SAGE researchmethods

Project Planner

Research Ethics

Title:	Research Ethics
Originally Published:	2017
Publishing Company:	SAGE Publications, Inc.
City:	London, United Kingdom
ISBN:	9781526408556
DOI:	http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781526408556

This stage will:

- Help you decide whether your research is ethical
- Explain key ethical concepts, such as informed consent and anonymity
- Explain the process for gaining ethical approval to conduct your research

For the social science researcher, issues of ethics and safety are of great importance, and should remain in the front of your mind when planning and carrying out research. We must take regard for the safety and well-being of the people we work with, just as we expect other people (and the institutions we work for) to take care of us.

This part of the tool will help you think about what it means to research ethically and safely and will lead you to additional resources to find out more.

How Do I Know My Research Is Ethical?

In the past researchers in medicine and the social sciences often accepted, or were made to accept, the predominant political philosophy of their era. Nazi scientists used human subjects in the same way as laboratory animals. In the US in the mid-twentieth century, it was common practice to conduct medical research on vulnerable groups, for example black prisoners, and poor recipients of medical treatment.

Society's awareness of the unethical nature of this research has changed, and continues to change. The Nuremberg Trials in 1947 identified the behavior of Nazi researchers as criminal. In August 2013, the family of Henrietta Lacks, a black woman whose tissue was taken from her without consent in 1951 and used in medical experiments since, won the right from the US Health Department to have her name and life acknowledged.

The key issue here is informed consent. Even when good comes out of such experiments, human beings must be given the opportunity to agree to taking part in research.

Search for resources about the history of research ethics

What Do I Need to Know About Potential Harm and Informed Consent?

People must not be subject to harm in the course of research unless the potential harm has been explained to them and they have given free consent—informed consent—to their participation.

In medical experiments, where the research is on the body of the subject, potential harm is easy to identify. For example, patients in a drug trial must be advised of possible side effects.

In social research, harm may be harder to identify. It is more likely to involve psychological harm to the subject. For example, a researcher looking into the experiences of war veterans would have to make the subjects aware of the potential psychological effects of recounting their experiences.

This is certainly something you will need to discuss with your supervisor before working with informants.

Read more about informed consent

Why Is Confidentiality an Important Aspect of Research?
Confidentiality is the other main ethical issue you will face in your research. In social science there is a general principle, reinforced by data protection laws, that people are entitled to privacy. We should assure people who take part in a survey or interview that their material will never be used in a way which allows them to be identified. This is the principle of anonymity.

Do My Research Subjects Need to Be Aware of My Role as Researcher?
This is a particular issue in ethnographic research. We can observe and report freely on people's actions in public contexts when their behavior is on show to everyone. However, when we work with people in a private context we must usually identify ourselves as researchers so that they are aware that they are being observed.

Sometimes ethnographic research is conducted on a covert basis, meaning the researcher works in non-public social contexts without identifying themselves as a researcher to others. This has been done in work on crime and sometimes in health contexts. It can be ethically justifiable but you must be able to justify it as a special case.

How Can I Gain Ethical Approval for My Research?
Almost all research projects have to go through the process of gaining ethical approval from an institution or funding body. These procedures vary in form and intensity. Here are some things you have to be aware of at this stage of your project.

Make sure you are fully familiar with the guidelines and procedures for gaining the ethical approval in order to conduct your research.

Consult the ethical approval guideline schemes applicable to your research. Incorporate appropriate elements/wording from them in your research proposal. Some examples of bodies which provide guidelines include:

- Your university

- The Economic and Social Research Council (UK)
- National Science Foundation (US)
- Other professional bodies, e.g., the British Sociological Association.

You may have to obtain approval for your research from an ethics committee, in addition to any other ethical approval process. This will apply if you are doing research in a National Health Service context, or in Social Work or Social Care contexts. You should note these considerations when working with a committee.

- **Stringency**
  For the reasons given below, this process is often more stringent—and time-consuming—than that applied, for example, by universities.

- **Relationship with clients**
  Your research will generally be done on patients or clients who are already in a relationship with the system. They are in a subordinate position, and obtaining informed consent from them is particularly important.

- **Value of research**
  Committees often include the stipulation that the value of the research must be such that staff time devoted to it can be justified. Make sure you can do that.

- **Lay people on committees**
  It's important to realize that some members of ethics committees in these contexts are lay people who do not have specialist knowledge of social research terminology and procedures. This may be particularly apparent in their questioning about the methods you intend to use. It will be useful to discuss this with your supervisor. And possibly practice your submission on a friend who isn't a social scientist.

If you are working with children up to the age of 16, or "vulnerable people," you will probably require a police check (sometimes called a disclosure) to establish that you have no criminal or other record in relation to the abuse of these people. This procedure can take time. (Even if you have completed an earlier check for similar research, you should find out if that document is valid for your current research.)

Transcript

00:01 [SOUND EFFECTS PLAYING]I think there's always a lot of concernabout involving children and young peoplein research-- that somehow they can't fully understand whatthe research is about so they're not fully-informed,

00:22 whether they can actually give full consent because of that.And again, that's a big debate that sort of continues, really.But I think what's important-- and again, like young peopleand children-- just want to know what that research is about,and I think they need to understandwhat their involvement might mean,what it might mean for their friends and family

00:43 perhaps if it's part of that kind of wider project.Certainly, with the work that I'vedone with young people that's specific to research ethics,one of the main concerns is aroundwhat happens to kind of the data that's collectedand privacy issues and confidentiality issues.They're very in tune with those kind of things.And again, those things are kind of part of the research ethics

01:04 approval process, but young peoplemay have specific concerns around those--doing an online survey may create issuesif it's somehow linked to them in any possible wayor whether they're prepared to kind of give answers that mightget them into trouble perhaps if they're asked about perhapshealth practices that they think they shouldn't be involvedwith, such as smoking at a young age or something like that.

01:26 So again, there may be other issuesspecific to young people.There are concerns always about whether childrenand young people might raise perhaps sensitive issuesand how an adult researcher mightdeal with that in the context of the research--who do they direct that young person toand whether that young person may feel any harms

01:47 as a consequence of that.As was described, research ethicsprocesses look at things like informed consent,confidentiality, data protection,and all those kind of things.But situated ethics really refer to those kindof everyday moments where you might be out in the researchfield and something happens that's perhapsethically sensitive and it requires the researcher to sort

02:09 of act or perhaps not act in that particular moment.And I think those kind of everyday momentsare no less important than kind of the procedural ethicsthat we quite often sort of focus on in termsof research ethics.For example, in school-based research,I've done kind of a lot of participate observationand, of course, in a school context where you've

02:31 got particular school rules-- young people aren't allowedto talk in class, they shouldn't beeating, they shouldn't be challenging teachers,that kind of approach--and when you'resat as a researcher in that classroom contextand all those activities are going on.So the young person might challenge the teacher.They might be talking in class.

