
5 Ethical Considerations

The consideration of ethics in research, and in general business for that matter, is of growing importance. It is, therefore, critical that you understand the basics of ethical research and how this might affect your research project. This is especially important if your research involves interaction with businesses or members of the general community who serve as participants (i.e., respondents) in your research. There are a range of interactions in your research that might occur, including in-depth interviews, focus groups, surveys, or even observing people's behavior.

Though all researchers (student, professional, or academic) are well intentioned, there is the possibility that interaction with participants may inadvertently harm them in some unintended way. This could include

- Psychological harm—for example, researching the use of nudity in advertising may show participants images that offend them.
- Financial harm—researching unethical behavior within a given firm may provide management with information on individual employees that results in an individual getting fired, or undertaking industry-based research may inadvertently share sensitive information with a firm's competitors, resulting in financial harm to the organization.
- Social harm—researching how lifestyle affects consumption may unintentionally disclose a person's sexual orientation when that person wanted to keep this confidential.

It is your responsibility to consider whether any type of harm could occur when you plan your research and to ensure that mechanisms are instituted to remove it. It is, therefore, essential that you carefully evaluate the *potential* for harm to arise and ensure that you (a) behave according to appropriate ethical standards; (b) consider how your research *might* negatively affect participants; and (c) protect yourself, your supervisors/teachers, and your institution from being placed in situations in which individuals could make claims of inappropriate behavior, resulting in public criticism or even your being sued.

Unfortunately, there is an increasing amount of litigation in the world and many universities have processes in place for vetting research to ensure that it is

undertaken in an ethical fashion. This ensures that the participant is protected and also ensures that the students, staff, and university undertaking the research are protected.

In covering the topic of ethics, we are not trying to change your values, but rather we want to make you more aware of potential ethical issues that might arise when undertaking your research. To do this, some questions will be asked that, if appropriately answered, will ensure that potential ethical problems are avoided.

This chapter is designed to discuss a range of ethical issues. Many of these issues are broadly covered in the various business and marketing ethics texts (for example, Smith & Quelch, 1992) as well as marketing research texts (for example, Churchill, 1991). These texts tend to look at research ethics from a client-agency perspective; that is, where the researcher is working for a client. The following material will try to broaden this view by also considering general social research ethics (Homan, 1991), covering a range of data collection approaches such as participant observation (Bulmer, 1982) and surveys/experiments (Sieber, 1982).

What Is Human Intervention?

In the context of this chapter, human intervention is defined to encompass a broad range of activities, including interviews, review of corporate records, focus groups, experiments, oral histories, or surveys. It basically involves the researcher having access to information that is not in the public domain. *If* your research involves accessing information that is readily and publicly available, such as a content analysis, meta-analysis, or literature review, it is unlikely that much of the material discussed within this chapter would apply, although some issues, such as academic fraud and plagiarism, would apply to *all* types of research.

Some examples of student research that would be less likely to involve human intervention would include the following:

- Content analysis of information contained in advertisements
- A multiple-regression study that uses data from publicly available databases, such as Predicast
- An examination of a data set that was collected for another purpose, assuming that the participants had already given their prior permission for others researchers to access this data

Codes of Ethical Conduct/Practice

There are various ethical codes of conduct that regulate researchers' behavior. These codes discuss many issues that potentially might arise in your research, as well as other issues associated with professional practice (Beauchamp & Bowie, 1997). For example, the American Marketing Association's code of conduct (AMA, 2003) touches on research-related issues and specifically states

that members must “not knowingly do harm.” It also specifies other issues of particular interest to professional marketers, such as the issues relating to the development of safe new products or the prohibition of price-fixing activities, and so forth (see Appendix 5.1).

Ethical issues are also examined by the European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research’s (ESOMR, 2003) Code of Practice, which sets out researchers’ broad responsibilities (see Appendix 5.2). ESOMR provides more detailed codes and guidelines for a range of different activities, ranging from broad-based activities such as a “Guide to Opinion Polls” to more specific guidelines on “Mystery Shopping” and “Interviewing Children” (see Exhibit 5.1). The codes are, of course, not static, and there are also specific detailed discussions of ethical practice relating to new technologies such as the Internet (AMA, 2003; ESOMR, 2003).

Exhibit 5.1 Index of ESOMAR Codes and Guidelines

All ESOMAR members and the management of the marketing research companies listed in the ESOMAR Directory have undertaken to comply with the ICC/ESOMAR International Code of Marketing and Social Research Practice which is applied by over 100 associations world-wide.

