

Foundation Ethics: Implications for students and staff

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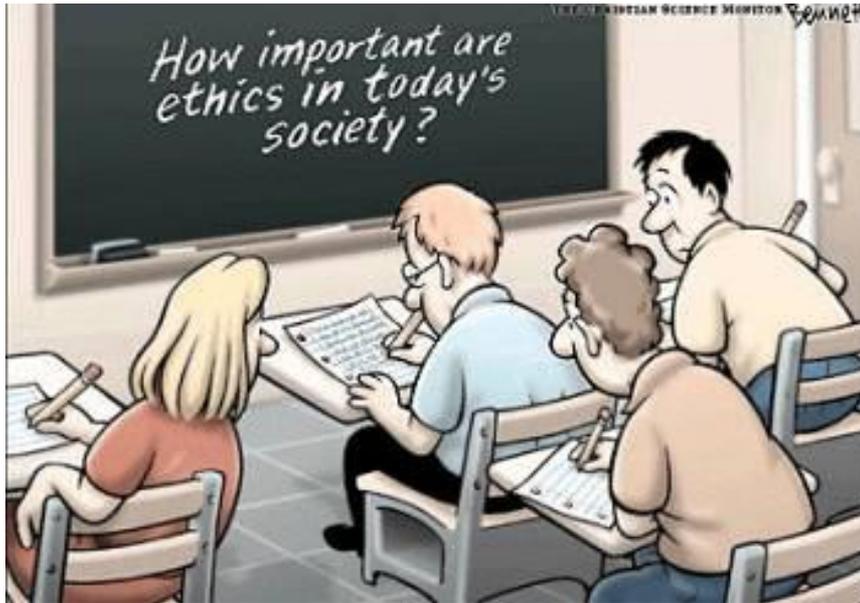
10th July 2013

Foundation Centre Ethics

1. Ethical Dilemmas
2. Discussion: your context?
3. Ethics: practicality or obligation? Nuisance or opportunity?
4. What we've done here



Ethical Dilemmas



What issues or concerns arise in these situations?

Have you encountered anything similar?

How is ethics handled in your context?

Ethical dilemmas (1):

- A student wants to do a research project on attitudes towards domestic abuse. She has designed a questionnaire which asks participants to rate the extent to which a victim can be blamed by placing an 'x' on a line from 0% - 100%.
- An international student in your class has a sound hypothesis and has worked hard to develop his questionnaire; however, his use of language is not always grammatically accurate and so the questionnaire has several errors, making the questions difficult to understand.
- A student is interested in the link between joblessness and crime. She plans to administer a questionnaire in the local jobcentre, asking participants whether or not they have ever committed a criminal act.
- A student is working on a project in a local school, during which time he becomes concerned with some of the practices he observes.

Ethical dilemmas (2):

- A student has been taking part in your study for the duration of the academic year, but is at risk of failure.
- You want to measure the impact of using a particular teaching methodology, so you use a control group who do not receive the intervention.
- Your interviewee is a member of staff who has agreed to participate in your study. However, on the day, she is acting very anxious and keeps glancing at her watch. Later in the interview, she suddenly and unexpectedly bursts into tears.
- In a project which evaluates a particular teaching strategy, you wish to use both qualitative and quantitative data, including students' grades, extracts from marked work, and focus groups.

How is ethics handled in your context?

Are staff members engaged in scholarship or research? How are these activities monitored? Do you feel confident that ethical standards and policies are being adhered to?

Are students working on research projects with human participants? How are these activities monitored? Do you feel confident that ethical standards and policies are being adhered to?

Why do we need to consider ethics?



Because it's the right thing to do!