02:51 I've been in situations where the teachers askedme to kind of almost defend them or kind of be their allyin that kind of situation.At the same time, the young person's asking me to defendthem-- "Actually, I wasn't doing anything"-- and to take sides.So again, those kind of things happen perhapson a almost daily basis in that kind of environment

03:13 where you might be kind of this in-betweener.You're the kind of stranger in that environment,but you're being asked by two different people to kindof side with them--to take sides--when rules have been broken.This is an issue with situated ethics.I don't think there's kind of necessarily a formula of what'sright or wrong in that kind of context.

03:35 Certainly, from my experience of doing a lot of participationobservation in schools, the young people reallydo look to the kind adult researcherto speak up for any injustice perhaps or anythingwhere they feel they've been treated unfairly, which, again,is also about ethics.And I think in order to do that type of research,

03:57 it goes back to what I said earlier.The dialogue with all players, all stakeholdersin that research is really, really important.So I found myself having long discussions with teachersbefore the lessons-- that, if breaking rules dooccur, what are your expectations of mein that context?But also, having that discussion with the young people as well,

04:19 so I guess that open dialogue.But again, I think that comes with experience.Sometimes, you can always preemptafter being in that context for awhile, these kind of issuesmay arise.Certainly, when you're new to them,they can be quite daunting-- thinking "What shall I do?"But I think the important thing isto have that dialogue with, for example,the teachers and the young peopleto say, "What do you expect from me?

04:41 What is your expectation?This is my research.This is kind of the way I'm thinking,"and to come to some common ground there.

Getting ethical approval can be a simple matter of getting your supervisor to sign off a local ethics form. But it can be time-consuming and complicated. Allow time for this in your timetable —and prepare to be patient.

Search for resources about gaining ethical approval

What Is a Risk Assessment?

The term “risk assessment” refers to the procedures and also the forms which you will have to submit to advise your institution of the safety aspects of your research.

Most social research carries few risks, but some does. So almost all universities and other employers of researchers insist that risk assessment forms are prepared as part of the process of obtaining approval for a research project. You should note that institutions’ insurers require these to be completed.

A very sensible principle of risk assessment procedure is that you will be asked to identify:

- The nature of risks in terms of severity
- The likelihood of risks in terms of occurrence.

Use common sense when assessing the risks in your research, and consult your supervisor if in doubt.

These are often simple. You may find that the form is multi-purpose, designed to address issues of laboratory safety or taking geography students on field trips as well as for social researchers, but you need to go through the process.

How Can I Ensure I Will Be Safe When Carrying Out My Research?

In issues of confidentiality and informed consent, researchers take note of the well-being of the

people they work with. But you, and the institution you work for, must also have regard for your own safety as a researcher.

A lot of social research is done in ways which closely resemble everyday life. The overwhelming majority of people you engage with are decent, friendly and helpful. Desk research in a library may be even safer. However, there may be times, both working in your own country or overseas, when you have to be more aware of dangers.

This is a common research situation and is nearly always safe. (You may find the greatest difficulty you face is whether to accept or turn down the regular refreshments you will be offered!) However, social researchers have been violently and sexually assaulted by disturbed interviewees so you must consider the risk.

Here you will be more likely to be at risk of assault or robbery, especially if you work after dark.

Sometimes researchers work overseas in areas where there are very real threats to safety due to civil unrest. Universities and other institutions take special note of this and you have to consult the relevant procedures in the development of a risk assessment.

If you plan on working in contexts which present a risk to your safety, you will have to take precautions. These may include:

- Informing someone of your whereabouts and your likely time of return
- Working together with other researchers in the same geographical area and keeping an eye on each other
- Working with, or including in your group, a local person who is trusted by the people you want to talk to.

A lot of safety concerns boil down to common sense and good manners. We live in the social world and in our ordinary lives we take sensible precautions for minimizing and avoiding risks.

Search for resources about research safety

What Do I Need to Know About Informed Consent and Confidentiality?

Informed consent became part of international law after the Nuremberg trials in 1947, which identified the behavior of Nazi researchers who experimented on human participants without their permission. It is applicable to experimental research when researchers carry out interventions on the participants, but also to qualitative research.

Researchers must not:

- Carry out research on people without their consent
- Carry out experiments on people without telling them that they were the subject of experiments.

Research participants must:

- Give consent
- Be provided with full information on the nature of the intervention and the possible risks associated with it.

Other things to remember:

- Children and vulnerable people must have consent provided on their behalf by a responsible adult
- While it is relatively straightforward to identify risk in a clinical context—e.g., a randomized controlled drug test—it is more complex to identify risk or harm to your subject in a social research context
- Consult your supervisor about clarifying areas of risk to your participants.

In **non-experimental research** (research in which we do not do anything to our subjects), the relationship between researcher and participants is more complex. In this type of research, if we are dealing with competent adults who are happy to help with our research but have the natural desire to keep their business to themselves, the key issue is not harm, but confidentiality.

Researchers must:

- Guarantee that the participant cannot be identified from the information provided
- Give a contractual commitment that the information will be anonymized.

Research participants must:

- Sign a consent form that interview information may be used anonymously.
- Sometimes also agree that interview material which identifies them can be used.

Electronic information which we hold is covered by data protection laws. This information can include:

- Electronic forms of interview transcripts
- Coded products of a computer-based data analysis package.

Universities and other institutions have data protection guidelines. It is very important that you observe these when storing and using data.

There are exceptions to the usual practice in dealing with information in a confidential manner.

- **Interviewing people in power**
  Your research may involve interviewing people in positions of power. It may be impossible to record their views anonymously. In this case, an alternative way to proceed may be to follow the journalistic code of “on” and “off” the record. Everything said is deemed to be “on the record”—and usable in your research—unless the interviewee specifies that it is “off the record.” You should alert the interviewee that this is how you intend to conduct the interview. But be aware that he/she may then decline to be interviewed!

- **Ethnographic and observational research**
  In these types of research, rather than conducting one-to-one interviews, you will interact with people in ordinary social contexts. For example, you may be conducting work-based research in your own employment, in education, health, criminal justice settings, etc. The common practice here is to obtain consent to the observation in advance from all actors in the situation.

- **Covert research**
  Covert research is when researchers go into a non-public context and do not identify themselves as researchers who are reporting on social action to other actors in that social situation. Much social research takes this form. Many social researchers believe that covert research can be justified, sometimes into areas of criminal activity. But if you wish your research to include this element, you must justify it in the discussion of ethical issues in your research proposal. This is definitely an area you need to discuss with your supervisor.

- **What if you see something wrong?**
  Sometimes if you are working in research as described in 2 or 3 above, you may come across a practice which you feel justifies breaking confidentiality to report to the appropriate authority. These may be:

  - **Breaches of professional standards**
    In contexts of professional work, things are straightforward. Professionals have a duty to uphold professional standards and to report breaches of them in accordance with professional codes and the requirements of the criminal law. These obligations over-ride any commitment to confidentiality.

- **Criminal activity**
  There are no hard-and-fast rules about what to do if "wrong activity" is observed in covert research. In practice, anonymity can be breached if the researcher considers that what has been observed is serious enough to merit breaking the research context. The rules of everyday life apply.

Search for resources about confidentiality

What Is Researcher Bias?
Researcher bias occurs when some aspect of the research design and/or the way in which the research is conducted generates a description or a conclusion which is not accurate.