1. ICC/ESOMAR International Code of Marketing and Social Research Practice
 - ESOMAR Notes to interpreting the ICC/ESOMAR Code
 - Annexe to the Code Notes regarding European Union Data Protection requirements
2. ESOMAR/WAPOR Guide to Opinion Polls
3. ESOMAR Guideline on Maintaining the Distinctions between Marketing Research and Direct Marketing
4. ESOMAR Guideline on Customer Satisfaction Studies
5. ESOMAR Guideline on How to Commission Research
6. ESOMAR Guideline on Interviewing Children and Young People
7. ESOMAR Guideline on Mystery Shopping
8. ESOMAR Guideline on Tape and Video-Recording and Client Observation of Interviews and Group Discussions
9. ESOMAR Guideline on Pharmaceutical Marketing Research. Endorsed by EphMRA
10. ESOMAR Guideline on Conducting Marketing and Opinion Research Using the Internet
11. The ESOMAR Arbitration Service
12. The ESOMAR Disciplinary Procedures (PDF file)

Ethical guidelines are not limited to the marketing discipline, as psychologists also have detailed guidelines regulating research involving human intervention. As can be seen in Appendix 5.3, the American Psychological Association’s (APA, 2003) *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* covers a diverse range of research issues, many of which relate to business research as well. For example, there is a whole section dealing with privacy and confidentiality (Section 4 of the APA’s code).

Many universities have also developed guidelines for conducting ethical research (Polonsky, 1998). In Australia, all universities have agreed to have all research comply with one set of ethical guidelines for *all* types of human intervention. These guidelines were developed by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC, 2003a) and apply to all types of research. In addition to the guidelines, the NHMRC also produced the *Human Research Ethics Handbook*, “which is the primary guideline for ethics committees and researchers alike” (NHMRC, 2003b).

Within some universities, researchers, students, and staff must complete detailed applications to be reviewed by an independent ethics committee (sometimes called a human subjects committee or human research ethics committee) before research can be undertaken (Polonsky, 1998). These committees apply basic ethical principles to all research and seek to ensure that all ethical issues are considered and appropriately addressed. Though not all the issues in every code of practice will apply to your research, reviewing these codes will give you some idea of the complexity of the issues that need to be addressed when planning your research project. Some of these issues will be described in more detail later in this chapter.

Ethical Philosophies

Within the ethics discipline there are a number of different approaches for examining ethics and values. Two philosophical approaches that relate closely to the discussion of student research ethics are deontological and teleological philosophies. To assist you in getting a better understanding of where harm may arise, a number of approaches will be briefly discussed.

According to Skinner, Ferrell, and Dubinsky (1988), “deontological philosophies focus on the *factors* or *means* used to arrive at an ethical decision. These philosophies emphasise moral obligations or commitments that should be binding or necessary for proper conduct” (p. 213). To put it quite simply, a deontological approach means that you should *not* harm participants in any way, no matter what the potential benefit. On the other hand, “teleological philosophies emphasize the *consequences* that result from an action. In other words, they deal with the moral worth of the behaviour as determined totally by the consequences of the behavior” (p. 213). This approach asks you to evaluate whether the benefits of the research outweigh the cost to participants; if so, the research would be considered acceptable.

A teleological approach is frequently used in medical research, where the research needs to weigh up the potential harm to participants versus the harm from them not participating. For example, when testing a new drug, it is determined that there is a 0.01% chance of some negative side effect occurring, but the chances of getting the disease the drug is trying to prevent is substantially higher, e.g., 10.0%. Thus, the potential harm from the research is outweighed by the potential benefit of the research. It is suggested that a teleological approach is inappropriate for your research, as you and other students would be unskilled in weighing up the associated costs and benefits.

Alternative ethical perspectives are also put forward in the ethics literature. For example, Kantian ethics suggest that “persons should be treated as ends and never purely as means” (Beauchamp & Bowie, 1997). Thus, any practice you might want to undertake that does not consider how the situation affects the individual would be unethical. This is a more stringent perspective than a deontological approach, as an individual would not have to be harmed for a breach of the Kantian perspective to occur. Other ethical perspectives put forward include common morality theory, rights theory, virtue ethics, feminist theories, and ethics of care, but these will not be discussed here, as they are less frequently applied in research associated with business practices (see Beauchamp & Bowie, 1997, Chapter 1 for a discussion of these). For our discussion of research ethics in relation to your project a deontological approach will be adopted; that is, any practice that causes any harm to an individual should be avoided.

