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M.A . Outdoor Education

Research Methods Reader

Ethics



**REVISED ETHICAL
GUIDELINES
FOR EDUCATIONAL
RESEARCH (2004)**

REVISED ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH (2004)

April 2004

Dear Member

On behalf of the Council of the British Education Research Association, I am very pleased to present the Association's Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research to you. As you know we have been engaged in a comprehensive updating of our original 1992 guidelines. We have done this partly to take account of changes in the legislation but mainly to recognize the diversity of our members' research and the ethical concerns we all share about the relationships between our work and those who participate in it, those who commission it and those who look to it for new knowledge, understanding and practical support.

You may wonder why we have kept the word 'Revised' in the Guidelines. We have decided to do this firstly for reference purposes to distinguish between them and the original 1992 set and secondly to recognize that these too are not cut in stone. As time goes on, the Council will review and continuously update the Guidelines to ensure that, as circumstances change, we provide the most up-to-date support for our members.

I hope that you will find the Guidelines of assistance to you in your work and that you will commend them to everyone who carries out, participates in or makes use of educational research.

With best wishes

John Furlong
(President)

Historical Note

The provenance of these guidelines can be traced back to a BERA invitational seminar convened by John Elliott and held at Homerton College, Cambridge in March, 1988. The seminar led to a report published in *Research Intelligence* 31 (Feb, 1989), which called for a code of practice to be drawn up. In 1991, BERA council invited Caroline Gipps and Helen Simons to formulate a set of guidelines, drawing with permission on the Elliott report and the then recently published American Educational Research Association's ethical guidelines. They drew up guidelines, published in *Research Intelligence* 43 (Summer 1992), for members to comment upon and were formally adopted as the '**BERA Ethical Guidelines**' at the Association's Annual General Meeting in August 1992.

As a code of practice the guidelines were universally welcomed but also attracted a degree of criticism in relation to their scope and application. An example of this was the critique presented by Peter Foster at the 1996 BERA conference. Following Peter Foster's death in 1999, his paper was reproduced in *Research Intelligence* 67 as a tribute to his work. Michael Bassey, the then Academic Secretary of BERA, used the paper to promote debate in the BERA Council and at the beginning of her presidency in September 2001, Anne Edwards announced her intention to update the 1992 Guidelines.

In the Spring of 2002 a working group comprising John Gardner (Chair), Ann Lewis and Richard Pring began the task of revising the guidelines. Over the next 18 months, several consultative exercises were carried out with the entire membership of the Association, using *Research Intelligence* and e-mail communications. A consultative draft of the **BERA Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research** came before the Association's Annual General Meeting of September 2003 and was endorsed, subject to minor amendments. In the Spring of 2004, the new guidelines were moved by John Furlong (President) and formally adopted by Council.

ISBN 0 946671 26 5

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REVISED ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH (2004)

PREAMBLE

1. This revision of the Association's *Ethical Guidelines* (for Educational Research) builds on the 1992 statement in two significant ways. First it seeks more fully to recognize the academic tensions that a multi-disciplinary community generates when dealing with the complex research issues that characterize education contexts. Secondly it seeks to include the field of action research.
2. It is intended that deliberation on these guidelines, and compliance where appropriate, will be a binding responsibility on all members of the Association in their research activities. Although they can only be advisory for others engaged in carrying out, sponsoring or using educational research, it is the hope of the Association that they will attract widespread consultation and adherence. In the particular case of groups of educational researchers (e.g. in university departments or private agencies), the Association recommends the setting up of local ethics committees that endorse and employ these guidelines in support of their own work.
3. The underpinning aim of the guidelines is to enable educational researchers to weigh up all aspects of the process of conducting educational research within any given context (from student research projects to large-scale funded projects) and to reach an ethically acceptable position in which their actions are considered justifiable and sound. For the vast majority of educational research activity this basic tenet may be non-problematic but dilemmas will arise for others and these guidelines will provide a basis for deliberation and perhaps resolution or compromise.

Aspirations of Educational Researchers

4. Educational researchers aim to extend knowledge and understanding in all areas of educational activity and from all perspectives including learners, educators, policymakers and the public. The Association recognizes that the community of educational researchers is multi-disciplinary and that within the paradigms and methodologies espoused by the various disciplines, and often

variously by their sub-disciplines, a variety of concepts may be problematic. Examples among these are the concepts of 'data', 'reliability', 'validity', 'subjectivity' and 'objectivity'. Debates abound, for example, on the relativity or otherwise of 'truth' and 'reality' and such debates are symptomatic of a community undertaking critical analysis of its basic tenets and enjoying the enhancement of its intellectual capital through the creative tension it produces.

5. The Association therefore recognizes the legitimacy of the diverse educational research philosophies, theories and methodologies that exist and seeks to ensure that its guidelines do not selectively judge or constrain, directly or indirectly, the methodological distinctions or the research processes that emanate from them. These guidelines, then, are offered as set of principles and advice that will be subject to continuing review as our knowledge, understanding and practice of educational research continues to evolve.

Principles Underpinning the Guidelines

6. The Association considers that all educational research should be conducted within an ethic of respect for:
 - The Person
 - Knowledge
 - Democratic Values
 - The Quality of Educational Research
 - Academic Freedom
7. In guiding researchers on their conduct within this framework the Association sets out its guidelines under the following headings:
 - Responsibilities to Participants
 - Responsibilities to Sponsors of Research
 - Responsibilities to the Community of Educational Researchers

GUIDELINES

Responsibilities to Participants

8. The participants in research may be the active or passive subjects of such processes as observation, inquiry, experiment or test. They may be collaborators or colleagues in the research process or they may simply be part of the context e.g. where students are part of the context but not the subjects of a teacher's research into his or her own professional practice.

9. The Association considers that educational researchers should operate within an ethic of respect for any persons involved directly or indirectly in the research they are undertaking, regardless of age, sex, race, religion, political beliefs and lifestyle or any other significant difference between such persons and the researchers themselves or other participants in the research. This ethic of respect implies the following responsibilities on the part of researchers.

Voluntary Informed Consent

10. The Association takes voluntary informed consent to be the condition in which participants understand and agree to their participation without any duress, prior to the research getting underway.
11. Researchers must take the steps necessary to ensure that all participants in the research understand the process in which they are to be engaged, including why their participation is necessary, how it will be used and how and to whom it will be reported. Researchers engaged in action research must consider the extent to which their own reflective research impinges on others, for example in the case of the dual role of teacher and researcher and the impact on students and colleagues. Dual roles may also introduce explicit tensions in areas such as confidentiality and must be addressed accordingly.

Deception

12. The securing of participants' voluntary informed consent, before research gets underway, is considered the norm for the conduct of research. Researchers must therefore avoid deception or subterfuge unless their research design specifically requires it to ensure that the appropriate data is collected or that the welfare of the researchers is not put in jeopardy. Decisions to use deception or subterfuge in research must be the subject of full deliberation and subsequent disclosure in reporting. The Association recommends that approval for this course of action should be obtained from a local or institutional ethics committee. In any event, if it possible to do so, researchers must seek consent on a post-hoc basis in cases where it was not desirable to seek it before undertaking the research.

Right to Withdraw

13. Researchers must recognize the right of any participant to withdraw from the research for any or no reason, and at any time, and they must inform them of this right. In all such circumstances researchers must examine their own

actions to assess whether they have contributed to the decision to withdraw and whether a change of approach might persuade the participants to re-engage. In most cases the appropriate course of action will be for the researchers to accept the participants' decision to withdraw. Decisions to persuade them to re-engage must be taken with care. Researchers must not use coercion or duress of any form to persuade participants to re-engage with the work. In cases where participants are required by a contractual obligation to participate e.g. when mandated as part of their employment to facilitate an evaluation study, researchers may, however, have proper recourse to a third party (e.g. the employing authority) to request compliance with a contract.

Children, Vulnerable Young People and Vulnerable Adults

14. The Association requires researchers to comply with Articles 3 and 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 3 requires that in all actions concerning children, the best interests of the child must be the primary consideration. Article 12 requires that children who are capable of forming their own views should be granted the right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them, commensurate with their age and maturity. Children should therefore be facilitated to give fully informed consent.
15. The Association considers that the spirit of Articles 3 and 12 above should also apply in research contexts involving young people and vulnerable adults.
16. In the case of participants whose age, intellectual capability or other vulnerable circumstance may limit the extent to which they can be expected to understand or agree voluntarily to undertake their role, researchers must fully explore alternative ways in which they can be enabled to make authentic responses. In such circumstances, researchers must also seek the collaboration and approval of those who act in guardianship (e.g. parents) or as 'responsible others' (i.e. those who have responsibility for the welfare and well-being of the participants e.g. social workers).
17. Researchers must ensure that they themselves, and any collaborators or research assistants and students under their supervision, comply with legal requirements in relation to working with school children or vulnerable young people and adults.
18. Researchers must recognize that participants may experience distress or discomfort in the research process and must take all necessary steps to reduce the sense of intrusion and to put them at their ease. They must desist

immediately from any actions, ensuing from the research process, that cause emotional or other harm.

19. Researchers must recognize concerns relating to the 'bureaucratic burden' of much research, especially survey research, and must seek to minimize the impact of their research on the normal working and workloads of participants.

Incentives

20. Researchers' use of incentives to encourage participation must be commensurate with good sense and must avoid choices which in themselves have undesirable effects (e.g. the health aspects of offering cigarettes to young offenders or sweets to school-children). They must also acknowledge that the use of incentives in the design and reporting of the research may be problematic; for example where their use has the potential to create a bias in sampling or in participant responses.

Detriment Arising from Participation in Research

21. Researchers must make known to the participants (or their guardians or responsible others) any predictable detriment arising from the process or findings of the research. Any unexpected detriment to participants, which arises during the research, must be brought immediately to their attention or to the attention of their guardians or responsible others as appropriate.
22. Researchers must take steps to minimize the effects of designs that advantage or are perceived to advantage one group of participants over others e.g. in an experimental or quasi-experimental study in which the treatment is viewed as a desirable intervention and which by definition is not available to the control or comparison group respectively.

Privacy

23. The confidential and anonymous treatment of participants' data is considered the norm for the conduct of research. Researchers must recognize the participants' entitlement to privacy and must accord them their rights to confidentiality and anonymity, unless they or their guardians or responsible others, specifically and willingly waive that right. In such circumstances it is in the researchers' interests to have such a waiver in writing. Conversely, researchers must also recognize participants' rights to be identified with any

publication of their original works or other inputs, if they so wish. In some contexts it will be the expectation of participants to be so identified.

24. Researchers must comply with the legal requirements in relation to the storage and use of personal data as set down by the Data Protection Act (1998) and any subsequent similar acts. In essence people are entitled to know how and why their personal data is being stored, to what uses it is being put and to whom it may be made available. Researchers must have participants' permission to disclose personal information to third parties and are required to ensure that such parties are permitted to have access to the information. They are also required independently to confirm the identity of such persons and must keep a record of any disclosures. Disclosure may be written, electronic, verbal or any visual means.
25. The Data Protection Act also confers the right to private citizens to have access to any personal data that is stored in relation to them. Researchers seeking to exploit legal exclusions to these rights must have a clear justification for so doing.
26. Researchers must ensure that data is kept securely and that the form of any publication, including publication on the Internet, does not directly or indirectly lead to a breach of agreed confidentiality and anonymity.

Disclosure

27. Researchers who judge that the effect of the agreements they have made with participants, on confidentiality and anonymity, will allow the continuation of illegal behaviour, which has come to light in the course of the research, must carefully consider making disclosure to the appropriate authorities. If the behaviour is likely to be harmful to the participants or to others, the researchers must also consider disclosure. Insofar as it does not undermine or obviate the disclosure, researchers must apprise the participants or their guardians or responsible others of their intentions and reasons for disclosure.
28. At all times the decision to override agreements on confidentiality and anonymity must be taken after careful and thorough deliberation. In such circumstances it is in the researchers' interests to make contemporaneous notes on decisions and the reasoning behind them, in case a misconduct complaint or other serious consequence arises.

29. The Association considers it good practice for researchers to debrief participants at the conclusion of the research and to provide them with copies of any reports or other publications arising from their participation. Where the scale of the research makes such a consideration impractical, alternative means such as a website should be used to ensure participants are informed of the outcomes.

Responsibilities to Sponsors of Research

30. A sponsor of research is considered to be any person or body that funds research (e.g. a research charity or government body) or facilitates it by allowing and enabling access to data and participants (e.g. an examinations body).
31. The Association expects researchers to bring its Ethical Guidelines to the attention of all sponsors of research.
32. Written agreements are considered the norm for funded or commissioned research. Such agreement should minimally cover the purpose of the research, the research methods to be used, any conditions of access to data or participants, ownership of data, the researchers' right to publish, requirements for reporting and dissemination, deadlines for completion of the work and the accounting for the use of funds. In recognition of the dynamics of research, agreements should also include provision for negotiating changes sought by either the researchers or the sponsors.
33. Researchers must avoid agreeing to any sponsor's conditions that could lead to serious contravention of any aspect of these guidelines or that undermine the integrity of the research by imposing unjustifiable conditions on the methods to be used or the reporting of outcomes. Attempts by sponsors or funding agencies to use any questionable influence should be reported to the Association.
34. Researchers must fulfil their responsibilities to sponsors to the highest possible standards. It is in the researchers' interest that respective responsibilities and entitlements should be agreed with the sponsors at the outset of the research. Where the sponsor acts essentially as a host or facilitator for research, researchers must, out of courtesy, inform them of the work they propose to undertake e.g. a group of teachers engaging in a process of action research as part of curriculum renewal should inform the school management of their intentions.

35. In negotiating sponsored research, researchers must provide honest and complete details of their competence and capacity to undertake the research that is proposed. Researchers will normally take a disinterested approach to research design, analysis and interpretation and where they feel they must take other than a disinterested position this should be made clear and amenable to scrutiny.

Methods

36. Researchers must employ methods that are fit for the purpose of the research they are undertaking. Those researchers who prefer or promote specific methods, theories or philosophies of research must have knowledge of alternative approaches sufficient to assure sponsors that they have considered these and that the research needs are being properly addressed. Sponsors should be offered a full, honest and amenable justification on the final choice of methods.
37. Researchers must, within the context and boundaries of their chosen methods, theories and philosophies of research, communicate the extent to which their data collection and analysis techniques, and the inferences to be drawn from their findings, are reliable, valid and generalizable.

Publication

38. The Association recommends that all members should make themselves familiar with the BERA research writing guidelines: *Good Practice on Educational Research Writing*.
39. The right of researchers to publish the findings of their research under their own names is considered the norm for sponsored research. The Association recognizes, however, that there are conditions under which this right might not hold including circumstances in which:
- Researchers have waived this right in writing;
 - Publication would contravene the law (e.g. in the area of libel or race relations);
 - The work that has been commissioned specifically to produce a confidential report e.g. consultancy reports that are based on research activity;
 - Undertakings have been given to participants concerning confidentiality and the intention to avoid causing unnecessary harm to those affected by the research findings;
 - The researchers have failed to comply with contractual obligations;

- The researchers have failed, without reasonable justification, to report findings in a manner consistent with these ethical guidelines e.g. failure to report findings honestly and accurately.
40. Researchers have the right to dissociate themselves publicly from accounts of the research that they consider misleading or unduly selective. Sponsors enjoy a similar right. It is in the interests of researchers and sponsors alike to prevent this situation arising by agreements on publication or, if necessary, through arbitration.
41. Educational researchers must endeavour to communicate their findings, and the practical significance of their research, in a clear, straightforward fashion and in language judged appropriate to the intended audience.

Responsibilities to the Community of Educational Researchers

42. The community of educational researchers is considered to mean all those engaged in educational research including academics, professionals (from private or public bodies), teachers and students.

Misconduct

43. All educational researchers must protect the integrity and reputation of educational research by ensuring they conduct their research to the highest standards. Researchers must therefore not bring research into disrepute by, for example:
- Falsifying research evidence or findings;
 - ‘Sensationalizing’ findings in a manner that sacrifices intellectual capital for maximum public exposure;
 - Distorting findings by selectively publishing some aspects and not others;
 - Criticizing other researchers in a defamatory or unprofessional manner;
 - Exploiting the conditions of work and roles of contract research staff;
 - Undertaking work for which they are perceived to have a conflict of interest or where self-interest or commercial gain might be perceived to compromise the objectivity of the research;
 - Undertaking work for which they are not competent;
 - Using work carried out with co-researchers as the basis of individual outputs without the agreement of the co-researchers concerned;
 - Using research for fraudulent or illegal purposes.

44. Where researchers become aware of examples of malpractice or potential malpractice they must present their concerns, in the first instance, to the researchers involved. If their concerns are proven correct and if the researchers in question do not move to correct the situation, the matter must be reported to the Association. With due consideration to the important principle of the public's right to know, researchers should avoid bringing the community into disrepute through public accusations or allegations.
45. Subject to any limitations imposed by agreements to protect confidentiality and anonymity, researchers must make their data and methods amenable to reasonable external scrutiny. The assessment of the quality of the evidence supporting any inferences is an especially important feature of any research and must be open to scrutiny. Where sponsors initiate the request for scrutiny, and disclosure of aspects of the data may be injurious to participants, researchers should consider assuring the sponsor of the integrity of the work through the scrutiny of a mutually acceptable third-party, who is also bound by the non-disclosure agreements.
46. Researchers must accord due respect to all methodologies and related methods. They must contribute to the community spirit of critical analysis and constructive criticism that generates improvement in practice and enhancement of knowledge.

Authorship

47. The authorship of publications is considered to comprise a list of everyone who has made a substantive and identifiable contribution to their generation. Examples of substantive contributions include: contributing generative ideas, conceptual schema or analytic categories; writing first drafts or substantial portions; significant rewriting or editing; contributing significantly to relevant literature reviewing; and contributing to data collection, to its analysis and to judgements and interpretations made in relation to it.
48. Academic status or other indicator of seniority must not determine first authorship; rather the order of authorship should reflect the relative leadership and contributions made by the researchers concerned.

An Australian view on Educational ethics

Annotated Bibliography - Ethics in Educational Research

Karen Halasa

Preface

Following the production of its Code of Ethics in 1993, the AARE Executive established an ongoing Ethics Committee. The role of the Ethics Committee was to promote further discussion of ethics in the educational research community, to consider ethics matters referred by members and, where necessary, to revise the code or provide additional resources or forums concerning ethics. Since 1993, the AARE has sponsored a regional conference on ethics in educational research; has published a new collection of work on this area (Ethics and Educational Research, edited by Martin Bibby, RARE No. 4, 1997) and has given further attention to the matter of research ethics relating to research involving indigenous people, and is recommending the use of the AIATSIS guidelines in this area. The commissioning of Karen Halasa to produce an annotated bibliography for reference by members was intended to provide a further and complementary resource on ethics for members.

Responses by members to publicity about the Ethics Committee in the AARE Newsletter indicated that they often had trouble finding references on ethics matters, and, at the 1995 AGM, it was agreed to set aside a small amount of money to produce an annotated listing of relevant resources. This bibliography, compiled by Karen Halasa, is the result of that decision. Because there is a relative paucity of readily available published materials in this area, Karen's search particularly extended to conference papers presented at annual meetings of the AARE, as well as the AERA and BERA. (The bibliography was being produced at the same time as RARE 4 and does not include reference to it or the other ethics material published by AARE, mentioned in my first paragraph). Karen Halasa's report includes an introduction which discusses what she found in the literature research, and this is followed by the annotated listing. For each reference there is a one sentence overview, and then a more detailed summary of the paper, chapter or book. We appreciate very much Karen's diligent and conscientious work on this matter.

The Annotated Bibliography is not intended to be an evaluation of materials listed or of particular approaches to discussions of ethics; it is presented as a service to alert members to materials and writers in this area. We hope that the present listing will be revised and will grow as members tell us of other useful materials in this area. (Please send suggestions for further listings to the Chair, AARE Ethics Committee.)

Lyn Yates
Chair
AARE Ethics Committee

Summary

Summary of Literature Search on Ethics in Educational Research

What has become apparent during the course of this search is that although there is a wealth of material on research ethics in general, in bio-ethics, the social sciences, in psychology and so on, there is not so much available on education research in particular. For this reason the focus of this research has been recent education conferences sponsored by AARE and AERA. Of the material which has been written on ethics in education, the focus has been on qualitative methods and on questions of confidentiality, informed consent and minimization of harm. There are many overlapping concerns between a range of disciplines and some of the issues for field work in other areas - sociology, anthropology, psychology - are relevant to qualitative work in education research. On the other hand, some authors have pointed out that what might be applicable in

other disciplines may not have direct relevance in education. What follows looks at the salient issues as they arise in a range of fields.

Informed Consent and the Minimisation of Harm

Informed consent is discussed in Evans and Jabucek's (1996) overview paper. They see informed consent as the key issue in research with human beings. In the paper they discuss the traditional foundation of research ethics in Kantian philosophy, and also note recent challenges to that way of thinking from postmodern philosophy. Research codes of ethics put in place a certain universality which compels every person to recognise universal rights for all persons as a constant norm. However, emerging postmodern ethical norms raise new problematic issues, going beyond traditional basic concepts of research ethics where empirical universality is assumed to be the one appropriate approach.

Kantian moral philosophy, which guides much of the writing on research ethics allows that individuals cannot be used as a means to an end but there must be a respect of persons. Research conduct is judged by the extent to which it is aligned to moral agency recognising the principle of respect of persons. It is not ethically permissible to violate participants self-purpose or self-determination. Codes of ethics are useful where there are conflicts to be faced which need to be settled. This represents guidance from colleagues and direction from institutions which both have a responsibility to act as guardians.

This view allows the flexibility necessary to judge particular research on its own merits, while at the same time paying attention to certain universal principles such as the respect of persons.

Evans and Jakupiec do acknowledge the conflict between the rights of the individual to privacy and the public's right to know. A book by Punch (1986) in qualitative methods in fieldwork sets out a strong case that in some instances covert research is justifiable depending on the public benefit to be gained. He uses the analogy of the social scientist being like an investigative journalist exposing a practice or organisation. Other writers on qualitative research argue for the centrality of a special relation between researcher and researched, and consequently reject covert research as an appropriate method. Punch's line of thinking seems to have little relevance for educational research and is both explicitly and implicitly challenged in much of the other literature.

Another article, by a feminist researcher who does take as a central issue the rights of subjects and the power relations of women in society, discusses an unusual case where she decided to use material collected in a non-research context. The situation was one where Fine (1992) uses an interview between herself as a volunteer rape counsellor and an emergency room patient. Ethical dilemmas arise because no research was originally anticipated. The subject was therefore not informed and information was given in a situation assumed to be private and confidential.

In answering the question of whether researchers then have a right to use such information, Fine gives the qualified response that it depends on the element of risk involved for the subject. There is also a question of how the subject would feel, what harm would be involved, if information provided confidentially turned up in a journal article. Other authors and education researchers would claim that this kind of what amounts to covert research is never justified.

An article by Kiegelmann (1996) is written from the perspective of a research subject. The article discusses the sense of betrayal of trust involved when the author was involved as a subject of covert research while undergoing analysis by a psychiatrist. A special relationship assuming confidentiality is developed in this situation and Kiegelmann shows that it is currently an accepted practice for therapists to conduct single-subject research without getting the informed consent of their clients. The author argues that this is in itself unethical and that retrospective disclosure is no answer to the initial betrayal. Clients may be manipulated into giving consent and one case is cited where although confessing that they failed to gain informed consent, some researchers went ahead and published anyway, gaining the advantages to their academic careers that this entailed.

Kiegelmann argues that research agendas need to be disclosed. This is particularly important in situations where the power imbalance puts the research subject at a disadvantage. In the teaching of qualitative research methods this is the only ethical method.

Another complaint of Kiegelmann about the content of current literature on ethics in research is a preoccupation with the possibility of damage to the discipline (Punch is cited). More important is the actual harm that is caused to the research participants who live in the field.

Kiegelmann concludes with a complaint that the literature on how to handle ethics in qualitative research is inadequate and stresses that foremost consideration should be given to the dignity of research participants and that covert research should be avoided. Researchers need to question the ethics of their own projects from these perspectives.

Informed consent is problematic because of the power imbalance between researcher and participant. How informed can participants be?

Ethical misconduct may be portrayed as a necessary or common aspect of field work by some researchers. (Punch, 1986). Kiegelmann argues that

'...the entire framework of a research project needs to be under ethical scrutiny, not just dilemmas that arise in the field...the choice of the research topic already is an ethical decision'

There are problems with obtaining prior informed consent in the case of qualitative and ethnographic styles of research as set out by Cassell (Seiber, 1982). It is, she claims, self-contradictory to secure informed consent before research is initiated, since the direction of and conclusions drawn from research are unknown at the beginning of the research. This is consistent with Fine's justification for using data collected before any research was anticipated. Cassell argues that a better approach ethically is to judge fieldwork in the context of respect for autonomy based on the fundamental principle that persons be treated at all times as ends in themselves and never merely the means to an end. This is not meant to replace minimisation of harms but to supplement it in situations where harms are relatively few and difficult to predict. The respect for autonomy should be extended to the autonomy of the group as well as the individual; fieldworkers need to respect and even attempt to augment the authenticity and independence of the communities they study.

That informed consent is open to a range of interpretations is raised by Raffae, Blundell and Bibby (Burgess 1989). They ask how fully should respondents be informed? What opportunity should be given to withhold consent? To what extent should researchers persist in relation to non-respondents with follow up questionnaires? The authors argue that there is a conflict between ethical and technical considerations in research and that codes of ethics are generally written by professionals for professionals who are motivated not just by concerns to protect the public but to leave the field clear for other researchers.

Burgess (1989) points out that informed consent occupies a central place in ethics literature and that it has a wider application than just field relations in ethnographic work but also applies to survey work, statistical investigation and action research. It is not a universal principle that is unproblematic to use in research investigations. When discussing his own fieldwork, Burgess (1989) points to a situation where some of the observation could be construed as spying by some teachers and points out that there are many 'grey' areas and that fieldwork often has to be interactionally 'deceitful' in order to survive and succeed. It involves compromise and negotiation and demands reflective practice.

