Ethics in Research

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I. Introduction

In planning a research project involving human subjects, it is important to consider the ethical guidelines designed to protect one's subjects. In particular, medical and psychological experimentation using human subjects involves some element of risk, however minor, and raises questions about the ethics of the process. Any set of rules or guidelines that attempts to define ethical limits for human experimentation raises controversy among members of the scientific community and other segments of society (Best & Kahn, 2003). These scholars hinted that too rigid controls may limit the effectiveness of research, possibly denying society the answers to many important questions. On the other hand, without some restraints, experimental practices could cause serious injury and infringe upon human rights. Most standard textbooks on ethics in social research would, in this case, advise researchers to proceed ethically without threatening the validity of the research endeavor in so for as it is possible to do so (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2005). According to them, conventional wisdom of this kind is admirable in its way, but the problems for researchers can multiply surprisingly when the principle comes to be applied: when they move from the general to the particular, from the abstract to the concrete. Each research undertaking is different and investigators may find that on one occasion their work proceeds smoothly without the hydra-headed creature of ethical concern breaking surface. At another time, they may come to realize that, suddenly and without prior indication, they are in the middle of an ethical minefield, and that the residual problems of a technical and administrative nature that one expects as a matter of course when pursuing educational research are compounded by unforeseen moral questions.

Cohen and his friends also indicated that ethical issues may stem from the kinds of problems investigated by researchers and the methods they use to obtain valid and reliable data. In theory at least, this means that each stage in the research sequence may be a potential source of ethical problems. Thus, 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 information of a sensitive kind); and what is to be done with data (publishing in a manner that causes the participants embarrassment).

Ethical issues go beyond courtesy or etiquette and concern the appropriate treatment of persons in a free society. Some of these questions have been dealt by scientists and philosophers, by enactments of legislative bodies, by codes of ethics of professional organizations, or by guidelines established by educational institutions.

Ethics in ...

Basic Ethical Guidelines

As clearly stipulated in Best (1982), Best & Kahn (2003), American Psychological Association (1982) & Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2005) the following are some ethical issues to be considered in the process of research project.

Informed Consent. Recruitment of volunteers for an experiment should always involve the subject's complete understanding of the procedures employed, the risk involved, and the demands that maybe made upon participants. Whenever possible, subjects should also be informed of the purpose of the research. When subjects are not competent to give informed consent due to age, illness, or disability, the informed consent of parents, guardians, or responsible agents must be secured. This freedom, to participate or to decline, is basic, and it includes the freedom to withdraw from an experiment at anytime without penalty. Coercion to participate or to remain as a participant must not be applied and any exploitation of participants is an unethical practice.

Invasion of Privacy. Ordinarily it is justifiable to observe and record behavior that is essentially public behavior that others normally would be in a position to observe. It is an invasion of privacy to observe and record intimate behavior that the subject has a reason to believe is private. Concealed observers, cameras, microphone, or the use of private correspondence without the subject's knowledge and permission are invasions of privacy. If these practices are to be employed, the participant's understanding of the reasons should be explained and permission secured.

Confidentiality. The ethical researcher holds all information that he or she may gather about the subject in strict confidence, disguising the participant's identity in all records and reports. No one should be in a position to threaten the subject's anonymity nor should any information be released without his or her permission.

Protection from Physical and Mental Stress, Harm or Danger.

In using treatments that may have a temporary or permanent effect on the subjects, the researcher must take all precautions to protect their well-being. Treatments are administered under the direction of competent professional practitioners in clinical or research facilities where effective and thorough precautions and safeguards may be assured. Where some risk is unavoidable, the potential benefits may be sufficient to justify the research. A balance needs to be achieved, with benefit outweighing risk, in such a case.

Knowledge of Outcome. The participant has a right to receive an explanation for the reasons for the experimental procedures and the results of the investigation. The researcher may explain the results and their significance orally, in writing, or by informing participants of the issue of the journal in which the report is published.