Ethical Issues to Consider

The goal of your research project is to facilitate your learning through a better understanding of research and how it influences practice. However, in undertaking your research, you will frequently be required to seek information from individuals who are not normally part of the educational process (e.g., average consumers, managers, employees, etc.). You will need to ensure that no harm occurs to these voluntary participants and that all participants have made the decision to assist you with full information as to what is required *and* what, if any, potential negative consequences may arise from such participation. Those who choose not to participate must also be given the same information on which to make their decision not to be involved.

There are a diverse range of research methods and research contexts potentially available to you, and each carries its own specific ethical considerations, which makes it difficult to provide one global set of ethical issues. It would be impossible to construct a composite list of all potential problems. For example, Table 5.1 lists a set of potential ethical problems relating to researching consumers. This listing is not comprehensive, and similar lists could be developed in relation to research involving employees or managers.

There are six broad ethical areas that need to be considered in your research. In this chapter, we will discuss voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, the potential for harm, communicating the results, and more specific ethical issues. These six areas are interdependent, and, as such, the following discussions will overlap a bit. It should be emphasized that you need to check whether your university has processes or procedures that must be followed and that may differ from those described here. You should also identify the relevant deadlines for presenting any required documentation to the ethics committee. The discussions in the following subsections are designed to ensure that you understand the ethical issues associated with each area, as well as provide some processes for addressing the issues if they arise.

Table 5.1 Potential Ethical Problems Relating to Researching Consumers

| <i>Ethical Issue</i> | <i>Right Violated</i> | <i>Compensation Available</i> |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| Preserving participants' anonymity | Right to privacy | |
| Exposing participants to mental stress | Right to safety | Right to be heard Right to redress |
| Use of special equipment and techniques | Right to privacy Right to choose | Right to redress |
| Involving participants in research without their knowledge | Right to be informed Right to privacy | Right to redress |
| Use of deception | Right to be informed | Right to be heard Right to redress |
| Use of coercion | Right to choose | |
| Selling under the guise of research | Right to be informed | |
| Causing embarrassment, hindrance, or offense | Right to respect | Right to redress |

SOURCE: Smith and Quelch (1992, p. 162).

Voluntary Participation

Participation should be voluntary in *all* research, and there should be no coercion or deception (this latter issue will be discussed in the subsections titled "Informed Consent" and "Other, More Specific Ethical Issues"). For the most part, you should not be in a position to force respondents to participate, but there are some situations in which could potentially occur. You should remember that participants are assisting you, and they should be *invited* to participate, with a clear understanding that they are under no obligation to do so and that there will be no negative consequences for them if they do not assist you in your research.

The potential for coercion varies depending on whom you are seeking assistance from. For example, if you are undertaking an intercept-type activity involving surveying fellow students in the university parking lot, it is unlikely that potential participants would be unduly pressured by you asking for a few minutes of their time. This assumes that you do not hound them until they agree to participate. Even when dealing with peers, there is a slight potential for coercion to occur, as you might exaggerate the importance of participants' assistance or of the study. For example, you might say something like, "I need you to fill out this survey or I will fail Subject X."

Such a statement would be inappropriate, as it places unnecessary social pressure on potential respondents.

In some circumstances, the target sample group might have unique characteristics or needs, and if this were the case, they would require special treatment. For example, consider the case in which a student was undertaking research involving a group with limited English capabilities. In this situation, respondents might not understand what they are being asked to do and, equally important, might not understand that the activity is voluntary (Davidson, 1995). Thus, you should ensure that any vulnerable groups are protected, even from unintentional harm.

The issue of voluntary consent can also arise when students undertake research of employees within an organization. This might occur if you were to arrange for a firm to allow you to research the organization's activities and/or employees, and it is especially of concern when you research your own workplace.¹ In these situations, it should be made clear to participants that (a) the organization has allowed you to investigate the specified activities; (b) any involvement is voluntary; (c) there is no penalty for not participating; and (d) specific information from the research will or will not be given to their employer.

Confidentiality and anonymity are potentially even more important when you are researching other staff within your own organization. How can you, who may be in a managerial position, indicate that participants will not be harmed if they don't participate in the study? One way to overcome this potential problem is to separate yourself from respondents, so that responses are confidential/anonymous. For example, in a group project, it might be possible for a member of the group who is not affiliated with the firm to collect and code the data. It would then be impossible for you to know who participated.