Clark (1995) claims that informed consent of those who participate in research should be secured although there is some debate about how binding this requirement should be. Underpinning this requirement is the idea that participants should be respected as persons. There are some qualifications where studies are conducted in a public place such as a school playground, where parents of children need to be consulted and where informing the participants and obtaining their consent will effect their subsequent behaviour and so, the results of the research. Where it can be

demonstrated that the results of the study will generate considerably more good than harm to the participants informed, consent may be withheld but Clark claims this is difficult to envisage being justified in an educational setting.

The Relationship between Researcher and Researched - Ownership of Data

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) claim that ethics in qualitative research is dominated by two concerns; informed consent and the protection of subjects from harm. Here it is clear that in fieldwork in education the emphasis is on the relationship between participant and researcher. The issues involved in establishing and maintaining the rapport in this relationship are essentially ethical ones. Hollingsworth (1993) characterises the research relationship as collaborative, implying a mutual engagement with the research process on the part of teachers, students and researchers. Patterson and Thomas (1993) go further and claim a special relationship between classroom teachers and university-based researchers where the research needs to be designed with particular attention to including the voice of classroom teachers. This argument for a collaborative style of research places quite different ethical concerns at the centre of the research process and moves away from the older concerns about disinterested detachment on the part of the researcher. Ethical practice centres here upon the relationship between researcher and researched. Doig (1994) argues for an action research methodology which balances theory and teacher voice.

A problem which may arise in the development of collaborative control over data is what Jenkins (1993) has described in his critique of the Success and Failure and Recent Innovation (SAFARI) ethical statements. The right to know is often seen to be in conflict with the central rights of the individual. The proposed solution of the SAFARI project was joint ownership of data, where data is progressively negotiated between informants and researcher. Jenkins is suspicious of this rhetoric and believes it has the effect of seducing respondents into revelation because of the suggestion of rapport and the masking of real power relations operating.

This problem may be overcome if researchers are also teachers. Mohr (1996) claims that teacher researchers see themselves as doubly bound to ethical behaviour both as teachers and researchers. How students are treated is a measure of the quality of both teaching and researching. A teacher-researcher statement of ethics put out by the Fairfax County Public Schools Teacher-Researcher Network includes the following:

Teacher/researchers' primary responsibility is to their students. They are teachers first. They respect those with whom they work, openly sharing information about their research; consult with teaching colleagues and supervisors to review the plans for their studies, explain research questions and methods of data collection and update their plans as the research progresses; use data from observations, discussions, interviews and writing that is collected during the normal process of teaching and learning, secure principal's permission for broader surveys or letters and permission to use data already gathered by the school; may present the results of their research to colleagues in their school districts, are honest in their conclusions and sensitive to the effects of their research findings on others. Before publishing written releases must be obtained from the individuals involved in the research including parental permission for those under 18. The confidentiality of the people involved in the research is protected.

A more general point raised by Cornett and Chase (1990) is that the degree to which a study is ethical or unethical does not ultimately rest with the scientific research community, some abstract canon of ethics or even an ethics checklist. Rather it is the result of a process of continuous interaction between the researcher and participant. This process must be based on an element of trust which may be built up through the participant finding the researcher approachable, communication that is two-way, a sense that the researcher is 'human' and able to reveal personal aspects of him/herself and assurances of confidentiality. Trust is the foundation of an ethical study.

Naama Sabar (Undated) is concerned with the extent to which teacher participants in research contribute to the new knowledge construction through reflection, interpretation and explanation.

Sabar goes beyond the idea that simple informed consent is all that is necessary in the relationship between research participants and researchers and argues that respondents should get information, power and the tools to use that power in saying how the information should be used.

While the guarantee of anonymity may protect participants from negative consequences, it also excludes them from public ownership of the data and input into its use. The power imbalance between researcher and teacher is thence accentuated and opportunities for a mutual collegial process lessened or missed. Although this process may be tedious and time-consuming it is essential when we think of education as a separate discipline with a code of ethics different from other domains such as psychology and sociology. Starting from this premise means that research ethics in education would include democratic and emancipatory principles by which teachers are listened to closely and involved significantly as partners.

Cultural Sensitivity

Weis (1992) explores what it means for a researcher to work in a multicultural environment, an environment often far removed from the researchers own original cultural location. The ethical imperatives for such research in this environment include know who you are before going into the field . By this the author seems to mean that the researcher should have an identity outside, within the researching institution or body or else engage in 'true community studies' where researchers actually move into the area and conduct a full community study rather than a study in a school. In the latter situation, Weis claims there is less 'fracturing of the self' which comes about as a result of imposed definitions from those being researched. This may be considered an ethical as much as a methodological issue since as a researcher 'you will be what people in the field choose to define you as and you have little control over this since you are entering their cultural totality - they are not entering yours.'

A second critical imperative here is to acknowledge your perspective. In dealing with cultures not our own it is critical to be honest about where we are coming from theoretically and personally. This is important since all behaviour observed in field work is interpreted through this biographical lens, what leads one to 'see' things about others.

A third imperative is to exhibit integrity. This is both methodologically and ethically sound since people will talk to you as a researcher if they trust you. The length of time spent in the field will in part determine this relationship. It is important to establish oneself as a trustworthy member of the community before attempting to conduct interviews. Weis does not elaborate on what might be deemed ethical behaviour other than to stress that this trust must not be broken. Issues such as informed consent are not discussed but confidentiality in relation to the information shared with the researcher is stressed as central to ethical behaviour (even when the subject matter may be itself illegal or immoral). The researchers job is to record and later analyse, not pass judgement.

Osborne (1995) raises other kinds of questions about his position as a researcher in the Torres Strait. At the written policy level there is strong support for training and employing indigenous researchers to research indigenous education but Osborne believes that simple indigenisation of those who make representations is not enough and that the role of non-indigenous researchers should be one of speaking not about, not for, but with oppressed minorities.

The Ethics of Ethics Committees

Crotty (1995) argues that much of what passes for codes of ethical conduct is just professional etiquette and that to attempt to derive a code of ethics which is absolute is outmoded. Postmodernist theorists would assert that, looked at independently of context, nothing can be said to be true. Morality is a matter for conscience and, according to J. S. Mill, the law of the land is not about the enforcement of morality as such. Pluralism however causes problems for ethics committees. A new kind of ethics committee could find diversity within its ranks authenticating and enriching.

Annotated Bibliography

Bogdan, R. and Biklen, Sari Knopp, (1992)

Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theory and Methods, Allyn and Bacon, Boston. This is a textbook intended to cover the full range of issues relating to qualitative research in education and gives substantial attention to ethical issues.

Summary (Section on Ethics, pp.49-55): Most academic specialities and professions have codes of ethics. 'Some codes are thoughtful and help sensitize members to dilemmas and moral issues they must face; others are narrowly conceived and do more to protect the professional group from attack than to set forth a moral position'.

Two issues have dominated the recent guidelines of ethics in research with human subjects

1. Informed consent, and
2. Protection of subjects from harm

Ethics in qualitative research is fundamentally different - with qualitative research the relationship between researcher and participant evolves over time. 'Doing qualitative research with subjects is more like having a friendship than a contract. The subjects have a say in regulating the relationship and they continuously make decisions about their participation. In submitting a research proposal to human subject committees for example, only a 'bare bones' description of what will occur can generally be included.'

Although qualitative researchers have not developed a specific written code of ethics, conventions have been established regarding ethics in fieldwork. Some general principles include:

- Subjects enter research projects voluntarily, understanding the nature of the study and the dangers and obligations involved.
- Subjects are not exposed to risks greater than the gains they might derive.

Burgess, Robert G. (ed.) (1989) - the writer's view of key issues in this area.

Summary: Ethics in educational research has been neglected in debate. Although there seem few scandals in educational research, ethical, moral and political questions abound. The agenda of topics for consideration in research practice that are provided in this book include:

- Research sponsorship - What is the extent to which research funders influence research activity. "Is it a case of those who pay for research projects also 'call the tune'?" There are questions of power relations and the way these assist or impede the research.
- Research relations - ethical issues concerning research relations are not confined to the use of participant observation or questions of 'open' or 'closed' research. Questions of access, power, harm, deception, secrecy and confidentiality are all issues that the researcher has to consider and resolve in the research context.
- Informed consent - occupies a central place in the ethics literature. It has wider application than just field relations in ethnographic work but also applies to survey work, statistical investigation and action research. Informed consent is not a universal principle that is unproblematic to use in research investigations.
- Data dissemination - key issues include confidentiality, reporting back, use of data by policy makers and in educational practice.

Some solutions to the problems that have been identified include:

- Collaboration - collaborative research has been suggested although this is not Unproblematic. Researchers need to consider the implications of engaging in collaborative research given the power relationships involved in terms of access to knowledge.
- Guidelines, codes and laws - these are means whereby professional associations and governments attempt to control research activity while protecting the respondents or subjects of research investigation. Statements of codes of ethics offer guidance and provide a framework within which good practice can be adopted.

Many contributors to this volume discuss codes and statements to which they work but they are quick to point out that such statements are not universally applicable to all circumstances but have to be interpreted in relation to the project on which a researcher works. A common theme to suggestions handling ethical dilemmas in research is the notion that there is no 'solution' to the problems identified by researchers. Researchers need to regularly reflect on their work so as to develop their understanding of the ethical implications associated with social and educational investigation.

Burgess, Robert, G.: Grey areas: Ethical dilemmas in educational ethnography' in Burgess, Robert G. (ed.) (1989) *The Ethics of Educational Research*, Falmer Press, London.

This chapter looks at the difficult ethical questions involved in ethnographic work, especially the vexed issue of informed and freely given consent. There may be other pressures operating on the participants which influence their decisions.

Summary: Ethnographic data is based on a close relationship in the field. Development of this relationship is intertwined with the outcome of the project and the nature of data. It is a question of access and acceptance. Ethical implications are openness, trust, commitment and confidentiality. The relationship implies a respect for the rights of the individual whose privacy is not invaded and who is not harmed, deceived, betrayed or exploited.

Literature on ethnography frequently ignores ethical questions. Woods (1986) outlines two basic ethical problems, the morality of doing educational research and the classic debate about the ethics of covert as opposed to overt observation.

Consent is sometimes problematic, the parameters of Burgess' research in school were not necessarily explicit, even to himself and could have been construed as spying by some of the teachers.

Sitting in on teachers job interviews, Burgess had the permission of the head and he was introduced to the candidates. None objected to his presence but 'it is dubious whether this kind of situation can be regarded as constituting informed consent given the power relations involved in the situation. What would the candidate risk in having him ejected from an interview when it was clear that the head and the governors had invited him into the situation?'

Both head and governors and the particular candidates pressed the researcher for comments on the performance and ranking of the candidates.

Issues of confidentiality: confidentiality is at risk from the very moment when the researcher is told or allowed to see something that would normally be hidden. Off the record or not for publication information - how might it be used by the researcher - why was she/he told if it was not to be used? The dissemination of data - confidentiality may be perceived to have been breached.

Some Implications for Fieldwork Practice: Professional associations attempt to come to terms with 'grey areas' by outlining codes of ethics (AAA, BSA). Many researchers have indicated the difficulties of working with codes of ethics when engaged in fieldwork '...fieldwork often has to be interactionally 'deceitful' in order to survive and succeed' (Punch). It involves compromise and negotiation and demands reflective practice.

'Harms, benefits, wrongs, and rights in fieldwork' Cassell, Joan, (1982) in Seiber, Joan (ed.), *The Ethics of Social Research: Fieldwork, Regulation and Publication*, Springer Verlag, N.Y., pp 7 - 31.

This article discusses the inadequacy of traditional codes of conduct in relation to qualitative field research and suggests some alternative emphases.

Summary: There are four dimensions to the relations between those who study and those who are studied within the research process:

1. The relative power of investigators as perceived by subjects,
2. Control of the setting where research takes place,
3. Context of the setting where research takes place, and
4. Control over research interaction.

Cassell points out through the use of a table, that different types of research - biomedical experimentation, psychological experimentation, survey research and fieldwork - will differ in the relative control of investigator compared with those investigated.

Within fieldwork, investigators have comparatively little power over those who are studied: informants are usually free to leave the situation or to decline interaction. In fieldwork power is shared between investigators and investigated. More contentiously, Cassell claims that there is comparatively minimal level of harm associated with fieldwork, this being primarily the violation of privacy or confidentiality. 'The most serious harms in fieldwork, occur not during the process of fieldwork but as a result of its products; the research data or findings.'

Because the investigator's conceptual control diminishes and it is impossible to predict exactly what is going to happen during the course of research interaction, it becomes self-contradictory to secure 'informed consent' before the research is initiated.

Fieldwork may be judged appropriately in the context of respect for autonomy based on the fundamental principle that persons be treated at all times as ends in themselves never merely as means. This is not meant to replace the principle of avoidance of harms but to supplement it in situations where harms are relatively few and difficult to predict. This respect for autonomy should extend to the autonomy of the group as well as the individual - field workers need to respect and even attempt to augment the authenticity and independence of the communities they study.

Ethical and Political Issues in Qualitative Research from a Philosophical Point of View, (Clark, J., Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand, 1995)

Paper presented to the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco.

This paper argues that in qualitative research a number of moral rules come into play and sets out what these may be.

Summary: A distinction can be drawn between moral principles and moral rules. Generally principles are few in number and would include: maximising good, minimising harm, pursuing the truth and respecting persons. Moral rules on the other hand are many in number and tied to the specific, providing prescriptive courses of action about what we ought to do. What are the moral rules which come into play in the course of qualitative inquiry?

The question of the aim of the research is paramount and the research can be justified if it offers betterment in the educational sense of the lives of the participants.

Informed consent of those who participate in the research should be secured although there is some debate about how binding this requirement should be. Underpinning this is the idea that participants should be respected as persons. There are some qualifications where studies are

conducted in a public place such as a school playground, where parents of children need to be consulted and where informing the participants and obtaining their consent will effect their subsequent behaviour and so the results of the research. Where it can be demonstrated that the results of the study will generate considerably more good than harm to the participants, informed consent may be withheld but Clark claims this is difficult to envisage being justified in an educational setting.

An overriding moral constraint on researchers is that participants always be treated as persons, moral agents, never as a means to an end and that the research, rather than being neutral should contribute to the educational betterment of those being studied. More contentiously, researchers should have a grasp of the conceptual, philosophical aspects of their work. Sometimes there may be a clash between the researcher's concern for truth and the moral duty to protect the interests of the participants.

Researcher and Participant Views of Ethics: Is Trust Enough? Cornett, Jeffrey, (Asst. Professor, University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida); Chase, Sue, (Hilliard High School, Ohio); Miller, Patricia, (Peterson Elementary School, Wichita, Kansas), presented as part of a symposium, Ethical Issues and Problems in the Conduct of Qualitative Research in Classrooms: Alternative Views from the Researcher and the Researched at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Boston, Massachusetts, April 16, 1990.

This paper emphasises the centrality of the relationship between researcher and participant as a starting point for considerations about the ethics of research.

Summary: The relevant literature in the field offers conflicting advice and emphases. One of the problems with qualitative studies is that the research design is emergent and responsive which makes it difficult to provide the research view of informed consent to the participant and difficult to assess the potential negative impact on the participant.

Teacher participant's voice should be an active one in the process of formulating clearer ethical guidelines for qualitative researchers.

The four major elements of ethical consideration in the research project undertaken by the authors (who include researchers and participants) are:

1. The nature of informed consent,
2. The protection of confidentiality when thick description is reported,
3. Extended scrutiny of a teacher's perspective, and
4. The possible impact of naturalistic methods of data collection on student engagement.

An important point raised by Cornett and Chase in a previous publication is that the degree to which a study is ethical or unethical still does not ultimately rest with the scientific research community, some abstract canon of ethics, or even an ethics checklist. 'It is the result of a process of continuous interaction between the researcher and participant.'

From the institutional point of view, documents giving informed consent and ensuring confidentiality provide legal protection but are not central to the ethical relationship between researcher and participant which should remain essentially collaborative. The researcher (Cornett) in both teacher studies mentioned in this paper, implemented formalised and periodic ethics checks, but concluded that trust is the key element in judging the ethical nature of his teacher thinking investigations. Trust must be an already present condition prior to selecting a participant for study. Cornett believes that it is unethical to request the participation of a teacher in a qualitative study of practice if there is doubt about the positive ability of that teacher, in which case no covert study is warranted. Trust is the foundation of an ethical study.

Crotty, Michael: ***The Ethics of Ethics Committees***, paper presented at the Second Colloquium on Qualitative Research in Adult Education, University of Melbourne, Sept.-Oct. 1995.
This paper questions the role of ethics committees in formulating codes of ethical conduct and argues that universal morality may be an outmoded concept.

Summary: Do ethics committees act ethically in imposing forms of behaviour specifically as ethical forms of behaviour?

There are two definitions of ethics one of which relates to the morality, the right and wrong of certain behaviours and the other to rules of conduct 'recognised in respect of a particular class of human actions in other words 'proper' ways of behaving for members of a profession or other group' - glorified etiquette.

If ethics as it relates to the norms imposed by ethics committees were to be understood in this second way, a code of ethics has nothing to do with morality but is a set of rules devised for members of the research community outlining appropriate behaviour for its members.

Ethics admits little certainty. Is it always immoral to do something to people without their knowledge and consent?

Morality is a matter for conscience. According to J.S.Mill, the state cannot forbid behaviour simply because it is 'immoral', since this does not necessarily involve harm to others. The law of the land is not about the enforcement of morality as such. The question of whether human rights are establishable and universal is also problematic. There are for instance issues of cultural difference. The notion that we can speak meaningfully of human nature and that certain moral logic is hard-wired is challenged by postmodernist thought which asserts that, looked at independently of context, nothing at all can be said to be true. Human rights foundationalism is seen by some theorists to be outmoded.

Pluralism, a much valued social perspective, causes problems for the expert boards, commissions and committees which are frequently set up to deal with the complex bioethical issues facing communities today.

What happens to ethics committees when liberal values are pressed to their logical conclusions? Legal and moral issues cannot be addressed as if law and morality were synonymous so committees are set up to address issues of legal interpretation. In the area of bioethics, committees advise governments on policy and legislation rather than concern themselves with individual morality.

The libertarian position need not be established as valid or true, only tenable. Researchers are not being allowed this when ethics committees issue ethical norms and brand contrary behaviour not just as non-compliant or recalcitrant or dissident but with the stigma of 'unethical' or 'immoral'.

A mature researcher can properly be expected to assume ethical responsibility for her or his actions. A new kind of ethics committee could find diversity within its ranks authenticating and enriching.

Doig, Shani, (1994): *The Placement of Teacher Voice in Educational Research*,

Paper presented at AARE conference, Newcastle, NSW.

This paper argues for a greater role for teacher voice in educational research from the viewpoint of both the quality of the research and the ethical concerns generated.

Summary: Concerned about the traditional divide between educational research and educational practice, the author tries to negotiate an approach to action research methodology which does not ignore the important place of theory but at the same time places teacher voice at the centre of research concerns. The tales of teaching are often lacking in accounts where teachers attempt to objectify, qualify and quantify their own classroom practice in the name of

achieving academic rigour. On the other hand, researchers have often been critical of teachers' apparent refusal to theorise. This research/practice binary needs to be overcome to allow the teacher's voice to be heard.

Evans, Terry and Jakupiec, Viktor, (1996): 'Research ethics in open and distance education: Context, principles and issues' in *Distance Education* Vol. 17 No. 1, pp 72-94.

This article looks at the major ethical issues involved in education research and raises the question of what should be the basis for ethical conduct.

Summary: The origins of concerns about research ethics are to be found in medical research but this has broadened to include all research with human subjects. Bodies such as the Australian Health Ethics Committee (AHEC) are seen as obstacles by many researchers, more concerned with the legal liabilities of the institution itself and the committee members than research.

Informed consent is the key to research with human beings. AHEC guidelines set out that people should be provided with clear, concise information about the project in which they are invited to participate, in a form which they can readily understand.

Universality is a feature of the ethical code which compels every person to recognise universal rights for all persons as a constant norm BUT emerging postmodern ethical norms are problematic and variable and go beyond basic concepts of research ethics where Empirical Universality is assumed to be the one appropriate approach. Based on Kant's moral philosophy, individuals cannot be used as a means to an end. This is an ethics of respect for persons. In order to make sense of what is ethically permissible, it is necessary to point out that general ethics is theoretical, moral philosophy is practical and a code of ethics elucidatory. Research conduct is judged by the extent to which it is aligned to the moral agency recognising the principle of respect of persons. It is not ethically permissible to violate participants self-purpose or self-determination. There are four questions to be asked of researchers' conduct to ascertain whether research is ethically permissible:

Does the researcher treat the individual as self-conscious, autonomous, free and rational?

Is the purpose of the research in the interests of the research participant?

Could the research data and findings be used for other than the intended purposes and is this possibility understood by the participants?

Does the research potentially make the participant an instrument of the research and/or the researcher?

There are arguments against covert research and a tension between the public right to know and the protection of the individual's privacy and confidentiality. Guidelines need to be formulated for the use of secondary data where informed consent of the participants is obtained, even if retrospectively.

Researchers in open and distance education need to be aware of the principles of free informed consent. Where there are conflicts which need to be settled, guidance is required from codes of ethics, from colleagues and direction from our institutions.

Fine, M., (1992) *Disruptive Voices*, University of Michigan Press, NY.

This is a text by a feminist researcher who does take as a central issue the rights of subjects and the power relations of women in society. As a note to the main issues of her discussion she cites a case where she decided to use material collected in a non-research context.

Summary: The author adds a note to some research she reports where there is a conversation between herself as a volunteer rape counsellor and an emergency room patient. The ethical dilemmas arise because informed consent was not gained prior to the interview since no research was anticipated. The information reported does not conform to the traditional standards of ethical practices of data collection. The subject was not informed because at the time there was nothing to be informed of. The ethical considerations in deciding to publish this information include anonymity, informed consent and assumptions about privacy. The author ensures that anonymity is well guarded, retrospective consent cannot be obtained and even if a statement had been signed by the subject upon entering the emergency room which OK'd the use of relevant information, it cannot be assumed that this is informed consent. When information is provided in a context presumed to be private and confidential, do researchers have a right to use it? Fine's qualified response is that it depends on the element of risk for the subject. Confidentiality also raises the issue of how one would feel if information provided confidentially turned up in a journal article. To utilise the methodology systematically and intentionally would involve:

- developing informed consent procedures so that all potential informants are aware that information could be used for research purposes; (this raises a further question about whether there are some counselling relationships in which counsellors cannot simultaneously be collecting research-relevant information)
 - weighing and discussing potential risk with the informants;
 - showing responsibility towards people who provide information, not abusing information provided when people assume the exchange to be private, confidential and safe
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Fraenkel, J. and Wallen, N., *How to Design and Evaluate Research in Education*, Chapter 3, Ethics and Research pp. 32-41

This book is really a textbook for students in the field and sets out in basic step-by-step form some of the ethical issues which may be encountered.

Summary:

- What researchers consider to be ethical is largely a matter of agreement between them.
- The basic ethical question for all researchers to consider is, 'Will any physical or psychological harm come to anyone as a result of my research?'
- There are a number of ethical principles which all researchers should be aware of and apply to their investigations. These include that the investigator:
 - in planning the study needs to make a careful evaluation of its ethical acceptability
 - should consider whether the subject is at risk or at minimal risk
 - always retains the responsibility for ensuring ethical practice in the research
 - establishes a clear and fair agreement with research participants
 - before conducting research which requires deception or concealment, determine:
 - a. that the use of techniques such as these is warranted by the value of the research outcomes,
 - b. that no other means are available, and
 - c. that the participants are provided with sufficient explanation as soon as possible.
- respects the individual's freedom to decline to participate in or withdraw from the research at any time.
- protects the participant from any mental and physical harm, discomfort or danger.

□ All subjects in a research study should be assured that any data collected from or about them will be held in confidence.

□ The term 'deception', as used in research, refers to misinforming the subjects of a study as to some or all aspects of the research topic.

□ Children as research subjects present problems for researchers that are different from those of adult subjects.

Hollingsworth, Sandra, *Choice, Risk and Teacher Voice: Closing the Distance between Public Perceptions and Private Realities of Schooling*,

Paper prepared for the American Education Research Association, Chicago, March, 1991.
This paper looks at the need for teachers and researchers to work collaboratively for progressive change and eschew notions of objective standards.

Summary: Hollingsworth advocates a position for her research in connection with a broader theory of knowledge, that the test for worthwhile knowledge is not whether it is true by objective standards (whatever these may be) but whether it leads to progressive change. Consistent with this view, Hollingsworth undertakes collaborative research aimed at airing teacher perceptions. The so-called critical distance of the researcher towards her subject is seen as antithetical to the development of this perspective upon which teachers and researchers need to work collaboratively, as do teachers and students, moving from a position of received knowledge to constructed knowledge. This implies a mutual engagement with the research process.

Jenkins, D., (1993) 'An adversary's account of SAFARI's ethics of case study' in Hammersley, Martyn (ed.) *Controversies in Classroom Research*, Open University Press.

This article looks at the contradictions involved in the ethical statements of the SAFARI project where the audience's right to know is in conflict with the subject's right to anonymity and confidentiality.

Summary: Success and Failure and Recent Innovation (SAFARI) ethical statements begin with obligations to the subject, Jenkins on the other hand begins with the researchers obligations to his/her audience and own professionalism. Users of case study methods encounter two main problems - confidentiality of data and publication of data (the need to preserve anonymity). There is a paradox where subjects are offered 'control' over data and audiences are seen to have a right to know. The researcher's aim is to attain access to sensitive data and to effect its release.

There is an ethical dilemma at the heart of case study research - it is more likely than other kinds of research to expose those studied to critical appraisal, censure or condemnation - others must live with the consequences of the findings. Responses include defence of the right to know (public accountability), the central issue as the rights of the individual and the third position is the SAFARI one - co-ownership of the data. Release of data needs to be progressively negotiated between case study worker and informants according to the context of publication and the audience to be informed.