We can distinguish between two types of researcher bias. You need to aware of the first when reviewing the literature for your project. And you also need to take steps to avoid both types when carrying out your own work.

Deliberate bias occurs when research is intentionally set up in such a way as to produce a particular result. This is a particular risk for evaluative research, as people want to show that their policies have worked. Researchers must be careful not to allow themselves to be pressurized toward a positive conclusion when it is not justified. Be aware of these ways in which bias can influence research findings.

- Bias can be built into the design of the evaluation, through a false specification of the appropriate outcome of the intervention
- Bias can emerge in the interpretation of results—painting a good picture from negative findings
- Bias can be shown in the presentation of a crude summary which does not reflect the actual conclusions of the research process. (The media and politicians are often accused of doing this!)

Unconscious bias occurs when researchers unintentionally work in a way which generates particular research outcome. They fail to consider to what extent their own beliefs, values, social position, and background contribute to the way they frame research questions and undertake research. There are two methods for dealing with this:

- The traditional argument is for research to be conducted with absolute objectivity. This has been criticized by those who consider that this allows a positivist frame of reference into the research process.
- An alternative approach argues for reflexivity. This requires that researchers explicitly and

carefully assess themselves in terms of social position and assumptions. They should make their potential biases explicit to others, and take account of them in designing, carrying out, and interpreting their research.

Transcript

00:06 I'm John Scott, Professor of Sociology at Plymouth.And I'm going to be talking about the first coupleof chapters, which are the ones that I co-authored.And what are they about?They set the scene for the book in talkingabout the nature of objectivity and philosophical discussion

00:27 and its relationship with [INAUDIBLE] relativism.So, John, you're going to summarizethe nature of objectivity and subjectivityin a foundational sense.Yes, what I did in the book was to lookat the philosophical arguments about objectivityin the traditional form, which implied

00:47 a very absolutist notion of objectivity, truth,correspondence with reality.And I take out some of the argumentsfrom Kant in the philosophy traditionand try and show how they influencesome of the debate within both natural scienceand social science.

01:09 And threw into question the notion of objectivity.That for Kant, he argued that therewas a basic difference between the worldas it really is, independently of people and the worldas we see it, perceive it.And he wanted to explore how it isthat we can claim that our knowledge, our perception

01:32 of the world is an accurate, truthful representationof that world.We clearly can't, he said, have direct accessto the things in themselves.They're beyond human understanding.But we can try to construct ways of understanding them better.

01:52 And I really try to show how that influencedquite a long tradition of analysiswithin philosophy and sociology thattried to explore the ways in whichperceptions of the world, our understanding of that world,relative to our position from which we view it.

02:14 So just as, when we're sitting in a room, we look around,each person in the room is locatedin a different position, sees the world differently,sees a different shape of the room.It's the same room.They're seeing it in different ways.The argument here was that in the social world,we are all located differently.We are different in our sex, our gender, our class,

02:38 our ethnicity.The social location is different and that gives usa particular perspective or standpoint on the world.And from that perspective, we construct outunderstanding of what the social world looks like.Therefore, these writers argued, all knowledgeis relative to your location.

03:02 So this therefore implied that therewas some kind of huge contrast between an objective viewof the world and a subjective or relative view of the world.From which I argued, was that we can actuallystart to find a way out of that impasse,particularly taking out the arguments of writer Karl

03:24 Mannheim, who tried to show that whilst everything wasrelative to a particular locationand had this particular standpoint behind it,nevertheless we could understand it as a more or less adequaterepresentation or reflection of that unknown world.

03:45 And his argument was that the waywe do that is by trying to synthesize all of themtogether, different standpoints.That you get a better model of the worldis if you can understand it from a whole seriesof different standpoints, synthesizing togetherinto a larger picture.And that gives a more accurate representation.

04:08 Each approach is authentic and valid to its own standpoint.But it's only from the standpoint of synthesiswhich he argues science has to achieve,that gives us an overall view of-- a betterpicture of the world, a gradual approximate moreand more to the reality of the world as it is.

04:29 And I think that was what I triedto set out as our own starting pointfor the analysis in the book.I think one of the fascinating things about the book

04:52 is that it is three voices and that the three voices are notentirely disharmonious.I think you agree on lots of thingsbut there are also some differences between the threeof you.So I wonder quickly, John, whether you could justsummarize for people watching this film,where your position with regard to objectivity and subjectivitydiffers from that of Gayle and Malcolm.

05:14 Well, this is clearly something that we explored quiteextensively and we had to process it writing itself.And we did start out with some biographical reflectionsin the book that showed how we came to this positionfrom our own experience of the social world.And I think we gradually clarifiedthe fact that although it seemed as if we had sharply

05:38 different views, what we were doingwas actually using words in a different way from one another.So there was actually much more agreementthan we might have perhaps initially thought.And we realized that ideas like objectivity, subjectivity,

05:58 relativity, truth, standpoint, have multifaceted meaningsto them.And we might use them in a particular way whichimplies a particular understanding,but in discussion, we gradually startedto realize that these were intertwined togetherand that we could quite constructively develop

06:22 that argument through our dialogues in the book.And I think we ended up actually with a substantial areaof agreement, having explored our differencesthrough the various discussions in the book.But how would you define the differences still between you,so that when viewers come to watch these films, that there

06:44 are some differences still and couldyou perhaps summarize those from your perspective?I think if you wanted a caricature pictureof the extremes, as it were, thenI suppose-- my coauthors may differ,but perhaps Malcolm's caricature picture

07:05 would be that of the hard-nosed, empirical researcher,getting to understand the world as it reallyis, strong objectivity.Gayle perhaps coming off from the standpoint of subjectivityand the authenticity of particular standpointsand perhaps her viewpoint.My position saying, well, yes, I can recognize truth

07:27 in both of those, and perhaps we can bring them together,taking that standpoint of synthesis.But I think as I say, that's a little bit of a caricature.It might have been where we started outin terms of our perceptions of one another,but we gradually moved toward a much moreof an agreement [INAUDIBLE].

07:56 I'm Malcolm Williams.I'm a professor at Cardiff Universityand I'm going to talk about [INAUDIBLE] and objectivity.I'd like to start where John kind of left off and was sortof making caricatures of our positions.In some ways what he said about me is actuallythere's some absolute truth about it.

08:16 My starting point was from-- perhaps contrasting to Gayle,my starting point was actually from [INAUDIBLE]social research, as somebody who's worked with large datasets mostly quantitative work.We also taught research methods for many years.And I got thinking about this whenI looked at a lot of research methods, textbooks,

08:38 which often did two things.First of all, they talked about objectivity as being somethingthat quantitative researchers do.And subjectivity as something qualitative researchers do.And it immediately begs the question,what about mixed methods research,where the two very often come together?And the second thing they talk of,is objectivity value free then?

09:01 And I don't think it is.My argument for situated objectivitybegins from a rejection of value freedom.And I'll just say something about value freedom and valuesfirst.Value freedom in itself is a formative contradiction.Because if you say, I'm value free,it's immediate that you have one value.But that's a small point.