As Best (1982) noted ethical researchers not only observe these ethical guidelines but take complete responsibility for the actions of their co experimenters, colleagues, assistants, technical personnel, secretaries and clerks involved in the project, constantly monitoring their research activities. Researchers have obligations to their subjects, their professional colleagues, and the public. They do not discard unfavorable data that would modify the interpretation of their investigation. They make their data available to their professional

Ethics in ...

peers so that they may verify the accuracy of the results. They honor promises made to subjects as a consideration for their participation in a study. They give appropriate credit to those who have aided them in their investigations, participated in the data analysis, or contributed to the preparation of the research report. They place scientific objectivity above personal advantage and recognize their obligation to society for the advancement of knowledge.

Some researchers have been known to justify deception, coercion, invasion of privacy, breach of confidentiality, or risks to subjects in the name of science, but one might suspect that the prestige, ambition, or ego of the experimenter was the primary motivation.

Conclusion

This small paper has attempted to acquaint readers with some of the ethical concerns that are likely to appear in the conduct of research. To this end, attention has been given to certain guidelines, not ethical absolutes, that characterize writing in the field of ethics and a number of professional codes that have been stated in different books.

As Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2005) pinpointed, 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 clarifying value. Third, when one's professional behavior 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 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. Indeed, it should be their aim to strike a balance between discipline and awareness. Discipline without awareness may result in largely mechanical behavior; whereas awareness without discipline can produce inappropriate responses.

References

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Plagiarism has many advantages over the labor of creation. It is much easier to carry out and less hard work. You can finish twenty works of plagiarism in the time it takes to produce one creative work."

Bernardo Atxaga (1951 -)

Ethnicity: ...

I will not continue this tour around the world any more instead, I shall rather try to define these multiple bases of group divisions which seem so diverse to justify a usage in which I label them all 'ethnic'. The term ethnic refers (Jonathan, 1995: p124) to asocial groups which share some aspect of common culture like language, religion, values. The same author contends that if ethnicity is considered synonymous with how people are identified both by themselves and others, language serves as its primary marker, particularly in the context of Africa. Language links people to a specific place of origin which in turn signals a shared cultural history. (Basil, 1995 219) reinforces the same notion and writes, "People identify themselves or have been identified by others as members of certain ethnic groups. While this identification can be based on a number of different criteria, a person's mother tongue is often the most common determinant [factor]."

Religion is another important base of human organization. In common understanding, religious loyalty of an individual is based on conversion and adoption from parents. The great religions of the world, namely, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism and Hinduism include individuals of every race and ethnic group. Early studies reviewed by Brown (1994:89) support the view that in the specific realities of social intercourse, however, religious groups very often act and feel as ethnic groups. It should be recalled that the overwhelming majority of people are born into a particular religion rather than adapt it, just as they are born into an ethnic group.

According to Microsoft Encarta Interactive World Atlas, religions are specifically associated with a defined ethnic group. Thus, in the Sudan and Chad Arabic speaking groups in the north (which are Muslims) contrast with social groups in the south (which are pagans or Christians). In Nigeria the northern linguistic group of Hausa is Muslim while the Ibo and Yoruba of the south are Christian. Aside from the close connection between religion and ethnic group, religion in itself is a culture forming and thus fashioning ethnic groups.

Historically, most of the new states that were formed out of the colonial empires were not nation-states (i.e. states representing a single ethnicity). These new states according to Basil (1995:111) accepted the old arbitrarily demarcated colonial boundaries and faced a new problem of becoming 'nations' by molding people to different ethnic groups into 'Nigerians', 'Kenyans', etc.

The same author continues arguing that, nation building in the African context included the creation of superficial national paraphernalia such as flags; anthems, national days; national language and natural myths. Nation building by one nation may destroy others.

In building the US nation and others, aboriginal nationals were erased or marginalized. Many new states are plagued by 'tribalism', rivalry between ethnic groups within the nations. The same thing resulted in their near disintegration. The case in point is the attempt by Biafra to secede from Nigeria in the 1970. The Rwandan genocide as well as the current problems in the Sudan, the disintegration of India into Pakistan and Bangladesh could be related to a lack of ethnic, religious or racial cohe-

sion within the nations.

