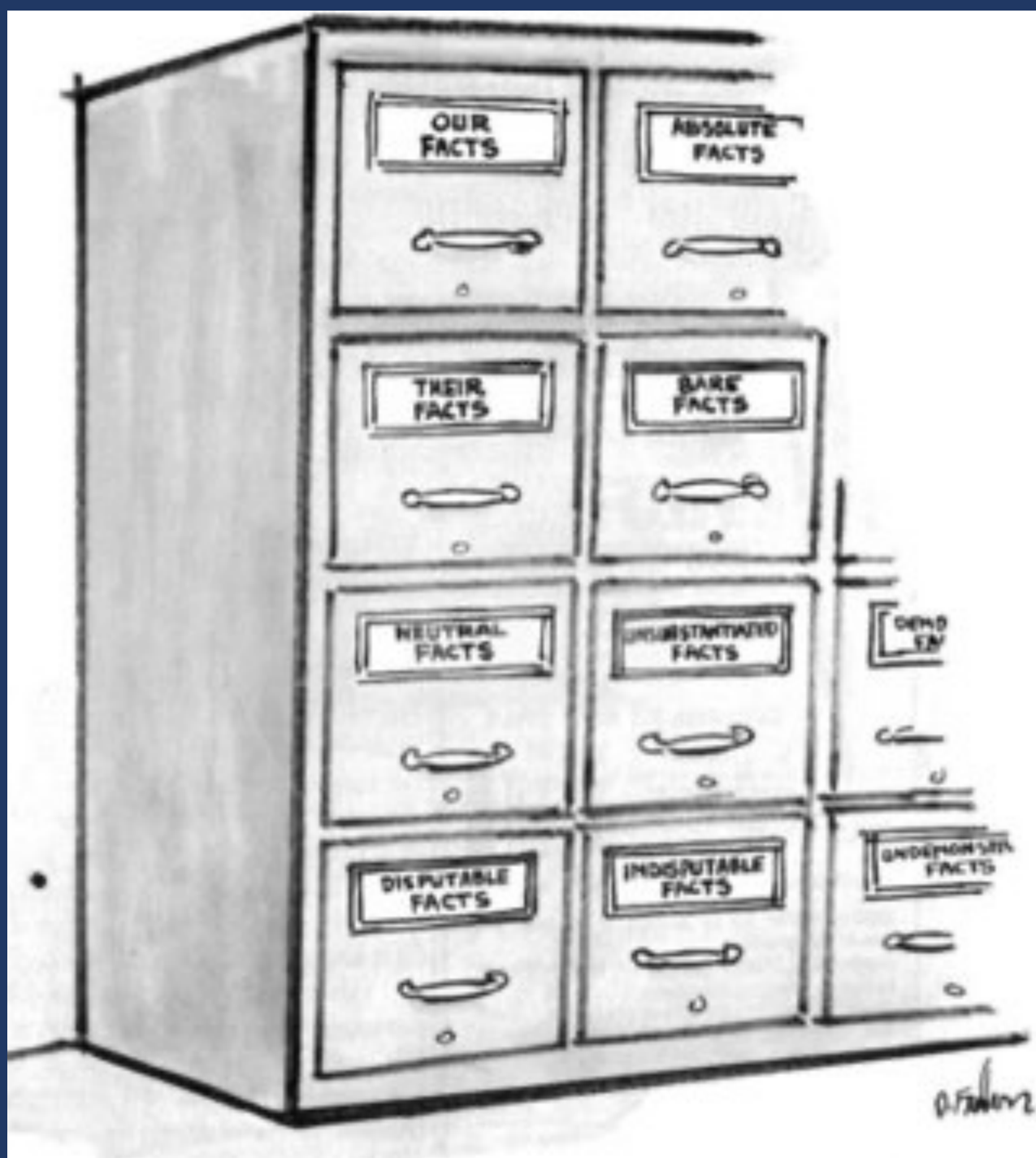
5.4 The Practice of science vs. The uses of science

Research ethics: Involves how research is conducted and how the data collected is used.

- Personal and institutional ethical principles
- Social workers must be transparent during their research procedures as well as their findings.
- Honesty is important from the beginning of the process until then end
 1. Identifying/recruiting
 2. Collecting/ analyzing data
 3. Gathering results

Social policies are established when researchers fully disclose how they conducted research.

- Legitimize research findings
- Honest about weaknesses and strengths in the study
- Research should be able to be replicated



- The purpose of this cartoon is that one can be biased when selecting which file drawer to open.
- One can choose to pick whichever facts one likes best.
- However, this method should not be practiced when conducting research. We should not be selective but instead be present and honest throughout the process.

Discussion

1. Two social work students decide to carry out their class research project by observing the nocturnal activities at a shelter for the homeless. The shelter has a limited number of beds and cannot accommodate everyone seeking housing. The two students show up and wait in line early enough to get beds and then watch and record the goings on at night while they pretend to be asleep.
2. A community organizer decides to observe and interview people and write about a demonstration against police brutality that is expected to be lawful. The demonstration unexpectedly becomes violent, and property is destroyed. Law enforcement officials show up and demand that the organizer identify people observed breaking the law. Rather than risk arrest as an accomplice after the fact, the organizer complies.

Are the researchers performing ethically?

Explain.

Closing

- Why is it difficult to enforce ethics in research?
- Should the rules for Human Research be more specific?
 - Think about the potential loopholes that exist within the Belmont Report
- How can we ensure our study respects the rights of participants?