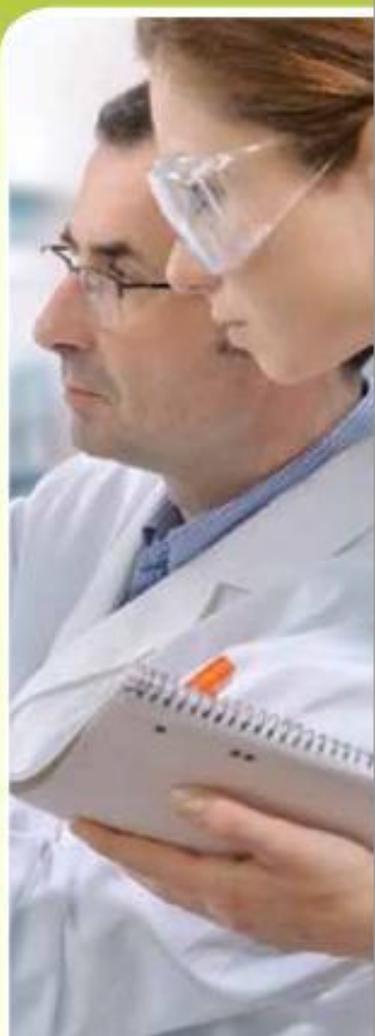
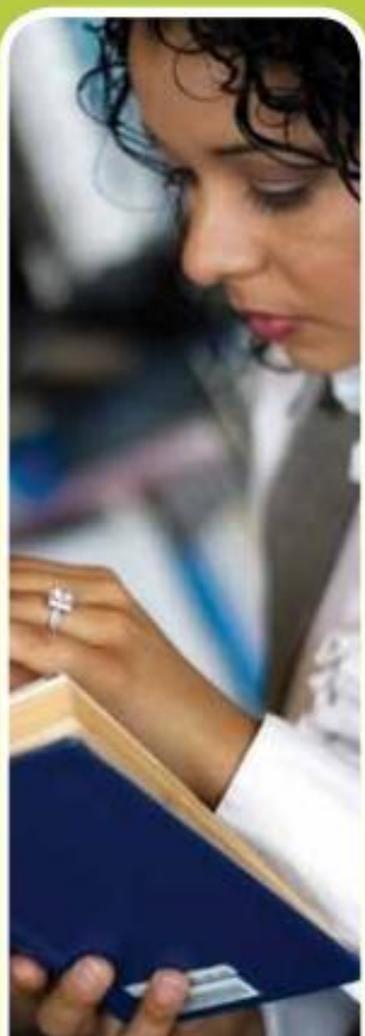
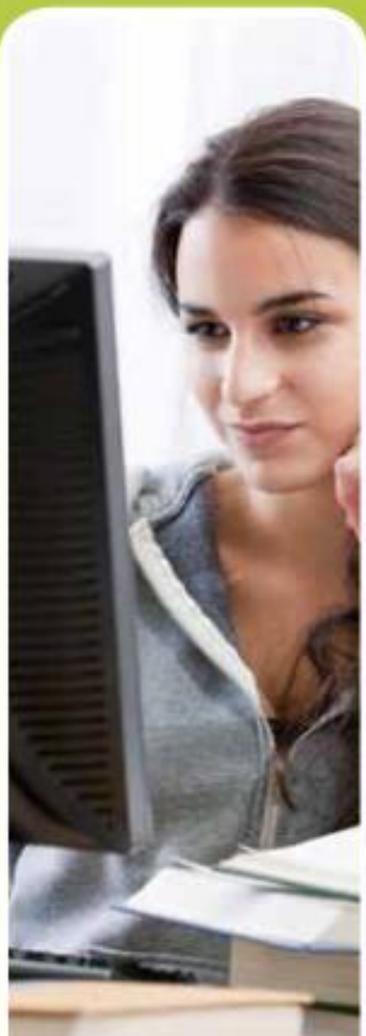
Because the university says we have to!

Ethics in research:

‘...university procedures now make ethics [a practical matter], but being ethical is *much more than just a practical matter*. Although there are important practical matters that stem from ethical concerns, ethics is about the conduct of your work: it is about how you think about inquiry; how you think about this research project; it is about your respect for others. To put these into a box called ‘ethics’, as the university procedures are sometimes apt to encourage us to do, is to minimise considerations about conduct and respect [...]’