09:21 The bigger point is that values, if we think of values,people often think of just moral values.Actually, values run right across from thingslike numeric values, right across the moral valuesand between that you've got thingslike methodological values and science and so forth.And the numeric values themselves,we can think of as being sort of reconstructive.

09:42 So you might think of temperature for example,refers to real concrete things.But we could use the measure Celsius, Fahrenheit, evenCalvin in extreme temperatures.So if we think of values as being somethingwe as scientists in a broader m attribute to things,

10:04 then one of those values, along with lots of other onesis objectivity.Objectivity comes out of the culture of science.If we didn't have science, we wouldn't have objectivity.So objectivity is a good making value in science.That's my starting point.The second-- but then two things I think are important.

10:26 First of all, objectivity is a value.What kind of value is it?Well, I think there are some aspects of objectivity thatwill transcend time and place.And I think there are three things.First of all, when we're conducting any kind of researchin the natural or the social sciences,we have a purpose in doing them.

10:47 And that purpose will be located in a particularsocial and historic moment.Secondly, we need to differentiate between things,at least at the level of saying, this is a glassand this is a pen.In the same way I need to say, this is John and this is Gayle.We need to make those basic differentiations

11:09 of classes of things.And thirdly, and perhaps most importantly,the key value of science itself is a pursuit of truth.But importantly, not the perhaps arrogant beliefthat we can find truth, although I'm not saying that'snot possible in some limited sense, but the fact

11:29 that we pursue it is of value.So those three things, purpose, differentiation, and truth,I think, lie at the heart of a socially situated objectivity.And social situation itself is not justsimply a methodological one, but it's alsothe context of the society that the sociologist for example

11:52 is working in.So the sociologist will research those kindsof things that are important to our society at any given time.Now, that doesn't mean that one maybesaid this is almost very similar to what they would be saying.That doesn't mean that when they're researching them,they are partisan in what they find out.

12:14 For example, I've done quite a lot of work on homelessness.Why, as a citizen, I'm very concerned that weeliminate homelessness.But as a researcher, I wanted the truth about homelessness,not what I'd like it to be.I need to find the truth of it.So that's really where I'm coming from.The difference between the [INAUDIBLE] perspective

12:34 and my own one is that I think-- and here Irefer to the work of Alan [INAUDIBLE]I think that the values from outside of the disciplineabsolutely permeate what you do while in that discipline.So I'm like Weber, who believed you kind of metaphoricallyleft them at the laboratory door.I believe you bring them into the laboratory with you.

13:06 Again, Malcolm, reflecting on the writingof the book and the dialogue within the bookbetween the three of you, again, if you could sketch out howyour position approximately differs from Gayle and John.I actually think that the difference between myselfand Gayle is much less one of epistemological difference

13:29 but one perhaps of experiential difference.Gayle and I both respect the kind of researchthat each of us do.We've done very different kinds of research.Where in Gayle's research, subjectivitybecomes very, very important to the way you do research.The kind of research I do, objectivity

13:49 becomes terribly important to the way you do research.But, during the course of the book, I've moved very closeto Gayle's position, that I thinka necessary condition for objectivityis to begin from subjectivity.And I think John and I became much closer.We had a discussion about standpoints.

14:09 And my starting point was to be veryskeptical about standpoints because Ifelt there was a kind of a sense of relativismhere, relativism to the individual.And I had to choose between those standpoints.But I think that we both quite coalesced aroundMannheimian idea of an underlying realism.

14:31 And probably the area where John and I stillhave some differences, and this iswhat's been so productive about the book,is the around the notion of truth.I unashamedly hang onto a correspondence versionof truth, where there is a logical correspondencebetween the truth of the matter and a statement that's made.But it's a logical rather than an empirical argument.

14:55 And I think John would take a slightly different view to meon that one.My name is Gayle Letherby and I'm a professorof sociology at Plymouth.And I'm here to talk about a position that I [INAUDIBLE]

15:15 subjectivity.OK.And I think I want to start reallyby saying that I think, far more for Malcolm,that I think my argument is similar to Malcolm's,but that I begin in a different place.So I find it interesting that in almost all debatesof this time, we start with objectivityand then move on to subjectivity and even we did that.

15:38 What we don't do is what often happensis, demonize subjectivity.So there's often a demonization of subjectivity.It's something that we need to avoid,something that we need to distance ourselves from.It's always kind of the demon in the room, really.So my position, which I call theorized subjectivity,I first talked about in a earlier publication in 2003.

16:03 And interestingly, since Malcolm and I met each other,we discovered we were writing about similar issuesin slightly different kind of ways at the same kind of time.I think theorized subjectivity is valuablebecause it recognizes that research is subjective,power laden, an emotional experience

16:24 that's shot through with-- it's relevant to our bodiesand embodies experience, as it were.So it's a position that recognizesboth the personal world of the researcherand it also recognizes the complex relationshipbetween the respondent and the receptor,so how that identity plays out in the research process.

16:47 It isn't a re-definition of objectivity.It's starting from a completely different place, whichadmits that subjectivity is relative to all the researchthat we do.And this is another place that Malcolm and Idiffer a little bit.And that's not necessarily an advantage or a disadvantage.It's just how it is.I mean, we call it how it is.

17:09 We need to acknowledge that at the very beginning.And ironically, I feel that an interrogationof the self in research, with referenceto the other in research, gets us closer to the positionthat we won't call objective.But if we didn't do that in the first place.So by starting with subjectivity,we get closer to something that we might call objectivity.

17:32 So, my work also, or my argument also,isn't a rejection of objectivity,nor is it a support of the idea that we'rebound to positions, that we have objectivity hereand we have subjectivity there.For me, they're interrelated.And it's recognizing the value of the subjective,

17:53 both positive and negative in both kinds of researchthat we do.I'm not arguing, which sometimes some people think I am,but I'm not arguing that we necessarilyneed to be close to our respondentsor close to the topic that we research.I have myself done research on topicsthat are very close to my own autobiographybut on topics also that are very different

18:15 from my own experience.But I am arguing that our autobiography is alwaysrelevant to the research that we do.And it's always in there.So I'm arguing, essentially that weneed to think about theoretical objectivity with referenceto what we might call politics of the research processand the politics of the research product.

18:36 So we've heard of the politics of the research process.We acknowledge that our identity as researchers, our position,our gender position, our age, our sexuality, et cetera, etcetera is always relevant in terms of what we doand what we get.And it also acknowledges that thatcan be-- research is complex.

18:57 So that, for example, while we acceptthat research is power laden, that power sometimes shifts.So we don't always research down.We sometimes research up.We sometimes research elites.We sometimes, perhaps surprisinglyfind that people that we thought were vulnerablearen't that vulnerable, and peoplethat we thought were in privileged positions

19:17 display a vulnerability.So it's much more complicated than is sometimes suggested.Also, in relation to that, it acknowledgesthat not only do we have an impact on the researchthat we undertake, but the research has an impact on us.And I use the analogy of walking into a field.When we walk into fields, we leave footmarks

19:40 but we also take away mud.So it's a dynamic relationship, as it were.This common awareness, I think, is sometimes mistakenly seenas synonymous with involvement, which as I said,is not my position.And this in turn, is sometimes seen as synonymous with bias.And bias again, is seen as inevitably a bad thing.