Jenkins sets up an adversarial view of researcher and participant. He claims that SAFARI's case study ethics is a rhetorical device to facilitate performance. He seems to insinuate that the recommendations for negotiation, control and censorship over joint data and assurances of confidentiality disarm respondents into revealing data that, because of the real power relations operating and the suggestion of rapport, they are 'seduced' into volunteering. He claims that SAFARI has produced a self-serving and manipulative device and concludes that such devices formulated to protect a hypothetical, helpless teacher may in fact serve government agencies keeping the public from knowing what they have every right to know.

Kiegelmann, Mechthild, (Harvard University), *The Subject Writes Back. Reflections on Ethics in Qualitative Research*, Conference Paper at American Educational Research Association, April 11, 1996.

Written from a very personal perspective, this paper outlines the sense of betrayal of trust involved when the author was involved as a subject of covert research while undergoing analysis by a psychiatrist.

Summary: A special relationship assuming confidentiality is developed in this situation. Kiegelmann shows that it is currently an accepted practice for therapists to conduct single-subject research without getting the informed consent of their clients. The author argues that this is in itself unethical and that retrospective disclosure is no answer to the initial betrayal. Clients may be manipulated into giving consent and one case is cited where although confessing that they failed to gain informed consent, some researchers went ahead and published anyway, gaining the advantages to their academic careers that this entailed.

The author argues that research agendas need to be disclosed. This is particularly important in situations where the power imbalance puts the research subject at a disadvantage. In the teaching of qualitative research methods this is the only ethical method.

Another complaint of the author about the content of current literature on ethics in research is a preoccupation with the possibility of damage to the discipline (Punch is cited). More important is the actual harm that is caused to the research participants who live in the field.

Informed consent is problematic because of the power imbalance between researcher and participant. How informed can participants be?

Ethical misconduct may be portrayed as a necessary or common aspect of field work by some researchers. (Punch again). Kiegelmann argues that '...the entire framework of a research project needs to be under ethical scrutiny, not just dilemmas that arise in the field...the choice of the research topic already is an ethical decision.' The author concludes with a complaint that the literature on how to handle ethics in qualitative research is inadequate and stresses that foremost consideration should be given to the dignity of research participants and covert research would be avoided. Researchers need to question the ethics of their own projects from these perspectives.

Mohr, Marian M., (1996): Ethics and Standards for Teacher Research: Drafts and Decisions, Conference paper delivered at AERA conference, New York.

This paper looks at the ethical considerations teacher/researchers need to be aware of in both roles.

Summary: Teacher-researchers have assumed that what they do differs from others ideas of both teaching and researching. Mohr claims that teacher-researchers see themselves as doubly bound to ethical behaviour both as teachers and researchers. How students are treated is a measure of the quality of both teaching and researching. Wong in an article in *The Educational Researcher*, asserts that researching and teaching are in conflict because they require a different kind of knowledge and generate a different kind of inquiry. Wilson, on the other hand asserted that teaching and researching are not two different roles but a relationship. The Fairfax County Public Schools Teacher-Researcher Network have produced a Teacher-Researcher Statement of Ethics which includes the following points:

Teacher-researchers' - primary responsibility is to their students, they are teachers first. They:

- respect those with whom they work, openly sharing information about their research;
- consult with teaching colleagues and supervisors to review the plans for their studies, explain research questions and methods of data collection and update their plans as the research progresses;
- use data from observations, discussions, interviews and writing that is collected during the normal process of teaching and learning, secure principal's permission for broader surveys or letters and permission to use data already gathered by the school;
- may present the results of their research to colleagues in their school districts, are honest in their conclusions and sensitive to the effects of their research findings on others.

Before publishing, written releases must be obtained from the individuals involved in the research including parental permission for those under 18. The confidentiality of the people involved in the research is protected.

Osborne, Barry,

Indigenous Education: *Is There a Place for Non-indigenous Researchers?* Conference Paper, Australian Association for Research in Education Conference, November 1995.

This paper considers the changes in thinking about the role of non-indigenous researchers and concludes that there is a place for them in speaking with oppressed minorities.

Summary: As a researcher amongst Torres Strait Islanders, the author finds that his position is problematic and has undergone a paradigmatic shift since he first approached the work from an assimilationist perspective in the 1960s. The National Aboriginal Education Committee (NAEC) has provided guidelines for working with indigenous people and sees a role for itself in examining proposals and initiating educational research, encouraging the training of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. At the written policy level there is strong support for training and employing indigenous researchers to research indigenous education.

Osborne sees some difficulties in generalising across a number of different contexts, for instance the work which has been done with African-American and feminist education may not be readily transferable to an aboriginal context.

Within the field of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs, specifically education, Osborne's role has gone from so-called expert (teacher), to learner, to advocate, to coworker and is now unclear both as a researcher and as a guide to non-indigenous researchers who want to research indigenous education.

Simple indigenisation of those who make representations is not in itself enough and the role of non-indigenous researchers should be one of speaking not about, not for, but with oppressed minorities. There is a need to work side by side, scrutinising each other's work. There is a need for both researchers in the field of indigenous education. Both researchers need to form coalitions with other educational researchers concerned with oppressed groups (anti-sexist, anti-classist and those working with NESB students) to produce a more powerful political force comprising a majority.

Patterson, Catherine and Thomas, Dawn, *Teachers: The Missing Voice in Educational Research*, paper presented at AARE conference, Fremantle, WA, November 1993.

This is a conference paper which argues a case for including teachers' input into university-based research in education. This suggestion stems from a concern with the ethics of research in a classroom situation.

Summary: The authors contend that there is a growing concern that the voices of classroom teachers are absent from published accounts of educational research largely because education research is generated by university-based researchers. In the model this provides, classroom teachers are viewed as the researched rather than the researcher and as subjects of research. Teachers are also expected to be the eventual recipients of knowledge generated by professional researchers. The paper questions the conventional relationship of teachers and research and argues, based on a case study using a collaborative model, for an acknowledgment of the significant contribution of classroom teachers as the primary source of knowledge and understanding about teaching and learning. 'In their daily professional experiences, teachers generate their own personally constructed, pedagogical knowledge base' and it is important to recognise this.

According to the authors there are two main problems with university-generated research into education. They are the reliance on standardised tests to measure student outcomes and the concept of generalisable teaching skills. Qualitative methods which move beyond these quantifiable outcomes may still place the researcher at the centre of the process, framing and mediating teachers' perspectives.

To include teachers' experience it is necessary to develop a collaborative process, building a creative interactive research relationship where all participants are seen as teachers. Classroom teachers cannot be seen as the subjects of research by university teachers and confidentiality and anonymity must be maintained at all times.

Punch M., (1986), *The Politics and Ethics of Fieldwork*, Qualitative Research Methods Vol. 3, Sage Publications, California.

This is a small book on the politics and ethics of fieldwork which pays attention to one of the most controversial areas of fieldwork, covert research.

Summary: Punch presents an argument that covert research in social science is justifiable in some circumstances. Ethical issues which he raises include the idea that some research areas are 'beyond the pale' as topics of social research. Although he gives some examples, Punch points out that there is no consensus in social science about what these areas might be and likens some kinds of social research to investigative journalism where an expose of a practice or organisation has some public benefit.

The definition of participant observation used here seems to entail some sort of deception. The necessity of informed consent of the participants in the research, or, that research within social science not only may be, but should be a cooperative venture, is not a primary consideration.

The examples Punch gives of cases where informed consent may be disagreed with seem extreme, and similar contexts are unlikely to arise in this form in educational research. For example, he cites a situation where the social researcher is accompanying a police car when the police involved are on duty and observing a violent arrest. Obviously the suspect is in no position to be asked for his/her consent.

Codes of ethics, according to Punch, cannot cover all the eventualities in field work and must therefore operate as a guide. 'My position is that a professional code of ethics is beneficial as a guideline that alerts researchers to the ethical dimensions of their work, particularly prior to entry'. More controversially he claims that to negotiate consent and access with everyone would be futile and that informed consent is unworkable in some sorts of observational research and 'that a strict application of the code will restrain and restrict a great deal of informal, innocuous research where students and others study groups and activities that are unproblematic, but where explicitly enforcing consent will make the research role simply untenable.' Punch gives no example of this kind of research.

He provides an argument that authorities who are being investigated such as corrupt or violent prison authorities or governments may be lied to by researchers seeking to uncover the truth and expose it in order to promote change within these organisations. This he characterises as a kind of conflict methodology. Punch mentions cases where the deception can go too far but provides little in the way of general guidelines which might assist in making the distinction. It seems like a case of the end justifying the means.

Punch considers the arguments of others (Bulmer 1982) that the rights of subjects override the rights of science but is concerned that it means closing avenues to certain types of research and he asks the question who is to perform the moral calculus that tells us what to research and what to leave alone.

Questions of anonymity and confidentiality arise particularly in the case where there is an invasion of privacy and Punch points out that assurances of sociologists are not watertight and that even when pseudonyms are used, there are often other means of identification. It is also, he says, difficult to predict to what purposes the research will be put.

Punch addresses the question of the damage that can be done to the discipline if confidences are betrayed and research subjects consider themselves deceived. Future researchers may be excluded.

Punch rejects formalised codes of ethics and conflict methodology. His main concerns appear to be based on a particular experience he had researching the former pupils of one particular school and his problems there seem to have lead him to the position that ultimately the research belongs to the researcher - a view which has been challenged by much of the more recent literature.

Raffe, David, Blundell, Ivor and Bibby, John, 'Ethics and tactics: Issues arising from an educational survey' in Burgess, R.G., (ed.) *The Ethics of Educational Research*, Falmer Press, London, pp. 13-29.

This chapter explores some of the ethical issues involved in the conduct of an educational survey.

Summary: Collection, storage and linkage of personal databases contain potential for abuse - the use of statistics and computers is often thought to lend an aura of infallibility to research results which may be used to silence the legitimate concerns of those wishing to speak up for their concerns.

Data Protection Act 1984 - The Act states that personal data shall not be used or disclosed in any manner incompatible with the purpose for which they are held (i.e. research) - appropriate security measures need to be taken against unauthorised access to, or alteration, disclosure or destruction of the data.

- Personal data should be accurate.
- Resource providers (institutions, funding bodies, employers) should not have rights of confidentiality.
- Intellectual property rights should not allow research providers to prohibit the publication of results.
- There should be a prior existence of a suitable code for conduct.
- Where the gatekeeper has a personal relationship with data subject (e.g. parents and teachers) researchers should be sensitive to the nature of that relationship.
- Confidentiality of data should be respected.
- Data subjects should be told the purposes of the research and have adequate opportunity to withhold cooperation.
- Researchers should display openness and sensitivity respecting different interests of different groups in society.
- Researchers should avoid designs which preclude certain outcomes.
- Researchers should disseminate findings fully.
- Researchers should facilitate re-use of data.

(these points are drawn from a range of codes BSA, ISI, MRS etc.)

- Sometimes there will be a need for the involvement of a third person where the respondent negotiates on their behalf, e.g. in answering or refusing to answer questions about parents.
- The principle of informed consent is often overlooked when information is gathered from other records e.g. school records.
- The practice of survey research may encourage a situation whereby ethical issues are less likely to be acknowledged in relation to those on whom the researcher is not dependent for resources or data.
- It is impossible to achieve absolute security of data, given the existence of hackers. There are problems about the anonymity of a school.

Problems of informed consent:

- how fully should respondents be informed?
- what opportunity should be given to withhold consent?
- to what extent should researchers persist in relation to non-respondents with follow-up questionnaires?

- The principle of informed consent is open to a wide range of interpretations.
 - Ethical principles related to the perceived expectations of others reflects a lazy approach to ethics and may also reflect a more tactical than ethical approach (p.24). For example, when considering what information about the survey to give to sample members, maximising response may be as important a motive as the principle of informed consent.
 - Applying the principle of openness of the research process to its fullest extent would require massive resources - being ethical can often be very expensive.
 - The relative objectivity of survey data can make it difficult to suppress the results of survey research: they can less readily be dismissed as subjective or unsubstantiated.
 - Even surveys may face conflicts between confidentiality and openness.
 - Sampling frames may disenfranchise certain groups - this is an ethical as well as a technical difficulty especially, when education policy may be formulated on the results.
 - There is a continuing dialectic of ethics and tactics.
 - Codes are generally written by professionals for professionals. To overstate only slightly, they advocate caution not so much to protect the public, more because overstepping the norms would tend to queer the pitch for other professionals.
-

Riddell, Sheila,

'Exploiting the exploited? The ethics of feminist educational research' in Burgess, R.G., (ed.) *The Ethics of Educational Research*, Falmer Press, London.

This chapter looks at some of the ethical issues involved in qualitative feminist research, including the power relationships involved in the interpersonal relations of interviewing.

Summary: Some feminists (e.g. Stanley and Wise) have been critical of much feminist sociology which reflects an essentially positivistic masculinist world view. This compares with the idea that there are competing views of reality - the only valid research project is to attempt to understand how personal reality is constructed and no attempt should be made to move towards a larger theory. Most feminist writers are less prescriptive. Duello Klein says that the basic demand of feminist research ethics is that the work should not simply be on women but for women. Qualitative and quantitative data can be used complementarily. Real questions are how the research is to be conducted, and whether it is likely to be helpful to women.

The Ethics of Access: Most of the gatekeepers are male and Riddell does not dwell on the specifically feminist nature of her project. Question arose of how she should, as a female researcher, present herself - e.g. vulnerable and in need of male protection. Ethical and practical problems in adopting a 'semi-covert' role (danger of discovery threatening the research).

Power Relations in Interviews: Feminist criticism of the notion of the objective interview. Women may 'open up' in interviews, however, because they are socially powerless, in such a way that it is not to their benefit. The unequal power relation may be exploited.

When Riddell had the cooperation of female students she felt she should place limits on herself such as declaring the girls' toilets out of bounds, waiting until the girls approached her rather than intruding upon them at lunch time, avoiding discussion of sexual relationships. Interviewing men provided a different dynamic and power relationship with male interviewees attempting to assert themselves by controlling the terms of the interaction.

Class differences were apparent with middle class parents asking many questions about what was going to be done with the data and working class parents asking very little. 'Working class women were the group least likely to question what I was doing.' Does the researcher challenge what is happening and risk being told nothing at all? To what extent should she support her true opinions etc.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data: Who, ultimately, does the data belong to? Burgess suggests a modest form of collaboration where some subjects may be given chapters of the final stage of the research to comment upon (shouldn't this consultative process proceed throughout the research?) He suggests the headmaster but Riddell asks why the headmaster should be given precedence over everyone else?

Another complex ethical issue is the extent to which a feminist researcher should adopt a value-free stance, or whether her personal and political convictions should be involved in her data analysis. NO work can be entirely value free. There are problems for those who claim that their research is value free. 'This would suggest...that they either did not realise the implications of their positions, or else they were trying to conceal their political viewpoint.'

Feminist researchers should employ high standards of academic rigour, the researcher should ensure that both her research design and reporting are reflexive, making explicit the way in which her political commitments have influenced her selection of problems, her conduct of the research and her interpretation of the data.

Disseminating Research Findings: It is impossible for anyone doing educational research to guarantee anonymity.

Rowling, Louise, (1994) *Ethical Dilemmas Encountered in Researching Sensitive Issues*, Paper delivered at AARE conference.

This paper examines recent qualitative research on loss and grief in school communities to exemplify some of the ethical dilemmas encountered in researching sensitive issues.

Summary: Data gathering through repeated in depth interviews on sensitive issues such as HIV/AIDS, grief and child abuse, poses ethical dilemmas for the social researcher. These arise from: the interaction of the self as the chief instrument; the interpersonal context of the interview; and the sensitive nature of the topic. Some of the dilemmas include: the ontological beliefs favouring a collaborative approach to research, brought to the research by the researcher; the spontaneous intimate self disclosure of participants; the acknowledgment of interviews as a form of intervention in people's lives; the dilemma of maintaining distance in interviews but also developing rapport; and the clash of the various 'I's' the researcher brought to the research topic.

Mechanisms for coping with these dilemmas are suggested by Rowling including the use of a research journal as a form of debriefing and the development of trust in the research process by the return of interview transcripts.

Sabar, Naama, *Teacher Researchers' Attitudes Towards Teacher-Informants: Some Ethical Implications*, Article submitted to Journal of Teacher Education, Tel Aviv University, Israel.

This article is concerned with the extent to which teacher participants in research should contribute to the new knowledge construction through reflection, interpretation and explanation.

Summary: Sabar goes beyond the idea that simple informed consent is all that is necessary in the relationship between research participants and researchers and argues that respondents should get information, power and the tools to use that power in saying how the information should be used.

While the guarantee of anonymity may protect participants from negative consequences, it also excludes them from public ownership of the data and input into its use. The power imbalance between researcher and teacher is thence accentuated and opportunities for a mutual collegial process lessened or missed. Although this process may be tedious and time-consuming, it is essential when we think of education as a separate discipline with a code of ethics different from other domains such as psychology and sociology. Starting from this premise means that research ethics in education would include democratic and emancipatory principles by which teachers are listened to closely and involved significantly as partners.

Sammons, Pamela, 'Ethical issues and statistical work' in Burgess, R.G., (ed.) *The Ethics of Educational Research*, Falmer Press, London.

This chapter gives an overview of some of the ethical issues involved in statistical research including informed consent and subsequent use of statistical data.

Summary: Understanding of numerical and statistical information is important for the general population to make informed decisions which affect them - the need for awareness of ethical issues and recognised codes of conduct which can inform and guide those who analyse, interpret and publish statistical data is acute.

Misuse of statistical information about schools in the media (parental choice of schools based on examination results).

The code of practice for statisticians, set up by the International Statistical Institute (ISI) represents a set of guidelines rather than absolute rules '...organised rules of ethics are an intellectual and moral absurdity, and ...the proper function of a professional association is to encourage frequent discussion, debate and publication of ethical issues'. The ISI code considers the statistician's obligations to different groups - society as a whole, funders and employers, subjects involved in research work and colleagues.

No code of conduct can guard against flagrant abuses of researchers e.g. fabricating data. Sammons argues that ensuring high standards of statistical research depends as much on the technical aspects of inquiry. Statisticians cannot prevent action based on statistical data but they can attempt to pre-empt predictable misunderstandings or counteract them when they occur.

The statistician has a responsibility to pursue objectivity- values should be made explicit at all stages of the inquiry. In reporting the research, any ethical conflicts and resulting choices should be recounted to inform other researchers.

The employer or funder should be referred to the relevant parts of a professional code to which the statistician adheres.

]Obligations to Colleagues include maintaining confidence in statistics, exposing and reviewing methods and findings and communicating ethical principles.

The good reputation of statistics is seen to depend upon the professional conduct of individual statisticians.

Obligations to Subjects: Avoiding undue intrusion - the advancement of knowledge and the pursuit of information are not themselves sufficient justifications for overriding other social and cultural values. Problems of secondary data analysis which might in some way overcome or reduce intrusion include that subjects who have provided data for one purpose may object to its subsequent use for another purpose without their consent. This is particularly the situation in the case of identified data.

Obtaining informed consent - subjects should be informed of their right to refuse or capacity to withdraw data just supplied.

Protecting the interests of subjects - in relation to the potential harmful effects of participating - another argument for keeping subjects as informed as possible.

Researcher statistician needs to assess what items of information are likely to be material to a subject's willingness to participate.

Informed consent is not a precondition of all statistical inquiry.

Maintaining confidentiality - unless informed consent has been obtained.

Preventing disclosure of identities - Statisticians should take all reasonable measure to prevent their data from being published in a form that would allow any subject's identity to be disclosed.

In utilising identified data anonymity is not always a guarantee of confidentiality.

Avoiding abuse of statistical techniques - overanalysis of data, complex statistical techniques are used by those who do not understand them, researchers should discuss their use of statistical procedures with other researchers involved in the relevant field of inquiry. Statistical zeal and sensitive individual conscience are required in the statistical researcher.

Weis, Lois, (1992) 'Reflections on the researcher in a multicultural environment' in Grant, Carl, (ed.) *Research and Multicultural Education: From the Margins to the Mainstream*, Falmer Press, London.

This chapter explores what it means for a researcher to work in a multicultural environment, an environment often far removed from the researcher's own original cultural location.

Summary: The type of research covered in the paper is specifically ethnographic or qualitative and Weis raises several key points which could be considered ethical imperatives for such research in a multicultural environment. They are –

- Know who you are before going into the field. By this the author seems to mean that the researcher should have an identity outside, within the researching institution or body or else engage in 'true community studies' where researchers actually move into the area and conduct a full community study rather than a study in a school. In the latter situation Weis claims there is less 'fracturing of the self' which comes about as a result of imposed definitions from those being researched. This may be considered an ethical as much as a methodological issue since as a researcher 'you will be what people in the field choose to define you as and you have little control over this since you are entering their cultural totality - they are not entering yours.'
- Acknowledge your perspective. In dealing with cultures not our own it is critical to be honest about where we are coming from theoretically and personally.. This is important since all behaviour observed in field work is interpreted through this biographical lens, what leads one to 'see' things about others.
- Exhibit integrity. This is both methodologically and ethically sound since people will talk to you as a researcher if they trust you. The length of time spent in the field will in part determine this relationship. It is important to establish oneself as a trustworthy member of the community before attempting to conduct interviews. Weis does not elaborate on what might be deemed ethical behaviour other than to stress that this trust must not be broken. Issues such as informed consent are not discussed but confidentiality in relation to the information shared with the researcher is stressed as central to ethical behaviour (even when the subject matter may be itself illegal or immoral). The researcher's job is to record and later analyse not pass judgement.

The Association has also established an Ethics Committee (a sub-committee of the AARE Executive) to which matters can be referred. If you have an ethics matter which you think this committee should consider, please contact

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Accessed 6th January 2010
: <http://www.aare.edu.au/ethics/aareethc.htm>

Research Methods in Education

Sixth edition

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and Keith Morrison**

2007

CH. 2

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

Introduction

The awareness of ethical concerns in research is reflected in the growth of relevant literature and in the appearance of regulatory codes of research practice formulated by various agencies and professional bodies.¹ A major ethical dilemma is that which requires researchers to strike a balance between the demands placed on them as professional scientists in pursuit of truth, and their subjects' rights and values potentially threatened by the research. This is known as the 'costs/benefits ratio', the essence of which is outlined by Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1992) in Box 2.1, and is a concept we return to later in the chapter. Ethical problems for researchers can multiply surprisingly when they move from the general to the particular, and from the abstract to the concrete.

Ethical issues may stem from the kinds of problems investigated by social scientists and the methods they use to obtain valid and reliable data. This means that each stage in the research sequence raises ethical issues. They may arise from the nature of the research project itself (ethnic differences in intelligence, for example); the context for the research (a remand home); the procedures to be adopted (producing high levels of anxiety); methods of data collection (covert observation); the nature of the participants (emotionally disturbed adolescents); the type of data collected (highly personal and sensitive information); and what is to be done with the data (publishing in a manner that may cause participants embarrassment).

In this chapter we present a conspectus of the main issues that may confront researchers. Each research undertaking is an event *sui generis*, and the conduct of researchers cannot be, indeed

should not be, forced into a procrustean system of ethics. When it comes to the resolution of a specific moral problem, each situation frequently offers a spectrum of possibilities (see <http://www.routledge.com/textbooks/9780415368780> – Chapter 2, file 2.1. ppt).

In this chapter we review *seriatim* several issues in the ethical field. These can constitute a set of initial considerations that researchers should address in planning research:

- informed consent
- gaining access to and acceptance in the research setting
- the nature of ethics in social research generally
- sources of tension in the ethical debate, including non-maleficence, beneficence and human dignity, absolutist and relativist ethics
- problems and dilemmas confronting the researcher, including matters of privacy, anonymity, confidentiality, betrayal and deception
- ethical problems endemic in particular research methods
- ethics and evaluative research
- regulatory ethical frameworks, guidelines and codes of practice for research
- personal codes of practice
- sponsored research
- responsibilities to the research community.

While many of these issues concern procedural ethics, we have to recall that ethics concern right and wrong, good and bad, and so procedural ethics are not enough; one has to consider how the research purposes, contents, methods, reporting and outcomes abide by ethical principles and practices. Before this, however, we examine another fundamental concept which, along with the *costs/benefits ratio*, contributes to the

Box 2.1**The costs/benefits ratio**

The *costs/benefits ratio* is a fundamental concept expressing the primary ethical dilemma in social research. In planning their proposed research, social scientists have to consider the likely social benefits of their endeavours against the personal costs to the individuals taking part. Possible benefits accruing from the research may take the form of crucial findings leading to significant advances in theoretical and applied knowledge. Failure to do the research may cost society the advantages of the research findings and ultimately the opportunity to improve the human condition. The costs to participants may include affronts to dignity, embarrassment, loss of trust in social relations, loss of autonomy and self-determination, and lowered self-esteem. On the other hand, the benefits to participants could take the form of satisfaction in having made a contribution to science and a greater personal understanding of the research area under scrutiny. The process of balancing benefits against possible costs is chiefly a subjective one and not at all easy. There are few or no absolutes and researchers have to make decisions about research content and procedures in accordance with professional and personal values. This *costs/benefits ratio* is the basic dilemma residual in a great deal of social research.

Source: adapted from Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias 1992

bedrock of ethical procedure – that of *informed consent*.

Informed consent

Much social research necessitates obtaining the consent and cooperation of subjects who are to assist in investigations and of significant others in the institutions or organizations providing the research facilities (see <http://www.routledge.com/textbooks/9780415368780> – Chapter 2, file 2.2. ppt). While some cultures may not be stringent about informed consent, in others there are strict protocols for informed consent. Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1992) suggest that informed consent is particularly important if participants are going to be exposed to any stress, pain, invasion of privacy, or if they are going to lose

control over what happens (e.g. in drug research); such informed consent requires full information about the possible consequences and dangers.