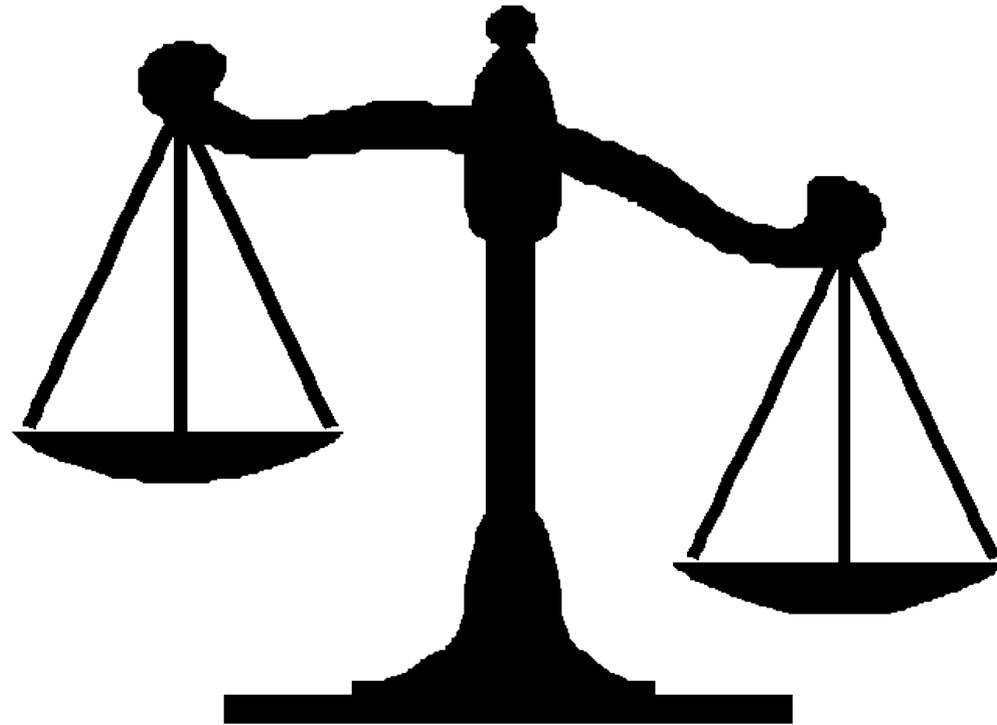
Thomas, G. (2009) *How to Do Your Research Project* Sage: London,
my italics

The concordat to support research integrity



Tension/ balance:

Issues about
power,
protection of
participants,
etc...



Allowing researchers
to get on with their
work

'ethical hypersensitivity'

Validity of Ethical Review Process:

- 1) ethics committees impose **silly restrictions**,
- 2) ethics review is a solution in **search of a problem**,
- 3) ethics committees **lack expertise**,
- 4) ethics committees apply **inappropriate principles**,
- 5) ethics review **harms the innocent**, and
- 6) **better options exist.**

Schrag, Z. (2011) 'The Case Against Ethics Review in the Social Sciences' *Research Ethics* Vol 7: 4 pp 120-131, my emphasis

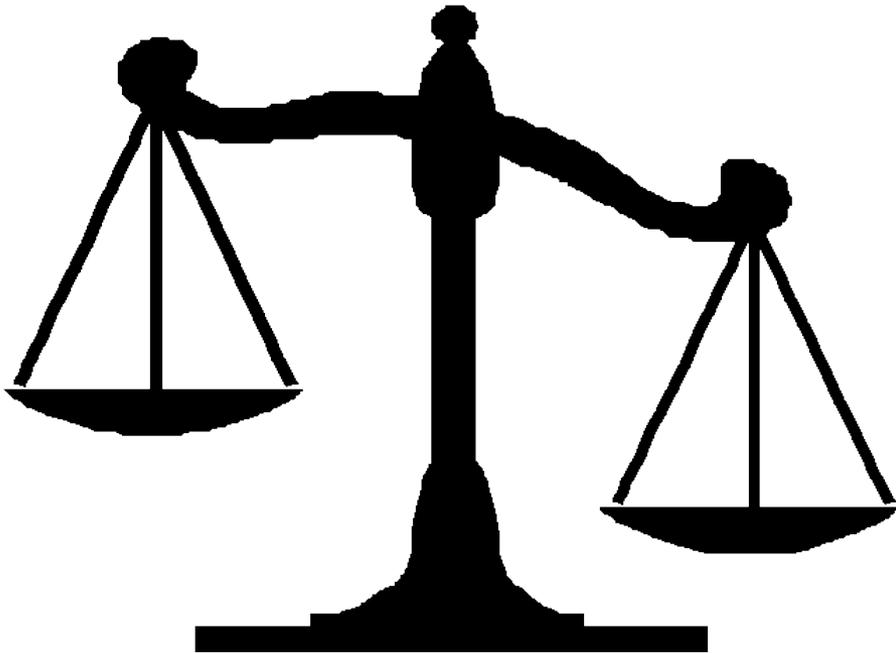


Frustration:

