Lecture Notes

# Chapter 6: Research Ethics

## Learning Objectives

* 1. Explain why it is necessary to consider ethical issues when designing and conducting research.
  2. State the guidelines that must be followed in conducting research with humans.
  3. Explain the procedures that must be followed to obtain approval to conduct a study.
  4. Specify the issues involved in conducting research with minors.

## Chapter Summary

This chapter discusses research ethics. Research ethics are presented and discussed as are ethical concerns, ethical guidelines for human subjects research, institutional review boards, ethical issues in electronic research, and ethical issues in preparing a report of the research.

## Annotated Chapter Outline

1. Research Ethics
   1. Research ethics influences all phases of the research endeavor. Researchers should attend to ethical behavior at all times in research with human subjects, in electronic research, and when writing up the research report.
2. What Are Research Ethics?
   1. **Ethics:** the principles and guidelines that help us to uphold the things we value
   2. Three approaches
      1. **Deontological Approach:** an ethical approach that says ethical issues must be judged on the basis of some universal code.
         1. Certain actions are inherently unethical and should never be used
      2. **Ethical Skepticism:** an ethical approach that says concrete and inviolate moral codes cannot be formulated but are a matter of individual conscience.
         1. Ethical decisions are the result of one’s conscience so researchers should do what they think is right and not do what they think is wrong.
      3. **Utilitarianism:** an ethical approach that says judgments of the ethics of a study depend on the consequences the study has for the research participants and the benefits that might arise from the study.
         1. Ethical decision results from weighing research study’s potential benefits and costs
         2. This approach is the one that is most widely used.
         3. Discussion question: compare and contrast the three types of ethical principles. What are their strengths and weaknesses?
3. Ethical Concerns: Identify the Ethical Issues That Are Important to Researchers
   1. **Research ethics:** a set of principles developed to guide and assist researchers in conducting ethical studies.
   2. Relationship Between Society and Science
      1. Should researchers study what is considered important in society at a given time?
      2. Should the federal government and other funding agencies use grants to affect the areas researched in a society?
      3. Should researchers ignore societal concerns?
   3. Professional Issues
      1. The primary ethical concern here is fraudulent activity (fabrication or alteration of results) by scientists. Obviously, cheating or lying is never defensible.
      2. **Research misconduct:** fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, performing, or reviewing research, or reporting research results.
      3. Plagiarism--using another’s thoughts and/or words as if they were your own. Also includes using your own words that have been published elsewhere.
      4. Duplicate publication (publishing the same data and results in more than one journal or other publication) should be avoided.
      5. Partial publication (publishing several articles from the data collected in one study). This is allowable as long as the different publications involve different research questions and different data, and as long as it facilitates scientific communication. Otherwise, it should be avoided.
      6. Results from personal and nonpersonal factors.
      7. Discussion question: What are some of the personal and nonpersonal factors that could lead to scientific misconduct?
      8. Discussion question: How do you prevent scientific misconduct?
   4. Treatment of Research Participants
      1. This is probably the most fundamental ethical issue in the field of empirical research.
      2. It is essential that one ensures that research participants are not harmed physically or psychologically during the conduct of research.
      3. Discussion Question: Have students discuss the Tuskegee Experiment and identify the many instances of unethical treatment of research participants.
      4. Discussion Question: Identify the ethical concerns in the S. R. Phillips study described in the chapter.
4. Ethical Guidelines for Research With Humans
   1. AERA guidelines
      1. One set of guidelines specifically developed to guide research conducted by educational researchers is the AERA Guidelines. The AERA is the largest professional association in the field of education, and is also known as the American Educational Research Association.
      2. <http://www.aera.net/About-AERA/Key-Programs/Social-Justice/Research-Ethics>
      3. 5 principles to follow
         1. Professional competence: act only in areas of expertise
         2. Integrity: honest, trustworthy, never jeopardize others’ welfare, **nonmaleficence** (doing no harm to others)
         3. Professional, scientific, and scholarly responsibility
         4. Respect for people’s rights, dignity, and diversity
         5. Social responsibility: **beneficence** (acting for the benefit of others)
   2. **Informed Consent:** agreeing to participate in a study after being informed of its purpose, procedures, risks, benefits, alternative procedures, and limits of confidentiality.
      1. Potential research participants must be provided with information that enables them to make an informed decision as to whether they want to participate in the research study.
      2. An actual consent form is shown in Exhibit 6.3.
      3. Table 6.2 has the information that the researcher must put in a consent form so that potential participants are able to provide informed consent.
      4. If research is conducted at multiple places, you will need approval from all relevant Institutional review boards.
      5. Discussion Question: Why must researchers obtain informed consent?
   3. Informed Consent With Minors as Research Participants.
      1. Informed consent must be obtained from parents or guardians of minors.
      2. Also, assent must be obtained from minors who are old enough or have enough intellectual capacity to say they are willing to participate.