The principle of informed consent arises from the subject's right to freedom and self-determination. Being free is a condition of living in a democracy, and when restrictions and limitations are placed on that freedom they must be justified and consented to, as in research. Consent thus protects and respects the right of self-determination and places some of the responsibility on the participant should anything go wrong in the research. As part of the right to self-determination, the subject has the right to refuse to take part, or to withdraw once the research has begun (see Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias 1992). Thus informed consent implies informed refusal.

Informed consent has been defined by Diener and Crandall (1978) as 'the procedures in which individuals choose whether to participate in an investigation after being informed of facts that would be likely to influence their decisions'. This definition involves four elements: competence, voluntarism, full information and comprehension.

Competence implies that responsible, mature individuals will make correct decisions if they are given the relevant information. It is incumbent on researchers to ensure they do not engage individuals incapable of making such decisions because of immaturity or some form of psychological impairment.

Voluntarism entails applying the principle of informed consent and thus ensuring that participants freely choose to take part (or not) in the research and guarantees that exposure to risks is undertaken knowingly and voluntarily. This element can be problematical, especially in the field of medical research where unknowing patients are used as guinea-pigs.

Full information implies that consent is fully informed, though in practice it is often impossible for researchers to inform subjects on everything e.g. on the statistical treatment of data; and, as we shall see below, on those occasions when the researchers themselves do not know everything about the investigation. In such circumstances the strategy of reasonably informed consent has to

be applied. Box 2.2 illustrates a set of guidelines used in the United States that are based on the idea of *reasonably informed consent*.²

Comprehension refers to the fact that participants fully understand the nature of the research project, even when procedures are complicated and entail risks. Suggestions have been made to ensure that subjects fully comprehend the situation they are putting themselves into, e.g. by using highly educated subjects, by engaging a consultant to explain difficulties, or by building into the research scheme a time lag between the request for participation and decision time.

If these four elements are present, researchers can be assured that subjects' rights will have been given appropriate consideration. As Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1992) note, however, informed consent may not always be necessary (e.g. deception may be justified), but that, as a general rule, the greater the risk, the more important it is to gain informed consent.

Ruane (2005: 21) also raises the question of 'how much information is enough'; she argues that this may be an unknown, not necessarily deliberately withheld. Further, just as providing information may bias the results (i.e. it is important for the integrity of the research *not* to disclose its purposes

or contents, e.g. the Milgram experiments, see Chapter 21), she argues that it may actually confuse the respondents.

It must also be remembered that there are some research methods where it is impossible to seek informed consent. Covert observation, for example, as used in Patrick's (1973) study of a Glasgow gang (Chapter 11), or experimental techniques involving deception, as in Milgram's (1974) obedience-to-authority experiments (Chapter 21), would, by their very nature, rule out the option. And, of course, there may be occasions when problems arise even though consent has been obtained. Burgess (1989), for example, cites his own research in which teachers had been informed that research was taking place but in which it was not possible to specify exactly what data would be collected or how they would be used. It could be said, in this particular case, that individuals were not fully informed, that consent had not been obtained, and that privacy had been violated. As a general rule, however, informed consent is an important principle. It is this principle that will form the basis of an implicit contractual relationship between the researcher and the researched and will serve as a foundation on which subsequent ethical considerations can be structured.

From the remarks on informed consent so far, we may appear to be assuming relationships between peers – researcher and teachers, for example, or research professor and postgraduate students – and this assumption would seem to underpin many of the discussions of an ethical nature in the research literature generally. However, much educational research involves children who cannot be regarded as being on equal terms with the researcher and it is important to keep this in mind at all stages in the research process, including the point where informed consent is sought. In this connection we refer to the important work of Fine and Sandstrom (1988), whose ethnographic and participant observational studies of children and young people focus, among other issues, on this asymmetry with respect to the problems of obtaining informed consent from their young subjects and explaining the research in a comprehensible fashion. As a

Box 2.2 Guidelines for reasonably informed consent

- 1 A fair explanation of the procedures to be followed and their purposes.
- 2 A description of the attendant discomforts and risks reasonably to be expected.
- 3 A description of the benefits reasonably to be expected.
- 4 A disclosure of appropriate alternative procedures that might be advantageous to the participants.
- 5 An offer to answer any inquiries concerning the procedures.
- 6 An instruction that the person is free to withdraw consent and to discontinue participation in the project at any time without prejudice to the participant.

Source: US Department of Health, Education and Welfare et al. 1971

guiding principle, they advise that, while it is desirable to lessen the power differential between children and adult researchers, the difference will remain and its elimination may be ethically inadvisable.

There are other aspects of the problem of informed consent (or refusal) in relation to young, or very young, children. Seeking informed consent with regard to minors involves two stages. First, researchers consult and seek permission from those adults responsible for the prospective subjects, and second, they approach the young people themselves. The adults in question will be, for example, parents, teachers, tutors, psychiatrists, youth leaders, or team coaches, depending on the research context. The point of the research will be explained, questions invited, and permission to proceed to the next stage sought. Objections, for whatever reason, will be duly respected. Obtaining approval from relevant adults may be more difficult than in the case of the children, but, being sensitive to children's welfare, it is vital that researchers secure such approval. It may be useful if, in seeking the consent of children, researchers bear in mind the provisory comments below.

While seeking children's permission and cooperation is an automatic part of quantitative research (a child cannot unknowingly complete a simple questionnaire), the importance of informed consent in qualitative research is not always recognized. Speaking of participant observation, for example, Fine and Sandstrom (1988) say that researchers must provide a credible and meaningful explanation of their research intentions, especially in situations where they have little authority, and that children must be given a real and legitimate opportunity to say that they do not want to take part. The authors advise that where subjects do refuse, they should not be questioned, their actions should not be recorded, and they should not be included in any book or article (even under a pseudonym). Where they form part of a group, they may be included as part of a collectivity. Fine and Sandstrom (1988) consider that such rejections are sometimes a result of mistrust of the researcher. They suggest that at a later date, when the researcher has been able to establish greater

rapprochement with the group, those who refused initially may be approached again, perhaps in private.

Two particular groups of children require special mention: very young children, and those not capable of making a decision. Researchers intending to work with pre-school or nursery children may dismiss the idea of seeking informed consent from their would-be subjects because of their age, but Fine and Sandstrom (1988) would recommend otherwise. Even though such children would not understand what research was, the authors advise that the children be given some explanation. For example, one to the effect that an adult will be watching and playing with them might be sufficient to provide a measure of informed consent consistent with the children's understanding. As Fine and Sandstrom comment:

Our feeling is that children should be told as much as possible, even if some of them cannot understand the full explanation. Their age should not diminish their rights, although their level of understanding must be taken into account in the explanations that are shared with them.

(Fine and Sandstrom 1988)

The second group consists of those children who are to be used in a research project and who may not meet Diener and Crandall's (1978) criterion of 'competence' (a group of psychologically impaired children, for example – the issue of 'advocacy' applies here). In such circumstances there may be institutional or local authority guidelines to follow. In the absence of these, the requirements of informed consent would be met by obtaining the permission of headteachers acting *in loco parentis* or who have had delegated to them the responsibility for providing informed consent by the parents.

Two cautions: first, where an extreme form of research is planned, parents would have to be fully informed in advance and their consent obtained; and second, whatever the nature of the research and whoever is involved, should a child show signs of discomfort or stress, the research should be terminated immediately. For further discussion on the care that needs to be exercised in working with children we refer readers to Graue and Walsh (1998); Greig and Taylor (1998); Holmes (1998).

Informed consent requires an explanation and description of several factors, including, for example:

- the purposes, contents and procedures of the research
- any foreseeable risks and negative outcomes, discomfort or consequences and how they will be handled
- benefits that might derive from the research
- incentives to participate and rewards from participating
- right to voluntary non-participation, withdrawal and rejoining the project
- rights and obligations to confidentiality and non-disclosure of the research, participants and outcomes
- disclosure of any alternative procedures that may be advantageous
- opportunities for participants to ask questions about any aspect of the research
- signed contracts for participation.

There are many more issues, and researchers will need to decide what to include in informed consent. Not least among these is the issue of volunteering. Participants may feel coerced to volunteer (e.g. by a school principal), or may not wish to offend a researcher by refusing to participate, or may succumb to peer pressure to volunteer (or not to volunteer), or may wish to volunteer for reasons other than the researcher's (e.g. to malign a school principal or senior colleagues, to gain resources for his or her department, or to gain approval from colleagues). Researchers have to ensure that volunteers have real freedom of choice if informed consent is to be fulfilled.

Access and acceptance

The relevance of the principle of informed consent becomes apparent at the initial stage of the research project – that of access to the institution or organization where the research is to be conducted, and acceptance by those whose permission one needs before embarking on the task. We highlight this stage of access

and acceptance in particular at this point because it offers the best opportunity for researchers to present their credentials as serious investigators and establish their own ethical position with respect to their proposed research.

Investigators cannot expect access to a nursery, school, college or university as a matter of right. They have to demonstrate that they are worthy, as researchers and human beings, of being accorded the facilities needed to carry out their investigations. The advice of Bell (1991: 37) is to gain permission early on, with fully informed consent gained, and indicating to participants the possible benefits of the research.

The first stage thus involves the gaining of official permission to undertake one's research in the target community. This will mean contacting, in person or in writing, an appropriate official and/or the chairperson of the governors if one is to work in a school, along with the headteacher or principal. At a later point, significant figures who will be responsible for, or assist in, the organization and administration of the research will also need to be contacted – the deputy head or senior teacher, for instance, and most certainly the class teacher if children are to be used in the research. Since the researcher's potential for intrusion and perhaps disruption is considerable, amicable relations with the class teacher in particular should be fostered as expeditiously as possible. If the investigation involves teachers as participants, propositions may have to be put to the stakeholders and conditions negotiated. Where the research is to take place in another kind of institution, e.g. a youth club or detention centre, the approach will be similar, although the organizational structure will be different.

Achieving goodwill and cooperation is especially important where the proposed research extends over a period of time: days, perhaps, in the case of an ethnographic study; months (or perhaps years) where longitudinal research is involved. Access does not present quite such a problem when, for example, a one-off survey requires respondents to give up half-an-hour of their time or when a researcher is normally a member of the organization where the research

is taking place (an insider), though in the case of the latter, it is generally unwise to take co-operation for granted. Where research procedures are extensive and complicated, however, or where the design is developmental or longitudinal, or where researchers are not normally based in the target community, the problems of access are more involved and require greater preparation. Box 2.3 gives a flavour of the kinds of accessibility problems that can be experienced (Foster 1989).

Having identified the official and significant figures whose permission must be sought, and before actually meeting them, researchers will need to clarify in their own minds the precise nature and scope of their research. It is desirable that they have a total picture of what it all entails, even if the overall scheme is a provisional one (though we have to bear in mind that this may cause difficulties later). In this respect researchers could, for instance, identify the aims of the research; its practical applications, if any, the design, methods and procedures to be used, the nature and size of samples or groups, what tests are to be administered and how, what activities are to

be observed, which subjects are to be interviewed, observational needs, the time involved, the degree of disruption envisaged; arrangements to guarantee confidentiality with respect to data (if this is necessary), the role of feedback and how findings can best be disseminated, the overall timetable within which the research is to be encompassed, and finally, whether assistance will be required in the organization and administration of the research.

By such planning and foresight, both researchers and institutions will have a good idea of the demands likely to be made on both subjects (be they children or teachers) and organizations. It is also a good opportunity to anticipate and resolve likely problems, especially those of a practical kind. A long, complicated questionnaire, for example, may place undue demands on the comprehension skills and attention spans of a particular class of 13 year olds, or a relatively inexperienced teacher could feel threatened by sustained research scrutiny. Once this kind of information has been sorted out and clarified, researchers will be in a stronger position to discuss their proposed plans in an informed, open and frank manner (though not necessarily too open, as we shall see) and may thereby more readily gain permission, acceptance and support. It must be remembered that hosts will have perceptions of researchers and their intentions and that these need to be positive. Researchers can best influence such perceptions by presenting themselves as competent, trustworthy and accommodating.

Once this preliminary information has been collected, researchers are duly prepared for the next stage: making actual contact in person, perhaps after an introductory letter, with appropriate people in the organization with a view to negotiating access. If the research is university-based, they will have the support of their university and supervisor. Festinger and Katz (1966) consider that there is real economy in going to the very top of the organization or system in question to obtain assent and cooperation. This is particularly so where the structure is clearly hierarchical and where lower levels are always dependent on their superiors. They consider it likely that the nature

Box 2.3

Close encounters of a researcher kind

My first entry into a staffroom at the college was the occasion of some shuffling and shifting of books and chairs so that I could be given a comfortable seat while the tutor talked to me from a standing position. As time progressed my presence was almost taken for granted and later, when events threatened the security of the tutors, I was ignored. No one enquired as to whether they could assist me and my own enquiries were met with cursory answers and confused looks, followed by the immediate disappearance of the individuals concerned, bearing a pile of papers. I learned not to make too many enquiries. Unfortunately, when individuals feel insecure, when their world is threatened with change that is beyond their control, they are likely to respond in an unpredictable manner to persons within their midst whose role is unclear, and the role of the researcher is rarely understood by those not engaged in research.

Source: Foster 1989: 194

of the research will be referred to the top of the organization sooner or later, and that there is a much better chance for a favourable decision if leaders are consulted at the outset. It may also be the case that heads will be more open-minded than those lower down, who, because of their insecurity, may be less cooperative.

Festinger and Katz (1996) also warn against using the easiest entrances into the organization when seeking permission. Researchers may perhaps seek to come in as allies of individuals or groups who have a special interest to exploit and who see research as a means to their ends, rather than entering the situation in the common interests of all parties, with findings equally available to all groups and persons (Festinger and Katz 1966). Investigators should thus seek as broad a basis for their support as possible. Other potential problems may be circumvented by making use of accepted channels of communication in the institution or organization. Festinger and Katz (1966) caution that if information is limited to a single channel then the study risks becoming identified with the interests that are associated with that channel.

Following contact, there will be a negotiation process. At this point researchers will give as much information about the aims, nature and procedures of the research as is appropriate. This is very important: information that may prejudice the results of the investigation may have to be withheld. Aronson and Carlsmith (1969), for instance, note that one cannot imagine researchers who are studying the effects of group pressure on conformity announcing their intentions in advance. On the other hand, researchers may find themselves on dangerous ground if they go to the extreme of maintaining a 'conspiracy of silence', because, as Festinger and Katz note, such a stance is hard to keep up if the research is extensive and lasts over several days or weeks, and trying to preserve secrecy might lead to an increase in the spread and wildness of rumours (Festinger and Katz 1966). If researchers do not want their potential hosts and/or subjects to know too much about specific hypotheses and objectives, then a simple way out is to present an explicit statement at a fairly general

Box 2.4

Conditions and guarantees proffered for a school-based research project

- 1 All participants must be given the chance to remain anonymous.
- 2 All data must be given strict confidentiality.
- 3 Interviewees should have the chance to verify statements at the stage of drafting the report (respondent validation).
- 4 Participants should be given a copy of the final report.
- 5 Permission for publication must be gained from the participants.
- 6 If possible, the research report should be of benefit to the school and participants.

Source: adapted from Bell 1991

level with one or two examples of items that are not crucial to the study as a whole. As most research entails some risks, especially where field studies are concerned, and as the presence of an observer scrutinizing various aspects of community or school life may not be relished by all in the group, investigators must at all times manifest a sensitive appreciation of their hosts' and subjects' position and reassure anyone who feels threatened by the work. Such reassurance could take the form of a statement of conditions and guarantees given by researchers at this negotiation stage. By way of illustration, Box 2.4 contains conditions laid down for the Open University students' school-based research project.

Ethical considerations pervade the whole process of research; these will be no more so than at the stage of access and acceptance, where appropriateness of topic, design, methods, guarantees of confidentiality, analysis and dissemination of findings must be negotiated with relative openness, sensitivity, honesty, accuracy and scientific impartiality. There can be no rigid rules in this context. It will be a case of formulating and abiding by one's own situated ethics. These will determine what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. As Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) say in this regard:

Individual circumstances must be the final arbiter. As far as possible it is better if the teacher can discuss the research with all parties involved. On other occasions it may be better for the teacher to develop a pilot study and uncover some of the problems in advance of the research proper. If it appears that the research is going to come into conflict with aspects of school policy, management styles, or individual personalities, it is better to confront the issues head on, consult relevant parties, and make rearrangements in the research design where possible or necessary.

(Hitchcock and Hughes 1995: 41)

Where a pilot study is not feasible it may be possible to arrange one or two scouting forays to assess possible problems and risks. By way of summary, we refer the reader to Box 2.5.

The field of ethics

Whatever the specific nature of their work, social researchers must take into account the effects of the research on participants, and act in such a way as to preserve their dignity as human beings: responsibility to participants. Such is ethical behaviour. Indeed, ethics has been defined as 'a matter of principled sensitivity to the rights of others, and that 'while truth is good, respect for human dignity is better' (Cavan 1977: 810).

Kimmel (1988) has pointed out that it is important we recognize that the distinction between ethical and unethical behaviour is not dichotomous, even though the normative code of prescribed ('ought') and proscribed ('ought not') behaviours, as represented by the ethical standards of a profession, seem to imply that it is. Judgements about whether behaviour conflicts with professional values lie on a *continuum* that ranges from the clearly ethical to the clearly unethical. The point here is that ethical principles are not absolute, generally speaking, though some maintain that they are as we shall see shortly, but must be interpreted in the light of the research context and of other values at stake.

Of course, a considerable amount of research does not cause pain or indignity to the participants, self-esteem is not necessarily undermined nor

confidences betrayed, and the social scientist may only infrequently be confronted with an unresolvable ethical dilemma. Where research is ethically sensitive, however, many factors may need to be taken into account and these may vary from situation to situation, for example: the age of those being researched; whether the subject matter of the research is a sensitive area; whether the aims of the research are in any way subversive (*vis-à-vis* subjects, teachers, or institution); the extent to which the researcher and researched can participate and collaborate in planning the research; how the data are to be processed, interpreted, and used. Laing (1967: 53) offers an interesting, cautionary view of data where he writes that they are 'not so much given as *taken* out of a constantly elusive matrix of happenings. We should speak of *capta* rather than data'.

Sources of tension

Non-maleficence, beneficence and human dignity

The first tension, as expressed by Aronson and Carlsmith (1969), is that which exists between two sets of related values held by society: a belief in the value of free scientific inquiry in pursuit of truth and knowledge, and a belief in the dignity of individuals and their right to those considerations that follow from it. It is this polarity that we referred to earlier as the costs/benefits ratio and by which 'greater consideration must be given to the risks to physical, psychological, humane, proprietary and cultural values than to the potential contribution of research to knowledge' (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada 1981), i.e. the issue of 'non-maleficence' (where no harm is wished upon subjects or occurs) (see <http://www.routledge.com/textbooks/9780415368780> – Chapter 2, file 2.3. ppt).

Non-maleficence (do not harm) is enshrined in the Hippocratic oath, in which the principle of *primum non nocere* (first of all, do no harm) is held as a guiding precept. So also with research. At first sight this seems uncontentious; of course we do not wish to bring harm to our research

Box 2.5

Negotiating access checklist

- 1 **Clear official channels by formally requesting permission to carry out your investigation as soon as you have an agreed project outline.**
Some LEAs insist that requests to carry out research are channelled through the LEA office. Check what is required in your area.
- 2 **Speak to the people who will be asked to cooperate.**
Getting the LEA or head's permission is one thing, but you need to have the support of the people who will be asked to give interviews or complete questionnaires.
- 3 **Submit the project outline to the head, if you are carrying out a study in your or another educational institution.**
List people you would like to interview or to whom you wish to send questionnaires and state conditions under which the study will be conducted.
- 4 **Decide what you mean by anonymity and confidentiality.**
Remember that if you are writing about 'the head of English' and there is only one head of English in the school, the person concerned is immediately recognizable.
- 5 **Decide whether participants will receive a copy of the report and/or see drafts or interview transcripts.**
There are cost and time implications. Think carefully before you make promises.
- 6 **Inform participants what is to be done with the information they provide.**
Your eyes and those of the examiner only? Shown to the head, the LEA etc.?
- 7 **Prepare an outline of intentions and conditions under which the study will be carried out to hand to the participants.**
Even if you explain the purpose of the study the conditions and the guarantees, participants may forget.
- 8 **Be honest about the purpose of the study and about the conditions of the research.**
If you say an interview will last ten minutes, you will break faith if it lasts an hour. If you are conducting the investigation as part of a degree or diploma course, say so.
- 9 **Remember that people who agree to help are doing you a favour.**
Make sure you return papers and books in good order and on time. Letters of thanks should be sent, no matter how busy you are.
- 10 **Never assume 'it will be all right'. Negotiating access is an important stage in your investigation.**
If you are an inside researcher, you will have to live with your mistakes, so take care.

Source: adapted from Bell 1991

subjects. However, what constitutes 'harm' is unclear: one person's harm is a society's benefit, and whether a little harm for a few is tolerable in the interests of a major benefit for all, or even for the person concerned, throws into relief the tension involved here. The question is whether the end justifies the means. As a general principle we would advocate the application of *primum non nocere* and, indeed, ethics regulatory boards, for example in universities perusing research proposals (discussed later), are guided heavily by this principle. However, there could be tensions here. What do you do if you discover that the headteacher has a serious alcohol problem or is having an affair with a parent? What do you do if your research shows teachers in the school

with very serious weaknesses, such that their contracts should be terminated in the interests of the students?

When researchers are confronted with dilemmas such as these (though they are likely to occur much less in education than in social psychology or medicine), it is generally considered that they resolve them in a manner that avoids the extremes of, on the one hand, giving up the idea of research and, on the other, ignoring the rights of the subjects. At all times, the welfare of subjects should be kept in mind, even if it involves compromising the impact of the research. Researchers should never lose sight of the obligations they owe to those who are helping, and should constantly be alert to alternative techniques should the ones they

are employing at the time prove controversial. Indeed, this polarity between the research and the researched is reflected in the principles of the American Psychological Association which, as Zechmeister and Shaughnessy (1992) show, attempts to strike a balance between the rights of investigators to seek an understanding of human behaviour, and the rights and welfare of individuals who participate in the research. In the final reckoning, the decision to go ahead with a research project rests on a subjective evaluation of the costs both to the individual and society.

The corollary of non-maleficence is beneficence: what benefits will the research bring, and to whom? Many would-be participants could be persuaded to take part in research if it is made clear that it will, or may, bring personal, educational and social benefits. For example, it may lead to the improvement of learning, increased funding and resources for a particular curriculum area, improved approaches to the teaching of a subject, increased self-esteem for students, or additional teachers in a school. While it is sometimes worth including a statement of potential benefit when contacting schools and individuals, it may also be an actual requirement for ethics regulatory boards or sponsors.

The recipients of the benefit also have to be factored into the discussion here. A researcher may gain promotion, publications, a degree, research sponsorship and celebrity from a piece of research. However, the research might still leave the participants untouched, underprivileged, living and working in squalid and under-resourced conditions, under-supported, and with no material, educational or other improvements brought to the quality of their lives and work. On the one hand, it could be argued that research that did not lead to such benefits is unethical; on the other hand, it could be that the research helps to place the issue on the agenda of decision-makers and that, in the long run, it could contribute to a groundswell of opinion that, itself, brings change. While it may be fanciful to believe that a single piece of research will automatically lead to improvement, the ethical question raised here – who benefits? – suggests

that a selfish approach to the benefits of the research by the researcher is unethical.

This latter point requires researchers to do more than pay lip service to the notion of treating research participants as subjects rather than as objects to be used instrumentally – research fodder, so to speak – imbuing them with self-esteem and respect. One can treat people with respect but still the research may make no material difference to their lives. While it is surely impossible to argue against treating people with dignity and respect, it raises the issue of the obligations and commitments of the researcher. Let us say that the researcher has been working closely in a school for one or two years; surely that researcher has an obligation to improve the lives of those being researched, rather than simply gathering data instrumentally? To do the latter would be inhumane and deeply disrespectful. The issue is tension ridden: is the research *for* people and issues or *about* people and issues? We have to be clear about our answer to the question 'what will this research do for the participants and the wider community, not just for the researcher?'

Bailey (1994: 457) suggests that there are several approaches that can be used to avoid harming research subjects, including:

- using computer simulations
- finding a situation in which the negative effects of harm already exist, i.e. where the research does not have the responsibility for having produced these conditions
- applying only a very low level of potential harm, or for only a short period of time, so that any effects are minimal
- obtaining informed consent (providing details of the potential negative effects and securing participants' consent)
- justifying the research on the grounds that the small amount of harm caused is much less than the harm caused by the existing situation (which the research is trying to improve)
- using samples rather than complete populations, so that fewer people are exposed to the harm

- maintaining the privacy of participants through the use of aggregated or anonymised data.

While some of these are uncontroversial, others in this list are debatable, and researchers will need to be able to justify the decision that they reach.

Absolutist and relativist ethics

The second source of tension in this context is that generated by the competing absolutist and relativist positions. The absolutist view holds that clear, set principles should guide the researchers in their work and that these should determine what ought and what ought not to be done (see Box 2.6). To have taken a wholly absolutist stance, for example, in the case of the Stanford Prison Experiment (see Chapter 21), where the researchers studied interpersonal dynamics in a simulated prison, would have meant that the experiment should not have taken place at all or that it should have been terminated well before the sixth day. Zimbardo (1984) has stated that the absolutist ethical position, in which it is unjustified to induce any human suffering, would bring about the end of much psychological or medical research, regardless of its possible benefits to society.

Box 2.6

Absolute ethical principles in social research

Ethics embody individual and communal codes of conduct based upon a set of explicit or implicit principles and which may be abstract and impersonal or concrete and personal. Ethics can be 'absolute' and 'relative'. When behaviour is guided by absolute ethical standards, a higher-order moral principle is invoked which does not vary with regard to the situation in hand. Such absolutist ethics permit no degree of freedom for ends to justify means or for any beneficial or positive outcomes to justify occasions where the principle is suspended, altered or diluted, i.e. there are no special or extenuating circumstances which can be considered as justifying a departure from, or modification to, the ethical standard.