The problems of the newly independent states of Asia in the post WWII were somewhat different. According to B. Sugata (1998:82) in Pakistan, India, Indonesia and the Philippines, the problem of creating a single nation became very difficult varying in intensity from country to country. It seems that the problem in each case was; would other identifiers- religion, linguistic, racial, and caste evolve themselves into new national identifiers with some possible claim to their own kind of state? Would they soon be demanding political recognition for their secession, with perhaps an ultimate claim to the right of independence?

In the European context with the exception of some eastern European states the ideal form of the states is one in which there is a state for each ethnic group and one ethnic group for each state. According to Basil (1995: 220) in the African context this is almost impossible. The struggle which aims at creating such an ideal nation state is unbearable.

Many multi-ethnic states have tried to argue that their ethnic conflicts should be left to themselves and that the outside world shouldn't interfere. But, the reality is that no ethnic issue can remain simply an intra-state issue.

Lawrence (1988) enumerates a number of factors which are leading to the internationalization of ethnic conflicts. There is first the increasing difficulty of making ethnicity and state concede. Secondly, there is a rapid growth of international information and communication technology which has led towards ethnic consciousness every where. The third factor leading to the internationalization of ethnic conflicts is the increasing refusal of the international community to oppose the

Ethnicity: ...

persecution of ethnic minority describing it as an internal affair. According to Christopher (1995), another important factor which has made ethnic problem so magnificent in so many different countries is the appeal to ethnic identity that draws more on such primal things as one's language, religion and early family experiences.

For all of the reasons I have noted, ethnicity seems to have become a permanent force in the contemporary world and multi-ethnicity is increasingly common in many states. It is urgent, therefore, to recognize the need in every country for new approaches to the handling of ethnic problems some of which erupt into a violent conflict, like, for example, what happened in Nigeria some time in the near past.

In the historic past powerful and forceful attempts of 'assimilation' and permanent subordination of certain groups were dominant approaches. Both approaches didn't work and never survived longer in the contemporary world. History has taught us that each 'threatened' nation can make its claim to just and equal treatment and surely will find strong support for its claims. Perhaps the answer to multi-ethnic problems in each country will be a situation in which each component nation has guaranteed rights, shares in the economy, politics and all other dimension of social life.

Yet, aside from conflicts within nations, ethnicity as a significant and potent problem raises serious questions related to relations among states. It may sow mutual mistrust which may serve as a source of potential breed of squabbles and wars among states. In the world in which the 'international community' championed by the US is waging the so called 'war on terror', the problem of ethnicity as a source of conflict within states and among states will continue unless the issue receives sustained and adequate attention of the policy makers and multi-lateral organizations like the UN.

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"I am a Jew to Catholics and a Catholic to Jews; an Englishman to the French and a Frenchman to the English."

James Goldsmith (1933 - 1997)

(*A man with mixed background of different race & religion.*)

The Leeside ...

Baseless and greed-motivated wars. Let us frankly tell them the fact that our way has been destructive and they have to learn much from us elders for the betterment of their future.

This can be done more in the education system of any country. We can begin teaching our students from their lower grades, for instance, how the ecosystem is polluted and how we can avoid any sort of pollution. Let's educate them how we can preserve nature. Let's tell them honestly how few insatiably selfish and adamantly narrow-minded citizens of this world are poisoning our beautiful habitat. Let's make the generation aware of the chronic problems we are in through our education system, for they are the ones who are going to face the dire consequences of global warming and/or anything like that that have devastative effects. Let them know their responsibility that they must fight for a better world starting, for example, from planting a single seedling around their locality. Let students be informed that they can influence their parents if they get them partaking in the process of aggravating global warming, such as involving in deforestation or gas and chemical emissions. In this way, if we teach and empower the young generation through the education system, for the sake of their own future, they will take care of themselves and the danger hovering this time around will become on the wane soon.

The way to win an atomic war is to make certain it never starts.

Omar Bradley (1893 - 1981)

In our nuclear age, the lack of a sense of history could have mortal consequences.

Hubert H. Humphrey

(1911 - 1978)

Many people, politicians and the public alike, believe that global warming is a rock-solid certainty.

Lee R. Raymond

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