20:03 My point is that we have to interrogate our biasand see what our bias is doing for the research, as it were,that we're undertaking.It's also very relevant as I said, in termsof the politics of the product.And this is a real kind of hot topic at the moment, wherewe're all being expected to demonstratethe impact of the research that we're doing,

20:24 and to make evident the relevance and the usefulnessof our research.And whereas we might from a positionof theoretical subjectivity, we might cautiouslyembrace that, we also do need to think, well,who's interests are necessarily being served in the researchthat we're doing?And the impact of gender is taken up

20:45 within the Academy and outside of it,will we end up only able to do research on topicsthat [INAUDIBLE] others define as important?

21:05 Talking about questions of epistemiology,which is what we're talking about with notionsof objectivity and subjectivity, the questionI've got, more than anything else was,why do I need to know about this stuff?So why?Why do I need to know about this stuff?I'll start.I think it's because so much of the critique of sociology

21:30 and the social sciences is saying,either it's all common sense or it's all a matter of opinionor it's just political bias.And therefore sociologists in particularneed to give some kind of defense of what they're doing.But what we're doing does have a validity.It does have an objectivity.

21:51 And it's precisely because of thatneed to defend that of social science, I think,certainly that battle is one that'smy interest in this area.And I think although we have all sorts of differencesamongst ourselves, even what we think of as scienceand what we like to describe our activity as science,

22:12 we do all face that view of counteringthat kind of normal objection to much social science, sociology.And I think Gayle tapped into it earlierwhen she was talking about subjectivityand how that gets confused with the notion of biasand that's the reaction that many people have.

22:33 I think I'd actually agree with that, John.I suppose on some level we're saying, why should you--why should somebody believe my account as a researcherof something, as opposed to somebody else's?And then I would say, well, I'm providing some evidenceof my account of the way the world is or what something is,

22:54 and the what's the basis on whichI'm providing that evidence.Well, those values-- and here, I think,this is where I think it's so importantto start with subjectivity, whereyou begin with that purpose.There's a purpose and that purposemight be shaped from the outside.And I think that's very important, that-- you mentioned

23:15 the impact of gender gap, the whole impact of genderis shaping this from the outside.But how can we do good sociology within that?And where I suppose I think all of uswould proudly part company with the post modern views,we would not say that one accountis as good as another account.

23:36 Because there are better accounts than other ones.Would that be right?Would we agree with that?Well, what we're talking about is research for accountability.I always talk to my students about theyneed to be responsible for what they're producingand the numbers that they're producing.So I actually ask them to read some pieces of work

23:58 where the researcher has written what I would call a reallybland methodological section where they say,I talked to this many people.I gave out this many questionnairesand then they go on to say, and these are the resultsthat I got.Unless we explain our intellectual as well asour practical process of how we got to what we got,then our knowledge is kind of meaningless, really.

24:20 So, for me, thinking epistemologicallyis about thinking how what we do affects what we get.And how if the four of us all do it, and get somethingdifferent, then what we might need to dois interrogate our process again to work outwhy we got to a different conclusion.

24:40 And I suppose, picking up on somethingJohn said about showing that sociology and sociologicalscience is effective, for me it's about showing sociologyand sociological science is working towards objectivity,although sometimes it doesn't necessarily get there.Yeah.I think it comes through in multiple places in the book,

25:03 that objectivity isn't a state, it'sa long term destination that's probablyreceding as you approach it.But we get better and better but we neverget perfection, as it were.It's a value.It's a value.

25:29 I wonder if you could each talk a little bit moreabout how we really embed these methodological concernsin our research practice, in designing a researchproject for ourselves.Because I don't think it's necessarily an easy thingto do.Well, to start your first point, I think actually

25:51 sometimes the reason that methodology and methodologicalsections aren't as rich as we would want them to,is [INAUDIBLE] because sometimes they're notso-- they think that the audience won't beso interested in those topics.And it's the same with colleagues.I remember when I was a PhD student,

26:12 the British Sociological Association Annual Conferencewas on issues of method and methodology.And I did my PhD at the same institutionthat I did my undergraduate degree.And I met one of my lecturers in the photocopy room and I said,I don't know why you're going to that conference.It's just going to be boring.Now, for me, I just think methodology is fascinatingand unless we explain the relationship, as I said,

26:37 between what we do and what we get, then essentially,we're not doing a good enough job.And I think what we also should dois we should rethink-- I talk about this in the book.We should rethink what we understandto be the process of research.And that often it starts before we begin to write about.

26:60 So when we write up our methodology,we write about our-- possibly our relationship with ethicscommittees and then our recruitment of respondentsand then our relationship with respondentsand when we collected the data.What we often don't write about ishow we got to write the grant proposal in the first placeor how we met with the commissioners who fundedour research and the process.

27:21 And sometimes our subjective positionon theorized subjectivity needs to start a longbefore the traditional research process started.And if we want to make an impact,probably needs to continue long after the timewhen we do the traditional presentation of our findings.So it's probably a much more extended process

27:42 than the traditional textbooks tell us that it is.I'm not-- what Gayle has just said is absolutely right.And I'm not going to say more about the external, those kindof externalities and thinking about our own attitudetoward it because I completely agree with her.

28:03 But what I would also say is that this can happenat the level of method as well.And a nice example is the work of Herrnstein and Murraymany years ago who wrote The Bell Curve, which was Iguess the philosophy was the neo-racist defenseof intelligence.And the thing where objectivity failed in that book

28:27 was not just absolutely the starting pointabout what counts as intelligenceand what the question is you're asking.But also the methods themselves because theyused-- their principle [INAUDIBLE] aggression.And the models themselves were very weak-fitting models.On the basis of the weak-fitting models,

28:49 they made huge generalizations.So the level of method sometimes,there's a lack of objectivity.I think probably the only thing I'd add to that would be I'dsay that when it comes to actually designingthe piece of research and getting involved in researchin a particular area, you can't detach it

29:11 from the methodological considerations.They have to structure the way you go about that research.And in particular, for example, what'shighlighted our debate on objectivity,is the research doesn't involve what's beencalled the view from nowhere.There's always a view from somewhere.We're always seeing the world from our particular position.

29:33 And the key question is how can youstudy whatever it is that you're interestedin without either resorting to a particular positionor implying that somehow you've got a god-like stance above allthose partial positions.And that raises all sorts of questions

29:55 about the kind of sources that it'sappropriate to use, how you get to understand other people'spositions, and build them into your analysis.So you have to have a good understanding of objectivityand wider aspects of methodology if you're going to do research.Otherwise, you do it unreflectivelyand I think you end up with bad research.

30:28 Let's say I'm a PhD student and I'mwriting my methodology chapter.What [INAUDIBLE] for your expectations of my chapter?Do we want lots of accounts of Kant and Mannheimand Foucault and Weber ad nauseumin thousands of PhD theses?