Source: adapted from Zimbardo 1984

By this absolute principle, the Stanford Prison Experiment must be regarded as unethical because the participants suffered considerably.

In absolutist principles – 'duty ethics of principles' (Edwards and Mauthner 2002: 20), a deontological model – research is governed by universal precepts such as justice, honesty and respect (among others). In the 'utilitarian ethics of consequences' (p. 20) ethical research is judged in terms of its consequences, e.g. increased knowledge, benefit for many.

Those who hold a relativist position would argue that there can be no absolute guidelines and that ethical considerations will arise from the very nature of the particular research being pursued at the time: situation determines behaviour. This underlines the significance of 'situated ethics' (Simons and Usher 2000), where overall guidelines may offer little help when confronted with a very specific situation.

There are some contexts, however, where neither the absolutist nor the relativist position is clear cut. Writing of the application of the principle of informed consent with respect to life history studies, Plummer (1983) says:

Both sides have a weakness. If, for instance, as the absolutists usually insist, there should be informed consent, it may leave relatively privileged groups under-researched (since they will say 'no') and underprivileged groups over-researched (they have nothing to lose and say 'yes' in hope). If the individual conscience is the guide, as the relativists insist, the door is wide open for the unscrupulous—even immoral—researcher.

(Plummer 1983)

He suggests that broad guidelines laid down by professional bodies which offer the researcher room for personal ethical choice are a way out of the problem. We consider these later in this chapter.

Voices of experience

Whatever the ethical stance one assumes and no matter what forethought one brings to bear on one's work, there will always be

unknown, unforeseen problems and difficulties lying in wait (Kimmel 1988). Baumrind (1964), for example, warns of the possible failure on the researchers' part to perceive a positive indebtedness to their subjects for their services, perhaps, she suggests, because the detachment which investigators bring to their task prevents appreciation of subjects as individuals. This kind of omission can be averted if the experimenters are prepared to spend a few minutes with subjects afterwards in order to thank them for their participation, answer their questions, reassure them that they did well, and generally talk to them for a time. If the research involves subjects in a failure experience, isolation or loss of self-esteem, for example, researchers must ensure that the subjects do not leave the situation more humiliated, insecure and alienated than when they arrived. From the subject's point of view, procedures which involve loss of dignity, injury to self-esteem, or affect trust in rational authority are probably most harmful in the long run and may require the most carefully organized ways of recompensing the subject in some way if the researcher chooses to carry on with those methods.

With particularly sensitive areas, participants need to be fully informed of the dangers of serious after-effects. There is reason to believe that at least some of the obedient subjects in Milgram's (1963) experiments (see Chapter 21) came away from the experience with a lower self-esteem, having to live with the realization that they were willing to yield to destructive authority to the point of inflicting extreme pain on a fellow human being (Kelman 1967). It follows that researchers need to reflect attitudes of compassion, respect, gratitude and common sense without being too effusive. Subjects clearly have a right to expect that the researchers with whom they are interacting have some concern for the welfare of participants.

Further, the subject's sensibilities need also to be taken into account when the researcher comes to write up the research. It is unacceptable for researchers to show scant regard for subjects' feelings at the report stage. A related and not insignificant issue concerns the formal recognition of those who have assisted in the investigation, if

such be the case. This means that whatever form the written account takes, be it a report, article, chapter or thesis, and no matter the readership for which it is intended, its authors must acknowledge and thank all who helped in the research, even to the extent of identifying by name those whose contribution was significant. This can be done in a foreword, introduction or footnote. All this is really a question of commonsensical ethics.

Ethical problems in educational research can often result from thoughtlessness, oversight or taking matters for granted. Again, researchers engaged in sponsored research may feel they do not have to deal with ethical issues, believing their sponsors to have them in hand. Likewise, each researcher in a collaborative venture may take it for granted, wrongly, that colleagues have the relevant ethical questions in mind, consequently appropriate precautions go by default. A student whose research is part of a course requirement and who is motivated wholly by self-interest, or academic researchers with professional advancement in mind, may overlook the 'oughts' and 'ought not's'.

A related issue here is that it is unethical for the researcher to be incompetent in the area of research. Competence may require training (Ticehurst and Veal 2000: 55). Indeed an ethical piece of research must demonstrate rigour in the design, conduct, analysis and reporting of the research (Morrison 1996b).

An ethical dilemma that is frequently discussed is in the experiment. Gorard (2001: 146) summarizes the issue as being that the design is discriminatory, in that the control group is being denied access to a potentially better treatment (e.g. curriculum, teaching style). Of course, the response to this is that, in a genuine experiment, we do not know which treatment is better, and that, indeed, this is the point of the experiment.

Ethical dilemmas

Robson (1993: 33) raises ten questionable practices in social research:

- involving people without their knowledge or consent

- coercing them to participate
- withholding information about the true nature of the research
- deceiving participants in other ways
- inducing them to commit acts diminishing their self-esteem
- violating rights of self-determination (e.g. in studies seeking to promote individual change)
- exposing participants to physical or mental stress
- invading their privacy
- withholding benefits from some participants (e.g. in comparison groups)
- not treating participants fairly, or with consideration, or with respect.

Interestingly, Robson (1993) calls these 'questionable practices' rather than areas to be proscribed, indicating that they are not black and white, right or wrong matters. They constitute the problem of ethical dilemmas.

At the beginning of this chapter, we spoke of the costs/benefits ratio. Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1992) express this as a conflict between two rights: the rights to conduct research in order to gain knowledge versus the rights of participants to self-determination, privacy and dignity. This constitutes the fundamental ethical dilemma of the social scientist for whom there are no absolute right or wrong answers. Which proposition is favoured, or how a balance between the two is struck will depend very much on the background, experience, and personal values of the individual researcher. We examine here other dilemmas that may confront investigators once they have come to some accommodation with this fundamental dilemma and decided to proceed with their research.

Privacy

For the most part, individual 'right to privacy' is usually contrasted with public 'right to know' (Pring 1984) and this has been defined in the *Ethical Guidelines for the Institutional Review Committee for Research with Human Subjects* as that which

extends to all information relating to a person's physical and mental condition, personal circumstances and social relationships which is not already in the public domain. It gives to the individual or collectively the freedom to decide for themselves when and where, in what circumstances and to what extent their personal attitudes, opinions, habits, eccentricities, doubts and fears are to be communicated to or withheld from others.

(Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada 1981)

In the context of research, therefore, 'right to privacy' may easily be violated during the course of an investigation or denied after it has been completed. At either point the participant is vulnerable.

Privacy has been considered from three different perspectives by Diener and Crandall (1978). These are the sensitivity of the information being given, the setting being observed, and dissemination of information. Sensitivity of information refers to how personal or potentially threatening the information is that is being collected by the researcher. Certain kinds of information are more personal than others and may be more threatening. According to a report by the American Psychological Association (1973) for example, 'Religious preferences, sexual practices, income, racial prejudices, and other personal attributes such as intelligence, honesty, and courage are more sensitive items than "name, rank and serial number"'. Thus, the greater the sensitivity of the information, the more safeguards are called for to protect the privacy of the participants.

The setting being observed may vary from very private to completely public. The home, for example, is considered one of the most private settings and intrusions into people's homes without their consent are forbidden by law. Dissemination of information concerns the ability to match personal information with the identity of the research participants. Indeed, personal data are defined at law as those data which uniquely identify the individual providing them. When such information is publicized with names through the

media, for example, privacy is seriously violated. The more people there are who can learn about the information, the more concern there must be about privacy (see Diener and Crandall 1978).

As is the case with most rights, privacy can be voluntarily relinquished. Research participants may choose to give up their right to privacy either by allowing a researcher access to sensitive topics or settings or by agreeing that the research report may identify them by name. The latter case at least would be an occasion where informed consent would need to be sought.

Generally speaking, if researchers intend to probe into the private aspects or affairs of individuals, their intentions should be made clear and explicit and informed consent should be sought from those who are to be observed or scrutinized in private contexts. Other methods to protect participants are anonymity and confidentiality and our examination of these follows.

Privacy is more than simple confidentiality (discussed below). The right to privacy means that a person has the right not to take part in the research, not to answer questions, not to be interviewed, not to have their home intruded into, not to answer telephone calls or emails, and to engage in private behaviour in their own private place without fear of being observed. It is *freedom from* as well as *freedom for*. This is frequently an issue with intrusive journalism. Hence researchers may have an obligation to inform participants of their rights to refuse to take part in any or all of the research, to obtain permission to conduct the research, to limit the time needed for participation and to limit the observation to public behaviour.

Anonymity

Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1992) underline the need for confidentiality of participants' identities, and that any violations of this should be made with the agreement of the participants. The essence of anonymity is that information provided by participants should in no way reveal their identity. The obverse of this is, as we saw earlier, personal data that uniquely identify their

supplier. A participant or subject is therefore considered anonymous when the researcher or another person cannot identify the participant or subject from the information provided. Where this situation holds, a participant's privacy is guaranteed, no matter how personal or sensitive the information is. Thus a respondent completing a questionnaire that bears absolutely no identifying marks – names, addresses, occupational details or coding symbols – is ensured complete and total anonymity. A subject agreeing to a face-to-face interview, on the other hand, can in no way expect anonymity. At most, the interviewer can promise confidentiality. Non-traceability is an important matter, and this extends to aggregating data in some cases, so that an individual's response is unknowable.

The principal means of ensuring anonymity, then, is not using the names of the participants or any other personal means of identification. Further ways of achieving anonymity have been listed by Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1992), for example, the use of aliases, the use of codes for identifying people (to keep the information on individuals separate from access to them) and the use of password-protected files.

These may work satisfactorily in most situations, but as Raffe and his colleagues (1989) have shown, there is sometimes the difficulty of maintaining an assurance of anonymity when, for example, combining data may uniquely identify an individual or institution or when there is access to incoming returns by support staff. Plummer (1983), likewise, refers to life studies in which names have been changed, places shifted, and fictional events added to prevent acquaintances of subjects discovering their identity. Although one can go a long way down this path, there is no absolute guarantee of total anonymity as far as life studies are concerned. In experimental research the experimenter is interested in 'human' behaviour rather than in the behaviour of specific individuals (Aronson and Carlsmith 1969). Consequently the researcher has absolutely no interest in linking the person as a unique, named individual to actual behaviour, and the research data can be transferred to coded,

unnamed data sheets. As they comment, 'the very impersonality of the process is a great advantage ethically because it eliminates some of the negative consequences of the invasion of privacy' (Aronson and Carlsmith 1969).

Confidentiality

The second way of protecting a participant's right to privacy is through the promise of confidentiality. This means that although researchers know who has provided the information or are able to identify participants from the information given, they will in no way make the connection known publicly; the boundaries surrounding the shared secret will be protected. The essence of the matter is the extent to which investigators keep faith with those who have helped them. It is generally at the access stage or at the point where researchers collect their data that they make their position clear to the hosts and/or subjects. They will thus be quite explicit in explaining to subjects what the meaning and limits of confidentiality are in relation to the particular research project. On the whole, the more sensitive, intimate or discrediting the information, the greater is the obligation on the researcher's part to make sure that guarantees of confidentiality are carried out in spirit and letter. Promises must be kept.

Kimmel (1988) notes that some potential respondents in research on sensitive topics will refuse to cooperate when an assurance of confidentiality is weak, vague, not understood, or thought likely to be breached. He concludes that the usefulness of data in sensitive research areas may be seriously affected by the researcher's inability to provide a credible promise of confidentiality. Assurances do not appear to affect cooperation rates in innocuous studies perhaps because, as Kimmel suggests, there is expectation on the part of most potential respondents that confidentiality will be protected.

A number of techniques have been developed to allow public access to data and information without confidentiality being betrayed. These have been listed by Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1992) as follows:

- deletion of identifiers (for example, deleting the names, addresses or other means of identification from the data released on individuals)
- crude report categories (for example, releasing the year of birth rather than the specific date, profession but not the speciality within that profession, general information rather than specific)
- micro-aggregation (that is, the construction of 'average persons' from data on individuals and the release of these data, rather than data on individuals)
- error inoculation (deliberately introducing errors into individual records while leaving the aggregate data unchanged).

Cooper and Schindler (2001: 117) suggest that confidentiality can be protected by obtaining signed statements indicating non-disclosure of the research, restricting access to data which identify respondents, seeking the approval of the respondents before any disclosure about respondents takes place, non-disclosure of data (e.g. subsets that may be able to be combined to identify an individual).

Betrayal

The term 'betrayal' is usually applied to those occasions where data disclosed in confidence are revealed publicly in such a way as to cause embarrassment, anxiety or perhaps suffering to the subject or participant disclosing the information. It is a breach of trust, in contrast to confidentiality, and is often a consequence of selfish motives of either a personal or professional nature. As Plummer (1983) comments, 'in sociology, there is something slightly awry when a sociologist can enter a group and a person's life for a lengthy period, learn their most closely guarded secrets, and then expose all in a critical light to the public' (see <http://www.routledge.com/textbooks/9780415368780> – Chapter 2, file 2.4. ppt).

One of the research methods that is perhaps most vulnerable to betrayal is action research. As Kelly (1989a) notes, this can produce several ethical problems. She says that if we treat teachers

as collaborators in our day-to-day interactions, it may seem like betrayal of trust if these interactions are recorded and used as evidence. This is particularly the case where the evidence is negative. One way out, Kelly (1989a) suggests, could be to submit reports and evaluations of teachers' reactions to the teachers involved for comment, to get them to assess their own changing attitudes. She warns, however, that this might work well with teachers who have become converts, but is more problematic where teachers remain indifferent or hostile to the aims of the research project. How does one write an honest but critical report of teachers' attitudes, she asks, if one hopes to continue to work with those involved?

Similarly Morrison (2006) considers the case of a school that is under-performing, poorly managed or badly led. Does not the consumer, indeed the state, have a right or a duty respectively to know or address this, such action typically involving the exposure to the public of a school's shortcomings, and will this not damage individuals working in the school, the principal and the teachers? What 'fiduciary trust' (Mitchell 1993) not to harm individuals (the ethical issue of 'non-maleficence') does the researcher have to the school or to the public, and how can these two potentially contradictory demands be reconciled? Should the researcher expose the school's weaknesses, which almost certainly could damage individuals but which may be in the public interest, or, in the interests of *primum non nocere*, remain silent? The issue hinges on trust: the pursuit of truth and the pursuit of trust may run counter to each other (Kelly 1985: 147); indeed Kelly herself writes that 'I do not think we have yet found a satisfactory way of resolving this dilemma'.

Finch (1985) raises ethical issues in the consequences of reporting. In her research she worried that her reporting

could well mean that I was further reinforcing those assumptions deeply embedded in our culture and political life that working class women (especially the urban poor) are inadequate mothers and too incompetent to be able to organize facilities that most normal women could manage.

(Finch 1985: 117)

Indeed she uses the word 'betrayal' in her concern that she might be betraying the trust of the women with whom she had worked for three years, not least because they were in a far worse economic and personal state than she herself was (Finch 1985: 118).

Deception

The use of deception in social psychological and sociological research has attracted a certain amount of adverse publicity. Deception may lie in not telling people that they are being researched (in some people's eyes this is tantamount to spying), not telling the truth, telling lies, or compromising the truth. It may also lie in using people in a degrading or dehumanizing way (e.g. as a rat in an experiment). In social psychological research, the term is applied to that kind of experimental situation where the researcher knowingly conceals the true purpose and conditions of the research, or else positively misinforms the subjects, or exposes them to unduly painful, stressful or embarrassing experiences, without the subjects having knowledge of what is going on. The deception lies in not telling the whole truth. Bailey (1994: 463) gives a clear example here, where respondents may be asked to complete a postal questionnaire, and believe that they are being asked for information about length and type of postage, whereas, in fact, the study is designed to compare different kinds of questionnaire. He reports that 88 per cent of studies from a sample of 457 studies used deception (see <http://www.routledge.com/textbooks/9780415368780> – Chapter 2, file 2.5. ppt).

Advocates of the method feel that if a deception experiment is the only way to discover something of real importance, the truth so discovered is worth the lies told in the process, so long as no harm comes to the subject (see Aronson *et al.* 1990). Deception may be justified on the grounds that the research serves the public good, and that the deception prevents any bias from entering the research, and also that it may protect the confidentiality of a third party (for example, a sponsor). The problem from the researcher's point of view is: 'What is the proper balance between the

interests of science and the thoughtful, humane treatment of people who, innocently, provide the data? In other words, the problem again hinges on the costs/benefits ratio.

The pervasiveness of the issue of deception becomes even more apparent when we remember that it is even built into many of our measurement devices, since it is important to keep the respondent ignorant of the personality and attitude dimensions that we wish to investigate. There are many problems that cannot be investigated without deception and, although there is some evidence that most subjects accept without resentment the fact of having been duped once they understand the necessity for it (e.g. the Milgram (1974) obedience-to-authority experiment: see Chapter 21), it is important to keep in the forefront of one's mind the question of whether the amount and type of deception is justified by the significance of the study and the unavailability of alternative procedures.

The use of deception resulting in particularly harmful consequences would be another occasion where ethical considerations would need to be given priority. An example here would be the study by Campbell *et al.* (1964) which created extremely stressful conditions by using drugs to induce temporary interruption of breathing (see Box 2.7).

Box 2.7

An extreme case of deception

In an experiment designed to study the establishment of a conditioned response in a situation that is traumatic but not painful, Campbell *et al.* (1964) induced – through the use of a drug – a temporary interruption of respiration in their subjects. The subjects' reports confirmed that this was a 'horrific' experience for them. All the subjects thought they were dying. The subjects, male alcoholic patients who had volunteered for the experiment when they were told that it was connected with a possible therapy for alcoholism, were not warned in advance about the effect of the drug, since this information would have reduced the traumatic impact of the experience.

Source: adapted from Kelman 1967

Kelman (1967) has suggested three ways of dealing with the problem of deception. First, it is important that we increase our active awareness that it exists as a problem. It is crucial that we always ask ourselves the question whether deception is necessary and justified. We must be wary of the tendency to dismiss the question as irrelevant and to accept deception as a matter of course. Active awareness is thus in itself part of the solution, for it makes the use of deception a focus for discussion, deliberation, investigation and choice.

The second way of approaching the problem concerns counteracting and minimizing the negative effects of deception. For example, subjects must be selected in a way that will exclude individuals who are especially vulnerable; any potentially harmful manipulation must be kept to a moderate level of intensity; researchers must be sensitive to danger signals in the reactions of subjects and be prepared to deal with crises when they arise; and at the conclusion of the research, they must take time not only to reassure subjects, but also to help them work through their feelings about the experience to whatever degree may be required. The principle that subjects ought not to leave the research situation with greater anxiety or lower levels of self-esteem than they came with is a good one to follow (the issue of non-maleficence again). Desirably, subjects should be enriched by the experience and should leave it with the feeling that they have learned something.

The primary way of counteracting negative effects of research employing deception is to ensure that adequate feedback is provided at the end of the research or research session. Feedback must be kept inviolable and in no circumstances should subjects be given false feedback or be misled into thinking they are receiving feedback when the researcher is in fact introducing another experimental manipulation. Debriefing may include the following (Cooper and Schindler 2001: 116):

- explaining any deception and the reasons for it
- describing the purposes, hypotheses, objectives and methods of the research

- sharing the results after the research
- ensuring follow-up psychological or medical attention after the research.

Even here, however, there are dangers. As Aronson and Carlsmith (1969) say:

debriefing a subject is not simply a matter of exposing him to the truth. There is nothing magically curative about the truth; indeed ... if harshly presented, the truth can be more harmful than no explanation at all. There are vast differences in how this is accomplished, and it is precisely these differences that are of crucial importance in determining whether or not a subject is uncomfortable when he leaves the experimental room.

(Aronson and Carlsmith 1969: 31)

They consider that the one essential aspect of the debriefing process is that researchers communicate their own sincerity as scientists seeking the truth and their own discomfort about the fact that they found it necessary to resort to deception in order to uncover the truth. As they say, 'No amount of post-experimental gentleness is as effective in relieving a subject's discomfort as an honest accounting of the experimenter's own discomfort in the situation' (Aronson and Carlsmith 1969: 31-2).

The third way of dealing with the problem of deception is to ensure that new procedures and novel techniques are developed. It is a question of tapping one's own creativity in the quest for alternative methods. It has been suggested that role-playing, or 'as-if' experiments, could prove a worthwhile avenue to explore – the 'role-playing versus deception' debate is raised in Chapter 21. By this method, as we shall see, the subject is asked to behave as if he or she were a particular person in a particular situation. Whatever form they take, however, new approaches will involve a radically different set of assumptions about the role of the subject in this type of research. They require us to use subjects' motivations rather than bypassing them. They may even call for increasing the sophistication of potential subjects, rather than maintaining their naivety.

Plummer (1983) informs us that even in an unlikely area like life history, deceptions of a

lesser nature occur. Thus, for example, the general description given of research may leave out some key issues; indeed, to tell the subject what it is you are looking for may bias the outcome quite substantially. Further, different accounts of the research may have to be presented to different groups. He quotes an instance from his own research, a study of sexual minorities, which required various levels of release – for the subjects, for colleagues, for general enquiries, and for outside friends. None of these accounts actually lied, they merely emphasized a different aspect of the research.

In the social sciences, the dilemma of deception has played an important part in experimental social psychology where subjects are not told the true nature of the experiment. Another area where it is used is that of sociology, where researchers conceal their identities and 'con' their way into alien groups – the overt/covert debate (Mitchell 1993). Covert, or secret participation, refers to that kind of research where researchers spend an extended period of time in particular research settings, concealing the fact that they are researchers and pretending to play some other role.

Bulmer (1982) notes that there are no simple and universally agreed answers to the ethical issues that covert research produces. Erikson (1967), for example, suggests that sociologists have responsibilities to their subjects and that secret research can injure other people in ways that cannot be anticipated or compensated for afterwards, and that sociologists have responsibilities towards fellow sociologists. Douglas (1976), by contrast, argues that covert observation is necessary, useful and revealing. Bulmer (1982), too, concludes that the most compelling argument in favour of covert research is that it has produced good social science which would not have been possible without the method. It would be churlish, he adds, not to recognize that the use of covert methods has advanced our understanding of society.

Kimmel (1988) claims that few researchers feel that they can do without deception entirely, since the adoption of an overtly conservative approach could render the study of important research hardly

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worth the effort. A study of racial prejudice, for example, accurately labelled as such, would certainly affect the behaviour of the subjects taking part. Deception studies, he considers, differ so greatly that even the harshest critics would be hard pressed to state unequivocally that all deception has potentially harmful effects on participants or is wrong.

Ethics and research methods in education

Ethical problems arising from research methods used in educational contexts occur *passim* in Burgess's (1989) edited collection, *The Ethics of Educational Research* and in Simons and Usher's (2000) edited volume, *Situated Ethics in Educational Research*. Every contribution in these reflects the reality of the day-to-day problems, issues and dilemmas that the educational researcher and beginning researchers are likely to encounter. These two books show that the issues thrown up by the complexities of research methods in educational institutions and their ethical consequences are probably among the least anticipated, particularly among the more inexperienced researchers, not least the socio-political dimension of research. Newcomers to the field need to be aware of those kinds of research which, by their nature, lead from one problem to another. Indeed, the researcher will frequently find that methodological and ethical issues are inextricably interwoven in much of the research we have designated as qualitative or interpretative. As Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) note:

Doing participant observation or interviewing one's peers raises ethical problems that are directly related to the nature of the research technique employed. The degree of openness or closure of the nature of the research and its aims is one that directly faces the teacher researcher.

(Hitchcock and Hughes 1989)

They go on to pose the kinds of question that may arise in such a situation. 'Where for the researcher does formal observation end and informal observation begin?' 'Is it justifiable to be open with some teachers and closed with

others?' 'How much can the researcher tell the pupils about a particular piece of research?' 'When is a casual conversation part of the research data and when is it not?' 'Is gossip legitimate data and can the researcher ethically use material that has been passed on in confidence?' As Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) conclude, the list of questions is endless yet they can be related to the nature of both the research technique involved and the social organization of the setting being investigated. The key to the successful resolution of such questions lies in establishing good relations. This will involve the development of a sense of rapport between researchers and their subjects that will lead to feelings of trust and confidence.

Fine and Sandstrom (1988) discuss in some detail the ethical and practical aspects of doing fieldwork with children. In particular they show how the ethical implications of participant observation research differ with the age of the children. Another feature of qualitative methods in this connection has been identified by Finch (1985: 116–17) who comments on the possible acute political and ethical dilemmas arising from how data are used, both by the researcher and others, and that researchers have a duty of trust placed in them by the participants to use privileged data appropriately, not least for improvement of the condition of the participants.

Kelly (1989a) suggests that the area in qualitative research where one's ethical antennae need to be especially sensitive is that of action research, and it is here that researchers, be they teachers or outsiders, must show particular awareness of the traps that lie in wait. These difficulties have been summed up by Hopkins (1985: 135) when he suggests that, as the researcher's actions are deeply embedded in the organization, it is important to work within these, and this throws into relief issues of confidentiality and personal respect.

Box 2.8 presents a set of principles specially formulated for action researchers by Kemmis and McTaggart (1981) and quoted by Hopkins (1985).

