

Research is not a private matter

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Ethical codes in social science

Common factors	Illustrative schemes
<p>The impact of research The effect on participants The process of research <i>The uses of research</i></p> <p>The treatment of participants Consent Confidentiality Vulnerable respondents</p> <p>Disciplinary considerations Quality Integrity</p> <p>The research relationship Responsibilities to funders Responsibilities to institutions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>The Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and the Commonwealth</i>• <i>British Educational Research Association</i>• <i>British Psychological Association</i>• <i>British Society of Criminology</i>• <i>British Sociological Association</i>• <i>ESRC Research Ethics Framework</i>• <i>MRC guidance on a range of ethical issues</i>• <i>The Socio Legal Studies Association</i>• <i>Social Policy Association</i>• <i>Social Research Association.</i>

Research with human subjects

The rights of participants

The Nuremberg Code:

- Voluntary participation
- Informed consent
- The right to withdraw

Confidentiality and anonymity

Information privacy

“the claim of individuals, groups or institutions to determine for themselves when, how and to what extent information about them is communicated to others”

(Westin, cited Kimmel, 1988)

Implications

If we took the idea of information privacy literally, it would affect:

Declared intentions

Re-use

(and re-use of unethical research)

Secondary analysis and meta analysis

Scientific discourse

Political discourse

These rules are not wrong, but they are over-generalised

Ethical research

The duties of researchers

Social science

Information for a purpose

Particular and general obligations

The public interest

The promotion of welfare

The public character of academic research

Discovery

Engagement

Practice

Networking

Research without consent

'Covert' research

Non-disclosure

– not deception!

Methodological
justifications

Hawthorne effects

Practical justifications

Limited disclosure

The public domain

The limits of information privacy

The private sphere	Personal data Research is public <i>Consent implies publication</i> Disclosure and intrusion Consent is not enough
Non-private personal activity	Criminal activity <i>Domestic violence</i> Organisational research <i>Mystery shopping</i> Public places <i>Mobile phone use in cars</i> Public purposes <i>Mme Cresson's dentist</i>
The public domain	Public scrutiny Public accountability Freedom of information The open society

How conventional presentations of research ethics have gone wrong

Bad rules

- The illegitimate prominence of participants
- Elevating particular duties over general ones
- Defending immoral and criminal conduct
- The threat to public life

Bad practice

- Treating medical rules as necessary and sufficient
- Inappropriate confidentiality and anonymity
- Research Ethics Committees:
Obstacles to research

The diversity of research

- Scholarship
- Discovery and exploration
- Deductive research
- Disciplinary research
- Practice

The variety of researchers

- Academics
- Journalists
- Practitioners
- Regulators
- Investigators

If it's unethical for one group, it's unethical for others

The acquisition of knowledge is fundamental to academic life