30:48 Or something else?What is that something else that youwould be looking for as sophisticated and engagedin a methodological chapter?I think what you look for is, in the jargon,is called reflexivity, someone to reflect on the methodologythey use when it comes to the stage of trying

31:10 to writing it up.To actually talk about the processthey went through in developing that research.Because it's very unlikely that the ideas that theyhad in the beginning are what they had at the end.Even down to things like the construction of their sample,the people they interviewed.I think it's important that in PhD source or any kind

31:34 of account of research, people reflectupon what they did and give a rationaleand justification as to why they did it in that wayand that's how you can, as a reader,assess the validity and reliability of whatit was they're doing.Is their understanding-- it becomes the subjectivity

31:55 of the researcher as part of the process.I think the starting point for them is perhapsto think about where did the research question comefrom in the first place?Why is it interesting?Why is it important?And then also to reflect on the methodsor the methodological protocol and the methods that they used.Why are they using one particular method or methods

32:16 rather than another?If we look at the differences for example, between the UnitedStates and UK, in the United States,the experimental method still remains terribly important,particularly in educational research.We hardly use it at all here outside epidemiology.Now, why is that the case?I'm sure the research questions are not so very different.

32:37 And likewise, we, on the whole, use longitudinal datamore than the Americans do.And again, why is that the case?Well, one of the answers to that is that the British governmenthas invested very heavily in longitudinal data sets.

32:59 For me, I think the reason why I reallylike working with PhD students, I really think at the timewhen someone begins to kind of understand methodology and sortof feel it in their bones, really,and what I hope is that a student will sort of understand

33:22 that you can really [INAUDIBLE] which is a really useful thingto do, but until you do it yourself,you don't really understand kind of like whatit is to do research and what it is to be a researcher.Because something always happens that you don't expect.And what I really like is when students realize for themselves

33:42 is that research isn't hygienic, and researchis messy and complicated.And that they have a story to tell within that,and that they can make it clear and what their story iswithin that kind of messiness.And I think it's also important that, not just PhD students,but all researchers, we understand, not

34:04 all epistemological superiority to the peoplethat we study because we don't have that.But our epistemological privilege in that we dohave all these resources at our hands.We do have all these books to readand other people to talk to.And we have access, usually, to many, many moreaccounts about an experience than our respondents have.

34:26 So I think we need to good PhD students are a bit humble now,I think, and realize what a privileged position we are in.Because to be able to study some of these things the way we do.And I think there's an interesting connection therewith what I took from Karl Mannheim in the book,

34:47 where Mannheim is often misunderstoodbut he talks about the role of peopleas a relatively unattached intellectual,free floating intellectual.And what he meant by that was preciselythat the intellectual, a person working in the universityhas a privilege of their three years as a PhD student,

35:11 or their career as a long term academic to actuallyhave these kind of resources and discussion and so on,and is therefore able to sit back and take a longer termview, to engage with other people,try and understand the world from a different perspectiveand incorporate all these other views.

35:33 And that is the privilege of the intellectual.And that's what separates the role of the social scientistfrom the person in their everyday world, whois locked into practical encountersand aren't able to necessarily stand back and floatin that same kind of way.But people do theorize on their own position in the world.

35:54 We just go out levels.We were able to go to the next levelbecause we have more resources.The TV journalists, particularly the BBC,will constantly talk objective reporting, objective--

36:16 behind which is implicit this notion that there'sobjective research behind the objective reporting.But the fact that you're saying that's a naive position.Well, sometimes that research is objectiveaccording to the criteria we would set out, but not always.Well, it's a plea to think about what you mean when yousay objective or subjective.And John Reed, the founder of the BBC,

36:39 certainly had the view that objectivitywas view from nowhere.It was the absolute truth.And yet I think the BBC charter, although it stillrefers to nation shall speak unto nation.And that implies this kind of dialogue and interchangefrom different positions, each nation has a different view.And therefore, strictly speaking,

37:01 from that journalistic approach, youcan't achieve objectivity without that engagement,that dialogue that is subject to the [INAUDIBLE].I wonder whether you might reflecton how the book might have been a little bit different had you

37:25 gone at it from talking about a psychological perspective, Idon't know, mind-body duality or the historical perspectiveon how is evidence retrieved over periods of time.I'm not sure your starting premise for me--your starting premise is not entirely correct, Patrick.Because I'd actually applied a science that

37:47 was a natural science was one of them.And much of what I'm saying actuallyhas its roots in the philosophy of science, not sociologyat all.[INTERPOSING VOICES]Yeah, I think it is something that should speakto those other disciplines.As a matter of fact, it is somethingwe were aware of when we decided to talk

38:09 about social research rather than sociological research.And this was sometimes a change in the languageas we were writing to make a more general point.I think, having said that, different disciplines dotypically utilize different sourcesand will raise those same questions in different ways.And again, they come at it from different directions.

38:32 I think to them, there may be somethingdistinctive about the social approach and the sociologistallies then with the historian more than say, the psychologistbecause of our emphasis that we are socially locatedand those values are social cultural values.

38:53 Whereas the psychologist may takemore of the side of embodiment, what is the other dimensionwe looked at than mind body idea.So I hope we cast a rather more general perspective.I would have thought theorized subjectivity would begood advice for psychologists.Well, interestingly, I have explored some of these issues

39:15 in a multidisciplinary [INAUDIBLE]a multidisciplinary group [INAUDIBLE] issues.It was a course that was for PhD students across the university.So there would be psychologists in the roomand medics and historians and sociologists.And I suppose that's one of the things I thinkthat's pretty wonderful about our discipline,

39:37 is that it really encourages critical debate.And so that's its strength, rather than somethingthat needed to get rid of.And certainly when I've given scenariosto the multidisciplinary groups about how a medic might have

39:57 a subjective position if he or she is researching canceras opposed to researching nuclear fuel,then students can see it.They can see it.So I think a lot of what we have to sayis relevant way beyond our discipline.Oh, exactly.And one detailed points about researching cancer.I think-- I can't even remember whether it was me or you said

40:19 it--I think it was you.You could at some point, make a choiceas to whether you're going to putyour resources into researching cancer or researchingthe conditions that create the cancer in the first place.So that starting point makes a difference in the scienceyou do afterwards.

40:40 And I think purely in terms of the sourcesand so on that we use, is it's worthremembering that Max Weber, who we go back to so oftenon this question of objectivity and values,at the time he was writing-- was employed as a historian,was writing as an economic historian,publishing the results in journal of social policy.

41:01 So, it's not a purely sociological argument at all.I think that's interesting and that's a good segueand I think into my next question, whichis, we're living in interesting times, aren't we?I mean, political and social researchis increasingly politicized.

41:22 I mean there's is the example of the US governmentnow, which is no longer funding any political researchwhatsoever.So if you want funding for your research in that [INAUDIBLE]sense, you have to go [INAUDIBLE]and not to the government.And yet ironically it seems that the laboryou're engaged in in this work is demonstrating

41:43 the theoretical and methodological oomphand credibility of social research in order to say,to perhaps people who don't understand social research,look, we're good at this, the research that we're doinghas a lot to offer society and potentiallya lot to offer policy.