Another solution, in the case of survey research, might be to have the organization distribute the surveys and then have employees return them confidentially/anonymously to you. In this way, neither you nor the firm can identify who participated. For other data collection techniques, there are other approaches for addressing this issue. For example, if you want to conduct interviews with employees, the organization could write to employees and invite them to contact you or simply show up at a predetermined appointment. However, if you work within the firm, you may still be able to identify the individual. As will be discussed in other subsections, knowing the people who participated is not necessarily problematic but needs to be considered, and participants may need to be protected.

Informed Consent

Another important issue in student research involving human intervention is to ensure that potential participants fully understand what they are being asked to do and that they are informed if there are any potential negative consequences of such participation. The most effective way to address the informed consent issue is through the use of an information sheet, which is

provided to all those who are invited to participate. If possible, this should be on official university letterhead, as this not only has been shown to increase the response rate but also informs respondents that this is an official university activity. In situations in which there *is* a potential for participant harm to occur, participants should be given the invitation sufficiently in advance to enable them to carefully consider whether they will participate.

Appendix 5.3 provides a sample information sheet, as well as a range of alternative information that could be included depending on the type of research involved. It is important that the information included be sufficiently clear so that your target group can understand what they are being asked to do. The level of complexity will vary based on the project and targeted respondent. For example, you may need to describe the study differently if you are examining CEOs than if the participants are high school students.

What information should be included in the information letter? The issues should be sufficient for individuals to make an informed decision as to whether they will participate. The letter should tell them who you are and why you are doing the project. For example, "I am an Information Science student at University X and I am undertaking a research project as part of a Systems Design course."

The letter should also tell participants what the project is about and the desired outcomes. For example, "This project is designed to examine Human Resource Managers' attitudes toward the outsourcing of recruitment, to see if they believe that these services are effective." There should also be a brief discussion of how and why the participants were selected. For example, "For this study we are interested in the views of local accountants and have contacted all firms listed in the local yellow pages under accountants."

Once you have explained who you are, and broadly what you are doing and why, it is essential that you explain what you are asking them to do. For example, "We would like you to complete the attached survey, which should take approximately 15 minutes to complete and is being administered with the permission of your firm. When finished, you can place the survey in the collection box in the lunchroom." *If* information is being distributed back to an organization, it is important that this is clearly stated. For example, "We will be providing the finance manager with a copy of the final report and will be quoting individuals who have given us permission to do so." In this way, individuals can hopefully identify the negative implications of participation, and if such consequences exist, they should be explicitly stated. For example, "Though we will not quote individual respondents, given the focus of the research and small number of respondents, it may be possible that individuals could be identified by their comments." A statement such as this clearly identifies that some harm *could possibly* arise depending on the topic. There are other situations in which respondents might need to be warned about the focus of the study. For example, "We will be showing participants copies of advertisements containing female nudity similar to those in magazines such

as Cosmopolitan. If you are offended by such advertisements, you may want to decline participation.” In this latter case, the students have explicitly tried to protect the respondent from the potential of harm.

The information sheet should also discuss how respondents would be provided feedback, if at all. It should also include contact details of your supervisor(s). In some instances, it might need to include a complaints mechanism, although this will vary by institution and may or may not be required (see the bottom of Exhibit 5.2). Last, though this is not an ethical issue, students should not forget to provide a deadline for responding, as this ensures they get the information requested in a timely fashion.

Exhibit 5.2 Example of an Information Sheet

<Italic material should be filled in for the specific project.>
 <UNIVERSITY LETTER HEAD>

<Supervisor's/Lecturer's
 Contact Details>

Dear Potential Participant,

As part of <SUBJECT X> I/We am/are undertaking a research project entitled <TITLE>. The project examines <1 or 2 sentences describing what the project is about and outcomes>. <Explain why they were chosen and how>.

We would like you to <1 or 2 sentences explaining what you want them to do>. This will take approximately <X minutes>. Your participation is completely voluntary [for employees of an organization it would be beneficial to inform them that this was achieved] and there will be no negative consequences to you for not participating.

[If there are audio or videotapes of interviews it might be appropriate to allow participants to review tapes or transcripts. If you use these, it is also beneficial to say:] During the interview, you will have the opportunity to edit the tape and/or stop the interview at any time. Prior to beginning the interview we will ask you to sign a consent form.

[If using a survey you can say:] Please return the survey to <Name of person collecting responses> by <Date>. Your completion and return of the survey is taken as an indication of your consent to participate.

