

Ethics in Fieldwork

Sociology

The obligations that outlast the study, and where they conflict with each other.

Principles first, then the conflicts they run into.

Obligations

Informed, voluntary, revocable consent.

Confidentiality, and anonymity where promised.

No avoidable harm, including after publication.

Extra care where power is unequal.

Honest reporting of methods and funding.

Secure storage; a plan for the data's end.

Where they collide

Consent versus a setting that closes on request.

Anonymity versus a site identifiable from detail.

Confidence versus disclosure of serious harm.

Participant wishes versus unflattering findings.

Openness versus the funder's contract.

Group consent versus one member's refusal.

Educational reference, not legal or ethics-committee advice. Milgram, Zimbardo and Humphreys are the standard cautionary cases.