42:03 And I think the cancer example touches on that.But the irony within that seems to methat the more social scientists talk about epistemologyand philosophy, the more they're accusedby those who don't understand social research of beingnaval gazing, of not actually engaging in the real world.So how do you counter that argument?

42:27 It isn't only external audiences, I don't think,that offer that challenges.There are sometimes challenges within the disciplineswithin which we work too.Because I've certainly seen critiquesfrom colleagues around epistemologically based pieces,let's say, in terms of, well, youknow why don't you just get on with it

42:48 rather than keep talking about what it means?But I suppose again, at the risk of repeating myself,I just think we can't really justifywhat we've done without making it clearhow we've got the answers that we're telling the world isthe truth or near to the truth.Because it's only half the story, really.

43:10 Yes, I think that's exactly, the justifications that we come upwith that unless you've got this kind of rationaleand justification, then it simply become assertion.That's what I think.And so if you venture and escape from that idea of,it's all obvious.We know what the world's like, we can come to our policy

43:33 conclusions and come to these findings and say,there really is something important here.And that our policy would be better,our practice would be better if based upon this knowledgerather than that knowledge.Then you need to be able to give a justification from it.And that justification has to be standing back,as a method story about the work itself,

43:56 rather than simply asserting the account that you've given.I think also it's that kind of area between sociology,philosophy of science, and methodology area we'rekind of working in in this book, isthat it can be useful underlay where it's

44:18 in more than just specific disciplines,but across the piece-- so not just us in this book,but those disciplines are doing I think some work that allof us need, in a sense.We're doing a job there.Though I do have some sympathy for people whosay, well, just get on with it.Because I think sometimes in multi-discipline,we do-- because part of our duties

44:40 as social scientists is to be answerable to,not just our own community, but the community outside.And so when you have terrible social problems,if we can't provide some kinds of answers to those problems,there's not really a point to what we do.

45:02 Research is like a baton.It's like a relay race.And we pass the baton on to one another.And it's not linear.Because we sometimes track, as it were.But unless we really know what the baton that we're holdinglooks like, then we can't really doanything meaningful with the next stage of what we do.

45:23 So it's about research should provide guidanceto people who are going to go on and dosimilar kinds of research.And that's why methodology and epistemology are important.So, it is.I think it's also important in justifyingto those who might have very different views,

45:44 I mean, politicians, for example,want the finding that will support their policy,rather than the findings that will give leadto a better policy.That's a caricature, but very often the case.And if you're going to really have an influence on whatMalcolm was talking about, improving the [INAUDIBLE]

46:07 and others, about getting on with the research.You've got to be able to justify why your findings are importantand why people shouldn't rely on simply their own prejudicesor their expectations or the researchseems to conform to what they think is the case.When you have the luxury of taking the long view,

46:30 you say, Patrick, the United States government no longerfunds the research.I raised the issue a few moments ago of The Bell Curve.History has shown that research to be rubbish.In the natural sciences, the classic exampleis the Lysenko Affair.For many years, people living in the Soviet Union

46:52 worked to a Lysenkoist methodology in agriculture.And it initially produced some results.But before it's time we were seento be a completely bankrupt approach.So in a sense, the way we do ourselves in science,if we do it in a situation objective waywill, in the [INAUDIBLE], show those things to be the case.

47:17 I have a confidence.If I didn't I wouldn't be a social scientist.I hope you're right.It strikes me that sometimes that the opponentsof social research, by which I mean political opponents willjust assert, so that while you undertakesome meticulous theoretical and empirical

47:39 work to demonstrate value of your research,that you will have political opponents who will justsay it's rubbish.That's where it comes back to the questionthat Gayle and Malcolm discussed earlier about power, thatwith these kind of questions about knowledgecan't be separated from ideas about power.And that's become a bit tracked with Foucault's work

48:02 on knowledge and power.But it's clearly the case.And that's why, again, in the bookwe look the way in which these discussions about the validityof knowledge depend upon what Karl Popper talked aboutas an open society, and open area of discourse,which is what the ideal of the university should be like.

48:24 Habermas talks about the ideal speech community.Mannheim talks about free discussionas that idea of arriving at knowledge in a context wherepower is as much as possible leftoutside the door, left outside the laboratory,the room, where we're discussing.

48:44 But once you then try to considerthe social and political role of the scientist,you can't escape that power relationshipand you're in a different context.And I think these are some of the kind of things that Gaylewas looking at in the final chapter of aboutthe public role of the sociologist and the audiencesyou address and how you convince and persuade.

49:14 From ethics, as well, it seems like implicitlyin a lot of what you've said in the discussionso far has been quite an ethical view of the role of researcher.And one could use the classic example of the Holocaust,that the responsibility on the part of the researcher

49:36 to make sure that we understand as best we canwhat happened in these terrible situations.And people are still today, facing horrific situationsin very many places.And it feels to me that like ethically, we owe it to themto do our very best to somehow account for the lives

49:59 that they are leaving.Do you agree that that's a valid example?Yeah.That certainly in my mind, my view, and whatwe were trying to get at in the book when Malcolm's talkingabout objectivity as a value.I mean, ethics is all about values.So in a sense, that statement about objectivity

50:20 is an ethical position.One should inquire into these notions of responsibilityand obligations.And I think we would reject any kind of viewthat power is the ultimate arbitratorand that might doesn't make right.And it is more hopefully going to bethe ethical consideration, which might often

50:43 make you seem the weak, the soft feeling approach ratherthan the hard-nosed approach.But I think it is important that that ethical dimension ispresent in our academic practice and in the waythat we react really to politicians and policy makers.

51:06 I would go even further and say, for me,it's the ethic of the Enlightenment.And if there had been no science, if there'dbeen no objectivity, we have science,we can't uninvent science.Science has made us what we are in the world.And it's terribly important that weretain that ethical objectivity without--and that objectivity, let me emphasize, goes beyond method.

51:27 It must go beyond method.I guess I think that ethically we have a responsibilityto do the best kind of research that we can in the bestkind of way that we can.And as part of that, personally, Ihave an ethical responsibility to makeit clear my position as a constructor of the [INAUDIBLE].

51:54 I don't have any more questions.But do you have questions that youthink young, neophyte researchers willwant to pose to you?I think we've covered-- It's more than I thought we would.

52:15 I suppose [INAUDIBLE] but some of the feedback that we've hadis that what we're doing is quite right.But could be scary for people?Because it's challenging in a way.

52:35 I suppose I do have sympathy for that but at the same time,find it quite sad that people would sort of feel that they'vegot to go on with traditional ideal,even if they don't think that that traditional ideal,that dominant message is still relevant.

52:58 And one of the things we say in the bookis that we think that we're just starting at the base,that we would like people to join in with.I think we don't think our debate's over.So we would like other people to join in the debate with us.But in a way that makes it more and more able to talkabout these things.Because one of the things about our discipline

53:20 is, as we've said, it allows this kind of debatethat maybe is shut down in other disciplines, where it'stoo scary to admit that your project simplymight be a bit objective.[INAUDIBLE] if you had [INAUDIBLE]in terms of-- what now, in terms of where the book is.You've made the point and you've- just like objectivity

53:42 is that you're moving towards our conclusion in the book,is actually the starting point for a larger debateon [INAUDIBLE].Yes, I think it would be terribly arrogant to believethat somehow we have written about a position of objectivityand subjectivity and therefore we provided the answers.

