

Ethical Restrictions in Human Sciences

Lesson 2: Fact-Finding Task

Focus: *How do real-world controversies in the human sciences reveal tensions between responsibility, power, and perspective?*

Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Analyze case studies where ethical standards in human sciences were contested, violated, or debated.● Understand how different perspectives (researchers, governments, corporations, communities) influence what counts as “responsible” knowledge.● Apply TOK concepts (responsibility, power, perspective) to evaluate how ethical knowledge is constructed or undermined.● Substantiate or challenge claims from Lesson 1 with real-world evidence and ethical reasoning.
Homework Preparation Task	<p>Case Study Task</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Divide students into small groups and assign each group a real world case study. Students will add their findings to the Kialo discussion from Lesson 1.● Each group will:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Reflect on how the case connects to the concepts discussed in Lesson 1.○ Explore the case using provided resources and their own research.○ Prepare a short presentation (5–7 minutes) responding to the question: “How does the chosen case highlight the ethical responsibilities and power dynamics in human sciences?”● Students should include details of:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ What happened in the case.○ Who had power to decide or act (researchers, governments, corporations, participants).○ Which perspectives were marginalized or excluded.○ Which TOK concept (responsibility, power, perspective) is most relevant.○ Whether the case supports or challenges a claim from Lesson 1. <p>Case Study Options</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. <u>Tuskegee Syphilis Study (1932–72, USA)</u><ul style="list-style-type: none">● Focus: African American men denied treatment in order to “study” disease progression.● Key Question: Can knowledge produced through exploitation ever be legitimate?● Suggested Sources: Tuskegee Experiment: The Infamous Syphilis Study HISTORY, The Tuskegee Study - YouTube.2. <u>Stanford Prison Experiment (1971)</u><ul style="list-style-type: none">● Focus: Simulated prison spiraled into psychological abuse of participants.● Key Question: Did Zimbardo uncover truths about power or simply create unethical suffering?● Suggested Sources: The Stanford Prison Experiment - YouTube, Stanford Prison Experiment History & Facts Britannica.3. <u>Cambridge Analytica & Facebook Data Harvesting (2016)</u><ul style="list-style-type: none">● Focus: Psychological profiling and big data used to sway elections.● Key Question: Where is the line between behavioral science and manipulation?● Suggested Sources: Youtube - Cambridge Analytica.

Activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction (5 mins) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recap Lesson 1: Review key claims from the Kialo discussion on whether ethical restrictions limit or strengthen human sciences. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prompt: Which arguments from Lesson 1 did you find most convincing or flawed? Did any claims rely too much on assumptions without real-world support? Present the central question for this lesson: <i>How do real-world controversies in human sciences reveal tensions between responsibility, power, and perspective?</i> Emphasize applying responsibility, power, and perspective to evaluate how human sciences research is judged by institutions, governments, corporations, the public, and affected communities. 2. Bridge to Lesson 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain that in this lesson, students will explore real-world human sciences controversies where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research practices were ethically challenged, ignored, or revised (Tuskegee, Stanford Prison). Perspectives from media, participants, governments, and corporations shaped whether the research was seen as legitimate or abusive. These cases highlight that human sciences knowledge is not neutral, universally accepted, or free from social values and power structures. Clarify the shift: This is no longer about theory alone — students are now testing claims from Lesson 1 using historical and contemporary ethical examples. Reinforce the goal: Move from debate to evidence-based evaluation. These case studies should help students understand how human sciences knowledge is constructed, challenged, or reshaped within ethical, institutional, and social frameworks 3. Presentations (30 mins) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student groups present their case studies (e.g., Tuskegee, Stanford Prison, Cambridge Analytica, AI bias). Students take notes on useful points from other groups to bring back into the Kialo discussion. 4. Recording Findings in a Kialo Discussion (20 mins) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students return to the Kialo discussion from Lesson 1 and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add at least one new claim or counterclaim based on their case study. Reply to at least one peer's argument, using insights from another group's case. Label their post with the relevant TOK concept (e.g., Responsibility – Tuskegee, Power – Cambridge Analytica, Perspective – AI bias). Focus areas for Kialo updates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ethical Gatekeeping: Who decides which human sciences research is permitted, funded, or published and who gets excluded? Institutional Authority: How do governments, universities, or corporations influence the perceived legitimacy of human sciences research? Trust and Responsibility: How do ethical breaches (Tuskegee, Facebook) impact public trust in research? Knowledge Inequality: Are all voices — especially marginalized communities, participants, or whistleblowers — treated equally in setting ethical boundaries?
Reflection Questions	<p>Discuss the following reflection questions in open discussion or exit ticket format:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How did your case study affect your understanding of who gets to define and legitimize “ethical” research in human sciences? What made certain examples feel more like abuse of power or institutional interference versus genuine ethical responsibility or protection? In your case, who had the most control over the ethical narrative: researchers, governments, corporations, or participants? Can efforts to make human sciences research more inclusive ever be truly equal when access to funding, authority, and publication remains uneven?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What role should credibility, transparency, and responsibility play in deciding whether human sciences knowledge is accepted or contested? • Should all human sciences research that affects public wellbeing (e.g., health, behavior, elections, surveillance) require broader social consultation or are there exceptions?
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson Slides • Kialo discussions from previous lesson
TOK Concepts	<p>Responsibility: Who is responsible for protecting participants in human sciences research? Should researchers, institutions, or governments carry the ultimate accountability when ethical failures occur?</p> <p>Power: How do power structures (e.g., governments funding research, corporations controlling data, universities setting ethical boards) shape which studies are conducted, silenced, or publicized?</p> <p>Perspective: How do cultural, social, and historical viewpoints influence what counts as ethical or unethical research? Are ethical standards universal, or do they shift depending on context?</p>
Critical Thinking Concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confronting Biases & Assumptions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Challenging Institutional Bias: Questioning the belief that research approved by elite universities, governments, or corporations is automatically ethical. ◦ Recognizing Neutrality Bias: Analyzing how the assumption that human sciences research is objective can obscure the influence of power, funding, or ideology on what is studied and how. • Exploring Contexts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Stakeholder Analysis: Identifying who benefits or suffers when human sciences research is permitted, silenced, or exploited — e.g., participants, corporations, policymakers, marginalized communities. ◦ Cultural and Social Influence: Considering how geography, class, race, or political ideology shape what is considered ethical or acceptable research in different societies. • Responsiveness and Flexibility of Thought: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Adapting Arguments: Being willing to reconsider whether a controversial study is legitimate or exploitative after examining the context, participant experience, and institutional response. ◦ Comparing Conflicting Interpretations: Weighing researcher justifications against participant testimonies, media reporting, and public reactions to develop a more nuanced understanding of ethics in human sciences. • Extrapolation & Reapplication of Principles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Applying Ethical Reasoning: Assessing whether human sciences research was conducted fairly, using principles like responsibility, consent, transparency, and equity. ◦ Connecting to Modern Issues: Relating lessons from historical cases (e.g., Tuskegee, Stanford Prison) to current debates around AI ethics, surveillance capitalism, or the use of behavioral science in politics. ◦ Building Ethical Literacy: Reflecting on how access to education, research opportunities, and institutional authority shapes which voices are heard or silenced — and how society decides what counts as “ethical” knowledge.