Box 2.8

Ethical principles for the guidance of action researchers

- *Observe protocol*: take care to ensure that the relevant persons, committees and authorities have been consulted, informed and that the necessary permission and approval have been obtained.
- *Involve participants*: encourage others who have a stake in the improvement you envisage to shape and form the work.
- *Negotiate with those affected*: not everyone will want to be directly involved; your work should take account of the responsibilities and wishes of others.
- *Report progress*: keep the work visible and remain open to suggestions so that unforeseen and unseen ramifications can be taken account of; colleagues must have the opportunity to lodge a protest to you.
- *Obtain explicit authorizations*: this applies where you wish to observe your professional colleagues, and where you wish to examine documentation.
- *Negotiate descriptions of people's work*: always allow those described to challenge your accounts on the grounds of fairness, relevance and accuracy.
- *Negotiate accounts of others' points of view* (e.g. in accounts of communication): always allow those involved in interviews, meetings and written exchanges to require amendments which enhance fairness, relevance and accuracy.
- *Obtain explicit authorization before using quotations*: this includes verbatim transcripts, attributed observations, excerpts of audio and video recordings, judgements, conclusions or recommendations in reports (written or to meetings).
- *Negotiate reports for various levels of release*: remember that different audiences require different kinds of reports; what is appropriate for an informal verbal report to a faculty meeting may not be appropriate for a staff meeting, a report to council, a journal article, a newspaper, a newsletter to parents; be conservative if you cannot control distribution.
- *Accept responsibility for maintaining confidentiality*.
- *Retain the right to report your work*: provided that those involved are satisfied with the fairness, accuracy and relevance of accounts which pertain to them, and that the accounts do not unnecessarily expose or embarrass those involved, then accounts should not be subject to veto or be sheltered by prohibitions of confidentiality.
- *Make your principles of procedure binding and known*: all of the people involved in your action research project must agree to the principles before the work begins; others must be aware of their rights in the process.

Source: adapted from Kemmis and McTaggart (1981) and quoted in Hopkins (1985: 134–6)

Ethics and evaluative research

Strike (1990), discussing the ethics of educational evaluation, offers two broad principles which may form the basis of further considerations in the field of evaluation. These are the principle of benefit maximization and the principle of equal respect. The former, the principle of benefit maximization, holds that the best decision is the one that results in the greatest benefit for most people. It is pragmatic in the sense that it judges the rightness of our actions by their consequences or, as Strike (1990) says, the best action is the one with the best results. The principle of utilitarianism requires us to identify the particular benefits we wish to maximize, to identify a suitable population for maximization, specify what is to count as maximization, and fully understand the consequences of our actions. The

second principle, that of equal respect, demands that we respect the equal worth of all people. This requires us to treat people as ends rather than means, to regard them as free and rational, and to accept that they are entitled to the same basic rights as others.

Strike (1990) lists the following ethical principles which he regards as particularly important to evaluative research and which may be seen in the light of the two broad principles outlined above:

- *Due process*: evaluative procedures must ensure that judgements are reasonable: that known and accepted standards are consistently applied from case to case, that evidence is reasonable and that there are systematic and reasonable procedures for collecting and testing evidence.

- *Privacy*: this involves a right to control information about oneself, and protects people from unwarranted interference in their affairs. In evaluation, it requires that procedures are not overtly intrusive and that such evaluation pertains only to those aspects of a teacher's activity that are job related. It also protects the confidentiality of evaluation information.
- *Equality*: in the context of evaluation, this can best be understood as a prohibition against making decisions on irrelevant grounds, such as race, religion, gender, ethnicity or sexual orientation.
- *Public perspicuity*: this principle requires openness to the public concerning evaluative procedures, their purposes and their results.
- *Humaneness*: this principle requires that consideration is shown to the feelings and sensitivities of those in evaluative contexts.
- *Client benefit*: this principle requires that evaluative decisions are made in a way that respects the interests of students, parents and the public, in preference to those of educational institutions and their staff. This extends to treating participants as subjects rather than as 'research fodder'.
- *Academic freedom*: this requires that an atmosphere of intellectual openness is maintained in the classroom for both teachers and students. Evaluation should not be conducted in a way that chills this environment.
- *Respect for autonomy*: teachers are entitled to reasonable discretion in, and to exercise reasonable judgement about, their work. Evaluations should not be conducted so as to unreasonably restrict discretion and judgement.

Strike (1990) develops these principles in a more extended and systematic form in his contribution.

Research and regulation: ethical codes and review

Ethical regulation exists at several levels: legislation, ethics review committees to oversee research in universities and other institutions

(these can constitute a major hurdle for those planning to undertake research), ethical codes of the professional bodies and associations as well as the personal ethics of individual researchers are all important regulatory mechanisms. All investigators, from undergraduates pursuing a course-based research project to professional researchers striving at the frontiers of knowledge, must take cognizance of the ethical codes and regulations governing their practice. Failure to meet these responsibilities on the part of researchers is perceived as undermining the whole scientific process and may lead to legal and financial penalties and liabilities for individuals and institutions.

Professional societies and associations have formulated codes of practice which express the consensus of values within a particular group and which help individual researchers in indicating what is desirable and what is to be avoided. Of course, this does not solve all problems, for there are few absolutes and in consequence ethical principles may be open to a wide range of interpretations. The establishment of comprehensive regulatory mechanisms is well founded in the United Kingdom, but it is perhaps in the field of information and data – how they are stored and the uses to which they are put, for example – that educational researchers are likely to find growing interest. This category would include, for instance, statistical data, data used as the basis for evaluation, curricular records, written records, transcripts, data sheets, personal documents, research data, computer files, and audio and video recordings.

As information technology establishes itself in a centre-stage position and as society has become increasingly dependent on information, the concept of information is important not only for what it is, but for what it can do. Numerous writers have pointed out the connection between information and power, for example Harris *et al.*'s (1992) comments on the power over individuals through the control of personal information and its relationship to power of professionalism in which submission to expert knowledge is required. Data misuse, therefore, or disclosure at the wrong time or

to the wrong client or organ, can result in the most unfortunate consequences for an individual, group or institution. And matters are greatly exacerbated if it is the wrong information, or incomplete, or deliberately misleading.

In an increasingly information-rich world, it is essential that safeguards be established to protect it from misuse or abuse. The UK Data Protection Acts of 1984 and 1998 are designed to achieve such an end. These cover the principles of data protection, the responsibilities of data users, and the rights of data subjects. Data held for 'historical and research' purposes are exempted from the principle which gives individuals the right of access to personal data about themselves, provided the data are not made available in a form which identifies individuals. Research data also have partial exemption from two further principles, with the effect that such data may be held indefinitely and the use of the data for research purposes need not be disclosed at the time of data collection.

Of the two most important principles which do concern research data, one states that personal data (i.e. data that uniquely identify the person supplying them) shall be held only for specified and lawful purposes. The second principle states that appropriate security measures shall be taken against unauthorized access to, or alteration, disclosure or destruction of personal data and against accidental loss or destruction of personal data.

Most institutions of higher education have their own ethics committees, and these usually have their own codes of ethics against which they evaluate research proposals. In addition, some important codes of practice and guidelines are published by research associations, for example the British Educational Research Association (<http://www.bera.ac.uk>), the British Psychological Society (<http://www.bps.org.uk>), the British Sociological Association (<http://www.britisoc.co.uk>), the Social Research Association (<http://www.the-sra.org.uk>), the American Educational Research Association (<http://www.aera.net>), the American Psychological Association (<http://www.apa.org>) and the American Sociological Association ([\[asanet.org\]\(http://www.asanet.org\)\). We advise readers to consult these in detail.](http://www.</p>
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The British Psychological Society's *Code of Conduct, Ethical Principles and Guidelines* (2005) includes, among many others, sections on competence, obtaining consent, confidentiality and personal conduct. Its section on *Ethical Principles for Conducting Research with Human Participants* first discusses deception, debriefing, risk and implementation (pp. 6–7) and then moves to eleven main sections: introduction; general principles, including the guiding precept that 'the essential principle is that the investigation should be considered from the standpoint of all the participants; foreseeable threats to their psychological well-being, health, values or dignity should be eliminated' (p. 8); consent; deception; debriefing; withdrawal from the investigation; confidentiality; protection of participants; observational research; giving advice; and colleagues. Interestingly it does not insist on informed consent, rather expressing it as 'wherever possible, the investigator should inform all participants of the objectives of the investigation' (para. 3.1). Similarly it does not proscribe deception, indicating that 'it may be impossible to study some psychological processes without withholding information about the true object of the study or deliberately misleading the participants' (para. 4.3). However, it says that these need to be rigorously justified, and alternatives must have been explored and found to be unavailable.

The American Psychological Association's *Ethical Principles and Code of Conduct* (2002) states five general principles: beneficence and non-maleficence, fidelity and responsibility, integrity, justice, and respect for people's rights and dignity. These principles then become the basis for ten sections of 'ethical standards': resolving ethical issues; competence; human relations (including 'avoiding harm' 'exploitative relationships' and 'informed consent'); privacy and confidentiality; advertising and other public statements; record keeping and fees; education and training; research and publication; assessment; and therapy.

The American Sociological Association's *Code of Ethics and Policies and Procedures of the ASA Committee on Professional Ethics* (1999) has five general principles: professional competence; integrity; professional and scientific responsibility; respect for people's rights, dignity and diversity; and social responsibility. These are then devolved onto twenty *ethical standards*, including non-exploitation, confidentiality, informed consent, deception, offering inducements and many others.

The *Statement of Ethical Practice for the British Sociological Association* (2002) includes sections on: professional integrity; relations with and responsibilities towards research participants; relationships with research participants; covert research; anonymity, privacy and confidentiality; relations with and responsibilities towards sponsors and/or funders; carrying obligations, roles and rights; pre-empting outcomes and negotiations about research; and obligations to sponsors and/or funders during the research process.

The Social Research Association's *Ethical Guidelines* (2003) draws on European law (<http://www.respectproject.org>) and indicates four levels of obligations: to society; to funders and employers; to colleagues; and to subjects (including avoiding undue intrusion, obtaining informed consent, modifications to informed consent, protecting the interests of subjects, enabling participation, maintaining confidentiality of records, and preventing disclosure of identities).

The British Educational Research Association's *Ethical Guidelines* (2000) are devolved onto: responsibilities to the research profession; responsibility to the participants (including working with children, informed consent, rights to withdrawal); responsibility to the public; relationships with funding agencies; publication; intellectual ownership; relationship with host institution. Similarly, the *Ethical Standards of the American Educational Research Association* (2000) includes: responsibilities to the field; research populations, educational institutions, and the public (including working with children), informed consent, confidentiality, honesty ('deception is discouraged' and 'should be used only when clearly necessary', after which the reasons for the deception should be explained

(para. B3)), rights of withdrawal, exploitation for personal gain, sensitivity to local circumstances (e.g. culture, religion, gender), avoidance of negative consequences, dissemination, anonymity; intellectual ownership; editing, reviewing and appraising research; sponsors, policy-makers and other users of research; and students and student researchers.

Web sites of these research associations' ethical principles and guidelines can be found either on the home page of each association or as follows:

American Educational Research Association:
http://www.aera.net/uploadedFiles/About-AERA/Ethical_Standards/Ethical_Standards.pdf

American Psychological Association: <http://www.apa.org/ethics/code2002.html>

American Sociological Association: <http://www.asanet.org/members/ecoderev.html>

British Educational Research Association: <http://www.bera.ac.uk>

British Psychological Society: [http://www.bps.org.uk/document-download-area/document-download\\$.cfm?file_uuid=6D0645CC-7E96-C67F-D75E2648E5580115&ext=pdf](http://www.bps.org.uk/document-download-area/document-download$.cfm?file_uuid=6D0645CC-7E96-C67F-D75E2648E5580115&ext=pdf)

British Sociological Association: http://www.britsoc.co.uk/new_site/user_doc/Statement%20of%20Ethical%20Practice.doc

Social Research Association: <http://www.thesra.org.uk/ethics03.pdf>

The difficulty and yet the strength with ethical codes is that they cannot and do not provide specific advice for what to do in specific situations. Ultimately, it is researchers themselves, their integrity and conscience, informed by an acute awareness of ethical issues, underpinned by guideline codes and regulated practice, which should decide what to do in a specific situation, and this should be justified, justifiable, thought through and defensible.

There is a certain degree of homogeneity between the codes and guidelines cited above. While they are helpful in providing guidance, they cannot tell the researcher what to do in every

- conduct a study in which personal research objectives influence the nature, contents and conduct of the research.

The researcher has obligations to the sponsor, but not to doctor or compromise the research.

Responsibilities to the research community

The researcher has responsibilities to the research community, for example not to jeopardize the reputation of the research community (e.g. the university) or spoil the opportunities for further research. Thus, a novice researcher working for a higher degree may approach a school directly, using a clumsy approach, with inadequate data collection instruments and a poor research design, and then proceed to publicize the results as though they are valid and reliable. This researcher does not deserve the degree; at the very least he or she should have sought and gained advice from the supervisor, modified the research as necessary, gained approval for the research, made suitably sensitive overtures to the school, and agreed rights of disclosure. Not to do so puts the researcher's institution at risk of being denied further access, of damaging the reputation of the institution, and, if word spreads, of being publicly vilified and denied the opportunity for further research to be conducted. In this case the novice researcher has behaved unethically (see <http://www.routledge.com/textbooks/9780415368780> – Chapter 2, file 2.6. ppt).

Further, what responsibility to the research community does the researcher have? If a negative research report is released will schools retrench, preventing future research in schools from being undertaken? Negative research data, such as reported evidence on deliberate grade inflation by schools in order to preserve reputation (Morrison and Tang 2002), may not endear researchers to schools.

The researcher has a responsibility to colleagues to

- protect their safety (e.g. in conducting sensitive research or research in dangerous locations)
- protect their well-being

- protect their reputation
- enable further research to be conducted
- expect them to behave ethically
- ensure that they adhere to correct and agreed procedures
- protect the anonymity and confidentiality of sponsors if so agreed.

The researcher is a member of a research community, and this brings ethical responsibilities.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have attempted to acquaint readers with some of the ethical difficulties they are likely to experience in the conduct of such research. It is not possible to identify all potential ethical questions or adjudicate on what is correct researcher behaviour.³ It is hoped that these pages will have induced in readers a certain disposition that will enable them to approach their own projects with a greater awareness and fuller understanding of the ethical dilemmas and moral issues lurking in the interstices of the research process. However inexperienced in these matters researchers are, they bring to social research a sense of rightness (Huizinga 1949) on which they can construct a set of rational principles appropriate to their own circumstances and based on personal, professional, and societal values (we stress the word 'rational' since reason is a prime ingredient of ethical thinking and it is the combination of reason and a sense of rightness that researchers must keep faith with if they are to bring a rich ethical quality to their work).

Although no code of practice can anticipate or resolve all problems, there is a six-fold advantage in fashioning a personal code of ethical practice. First, such a code establishes one as a member of the wider scientific community having a shared interest in its values and concerns. Second, a code of ethical practice makes researchers aware of their obligations to their subjects and also to those problem areas where there is a general consensus about what is acceptable and what is not. In this sense it has a clarificatory value. Third, when one's

professional behaviour is guided by a principled code of ethics, then it is possible to consider that there may be alternative ways of doing the same thing, ways that are more ethical or less unethical should one be confronted by a moral challenge. Fourth, a balanced code can be an important organizing factor in researchers' perceptions of the research situation, and as such may assist them in their need to anticipate and prepare. Fifth, a code of practice validated by their own sense of rightness will help researchers to develop an intuitive sensitivity that will be particularly helpful to them in dealing with the unknown and the unexpected, especially where the more fluidic methods such as ethnography and participant observation are concerned. And sixth, a code of practice will bring discipline to researchers' awareness. Box 2.9 gives a short ethical code, by way of example. It must be stressed, however, that bespoke items, i.e. those designed to meet the needs of a specific project, are preferable to standard ones. The items in Box 2.9 are illustrative, and in no way exhaustive.

In more detail, one can suggest that further considerations have to be borne in mind in planning, conducting and reporting educational research (Box 2.10).

Box 2.10 raises issues and suggestions, not solutions or decisions. These will have to be decided by each researcher in respect of the particular situation he or she faces. For a summary of ethical principles for social research see the accompanying web site (<http://www.routledge.com/textbooks/9780415368780> – Chapter 2, file 2.1.doc).

Box 2.9

An ethical code: an illustration

- 1 It is important for the researcher to reveal fully his or her identity and background.
- 2 The purpose and procedures of the research should be fully explained to the subjects at the outset.
- 3 The research and its ethical consequences should be seen from the subjects' and institution's point of view.
- 4 Possible controversial findings need to be anticipated and, where they ensue, handled with great sensitivity.
- 5 The research should be as objective as possible: this will require careful thought being given to the design, conduct and reporting of research.
- 6 Informed consent should be sought from all participants: all agreements reached at this stage should be honoured.
- 7 Sometimes it is desirable to obtain informed consent in writing.
- 8 Subjects should have the option to refuse to take part and know this, and the right to terminate their involvement at any time and know this also.
- 9 Arrangements should be made during initial contacts to provide feedback for participants who request it: this may take the form of a written résumé of findings.
- 10 The dignity, privacy and interests of the participants should be respected and protected at all times.
- 11 Deceit should be used only when absolutely necessary.
- 12 When ethical dilemmas arise, the researcher may need to consult other researchers or teachers.

Source: adapted from Reynolds 1979

- the selection and formation of the research question;
- the work of institutional review boards;
- methodology, including the use of human and animal subjects, data collection, and statistical analysis;
- the presentation of results, including publication; and
- practices currently used to prevent fraud and misconduct in research (e.g. institutional responsibility, individual responsibility, and publication practices).

A series of case studies have been included to help develop sensitivity toward ethical issues in research and to assist in the development of ethical thinking. Readers can use the case studies to determine whether ethical dilemmas are present in certain situations, to identify what those issues are, and to consider the concerns such dilemmas present. Next, the behavioral options present can be determined, and finally, the rightness or wrongness of the choices can be determined. When determining the rightness or wrongness of actions, the following questions should be answered: Why is the choice right or wrong? If the action is wrong, what needs to be changed to make it right? In closing, suggestions for actions to minimize or prevent fraud will be presented.

You will find the issue of ethical practices in research presented both in the text narrative and in questions, in addition to case studies and case problems presented throughout the book. These cases are based on situations commonly encountered by practicing professionals, some of them upon actual ethical problems that have occurred. I encourage you to identify the ethical issue, if present, and to decide the appropriate course of action to resolve it.

In the appendices you will find the regulations relevant to research using human subjects and animal subjects. Researchers today must know these regulations if they actively use human or animal subjects.

Ethical Decision Making in Physical Activity Research will be useful as a supplemental text for classes in research methods or for seminars dealing with ethical practices in research. The intended audience includes professionals and students in exercise science, kinesiology, and sport science who have an interest in conducting and evaluating research. Students and scientists pursuing research in these fields face the ethical problems described in this text and face questions similar to those raised here.

I wish to acknowledge the contributions of my students, whose questions led to the development of this book. Teaching has always been a learning experience for me. My students and I explored issues that were often ignored in standard research textbooks.

CHAPTER 1

THE NATURE AND ROLE OF ETHICS

Creativity and the pursuit of knowledge have been human goals since time immemorial. Genesis emphasizes this in the story of Adam and Eve and their involvement with the tree of knowledge. Throughout recorded history men and women have attempted to understand and explain phenomena they observed. These phenomena range from natural events to cultural differences. Common sense has proved not to be a good provider of knowledge as it lacks any means for the evaluation of knowledge and does little to produce new knowledge.

Likewise, tenacity, authority, and intuition have been insufficient methods of obtaining knowledge. *Tenacity* refers to the proposition that one holds to the truth because it is known to be true and it has always been known to be true. Here individuals tenaciously hold to their beliefs, tenacity tending to strengthen these beliefs even if doubt is cast on their validity. Knowing by way of *authority* means relying on established beliefs. Information is accepted as true because it is published or imparted by an authority figure. Using the intuitive, or *a priori*, method of knowing, propositions are accepted when they are “agreeable to reason” or are self-evident. Thus, with this method of knowing the premise is that if something “stands to reason,” it is self-evident and true: humans can reach the truth because their natural inclinations tend toward truth (Kerlinger 1966).

Science, on the other hand, provides a systematic and controlled procedure for evaluating ideas. The scientist acquires knowledge through research involving the use of the scientific method. This method sets forth a form of inquiry appropriate to all fields of study, its principles as applicable to research in history, English, or philosophy as they are to research in physiology, psychology, physics, or chemistry. Scientific research, according to Kerlinger (1966, 13), “is systematic, controlled, empirical, and critical investigation of hypothetical propositions about the presumed relations among natural phenomena.”

The scientific method was developed to provide a necessary element for obtaining information: self-correction through the use of a built-in series of checks. Over the years, the scientific method has evolved to enhance our ability to explain our universe and ourselves. The scientific method blends logic and

practical experience and provides for the self-correction of errors. This self-correcting aspect involves the empirical testing of the phenomena we are studying. Here the researcher puts personal belief to a test. Subjective belief is checked against objective reality. The scientific method provides a systematic, ordered, and controlled framework through which this check can occur. The basic steps employed by the scientific method are

- **identification of the problem**—when experiencing an obstacle to understanding, express the problem in a reasonably manageable form;
- **hypothesis**—develop a conjectural statement or tentative proposition about the problem;
- **reasoning**—deduce the consequences of the hypothesis formulated and, if necessary, revise the problem or abandon the study; and
- **observation-test-experiment**—put the problem to an empirical test; examine the hypothesis or the deduced implications of the hypothesis.

Empirical study means that the phenomenon being tested is subjected to experience and observation and can be replicated by others.

When used appropriately, the checks are anchored as much as possible in authenticity existing outside the scientist. All statements, even if they appear true, will be tested for veracity. If the hypothesis appears to be supported by the experiment, alternative hypotheses will also be tested to see if they cast doubt on the first hypothesis. The experimental and testing procedures are open and published so that others can attempt to replicate the experiment. The whole process was developed to provide objectivity in research.

Any process can be abused, and the scientific method is no exception. To make the scientific method effective, faithful adherence to its procedures is required so that the researcher's personal biases, values, attitudes, and emotions are not factors. Thus, while the scientific method provides the way to make an unbiased evaluation of knowledge, the characteristics of the investigator remain important. The following articles from the *Toledo Blade*, 30 April 1994, and *USA TODAY*, 2 May 1994, demonstrate recent abuse of the scientific method.

Doctor Quizzed in Faulty Study

PITTSBURGH—Federal officials have asked the University of Pittsburgh to determine whether Dr. Bernard Fisher did anything wrong while supervising a \$17 million breast cancer study that was tainted by fraudulent data. The study was based on research that included falsified data from St. Luc Hospital in Montreal.

Federal officials want to know whether Dr. Fisher, who resigned March 28 [1994] as director of the national Surgical Adjuvant Breast and Bowel Project, and his chief statistician, Dr. Carol Redmond, included data they knew to be false when they submitted their research.

More Faulty Data in Breast Cancer Study

Government auditors are turning up more problems in a landmark breast cancer study.

Teams are reviewing some 1,800 patient records used in the study that concluded lumpectomies are effective alternatives to breast removal for breast cancer patients. The probe began in March [1994] after officials discovered fraud by a Canadian researcher.

The *Chicago Tribune* reported Sunday that the Memorial Cancer Research Foundation of Southern California, Beverly Hills, Calif., submitted data

- on women who were ineligible for the study;
- on a woman described as “alive and well” who, in fact, had died; and
- about women who had not consented to being in the study.

“It’s a mess right now,” says Dr. Bruce Chabner, a top National Cancer Institute official. Chabner is troubled because study leaders knew about the California data errors in 1990, yet didn’t tell the NCI. They also failed to report fraud by a Montreal doctor involved in the same study. “They didn’t want us to know about things that were a problem,” Chabner says.

Several newer studies also support lumpectomy, NCI officials say, and this study was large enough so that a few faulty data points won’t alter its conclusion. But the new problems “raise questions about the database itself,” Chabner says.

NCI suspended the study group, coordinated by the University of Pittsburgh, and ousted its leader, Dr. Bernard Fisher, in March. Larry Weinberg, a spokesman for the California researchers, acknowledges their data may include “some anomalies and relatively inconsequential errors.”

As shown here, dishonest and unethical researchers can circumvent the checks and balances built into the scientific method. As the press has illuminated more cases of fraudulent and dishonest research that has obtained government funding, pressure has increased to reduce the possibility for such occurrences. Ethical issues in science have been identified and ways to prevent dishonesty have been proposed. The application of ethical systems designed to maintain integrity in science and research has been a result of this process.

Ethics

A number of disciplines analyze human behavior. Sociologists study the development, structure, interaction, and collective behavior of organized groups. Psychologists explore human behavior from developmental, motivational, and learning

perspectives. Anthropologists study human beings in relation to distribution, origin, classification, and relationship of races, physical character, environmental and social relations, and culture. Some researchers attempt to describe behavior, while others look for cause-and-effect relationships. In each case, these scientists tell what behavior is or was.

Ethics views human behavior from a perspective of good or bad. Ethical statements are developed to prescribe behavior as directives that tell us what we ought to do in the situations we encounter. A goal of ethics is to develop a system of general ethical statements that provide a distinct universal prescription (one that applies to everyone) detailing which behaviors are right and which are wrong.

According to Reagan (1971), people often define ethics as what they feel they should do. However, ethics is not concerned with what people think or feel they ought to do, but with what they really ought to do. Interpersonal conduct, which is the focus of ethical study, differs from legally mandated behavior or custom. Each approach deals differently with the behavior in question. Law and morals are similar as they deal with the more important human behaviors, whereas custom or etiquette deals with minor concerns. For example, both law and ethical rules may agree that a particular behavior, such as murder, is wrong. In other cases, they may disagree, as in instances where a particular behavior, such as abortion, may be legal yet may also be viewed as morally wrong. Thus, ethics and law govern behavior from different perspectives. Law looks at the preservation of civil order and individual rights, while ethics is concerned with morally correct action. In contrast, custom views behavior in terms of socially correct actions.

Any discussion of ethical behavior requires a common ground, based on a uniform understanding and usage of words. Therefore, the following definitions from *Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language* are used here.

- **ethical**—of or relating to moral action, motive, or character; containing precepts of morality, moral feelings, duties, or conduct.
- **ethics**—moral principles, quality, or practice; a system of moral principles; the morals of individual action or practice.
- **moral**—manner, custom, habit, way of life, conduct characterized by practical excellence, or springing from, or pertaining to, man's natural sense of what is right and proper. Of or pertaining to morals; designating, or relating to, the science or philosophy of conduct; hence, relating to, or regarded with respect to, the qualities and considerations with which morals deal, as questions of right and wrong or virtue and vice. Conforming to, or embodying righteous or just conduct, or the dictates of the moral sense. Relating to virtuous conduct or natural excellence as distinguished from civic or legal righteousness.
- **integrity**—state or quality of being complete, undivided, or unbroken; wholeness; entirety. Moral soundness; honesty; freedom from corrupting influence or practices.