54:04 For us, it's very much an ongoing project.Anything else would be arrogant.But a project that really should take place and notbe pushed under the carpet, which it sometimes is.Yes.You know, the builders know that we've come to the endbecause they've stopped doing work.[LAUGHING]

54:25 It's also [INAUDIBLE] today, isn't it?I think we've got some post-modernist buildersout there.Was that last bit something you can edit down?[INAUDIBLE] We'll just insert the question, and the questionwill come up on the slide.Unless you want me to pose a particular--[INTERPOSING VOICES]

54:49 It felt reasonably whole as a little chunk.So I think that's OK.Any other questions that I should be asking,or what were the common questions yougot when you did it in Cardiff?What was Steve's question?Steven was quite damning, wasn't he? [INAUDIBLE] position, but--

55:11 And the other thing we were asked aboutwas the kind of [INAUDIBLE] thing that we touched on.But we haven't got into it.Do you want to-- [INAUDIBLE] kindof any truth indicators or social constructionist.Do we want to say something about that?Oh,

55:32 We sort of have, haven't we?[INTERPOSING VOICES]I think that what we're [INAUDIBLE] so no oneis ruling out social constructions.It's just that social constructionscan take on a reality where one social construction cancreate a very different set of conditions to another one.

55:54 And we can't make up the social world.The social world imposes itself upon us.Durkheim is still right, that thereare social facts out there.I think when we were questioning on this before, we talked

56:17 about this in terms of the natural world that people saw,the physical objects around them, and social constructionsas well.Constructions are [INAUDIBLE] not fixed and immutableobjective categories.And I think I pointed out in the discussionthat people can construct this in front of us as a table

56:41 or as a chair, depending on whether they sit on itor sit at it.They can construct I guess doors and windows,but when it comes to it, they allleave the room through the door, rather than through the window.Yes, excellent.So there are constraints for the facts for the physical also.I think there's also sometimes another argument that's

57:02 raised by people such as Norman Danzer.The world is infinite.The social world is infinitely variable.And I think that begs the question, whatwould make social life possible if that were the case?And social opportunity is possible.And at one point, I had referred to some

57:23 of the work of Robert Nozick, where he'stalking about the physical world,about levels of invariance in the physical world,but I've also said that even in the social world,there are, different from the physical world,but there are levels of invariance also.There are things that we are able to conduct ourselvesin our daily social intercourse where we can depend

57:44 on the reactions we'll get.There is that order.The social order is there.There is a level of invariance.[INAUDIBLE] science is full of very contentious debate.We are probably reaching a consensusnow that global warming is man made.

58:05 It's a reality that's going to impacton the future of human society.And the basis of that is a lot of data from very many sources.But it's still contested in very many fora.And it's a highly politicized debate.Yet it's based on seemingly robust meteorological dataand experimental data in the field of how gases

58:28 react in certain environments.That's an example I've used in allthe papers I did on objectivity and natural science.My argument there was that it is not impossiblethat the people who have been saying there is global warmingare wrong.It's logically possible.But you probably have to adopt the Peter Principle there where

58:50 you, because of the impact of being wrong,that there is global warming is much greater than the impactof being wrong that there isn't.That's right.There are also all sorts of very obvious constraintsabout everyday objects.That if we consider the table again,and the idea of the table being solid.

59:12 It clearly seems solid.But if we were able to shrink ourselves downto the size of an electron, it wouldseem remarkably empty and spaciousas the universe around us.So that the relativity of the standpointis in the brain in the natural world.Yet, at the human scale, at that particular standpoint,

59:33 clearly the table is a solid constraint.So I think you get back to some of the other thingsthat we were talking about, that are arguments about objectivitynot only counter some of these moreextreme social constructionist and relativist standpoints.They are applicable to natural science and physical scienceand understanding the physical world

59:56 [INAUDIBLE]And being aware of your subjective positionis not just being aware of your identity as a person,but your intellectual reasonings,your intellectual processes, which determine whether or notglobal warming has occurred.You know, some of what, when you talkabout the position of theorized subjectivity

01:00:15 is pretty much what Barbara McClintock was talkingabout when she talked about the organism,feel for the organism in biology.Very much her kind of-- examining your relationshipto what you're researching, even on the level of biology.It's hard though, isn't it, because there comesa point where one has to act.

01:00:37 I mean, if the worst prognosis of global warming is correct,then we should be doing something about it right now.And at what point and how do we make those decisionsabout changing the way people's lives are livedand economies are managed and how businesses are run.It could be sweeping.

01:00:58 I think that's an interesting point that youmake for social scientists.And you know, to use the old cliche, wherel say it's above my pay grade as a social scientist,and as a citizen I think it is [INAUDIBLE] but asa social scientist.I think about your earlier point about what'sthe point of doing this kind of theorizing around a process.

01:01:22 And we deal with the fact that sooner or later, you're right.We have to do something.So sooner or later, even if we're not sure,that we've reached our objective truth,well, this is a good enough position for usto do something about it.Otherwise we don't do anything.And what's the point of doing it if we're notgoing to do anything? And, if we don't do something with the knowledge

01:01:42 that we produce, somebody else will.Because knowledge is political too.So somebody might do something with itthat we think, through our investigationsis the wrong thing.So if one wants to stand by the work that we do then,it's our responsibility to do something with ittoo, even if it means [INAUDIBLE].No, but I think it's important that if you have evidence,

01:02:08 that you do your very best to get that into the forathat that evidence must go into.I think that's your job as a social scientist, what theycall dissemination these days.But I think also, equally, we have to be careful.Beckett talked about-- [INAUDIBLE]talked about sociologists mostly beingon the kind of the liberal political left.And it's very easy for us to see government, capitalist society

01:02:35 is imposing a set of values that shape our research in a way wedon't want it shaped possibly.But equally, we should not start from the position of thinking,this is the way we want the worldto be as liberal, leftist citizensand try to shape our social science for that.

Search for resources about bias

Checklist: Ethical Data Collection From Human Participants

Here are some questions you should ask yourself when thinking through the ethical issues which might arise in relation to your research, referring to fundamental ethical principles.

Human participants: Risk and consent

- **Have you determined if your research involves human participants who would be required to give informed consent to their participation in the research?**
- **Have you established the degree of risk, if any, to participants in your research?**
- **Have you established whether your participants are competent to give consent?**
- **If not, have you established who might be able to give consent on their behalf?**
- **Have you prepared an account in plain language of the purposes of the research which explains the role of participants and risks to them, if any?**
- **Have you prepared an appropriate document which explains the rights of participants, including the right to withdraw consent at any time?**
- **Have you prepared an explicit consent form for participants?**

Endorsement from appropriate body

- **Have you established who or what body will be required to endorse the ethical process you have established for your work?**
- **Have you prepared in an appropriate form a submission to that body?**