1. Writers often differ quite widely from each other over what is or is not ethically acceptable
2. The main elements in the debate haven't changed over time (and may never be fully resolved)
3. Emphasis on notorious cases may imply that ethical concerns reside only in extreme cases (e.g. Milgram)
4. Implication that certain methods (e.g. covert observation) are more ethically suspect than others

Bryman, A. (2004) *Social Research Methods* Oxford University Press: Oxford

Priorities



‘In undertaking ethical review, the Ethics Sub-Committee shall consider :

- (a) The interests, needs, health and safety of *applicants* who are applying to undertake projects of good quality. However, the goals of the project, and of project applicants, while important, should always be *secondary* to the dignity, rights, health, safety and well-being of the *project participants and concerned communities*.’

www.dur.ac.uk/resources/science.faculty/StandingordersamendedMar11.pdf (accessed 21/09/2012), my italics

Ethics in Research:

Guided by six main principles:

1. Respect for people/ autonomy
2. Beneficence (benefit)
3. Do no harm (nonmaleficence)
4. Justice
5. Fidelity (honesty, integrity, trust)
6. Academic freedom

Farrimond, H. (2013) *Doing Ethical Research* Palgrave MacMillan: Hampshire

Ethics in social research:

‘Any research project involving human beings should be characterised by the protection of the human rights, dignity, health and safety of participants and researchers. This is achieved by observing 3 fundamental tenets:

- The research should **do no harm**
- Consent should be **voluntary**
- **Confidentiality** should be respected throughout’

(McMillan, et al, 2009, *The Smarter Study Skills Companion*)

Ethics in social research:

Four main areas of concern:

1. Whether there is *harm to participants*
2. Whether there is a *lack of informed consent*
3. Whether there is *an invasion of privacy*
4. Whether *deception* is involved

Deiner and Crandall (1978), cited in Bryman, A. (2004) *Social Research Methods* Oxford University Press: Oxford, Italics in original citation

Ethics in educational research:

British Sociological Association (BSA) *Statement of Ethical Practice:*

Researchers must ‘anticipate, and guard against, consequences for research participants which can be predicted to be harmful [and] to consider carefully the possibility that *the research experience may be a disturbing one.*’

Social Research Association (SRA) *Ethical Guidelines:*

‘Social researcher[s] should try to minimise disturbance both to the subjects themselves and *to the subjects’ relationships to with their environment.*’

Cited in Bryman, A. (2004) *Social Research Methods* Oxford University Press: Oxford, my italics

Ethics in research:

British Educational Research Association (BERA) -- Responsibilities to Participants:

1. Voluntary informed consent
2. Openness and disclosure
3. Right to withdraw
4. Children, vulnerable young people and *vulnerable adults*
5. Incentives
6. Detriments arising from participation in research
7. Privacy
8. Disclosure

<http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/ethical-guidelines> (accessed 21/09/2012)

Vulnerable Adults?

1. Institutionalised groups
2. Groups with issues over capacity to consent
3. Traditionally marginalised, disadvantaged or stigmatised groups
4. Groups living in dangerous or impoverished structural environments, or engaging in risky behaviours

Farrimond, H. (2013) *Doing Ethical Research* Palgrave MacMillan: Hampshire

Vulnerable Adults?



Two main features:

- differential power relationships between researcher and participant
- the use of gatekeepers for access

Farrimond, H. (2013) *Doing Ethical Research* Palgrave MacMillan: Hampshire

Discussion:

Ethical Review Procedure for Foundation:

1. What steps are required? Necessary? Suited? Who needs to review and at what stage? What permissions are required? Is there a difference in strategy required for research conducted by students/ staff?
2. Is there a need for the documentation/ application process/ policies to be improved? What is needed for your context?

Policies:

1. Informed Consent Policy (approved)
2. Ethical Review Policy for Scholarship (draft)
3. Guidance for Ethical Review for Student Projects (draft)
4. Checklist for student policies (in development)

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Bibliography:

Bryman, A. (2004) *Social Research Methods* Oxford University Press: Oxford

(McMillan, et al, 2009, *The Smarter Study Skills Companion*)

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