- **honesty**—characterized by integrity or fairness and straightforwardness in conduct, thought, speech. Upright; just; equitable; trustworthy; truthful; sincere; free from fraud, guile, or duplicity; not false.
- **right**—being in accordance with what is just, good, or proper; agreeable to a standard; conforming to facts or truth.
- **wrong**—an injurious, unfair, or unjust act; something wrong, immoral, or unethical; principles, practices, or conduct contrary to justice, goodness, equity, or law.
- **fraud**—quality of being deceitful; deception deliberately practiced with a view to gaining an unlawful or unfair advantage; deceitfulness; deceit; trickery.

These definitions are circular and interrelated, and they are difficult to quantify. Attempts to justify moral principles by definitions would be difficult, if not impossible, whenever there is substantial disagreement over the definition of the term being used. Common themes included when defining *ethics*, *moral*, *integrity*, and *honesty* are "right and proper, honesty, free from fraud and deception, and freedom from corrupting influence or practices." *Fraud* and *wrong* have the opposite meanings, namely, "unfair, unjust, immoral, deceitful and trickery." Even with agreement on definitions, questions remain. For example, is one right better than another right? Is one wrong worse than another? Can we rank order values? Is there a difference between morality and ethical behavior? Is fraud the absence of moral behavior, or is fraud an entirely different type of behavior?

If we are to determine the right or wrong of a behavior, person, or thing, what standards do we use to judge value? Do we attempt to limit ourselves to nonmoral value of the sort that we place on cars, tennis racquets, food, and other material objects? We regularly assign these things values of good, bad, or average without ever using a moral approach. We compare one item with another and specify a value rating based on how well it accomplishes its purpose. We also use instrumental value to determine good or bad, rating something on how well it accomplishes something else. Whether the "newest" fashion is good or bad depends on how well it satisfies those who chose to purchase it. When a thing is described as good in itself, such as happiness or peace of mind, it has intrinsic value. When evaluating people, we often describe their character traits as good or bad. Since we can't directly measure character traits, we rely on behavior to judge a person as good or bad. While it is desirable to develop good character traits, such an approach does not answer all ethical questions. Values are relative, and questions remain. For example, is a person immoral for failing to do something that was beyond his or her ability to do? Is a person moral for doing something that he or she must do?

A major problem in the development of ethical principles is that they cannot be verified, as scientists like to do with their data. However, they can be confirmed or disconfirmed relative to the evidence. A potential problem exists with this process because, if a researcher selects evidence carefully, then almost any empirical statement can be verified relative to the evidence used. It is therefore

necessary to evaluate empirical statements relative to all the available evidence rather than to engage in a process of selecting which evidence to use and which to ignore. No empirical statement can be evaluated in isolation. Rather, it must be evaluated as a part of the theory in which it plays a part. Consequently, empirical statements are indirectly evaluated while the theories are directly evaluated.

Systems of Ethics

Several approaches to ethics have been developed over the years. Not only do these approaches come from different perspectives but they involve different subject matter. *Normative ethics* is the study of rules, norms, or criteria by which we judge actions as right or wrong. *Normative ethics* therefore is a rational attempt to determine how one should behave in a particular situation. A second subject matter is denoted by *metaethics*, which is a study of what we mean when we make certain statements. For example, metaethics attempts to answer questions such as, "What do we mean when we use *good* as an ethical term?" *Ethical theories* are developed to establish a coherent relationship between the different elements of the theory and to justify particular moral judgments. *Ethical rules and principles* are used to build a theory. A well-developed theory will enable us to show whether our moral judgments are correct and reasonable in light of the theory's rules and principles. To illustrate how a system of ethics will function, two systems—situational ethics and rule utilitarianism—are briefly presented as examples.

Situational Ethics

Some people will argue that no general ethical rules are applicable, as having general rules that apply to all individuals in all situations is impossible. Each person is unique. Therefore, there is no universal human nature. Since we are unique, each situation in which we find ourselves is also unique. Because of this, we cannot use class logic because when we do so, individuals are treated as though they are not unique. Proponents of this position follow the theory of situational ethics, which requires that each action be evaluated on its own merits and without any reference to general rules or obligations. In other words, there are no universal ethical rules that must be followed. Situational ethics follows the premise that you should evaluate each situation or case and do what you think is right in that situation. This ethical practice means that there is no one correct answer or behavior, as it always depends on the unique situation at hand. Returning to the example of scientific misconduct, actions based on situational ethics will often lead to results such as were present in the news item that follows. This is a follow-up article, published May 19, 1994, in the Toledo, Ohio, *Blade*. It deals with the same incident reported earlier in this chapter.

Motive Was Patients, Says Doc Who Faked Breast-Surgery Study

BOSTON (AP)—A surgeon who faked records in a landmark breast cancer study said he only wanted the best treatment for patients and didn't believe the project's rules had to be "followed blindly."

Dr. Roger Poisson of St. Luc Hospital in Montreal was one of the chief contributors to the study which changed the way early breast cancer is treated. His falsifications of dates in a handful of cases cast doubt on the study, calling into question the now standard practice of treating breast tumors by removing the cancerous lump rather than the whole breast.

Experts have since assured patients that his falsifications did not change the study's overall results, and other research confirms that lumpectomy is acceptable treatment. Nonetheless, the affair triggered a furor, in part because of a delay in making the fraud public. Nearly four years elapsed from when officials first became suspicious of Dr. Poisson's data and the disclosure in an article in the *Chicago Tribune* two months ago.

Dr. Poisson's explanation was one of several letters about the affair published in today's *New England Journal of Medicine*. Among the other versions of events was a step-by-step account by Dr. Bernard Fisher of the University of Pittsburgh, the study's coordinator, who was recently dismissed from the project because of the uproar. Dr. Fisher said that by the time a two-year federal investigation was over last year, it was clear that the fraud had no impact on the study's results, so there was "no issue of public health."

"We failed to recognize that the public might interpret that lack of an immediate announcement or publication of a reanalysis as a sign that we were less than forthright or even that we had concealed information that could have affected the treatment of women with breast cancer," he wrote.

The lumpectomy study, published in 1985 in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, was part of the National Surgical Adjuvant Breast and Bowel Project, which Dr. Fisher headed. In the study, women with breast cancer were randomly assigned to have lumpectomies or mastectomies. All participants were supposed to meet explicit rules regarding their health and treatment. The goal was to ensure they were as alike as possible so valid comparisons could be drawn.

Of 1,511 women in the study, 354 were Dr. Poisson's patients. The U.S. Office of Research Integrity concluded that Dr. Poisson faked records of six of them. Each of the six should have been excluded from the study because too much time had elapsed since biopsies were performed to diagnose their cancers. Dr. Poisson changed the date of their biopsies so they could take part. He said he believed study participants would get better therapy and follow-up than had they not been enrolled.

"I felt that the rules were meant to be understood as guidelines and not necessarily followed blindly," Dr. Poisson wrote. "For me, it was difficult to tell a woman with breast cancer that she was ineligible to receive the best available treatment because she did not meet one criterion out of 22, when I knew this criterion had little or no intrinsic oncologic importance," Dr. Poisson wrote. His letter didn't mention the health status of the six women.

In an editorial, the journal's two top editors questioned whether Dr. Poisson's motives were entirely selfless, since his hospital was paid according to the number of patients in the study.

If we evaluate the statements and decisions made by Drs. Poisson and Fisher quoted above, several questions about professional ethics arise. Was Dr. Poisson engaging in situational ethics behavior when he said that "rules were meant to be understood as guidelines and not necessarily followed blindly?" Does it make any difference to your answer that Dr. Poisson's hospital received financial benefit based on the number of subjects participating in the study? For women who did not qualify as subjects for the study, was it ethical that they would not "receive the best available treatment" if such was indeed the case? Was it ethical to break the scientific protocol arbitrarily and taint the research that would be of benefit to many other women by including ineligible women as subjects even if it were true that nonsubjects did not "receive the best available treatment"? In other words, do you sacrifice the good of many for the good of a few? Was it ethical that Dr. Poisson made the unilateral decision that "this criterion had little or no intrinsic oncologic importance"? What ethics were involved with Dr. Fisher's position that "the fraud had no impact on the study's results, so there was 'no issue of public health,'" which led to his failure to blow the whistle on Dr. Poisson's fraudulent data? Was it right for him to withhold this information unilaterally? Are such researchers above the rules published by the granting agencies and accepted professional standards of conduct that govern their ability to make such decisions?

When dealing with the issue of universality in ethics as well as interpretation of research data, it's important to keep in mind that every scientific theory is an attempt to generalize; in fact, that's why the sample used in a study must be representative of the population from which it comes. Without the ability to generalize, chaos would result. This does not mean that we should ignore individual differences. Rather, humans are similar enough that we can use generalizations while being alert to the uniqueness of individuals involved. We can continue to apply our theories and practice, keeping in mind when we make predictions that our theories apply to groups of people, not individuals. The adoption of situational ethics would not give predictability and universality to ethical conduct. There would be no universal right or wrong acts.

Rule Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism is another approach to ethical conduct. It resembles situational ethics, as all actions are evaluated by their consequences (i.e., whether they

produce greater good than evil in the world). Like situational ethics, only a particular action performed by a particular person in a particular situation is evaluated. However, several basic problems have led to the discarding of this approach and the development of rule utilitarianism.

Rule utilitarianism is a philosophical approach developed by social philosophers who were disappointed with the potential injustices that resulted from the utilitarian approach. According to Grassian (1992), the utilitarian approach attempted to separate moral foundations from a consideration of universal consequences and psychological and sociological knowledge. Instead, it sought to determine the rightness of an action by its individual consequences. In contrast, those who accept rule utilitarian philosophical approaches will base their ultimate concern on the presence of beneficial consequences, asking the question, "What would be the consequence if everyone were to do this?" The approach asking this fundamental question is known as *general rule utilitarianism*, and it makes the moral rightness of an action dependent on the universal consequences of a behavior rather than on independently specified moral rules.

Rule utilitarian positions are further divided into two camps: actual and ideal. Actual rule utilitarians focus on the need for actions to be based on the actual and recognized rules of the society if the behaviors are to have moral justification. Ideal rule utilitarians approach moral justification on the premise that acts are moral if they are justified by moral rules that would be ideal for the society. Hence, the first approach looks to actual rules that are present, whereas the other approach looks to idealistic rules that should guide society.

In practice, many rules and regulations are based on the assumption of actual rule utilitarianism, which postulates that the greatest good for individuals will be to act on the basis of specific moral rules. The use of specific moral rules provides predictability and guidance that would be lost if our specific actions had to be justified by their utility. Utility would leave moral justification to the beliefs of individuals and the society without any uniform moral code, which in turn could lead to chaos and disintegration of society. Thus, according to actual rule utilitarianism, moral life requires that individuals commit themselves to established ways of doing things as defined by rules that define behavior. Perhaps the best example of this is the use of criminal laws that define improper behaviors and establish punishments for engaging in such behaviors. The statements of ethical practice and acts within professions are also examples of the use of moral rules that define appropriate behavior. Given human imperfections, such as the lack of perfect omniscience and concern for others, actual rule utilitarianism accepts moral rules as necessary guidelines that will maximize moral behavior and utility for a society.

Within a legalistic framework, precedence is used to establish ways of doing things, and judges are given some latitude to use their discretion, although they are bound to follow the accepted rules of law. The use of judicial discretion can be seen in the sentencing phase of a criminal trial when the judge weighs factors such as family ties and past behavior to determine the severity of a sentence. In its *Model Penal Code*, the American Law Institute (1958) also accepts the principle of

utility when it states, "Conduct which the actor believes to be necessary to avoid an evil to himself or to another is justifiable, provided that the evil sought to be avoided by such conduct is greater than that sought to be prevented by the law defining the offense charges."

The purpose of a legal system is to fashion rules that function as constraints on human behavior, that is, indicating acts that society prohibits. According to utilitarianism, these legal rules differ from moral rules that individuals should follow when deciding how to act morally in any given situation. In the utilitarian framework, the moral rules would lead to behaviors based on answers to such questions as "Is it right to break a moral or legal rule when reasonably assured that such action would have the best consequences?" rather than engaging in mechanistic and legalistic behavior based on whether the rules permit the act. Although this approach has generally been adopted by society to govern criminal conduct, will the utilitarian framework work in governing professional activities? If so, who decides what are the "best consequences" for a profession?

Ethical Problems in Research

Research refers to a class of activities designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge. Generalizable knowledge means theories, principles, or relationships (or the accumulation of data on which they may be based) that can be corroborated by accepted scientific observation and inference. The research process extends from the germination of an idea to the publication of the conclusions. Every scientist publishing a report of completed research knows that other scientists will be reading and evaluating the work. This knowledge alone causes the writer to carefully consider what is written. Practice or clinical action differs from research and refers to a class of activities designed solely to enhance the well-being of an individual patient or client. Therefore, the purpose of practice or clinical treatment is to provide diagnosis, preventive treatment, or therapy (Levine 1981).

Research is generally considered to take one of two forms: experimental or clinical. *Experimental research* is usually conducted in some sort of laboratory and emphasizes the control of all experimental factors. *Clinical research* is usually conducted in medicine and therapies where the treatment of individual patients is followed and then compared with the advantages and disadvantages of other treatments. Such research is not amenable to the controls exercised in experimental or laboratory research. Experimental studies may be classified as either "pure" or "applied." Whichever category the research falls into, it relies upon formal, diligent, and systematic inquiry designed to discover or revise facts, theories, and applications. Research is problem solving using the scientific method to guide the inquiry. The commonly used distinction, although many researchers deny any such difference exists, is that "pure" science or research does not

depend on the examination of practical, concrete problems or issues, whereas "applied" research is atheoretical and attempts to use knowledge to solve existing problems.

Basic researchers usually view themselves as value-free scientists, active in discovering the truth but unconcerned about society's use of their findings. They view knowledge as ethically neutral and their work as objective and morally neutral. This position of scientific nonresponsibility held by "pure" researchers is emphasized when they describe their experiments as "pure" or "basic" research. In contrast, "applied" researchers have been described as engaging in action-oriented research, albeit with a theoretical orientation. Often "applied" research will focus on problems that arise in individuals' adjustment to their society, and such focus comprises much of the research conducted in the social sciences. The primary goal of an "action-oriented" study is to accumulate facts and principles that can be applied to resolve current social problems (Kimmel 1988).

Regardless of one's approach to research, basic or applied, the need for ethical decision making exists. Coupled with the need for ethical decision making is the need to recognize the potential ethical problems that exist in the scientific process. From accounts in newspapers and professional journals, dishonesty and the use of measures that circumvent the scientific method continue in the research community. Newspapers reported researchers manufacturing data at Harvard University and overreporting expenses to increase grant income at Stanford University during the early 1990s. As early as 1980, Brackbill and Hellegers (1980, 20) expressed concern over the ethical conduct of scientists:

Most scientists are under great pressure to conduct research and publish it. Publication is the sole route to professional success, to salary increases, to tenure, to promotion. Scientists, therefore, regard the terms and conditions of publication as matters of considerable importance. There is no question that ethical review as a gate to publication is an effective means of maintaining ethical standards in research. It is also the most feasible method.

Scientific fraud is a crucial issue that generates more questions than answers. Wrather (1987) indicated that the incidence of fraud in science appears to have increased in recent years. Misrepresentation of results threatens the conduct of scientific research. Important first steps in reducing fraud and misconduct have included the guarantee of confidentiality for whistle blowers and the development of guidelines for use by universities and funding agencies.

The desire for academic success and job security can lead to dishonesty in science and research. Fraud and misconduct in scientific pursuits must be addressed in such a manner as to reduce or eliminate their occurrence. If society is to benefit from scientific research, its belief in the veracity of a study and the information disseminated from it is crucial. Case 1.1 illustrates a practice all too common among professionals these days.

A RESPONSE TO PUBLISH OR PERISH PRESSURES

Dr. May I. Cozen partially meets the scholarly activities requirement of her job by presenting several research projects at national conferences each year. She selects conferences that are unlikely to draw the same participants and then submits her abstracts for acceptance on their programs. Dr. Cozen uses the same data in each presentation, but she chooses various titles for the presentations and makes other slight cosmetic changes. She may reword the introduction, list different studies in the literature review section, and present particular conclusions in one presentation and other conclusions in another presentation. Regardless of the changes she makes, however, the data and analysis remain the same. This technique has allowed Dr. Cozen to make three or four presentations in a year using the same data.

Some professionals will readily sign statements that a paper or manuscript has not previously been presented or published. They might argue that the paper hasn't been presented before because it has a new introduction, review, and set of conclusions; only the data—in a different interpretation—have been presented. Consequently, the writers contend, it is a new paper. Is this ethically correct? How much of the paper must be changed before it qualifies as new? Must the data be entirely new, or can a new analysis of data presented in the past qualify as a new paper?

Shore (1991) attempted to determine what types of dishonesty exist in research by analyzing cases from files at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) (using the Freedom of Information Act) and the Harvard University Medical School (see table 1.1). Of the thirty-eight cases reporting dishonesty in laboratory research, twenty-five involved fabrication and falsification, plagiarism, and non-publication of data that would refute prior research. These cases typified fraudulent and dishonest situations where guidelines and ethical standards are least likely to prevent dishonesty. The remaining thirteen cases involved behaviors in laboratory research that were likely to be influenced by guidelines, including the need for refined data-gathering, storage, and retention procedures; better writing techniques; and proper publication practices. In clinical studies, the problem areas were disregard for protocol (e.g., inconsistent logging of information), poor choice of controls, failure to use blinding codes, and inaccurate logging of data.

Russell (1991) reported similar findings of common transgressions in NIH-funded research. NIH identified failure to retain primary data, overinterpretation

Table 1.1 Problem Areas Identified in Scientific Research

PROBLEM AREA	CASES
Laboratory research	
Fabrication and falsification	16
Plagiarism	7
Nonpublication of data	2
Data-gathering procedures and data storage and retention	9
Authorship	2
Publication practices	2
	38
Clinical research	
Disregard of protocol	6
Logging information	2
Use of controls	2
Use of blinds	2
	12

Data from Shore 1991.

or misrepresentation of results, selective inclusion or exclusion of information, alteration of findings resulting in either no change or a favorable change, plagiarism, and data manufactured without supporting evidence. As was the case with the misconduct findings reported by Shore, some of these transgressions were the result of the researcher's character and cannot be prevented by the adoption of codes of ethical conduct.

These two reports looking at a limited number of studies showed that the checks and balances included in the scientific method of inquiry have frequently been circumvented by fraudulent acts of researchers. Some dishonesty was associated with deliberate misconduct, while other problems resulted from poor organization or techniques. When dishonesty results from fabrication and falsification of data, plagiarism, and selective publication of results, the character of the researcher produces the lack of integrity in science. No ethical codes, policies, or guidelines will totally prevent such behavior from dishonest scientists. Other problem areas identified, such as poor organization, improper techniques, and failure to adhere to protocol, can be improved through codes, policies, and guidelines as well as better mentoring. The Public Health Service and National Institutes of Health felt the problem was extensive enough to warrant the development of definitions of misconduct, which are included in their regulations:

- **"Misconduct"** or **"misconduct in science"** means fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, or other practices that seriously deviate from those that are commonly accepted within the scientific community for proposing, conducting, or reporting research. It does not include honest error or honest differences in interpretations or judgments of data (42 C.F.R. Chapter 1, § 50.102).

- **"Misconduct"** means (1) fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, or other serious deviation from accepted practices in proposing, carrying out, or reporting results from research, (2) material failure to comply with federal requirements for protection of researchers, human subjects, or the public or for ensuring the welfare of laboratory animals, or (3) failure to meet other material legal requirements governing research (NIH 1990).

In any event, the findings reported by Shore and Russell emphasized the need for ethical researchers if scientific integrity is to be achieved and maintained. What does this research indicate? Is there a problem that will be solved by developing and adopting a code of ethics? According to Callahan (1982, 336), "There is a good historical rule of thumb to use in examining any calls for codes of ethics. Very simply, it is that such calls normally seem to arise when a profession, field, or discipline is in an internal state of disarray. . . . They arise as a response to internal tensions and external pressure."

Most of the problems described above relate to dishonesty and/or fraud on the part of scientists. Ethical problems, rather than dishonest conduct, can also appear from the issues involved. In such cases, sensitivity to potential ethical issues is necessary for the decision-making process to be effective. However, sensitivity alone will not be sufficient for resolving ethical questions that may pertain to the body of knowledge under investigation, or the conduct of the research, in such manner as to protect the rights of participants and society.

Studies such as those cited above have shown that ethical questions arise from several factors. First, most ethical problems arise from situations where conflicting values also exist. If no difference in values exists, then no problem exists. Second, ethical problems can be found both in the subject matter of the research problem and in the manner in which the research will be conducted. A current example would be the use of aborted fetal tissue for research; both the abortion and the use of the material are subject to conflicting values. Further in this case, sensitivity to the conflict in values will not lead to a solution, as the groups having values at both extremes will not work to resolve the issue. The ethical conflict can involve both personal and professional components. Individuals can experience conflict between these two elements of life. As the complexity of the research increases, so too can the questions relating to ethical behavior. Often a single research problem can raise multiple questions about proper conduct necessary to protect human rights, as well as protect the integrity of the data. Finally, many ethical decisions are not yes or no, black or white; rather, judgments about proper ethical conduct often lie somewhere in between. Yet, many individuals expect that a clear, simple, dichotomous yes or no decision can be made in all research situations. This has led to the need for increased integrity on the part of researchers.

Ethics and Integrity

At the end of World War II, the discovery of abuse by Nazi scientists led to the development of the first ethical codes of conduct applied to researchers. The ethical issues in science and research have raised increased concern as researchers try to ensure that their studies are directed toward worthwhile goals and that the welfare of their subjects and research associates is protected. Such concern is evidenced by the number of codes that have been developed, beginning with the Nuremberg Code of 1947. Subsequent internationally accepted codes include the Draft Code of Ethics, World Medical Association, Geneva, 1961 and the World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki (1964; rev. 1975). Congress has passed several regulations that specify criteria for scientific research and require researchers to report any incidence of misconduct, for example, 42 C.F.R. Chapter 1, Part 50; 45 C.F.R. Subtitle A, Part 46; and 9 C.F.R. Chapter 1. Copies of sections of these codes and regulations are found in the appendices. See appendix A for the Nuremberg Code, appendix B for the Helsinki Declaration, appendix C for 42 C.F.R., appendix D for 45 C.F.R., and appendix E for 9 C.F.R.

Kimmel (1988) discussed ethical theories and standards used as research guidelines. He observed that since scientists and others can differ in the general approaches used for ethical decision making, it is important for individuals to be aware of the approach they use when faced with a moral problem. The issue of ethics is further complicated by a disagreement among philosophers as to the precise scope of ethics. Some philosophers accept the notion of normative ethics, or a set of principles that guide human behavior. Others argue for a metaethical approach, which focuses on the analysis or logic of moral concepts rather than on a systematic theory of ethics for daily living. As described earlier, normative ethics sets forth standards used to judge the morality of actions, whereas metaethics considers the process that people use when they make moral decisions.

In spite of the philosophical debate as to whether a normative ethical or metaethical approach should be adopted, the government and professional organizations have rushed to embrace a normative approach. The result of governmental activity is that series of rules, regulations, and procedures have been put into place to guide research, especially scientific investigations involving human or animal subjects. The intent of the government and professional organizations is to provide rules that apply to all research.

According to this approach, judgments, if challenged, may be justified ethically by showing they conform to one or more rules or norms. A rule is a general statement that actions of a certain type ought (or ought not) to be taken because they are right (or wrong). At an even more fundamental level, ethical principles serve as foundations for the rules and norms. Finally, there are ethical theories that consist of systematically related bodies of principles. At the heart of this system lies the concept of a basic ethical principle, which justifies the many particular prescriptions for and evaluations of human actions (National Commission 1976, 1977). To develop a system of ethics, one begins with a theoretical

oasis. Principles, rules, and norms for behavior are developed by using this ethical theory. The behavioral norms represent the most specific aspects of an ethical system. See figure 1.1 for a representation of an ethical system.

Proponents of this ethical system believe that a fundamental ethical principle can be formulated. This is a principle that exists within a system of ethics and is taken as an ultimate foundation for any second-order principles and norms. A fundamental principle represents a "pure" or "basic" ethical value because it is not derived from any other statement of ethical values. Thus, an ethical norm is a statement manifesting that actions of a certain type ought (or ought not) to be taken. An ethical norm statement contains the words *should*, *ought*, *must* or *forbidden*. Examples of ethical norm statements include the following:

The experiment should be so designed and based on the results of animal experimentation and a knowledge of the natural history of the disease or other problem under study that the anticipated results will justify the performance of the experiment. (Nuremberg 3)

The experiment should be conducted only by scientifically qualified persons. The highest degree of skill and care should be required through all stages of the experiment of those who conduct or engage in the experiment. (Nuremberg 8)

Biomedical research involving human subjects must conform to generally accepted scientific principles and should be based on adequately performed laboratory and animal experimentation and on a thorough knowledge of the scientific literature. (Helsinki I. 1)

Biomedical research involving human subjects should be conducted only by scientifically qualified persons and under the supervision of a clinically competent medical person. The responsibility for the human subject must always rest with a medically qualified person. (Helsinki I. 3)

Respect for persons incorporates at least two basic ethical convictions: First, that individuals should be treated as autonomous agents, and second, that persons with diminished autonomy and thus in need of protection are entitled to such protection. An autonomous person is . . . an individual capable of deliberation about personal goals and of acting under the direction of such deliberation. (National Commission 1976)

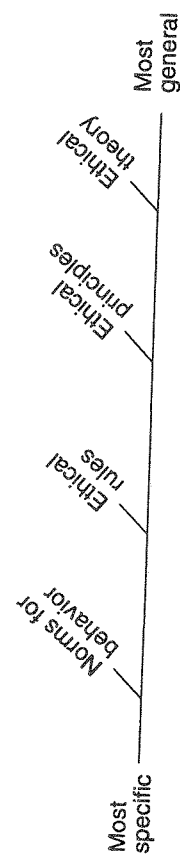


Figure 1.1 Schematic representation of a system of ethics.

