

Chapter 3
Topic 4 Objectivity and values in sociology
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Activity: Media
Social scientists and the military

Learning objectives

At the end of this activity you should be able to:

- Describe the involvement of social scientists in the work of the military.
- Analyse issues relating to value freedom and professional ethics arising from this involvement.
- Explain and justify your own views in relation to these issues.

Anthropology is a subject that is closely related to sociology. Social or cultural anthropologists mainly study less developed societies, using qualitative research methods such as participant observation and unstructured interviews. This activity looks at their involvement with the American military and its counter-insurgency strategies for combating armed groups opposed to their presence in Afghanistan and Iraq.

A. Watch the clip below and then working in groups of four, answer the questions that follow.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pTg6g9mR2FQ> "What is HTS?"

1. Who were the US Army recruiting as part of the HTS programme?
2. Why was the HTS created?
3. What is the official goal of the HTS programme?
4. How is the HTS meant to help the army?
5. What do the social scientists who work in the HTS programme do?
6. How is the HTS portrayed by its supporters?
7. According to the film, what is the real goal of the HTS?
8. How are anthropologists and other social scientists persuaded to take part in the project?

B. Watch the clip below and then working in groups of four, answer the questions that follow.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jnj9D5pr8f8> "Human Terrain System & War in Iraq"

1. Why do the military want anthropologists and other social scientists to help them?
2. Why were some anthropologists opposed to the work of the HTS?
3. What code of ethics do anthropologists in the USA follow and what does it state?
4. Why is the HTS of concern to anthropologists and other social scientists?
5. How is the ethical code of anthropologists violated by the HTS?
6. What are the consequences of the HTS?
7. What is 'Tracey' doing that is questionable in the view of other anthropologists?
8. What is suggested that can be learned from history?
9. How were anthropologists and other social scientists used in:
 - a. the Second World War?
 - b. the 1960s?
10. According to the film, what should anthropologists be doing?

C. Individually, write a paragraph to summarise how the debate about HTS illustrates the problem of social scientists remaining value-free. Do you think that social scientists should be involved with the military? Give your reasons.

D. You might also be interested in watching this short clip as well:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DqufC2X3y4U>