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The potential problem, as we see it, is that if the public *perceives* that advocacy is driving the findings that we social scientists report, that we manipulate or misuse data to support certain causes, or that we make claims beyond what the data can justify, public confidence in our claims may be undermined. It is easy for the public to dismiss our claims about particular issues if they perceive that the claims are ideologically motivated. And having dismissed the claims, it is easy for the public to dismiss the issues themselves.

Furthermore, if everyone is a victim of abuse, do the terms *victim* and *abuse* not lose their meaning? If marital pushing and shoving is abuse, then many marital couples have engaged in "abusive" behavior. If spanking is child abuse, then almost all children are "victims of abuse." If sibling pushing or hitting is abusive, then almost all siblings are victims or perpetrators or both. In each of these scenarios, the meaning of the terms *victim* and *abuse* have been diluted. However inappropriate and indefensible these relatively minor forms of violence and maltreatment are, they should be clearly distinguished from more serious and damaging forms of VMIR. Giving a child an occasional swat on the bottom may not be good or effective, and we might want to advocate that society not accept these behaviors, but do they constitute *abuse*? Certainly, we must acknowledge that the effects of spanking are minor compared with severe assault. If our advocacy leads us to claim otherwise and our attention is diverted from more serious forms of abuse, then we may do more harm than good.

The notion of *value-free inquiry* can be traced to the very beginnings of the social sciences. Sociologist Max Weber (1949) reasoned that if values influence research, the findings will be rejected and the discipline discredited. But Weber also reminds us that topics we choose, and the ways we approach these topics, are always "value relevant."

There can be no purely objective scientific analysis of society. We cannot be, nor should we be, completely value-free. It simply is not possible. Yet we must be careful. If our advocacy commitments lead to poor scholarship and shoddy research then we may win a battle here and there, but we may be less likely to win the war.