

## Study Questions for Esterberg's Chapter 3: Ethical Issues

1. Explain in your own words what the principle of *informed consent* involves.
2. The Chapter includes a description of the Milgram research on obedience to authority. Milgram was investigating what he believed was a very important social problem – people's blind obedience to authority figures to the detriment of other people, as was most blatantly evident in the claims of some Nazis at the Nuremberg trials that, "I was only following orders." Given Esterberg's description of Milgram's research, do you believe it was ethical? Explain what you think are the core ethical issues that should have been considered in his research.
3. The Chapter also includes a description of Laud Humphreys's Tearoom Trade research. Homosexuality was illegal at the time he did his research, and it was research like Humphreys's that helped to change this situation by challenging existing stereotypes and showing that gays were just average, normal people. Given Esterberg's description, do you think Humphreys's research was ethical? Explain what you think were the core ethical issues in his research.
4. What unique issues have feminist scholars brought to considerations of ethics in research?
5. Esterberg mentions the IRBs – Institutional Review Boards – that exist in the United States. In Canada, these are called REBs – Research Ethics Boards. Many qualitative researchers have expressed great dissatisfaction with these committees. Why? What's the basis of their concern?
6. What are some of the characteristics of qualitative research that raise ethical red flags for IRBs/REBs?
7. Under what conditions does Esterberg appear to accept that deception as to the true nature of one's research is OK? Would you agree? Explain.
8. A fundamental ethical principle of social researchers is *confidentiality*. Although there are some times when maintaining it is absolutely crucial – any time you are asking about sensitive information whose disclosure can have negative ramifications for the participant (which happens a lot in Criminology) – researchers normally maintain confidentiality even on less sensitive topics just as a matter of course. What are some of the procedures you can incorporate into your research to ensure that confidentiality is maintained?
9. "Your ethical responsibilities finish when you finish collecting the data." Would you agree or disagree with that statement. Explain.