[You can also say (more than one may be applicable):]

1. We will be providing <X> with a copy of the final report; however, data will be aggregated such that individuals cannot be identified.
2. We will be providing <X> with a copy of the report and will be quoting individual comments with your permission.
3. We will be providing a copy of the results to your organization, which will make the results available to you.
4. If you would like a summary of results, they will be available from our supervisor after <Date>.

Thank you for considering participating in this study. If you have any questions in relation to my/our study, please contact my/our supervisor at the above address.

[ALL Students Sign.]

[Your university may also require you to include a complaints mechanism, such as the following:]

The university requires that all participants are informed that if they have any complaint concerning the manner in which research is conducted, they may direct it to the researcher, or if an independent person is preferred, they can contact <X at Phone and Address>.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Within the information sheet, you may have mentioned that you will keep respondents' answers confidential and/or anonymous. These issues have been mentioned earlier, but they should be discussed further. You need to understand the difference between these two issues, as they are often confused.

Anonymity requires that you do not know who the participants are. This could be achieved through random phone surveying or having an organization distribute a survey on behalf of the student. Confidentiality means that you know who the participants are, but that their identity will not be revealed in any way in the resulting report. As we mentioned earlier, confidentiality is very important especially when you are examining situations within a firm in which you will give managers a copy of the report. It could also be important when undertaking an industry-based study, and the final report will be distributed to all participants, who may be competitors.

You must consider how to protect your participants, and if there is any possibility that they will not be protected, this must be clearly stated to potential respondents in the accompanying information letters and consent forms (discussed in more detail later in this chapter). If individuals clearly know they will be identified and that the report will be distributed to managers or competitors, there is no ethical problem associated with responses not remaining confidential or anonymous.

There are several ways that anonymity and confidentiality can be protected. As mentioned earlier, if the researcher does not know who replies, individual confidentiality and anonymity are usually protected. However, it may be possible that individuals could still be identified based on the level of analysis. For example, how many 45-year-old female senior managers in the Finance Department are there within one organization? If the answer is one, then that individual *could* be identified if the analysis is too detailed. Therefore, you need to be careful as to how detailed and/or segmented your data is.

Potential for Harm

There are a number of ways in which participants can be harmed: physical harm, psychological harm, emotional harm, embarrassment (i.e., social harm), and so on. It is important for you to identify any potential for harm and determine how this potential for harm could be overcome. Ideally, your research should have minimal, *if any*, potential for any harm to occur. This issue is frequently one of the most difficult for students to address, as it requires them to place themselves in the other person's shoes. The question is *not* whether you believe harm could occur, but whether participants or potential participants believe that harm could occur.

There are some topics in which it could be expected that some harm might arise. For example, what would happen if you were to examine sexual harassment in the workplace, which might identify respondents who are either

presently being harassed or where harassed in the past? Ideally, projects that examine issues in which there is a high likelihood of participant harm should not proceed *unless* a supervisor was actively involved and ensures that processes were in place to address any harmed individuals. One possible way to address the harm in such a project would be to provide participants with information on counseling services or appropriate support bodies dealing with the issue. Such materials should be distributed to all respondents with the information sheet, so that those who need assistance can seek it. In this way, you will have at least provided a mechanism to assist any harmed individuals and thus undertake a duty of care in regard to participants. While the research per se did not harm the individual, it may cause additional distress, and thus it is your responsibility to address the issue.

In other situations, there could be more direct harm to participants. For example, a study looking at staff drinking on the job could result in someone being fired if the study identified that they had a problem. As mentioned earlier, even showing participants advertisements used in the media may embarrass or offend some segments of the community. Thus, you must identify any potential harm to participants and seek to ensure that the potential is minimized within the study as well as that participants are clearly informed of the potential for harm.

Though not a mechanism for preventing harm, in cases involving interviews and/or focus groups, it may also be beneficial to have respondents sign consent forms in addition to receiving an information sheet. This makes it clear that individuals have agreed to participate; however, given that individuals should always be given the right to withdraw at any time, this may provide less protection than anticipated (consent forms will be examined in more detail in the subsection titled “Other, More Ethical Issues Specific Methods”). The real answer to minimizing harm is to select topics and methods that preclude any harm arising.

Communicating Results

There are three broad issues that you need to be aware of when completing your research project report and communicating results with your lecturer/professor/supervisor and with clients, should they exist: plagiarism, academic fraud, and misrepresenting results.