      3. **Assent:** the minor agrees to participate after being informed of all the features of the study that might affect the participant’s willingness to participate.
      4. Exhibit 6.4 has an example of a consent form for parental consent for minors.
      5. Discussion Question: Compare and contrast consent and assent.
   4. Passive Versus Active Consent
      1. **Active Consent:** a process whereby consent is provided by signing a consent form.
      2. **Passive consent:** a process whereby consent is given by not returning the consent form.
      3. Exhibit 6.5 provides an example of a passive consent form
      4. Discussion Question: compare and contrast active and passive consent. Give examples of when you would use each.
   5. Additional Consent: you must identify “gatekeepers” and get their permission to conduct the research.
   6. **Deception:** misleading or withholding information from the research participant
      1. Usually deception is around the nature and/or purpose of the study.
      2. Deception is allowable when the benefits outweigh the costs. However, the researcher is ethically obligated not to use any more deception than is needed to conduct a valid study.
      3. If deception is used, debriefing should be used. **Debriefing** is a poststudy interview in which all aspects of the study are revealed, any reasons for deception are explained, and any questions the participant has about the study are answered.
      4. Debriefing has two goals:
         1. **Dehoaxing**--informing study participants about any deception that was used, and the reasons for its use. The goal is to restore trust.
         2. **Desensitizing**--helping study participants deal with and eliminate any stress or other undesirable feelings that the study might have created.
      5. Discussion Question: Discuss situations when deception may be necessary?
   7. Freedom to Withdraw
      1. Participants must be informed that they are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.
      2. If you have a power relationship with the participants (e.g., if you are their teacher or employer), you must be extra careful to make sure that they really do feel free to withdraw.
   8. Protection from Mental and Physical Harm
      1. This is the most fundamental ethical issue confronting the researcher.
      2. Fortunately, much educational research poses minimal risk to participants
      3. **Institutional Review Board:** the institutional review committee that assesses the ethical acceptability of research proposals.
   9. Confidentiality, Anonymity, and the Concept of Privacy
      1. **Privacy:** having control of others’ access to information about a person. It involves choosing the time and circumstances relating to sharing or withholding information. It also concerns the right to not receive information you may not want to know.
      2. Anonymity and confidentiality are used to protect privacy
      3. **Anonymity:** keeping the identity of the participant from everyone including the researcher.
      4. **Confidentiality** (not revealing the identity of the participant to anyone other than the researcher and his or her staff) is a basic requirement in all studies.
5. Institutional Review Board (IRB): committee of professionals and lay people who review research proposals to ensure that the researcher adheres to federal and local ethical standards in conducting the research.
   1. Researchers must submit a **Research Protocol** (the document submitted to the IRB by the researcher for review) to the IRB for review.
      1. A full example of a research protocol submitted to the IRB is shown in Exhibit 6.6.
   2. Three of the most important categories of review are **exempt studies** (studies involving no risk to participants and not requiring full IRB review), expedited review (i.e., the process by which a study involving minimal risk is rapidly reviewed by fewer members than constitute the full IRB board), and full board review (i.e., review by all members of the IRB).
      1. Although many educational studies are fall into the exempt category, it is the IRB staff and not the researcher who makes the decision as to whether a research protocol is exempt. The IRB will provide the formal documentation of this status for such studies.
      2. Table 6.4 lists the categories of exempt studies
      3. Discussion Question: Describe the process the IRB uses to review studies as well as the different categories of studies reviewed by the IRB.
6. Ethical Issues in Electronic Research
   1. Informed Consent and Internet Research
      1. If it is determined that informed consent is needed, apply the same principles via the medium of the internet.
      2. Just like any other educational research, research conducted electronically might require debriefing.
   2. Privacy and Internet Research
      1. It can be difficult to maintain privacy of data collected via the Internet.
   3. Debriefing and Internet Research
      1. Extra steps must be taken to ensure that debriefing can occur when the Internet is used for research.
   4. Discussion Question: Explain why conducting electronic research is different from other forms of research.
7. Ethical Issues in Preparing the Research Report
   1. Authorship
      1. Goes to the individuals who made a substantial contribution to the conceptualization, design, execution, analysis, or interpretation of the study.
      2. Helping collect, enter, or analyze data does not usually warrant authorship but does warrant acknowledgment in a footnote.
   2. Writing the Research Report
      1. **Plagiarism** refers to using the words or work produced by others and presenting it as your own.
      2. For ***short quotation*s** (quotation of 4 or more words but fewer than 40, around which quotation marks are used), put the material in quotation marks and include citation (including page number).
      3. **Block quotation:** quotation of 40 or more words indented format (including citation and page number.
      4. **Self-plagiarism**: presenting one’s words as original when they have been used previously in another publication.
      5. Remember to give credit for anything that is from someone else.