The question remains, however, can one fundamental ethical principle serve in all situations? The current need for Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) research and policy serves as an example of the issues raised when dealing with ethics in research and science. The ethical norm statements above indicate that research must be based on a sufficient background of animal research and adequately performed laboratory research before human subjects are introduced. However, the desperate need for medical treatments arising from the pressure to do *something* caused the governmental agencies to issue guidelines allowing drug companies and physicians to bypass the traditional procedures used when testing medicines for safety and efficacy.

Some individuals argue that safety is not a major issue when people afflicted with a fatal disease are involved, and they should be provided with any and all opportunities, however risky, to receive whatever treatments they wish to endure. Even in such dire circumstances, however, highly toxic drugs can potentially reduce their life span and/or affect their quality of life.

An equally important question arises. Absent the use of traditional methods of scientific evaluation, how will the quality of these clinical trials be determined? Should the traditional ethical norm statements be discarded in the face of pressures to do something to stop the advance of a fatal communicable disease? These same ethical issues were present in the breast cancer study fraud highlighted earlier. Research is used to influence and guide policy development, so the quality of research is of paramount importance to decision makers. Our responses to the AIDS epidemic have been reactive, which in turn compromises the government's ability to develop effective policy. Thus, the abandonment of traditional scientific methods has a great impact on society as a whole, and increased risk from poor research is not limited to only those individuals with AIDS who are electing to receive questionable treatments (Kaemingk and Sechrest 1990). The proper scientific foundations for procedures being developed for future generations of individuals needing treatment must also be considered as a part of the ethical consideration when traditional methods are disregarded.

Returning to the issue of the war crimes trials in Nuremberg, a great deal of attention was focused on the unethical scientific experiments conducted by Nazi scientists. For example, Nazi scientists recorded how long it took people to die when they were immersed in ice water. No amount of punishment, ethical norm statements, or other actions will bring back to life those individuals who suffered through the horrible experiments. But the question remains, what should be done with the data? Should all the data from those studies be discarded because of inhumane research, or should data that provides a legitimate contribution to knowledge, if any exists, be kept and used so those subjects did not die in vain?

During the 1930s and 1940s physicists worked on basic research that led to the development of nuclear fusion and fission. They discovered atomic energy, which led to the development of the atomic bomb and even more powerful nuclear weapons. Pure researchers would argue that the development of nuclear energy is amoral (i.e., neither good nor bad). The resulting atomic bomb and its use on two Japanese cities during the war has been described as both good and

bad. Some argue that such a horrible weapon should never have been used; others argue that without the use of the atomic weapons, the war would have lasted much longer and thousands more would have died, far exceeding the number killed by atomic bombs. In fact, more deaths and destruction occurred from the incendiary bombs used on Japan than from the two atomic bombs, yet the moral aspects of this bombing have not been questioned. Nuclear energy has since been used to provide electrical power in peaceful settings and has been hailed by some as an environmentally friendly source of energy.

The discovery of any new knowledge raises ethical questions that must be answered. In the case of new discoveries such as nuclear energy or genetic engineering, is the discovery of new knowledge that has potentially deadly results morally neutral? Must the potential of new knowledge for deadly results be weighed against its potential for beneficial results? Finally, do the "pure" researchers who identify such new information have a moral responsibility concerning the release and use of their findings?

Answers to these and similar questions related to science and research depend on your philosophical approach to ethics. If a code of ethics is to be accepted, what will provide the standards by which the correctness and incorrectness of conduct can be judged? Who will determine the standards to be used when judging ethical decisions? The prevailing rules of a culture have been rejected from time to time as appropriate standards of right and wrong behavior. Keeping this problem in mind, is there a fundamental ethical or moral principle that can guide all decision making? Can a series of ethical rules apply to all situations faced in science and research? In life? Should all scientists be required to take a course in ethics? Should ethical decision making be a part of all professional curricula? What is the role of ethics in research and science?

Summary

Ethics is one of several disciplines that study human behavior. Ethics views behavior from the perspective of right or wrong, good or bad. The system of ethics used by professional organizations and governmental agencies is that of rule utilitarianism. Its goal is to develop a system of ethical statements that has universal application and that delineates which behaviors are right and which are wrong. This approach evolved from publicity concerning reports of fraud in science. Studies have indicated that problems exist in both laboratory research and clinical research. Some problems were caused by researcher dishonesty. Fewer problems resulted from poor organization and improper techniques. Sensitivity to potential ethical issues in research is required, but increased sensitivity alone will not eliminate the problem. Dishonest individuals must be disciplined and ousted from the research professions, and opportunities for fraudulent research practices must be minimized as much as possible.

CHAPTER 2

BEGINNING THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Any individual who develops a research idea, whether it be for a class assignment, personal research, or a grant submitted to a funding organization, will follow a series of specific steps. First these steps will constitute the proposal, then they will be used to draft the research project. The investigator begins by formulating a problem that will be studied and ends by publishing the results, whether it be in a class paper, journal manuscript, conference presentation, or report to a granting agency. The researcher must make one or more ethical decisions at each step of the research process. This chapter presents types of ethical decisions that appear during the development of a research project, including the formulation of a statement of the problem and the role of Institutional Review Boards (IRB).

Developing the Problem

Ethical situations in research can be observed as early as when the researcher thinks about a research problem. The ethical decisions become essential as researchers develop the statement of the problem that will be studied. Ethical problems can occur with the decision to conduct research as well as with the decision not to conduct research. Researchers might decide not to pursue a research topic for several reasons: the study might invade someone's privacy, too much time will be required to get subjects and clearance from an IRB, or the necessary procedure might be too controversial, time-consuming, or costly. In each case, researchers might be making life easier for themselves, but they may neglect to conduct research that will be in the best interest of society or the research participants. At this point they may ask themselves, Why conduct research anyway if you have to put up with all the problems associated with developing a topic, getting IRB approval, and dealing with subjects while collecting the data? Is the hassle worth the trouble it causes for me? For society?

Pring (1984) believes there is a need for knowledge and that, without access to knowledge, society would be worse off: "Maybe the right to know . . . will

lead to undesirable results. Maybe it will clash with other principles. . . . The main thing however is that, as in most moral matters, whether the right should be given and over what area it should be extended need to be argued in the context of particular cases" (8-18). Pring argues that a need exists to determine specific cases in which knowledge is made available and that moral decisions should be made regarding these cases. The appropriate time for this type of discussion is during the project's formulation. If researchers fail to do so and decide that a research project is not worth the effort, they have merely traded one problem for another, unaware that they have made an ethical decision. Thus, ethical decisions are made before the problem is framed for study, and decisions continue to be made even after the investigation is completed. The following case study illustrates one type of ethical problem investigators may face when framing their research.

CASE 2.1

HONESTY WITH CORPORATE SPONSORS

A university professor plans to submit a research proposal that will receive considerable support by a corporate sponsor. This research could lead to the development of new manufacturing processes that would benefit the sponsor. The grant for this research will not include contractual agreements whereby the professor becomes an employee of the corporation. Basic intellectual and scientific ethics dictate that the data and experimental method used should be open and published. However, in the corporate world, trade secrets, business ethics, and other considerations require that some information be kept confidential. The findings of this proposed research will likely result in information that will give the corporate sponsor an advantage over its competitors and would fall into the category of trade secrets. In addition, the researcher feels that publication of this research will likely enhance her reputation as an authority in her field, and she wants to publish the results of this study.

How should the researcher deal with this situation? Should the researcher wait to see if any stipulations regarding publication accompany the grant? Who owns the data? Who owns the findings? If no statements about publication are present, should she ignore the problem during the formation of the proposal and publish her findings without considering the wishes of the corporate sponsor once the study has been completed? What are her ethical duties to her profession? Her university? The corporation? To future scientists who try to secure grants from the corporation? Does this situation fall within the earlier proposal made by Pring?

Selection or Rejection of a Topic

Once an individual chooses to engage in a research project, ethical decisions present themselves regarding the choice of topics studied. For example, since many journals will publish only articles that report statistically significant results, investigators often feel extreme pressure to develop a study that will produce statistically significant results. This pressure might be present for master's or doctoral research if the institution requires that an acceptable thesis or dissertation contain statistically significant results. It is also present for graduate students, faculty members, and others who are under pressure to show a record of publication and who desire to use this work to meet their publication requirements. Likewise, many professional meetings will not accept presentations that lack statistically significant results. Researchers who depend on grants to fund their research know that failure to produce statistically significant findings can result in the loss of future funding. Consequently, an investigator is often pressured to choose problems that are almost certain to produce such findings. The topic selected can be one known to include questions that produce statistical significance, or the researcher can choose to investigate multiple questions using large numbers of subjects that will, by chance alone, likely produce significant results.

Statistical significance differs from practical significance in that it means the results will occur from factors other than chance. On the other hand, practical significance looks at the utility of the results and may include such factors as cost, time, risk to others, and availability in its determination. Statistical significance may not result in practical significance and, in fact, the lack of statistical significance may have practical significance. If research findings show no difference in the efficacy of two drugs used to treat seizures or mental illness, but there is a difference in retail prices, then there is an issue of practical significance for the consumer. Does this raise ethical considerations for the parties involved with the research? Does your view of the ethical problem change if one product is more profitable than the other?

What, if any, ethical issues arise when a researcher avoids legitimate problems because the investigation might not produce statistically significant results? Does the policy of a journal limiting its acceptance of manuscripts to only those having statistical significance produce an ethical problem? Does a profession have a moral obligation to provide information that two drugs, educational programs, or other factors are equivalent?

Multiple or Single Ethical Issues

With ready access to considerable computing power, the nature of many investigations has changed. Evaluating large amounts of data and multiple hypotheses in a short time is now possible. Consequently, many researchers no longer develop and conduct single-issue studies. When conducting a complex study, an investigator is unlikely to be successful in isolating the ethical question in the study, as

multiple issues usually arise. Even in single-issue studies, multiple ethical issues are present if the proposed study is carefully evaluated by the investigator. Ethical questions arise as the proposal and statement of the problem are evolved. How are subjects selected or omitted? Must subjects be labeled and, if so, how? What experimental procedures will be used? What impact will the procedures have on the subjects, confidentiality, collection and storage of data, release of findings? And how will the authorship of manuscripts be resolved? Such issues will be explored in greater depth later.

Deciding what to include in the research problem can be another ethical issue. Should the investigator include topics that fall outside his or her area of expertise? Must the investigator be neutral about all topics included in the study? Consider the following case study.

CASE 2.2

THE USE OF ADDED "VARIABLES" IN RESEARCH

Researcher Doe is a consultant for the MetaValue Athletic Supplement Company, Inc. He receives both a retainer fee and a royalty based on sales of the supplements he helps develop. He knows that sales will improve if he can prove that MetaValue Supplements will improve performance. So Doe looks for opportunities to include MetaValue products in every study that he conducts to evaluate athletic performance. Doe decides that it is quite simple to add one more variable—namely, MetaValue—and collect all the data possible. He adds MetaValue to all his studies, even when a project is funded by government or agency grants. He does not tell the funding agencies that he is adding the supplements, nor does he mention MetaValue in his analyses. MetaValue data is analyzed separately and reported only in advertisements or professional journals when outstanding results occur. Who is injured by this practice, Doe reasons, since the MetaValue data won't be included in the research report sent to the grantor? After all, they got what they paid for.

Recall, one purpose of the scientific method is to remove any investigator bias. Is Doe violating the principles of the scientific method? Does his choice affect ethics and integrity in research? Does it represent a legal breach of contract? Is a conflict of interest present? Does Doe's choice represent a violation of professional ethics?

Selection of Subjects

Although it sounds like a simple issue, the selection of subjects can raise several ethical questions. Several subpopulations have not been used extensively because subjects and useful data are not as extensive for these groups as they are for others. It's been said that the most widely used subjects are male army recruits, male college freshmen, and white rats. Groups that have not received a great deal of study and have a dearth of data are females, older adults, children, and individuals with disabilities. Years ago, young adult males were more readily available for use as subjects because they made up most of the college student body and military personnel. However, although demographics have changed as female college enrollments and military enlistments have increased greatly, young adult males remain the subjects of choice in many instances.

Perhaps the major reason for this reliance on young adult male subjects is that often it is easier to use them than members of other subpopulations. When using young adult females as subjects, the issue of pregnancy may appear. The researcher may be asked by an IRB to add provisions, such as screening tests, that will eliminate any subject from the study who is or might be pregnant. Likewise, IRBs may require that all subjects over the age of 40, regardless of their health status, knowledge of the risks involved, and readiness to participate, have a complete physical examination before the study begins. Such requirements will add considerable cost and complexity to the study, including the issue of who pays for the examination. Often investigators, when faced with these requirements, choose to limit their subjects to young adult males so they will not be faced with these additional costs and procedures. Does the elimination of females, older adults, and children as subjects pose an ethical problem? If so, for whom does the problem exist: the researcher, the IRB, or the funding agency?

Once the subjects have been selected, the question arises as to how you designate the groups and whether you tell the subjects which group they are placed in. Labeling individuals can create serious experimental problems. Rosenthal and Jacobson's 1968 book, *Pygmalion in the Classroom*, received immediate and widespread attention in the education community. It was the result of a 10-year research project funded by the Division of Social Sciences of the National Science Foundation, which investigated the effects of interpersonal, self-fulfilling prophecies. Their results showed that one person's expectation for another's behavior could serve as a self-fulfilling prophecy; children classified as bright, though they were of average ability, were regarded as bright by their teachers and their test scores improved correspondingly. The actual difference between these "bright" children and normal children existed purely in the minds of the teachers.

Considering such findings, the use of labels for subjects has ethical concerns. In social intervention research, it's a common strategy to achieve early identification of individuals at risk and modify their environment in attempts to reduce the risk. Often, this procedure means that others such as teachers, therapists, parents, and perhaps peers must be involved. If such individuals need special

services, then they must be labeled before the services will be provided (e.g., mentally retarded, mentally ill, or developmentally delayed). The use of such a label, however, increases the possibility that interpersonal self-fulfilling prophecies will result, producing a negative effect on the at-risk subject. Thus, an ethical problem exists in the choice between helping the at-risk person by assigning a negative label and not providing the person with the assistance necessary by failing to assign a label.

Several solutions have been proposed in attempts to avoid labeling problems; however, these solutions also raise practical and ethical problems. One suggestion, for example, is to use the schoolroom or regional "broadcast" design. Using this intervention approach, groups of people, such as schoolrooms, regions, or institutions, receive the treatment, rather than only the targeted at-risk individuals. This raises problems of logistics and obtaining parental consent from parents of children who are not at risk. Finally, to determine the impact of the intervention on the target groups, subgroups must still be formed to allow for follow-up evaluations. These procedures serve to increase the cost of the project and, in the end, individuals must still be identified as at-risk and labeled. Is it ethical to provide the service for individuals both at risk and not at risk, spending large amounts on those who will likely not benefit? Is it more ethical to limit the services to those individuals at risk, even if labeling is required? Does labeling fail to raise an ethical problem, since the subjects have likely already been labeled by those observing and interacting with them?

Labeling is but one way in which participation as research subjects can cause difficulties. Intervention studies that seek to change behaviors and produce positive changes in individuals can also cause difficulties, not only for the person whose behavior is changing but also for those who have close relationships with that person. The use of intervention research raises ethical questions that must be answered. Consider the following example, for instance.

CASE 2.3

RESEARCH THAT CHANGES RELATIONSHIPS

A researcher is planning a study regarding health promotion and wellness that will investigate the roles that family members adopt toward each other that may correlate with healthy or unhealthy lifestyles. Developing an intervention study, the researcher decides to use a technique that will change one or more of the family members' attitudes toward their role in the family in the hope that this will facilitate the adoption of a healthier lifestyle. The researcher is well aware of data indicating that changes in roles by family members can cause strife within the family. In some cases, the use of intervention techniques can damage family and interpersonal relationships.

Should the researcher individually make the decision whether to use this technique? Does the potential for benefit to an individual outweigh the potential for stress and harm? Who should decide? Knowing this type of research may cause turmoil within the family, what is the researcher's responsibility to the subject and to other family members? When reporting the results of such a study, is it ethical to report only the positive changes in the individual without telling of the problems the change in behavior caused others?

Institutional Review Boards

Early codification of ethics for use by professionals engaged in scientific research, as seen in the Nuremberg Code and Helsinki Declaration, emphasized the role of the scientist in determining the safety of the subjects. Scientists were required to exercise "the good faith, superior skill and careful judgement" (Nuremberg 10) and to terminate the experiment if injury, disability, or death of the subject was likely. The Helsinki Declaration emphasized that "the importance of the objective is in proportion to the inherent risk to the subject" (Helsinki I. 4) and that research projects "should be preceded by careful assessment of predictable risks in comparison with foreseeable benefits to the subjects or to others" (Helsinki I. 5). Both codes placed the responsibility for making such determinations on the investigator. Some of these principles have changed following proposals made by government study groups. During the 1970s, the National Commission for Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research (National Commission 1976, 1977, 1978) published a series of reports with the result that much of their work was incorporated into federal regulations. The 1978 report expressed their concern that Institutional Review Boards (IRB) should be made a part of the research granting process, and it listed recommendations concerning their establishment and function.

Today the basic IRB policies and requirements are set forth in 45 C.F.R. Subtitle A, §46.101 et seq. Present government regulations limit the required review activities of the IRB to research funded by selected government agencies such as the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) or National Institutes of Health (NIH). This is a change from earlier regulations that required review of all research proposals developed at institutions who received any government support for research. However, many universities and other agencies continue to extend their requirement for IRB reviews to research proposals in situations that far exceed the scope required by government regulations. Many institutions give their IRB the power to review all research involving human or animal subjects, thus enabling the IRB to approve or disapprove all such projects conducted by researchers related to the institution. An IRB review may require modifications in the proposed research procedures that will change the thrust of the proposed research. As described earlier in the discussion about the selection of subjects, costly and stringent requirements are often imposed on a research

project that practically eliminate certain populations from use as subjects. These requirements frequently impact populations, such as the elderly, disabled, and females, where information required to make important policy decisions is lacking. With elderly subjects, the additional factors that usually preclude their use as subjects relate to the requirement that all individuals must have expensive physical examinations before they can serve as subjects. With females, the requirement that causes investigators to discard them as subjects usually focuses on the potential for pregnancy, even though pregnant women have been, and continue to be, participants in stressful international athletic contests with no evidence of harm accruing to either the women or their unborn infants. Disabled subjects are often eliminated because of the extra needs associated with such individuals, the fact that they are unable to appreciate the risks they may experience as subjects, the added costs associated with their inclusion, or the feeling that they are medically high-risk individuals who should not participate as subjects in research projects.

Another ethical issue regarding the use of IRBs is the membership requirements associated with the boards. According to DHHS regulations (45 C.F.R. Subtitle A, §46.107), an IRB must have at least five members with varying backgrounds, and they cannot be all men, women, or members of one profession. Each board must contain one member in a nonscientific area (e.g., lawyer, ethicist, member of the clergy) and one member who is not affiliated with the institution and not a relative of a person affiliated with the institution. IRBs cannot have members who are participating in a project under review or who have a conflict of interest. Because of special membership requirements, IRBs often may invite individuals with competence in special areas to assist in the review, but they will not allow these individuals to vote on the project under consideration. There is no information about how often IRBs invite such experts or how their ideas are used by the board.

A series of practical and ethical questions arise about the nature of the IRB review and approval processes. Examples of these issues are as follows: What primary ethical concern does the IRB represent? The welfare of the institution? Protection of subjects? Implementing government regulations? An IRB review should balance the suitability and importance of the research topic under review with the risks involved for the subjects. Consequently, the IRB must pay attention to the design and methodology of the study. Considering this task, does the membership requirement stated in federal code adequately constitute an IRB that can review a sophisticated topic that only a few investigators in the field could understand? Should the IRB review be limited to safety of the human and animal subjects? Should the IRB have a goal of eliminating "bad" research? If so, who or what determines what constitutes "bad" research? Should the IRB review all proposals that use human and animal subjects in research activities? Should the IRB be in the business of revising research projects when IRB members either don't understand or don't agree with the procedures proposed in situations where reasonable scientists may differ? Should the IRB attempt to eliminate all risk or only unreasonable risk of harm to subjects? If only unreasonable risk of harm

is eliminated, how is reasonable risk determined? How much weight should an invited expert's participation have in decision making? Should the IRB impose such extensive and expensive requirements that effectively eliminate certain populations as subjects because of the difficulty a researcher will experience in meeting the requirements? Should IRB reviews be limited to only a consideration of funded research?

IRB reviews require the vita and presence of the investigator, or the investigator's representative (e.g., dissertation advisor), when reviewing a proposal. IRBs have reportedly disapproved studies that would otherwise have been acceptable based on their evaluating of the investigator's qualifications. Are IRBs equal to the task of evaluating an investigator's qualifications to conduct research? If so, what should they consider in their evaluation? Reviews of manuscripts submitted for publication in refereed professional journals are subject to "blind" reviews in which the identity of the author or authors is not known to the reviewer. This procedure is used in an attempt to eliminate any bias or "halo effects" through which well-known authors have their work accepted by the weight of their reputations while unknown authors may have their work rejected. The principle inherent in this practice is that manuscripts should be reviewed on their scientific merit without regard to the authors' reputations. Should IRB reviews be conducted using the blind review procedure so that the review is limited to the scientific merit of the proposed study?

In summary, several concerns about IRB reviews of proposed research have been raised. Kroll (1993, 42-43) writes:

In another example of IRB jurisdiction in non-scientific aspects of a study, the board requires an estimate of the amount of time each human subject will be expected to devote to the study. One can only surmise that the IRB is empowered to decide what a reasonable time commitment is for human subjects and to disapprove those studies it determines take too much time. IRBs also require information about the amount of any compensation provided to subjects. Such a provision must lead to decisions about appropriate amounts of compensation, although the original intent was probably to discourage subjects from accepting more than minimal risks in order to earn financial stipends. Numerous related examples could be cited, but it seems safe to suggest that IRBs as well as policies of federal agencies often intrude on researchers' autonomy and make value judgments about the conduct of science, which can be challenged as being beyond their scientific expertise or intended charge.

And it is precisely to this issue that most complaints about institutional review boards have been directed. The IRB often makes recommendations and conditions for approval that transcend simple attention to possible risks and safeguards. The IRB often assesses the scientific worth and methodology of a study under review. So too sensitivity to the needs of society extends to *prescriptions* for research methodology. Consider the priority announcements for research involving biomedical and behavioral

studies of diseases and disorders. The NIH/ADAMHA policy is that applicants must include minorities and women in study populations "so that research findings can be of benefit to all persons at risk." If women or minorities are not included or inadequately represented, "a clear and compelling rationale should be provided." If such information is not clearly provided, the initial review group is to request such information; if it is not provided, the application is deferred or returned to the applicant.

While the decision to review and reduce unnecessary risk to human subjects is ethically sound, many IRB functions go beyond this original charge. Although the NIH/ADAMHA policy requires the inclusion of women and other groups in studies, IRB-imposed requirements often serve to eliminate the possibility that these populations will serve as subjects in some research projects. Research today has become political at the funding level and at the institutional level. Ethical questions about the effect of political approaches upon scientific procedures are many, and individual researchers may not have much choice in the matter. Does the introduction of political factors into the review process create ethical problems? If so, for whom? The researcher? The institution? The IRB members? Should human subject review procedures be revised to eliminate any political considerations? If so, what revisions should be made?

Summary

Ethical problems can appear as soon as a researcher begins thinking about a problem, defining it, and developing the methods that will be employed to study the problem. Even the decision not to pursue a problem involves an ethical decision by the scientist. The selection and treatment of subjects raise several ethical questions. Not the least among these is the population from which they are drawn. Should subjects be limited to young adult males, or should the subject pool include other groups? When research uses human subjects, labeling of subjects becomes an issue for the researcher. Current government regulations demand review of human and animal studies proposed for funding by DHHS and NIH by an IRB associated with the institution where the research will be conducted. Many institutions have expanded the role of their IRBs to review all studies involving human and animal subjects. The composition, purpose, and involvement of an IRB also raise ethical questions in research.

CHAPTER 3

DEVELOPING YOUR METHODS

In the previous chapters, we discussed potential ethical problems associated with the decision whether or not to conduct a research investigation and, if so, which subject populations should be used. Once you have decided to pursue a research topic and have determined the characteristics of the subjects you will use in the project, you can begin to develop the research methods and analyze the data you obtain. The research methods component of a project includes securing your subjects, developing procedures, choosing the tests and protocol that will provide the data, and deciding how the data will be analyzed. Each of these components requires an ethical decision, so the researcher must be aware of the ethical issues that arise during this phase of the research. Typical questions associated with the methods used in research are many and varied. Decisions made during the design of a research project are critical to the conduct of a responsible study according to the scientific method and to the protection of subject rights and welfare. Without the use of proper methods, the study will not meet accepted scientific criteria and its utility will be limited.

Securing Subjects

As mentioned in chapter 2, the most frequently used subjects have been white rats, army recruits, and college freshmen, although not necessarily in that order. The reason for using white rats in biomedical research is obvious; possibly the same thing could be said for the use of army recruits as subjects. However, why are college freshmen so widely used as experimental subjects? Typically college freshmen are enrolled in large lecture sections of introductory classes, and they are required by their professors to participate as subjects in an experiment before they can receive a grade in the class. Sometimes students are given extra credit or bonus points for participating in experiments. The reason usually set forth to justify this requirement is that such participation will introduce the students to