Plagiarism

The first issue of plagiarism relates to all student work; that is, you need to be very careful that you do not misrepresent someone else’s work as your own. The appropriate techniques for referencing others’ ideas are discussed in the chapter on Literature Reviews. There may be a temptation to “cut and paste” others’ work to form new ideas. This is unfortunately getting easier with the use of electronic databases and information on the Web. Do *not* be

tempted to simply cut paragraphs (or more) out of other documents. *If* you do, make sure you appropriately cite this material. In most universities, plagiarism is a breach of the student code of conduct and can result in failure of the subject/class or even expulsion from the institution. Therefore, you need to be very careful when using material from others to ensure that it is adequately referenced.

Academic Fraud

Once students begin undertaking research involving the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data, there is also the possibility of what is known as academic fraud, which in most cases is perceived by universities as bad if not worse than plagiarism. Academic fraud involves the intentional misrepresentation of what has been done. This would include making up data and/or results from the data or purposefully putting forward conclusions that are not accurate. Students may be inclined to commit academic fraud for a number of reasons. For example, they may have difficulty accessing the correct people to survey and so make up data. In other cases, students may find that their results are inconclusive and think that they need to find *something* in order to receive a good grade.

The temptation to commit academic fraud should be avoided. As you need to realize, most research projects have “hiccups,” and, in fact, many academic journal articles include a limitation section that identifies unforeseen problems. To ensure that you will be able to get the data needed, think about the project in advance and come up with contingencies should problems arise. For example, one group of students wanted to undertake a random telephone survey of 18- to 25-year-old males by randomly calling people until they obtained 100 responses. After they called 100 people, they found that they received only one response. On looking at the census data, they found that this group (18- to 25-year-old males) represented only 5% of the population; thus if they were lucky, they would only have had five respondents from their 100 calls. The group decided that they would rather survey male students in the university cafeteria in this age category. As this example shows, a data collection problem forced the students to modify the design and refocus the question, which in this case was fine and still satisfied the assignment requirements.

In regard to research results, you may get concerned if your findings are inclusive or are inconsistent with existing literature. Many researchers undertake studies that don't find the expected outcomes; unfortunately, you will find fewer of these works published, as journals don't often want to say that nothing interesting was found. However, for your research, this should not be a problem, and in many cases there might be sound reasons that no result was found. For example, the instrument may have been imprecise, the sample problematic, the context of the study different, and so forth. In most cases, your projects are evaluated on the process, rather than the outcomes,

although the criteria to be used to evaluate the research need to be clarified with your individual instructor.

Misrepresenting the Results

The last issue, misrepresenting the results, is especially important for students undertaking their project for a client. In many situations, you will be so good at marketing your work that businesses may forget that these are student projects, which frequently have substantial limitations. In the second place, students are just that, students. You are learning about the application of research to solve business problems and, as such, may make conclusions and recommendations that are inconstant or incorrect based on what you found. On occasion, some students (not you, of course) may purposefully misrepresent their work to impress their business client. Academic supervisors, on the other hand, will frequently identify these exaggerations and mark the work down accordingly.

The problem of overclaiming is often difficult to overcome without the assistance of your lecturer/professor/supervisor, who, as an objective expert, will be able to determine if there are any substantial errors or omissions. If you do have a client, you should make sure that any report to clients clearly specifies what was done and what limitations exist. In addition, we recommend that your instructor provide some objective feedback that is passed on to the client with any final report.

Other, More Specific Ethical Issues

The issues discussed so far have been applicable to a wide range of research projects. There are, however, a number of ethical issues that may arise in specific situations or when using specific types of research techniques. A number of these issues will be discussed in the following subsections, but once again these are in no way comprehensive in terms of other ethical issues that could arise, and these are meant only to be a guide.

Conflicts of Interest

This issue arises when you or one group member is an individual employed in the industry you are researching and you do not inform all respondents of this fact. While the research may be a good opportunity to gain competitive information, such action would be ethically inappropriate. It is always surprising how much competitively useful information a business will give student researchers. The easiest way to overcome this problem is to not place yourself or your group in this position to start with; that is, if you work in one firm in an industry, don't try to look at your competitors. However, if you do, it would be imperative that you make your dual status as researcher and competitor clear in the information sheet.

Focus Group Participant Identification

When conducting a focus group, the researcher is not the only one involved, as there are other participants in the focus group, and its dynamic nature is one of the benefits of its use (see Chapter 9 for a discussion of focus groups). However, this means that the information discovered within the group becomes common knowledge among all those in attendance. Therefore, it is important that members of the focus group sign appropriate consent forms in situations in which this information might be used against the person who said something or a third person who was discussed. The consent form could include a statement regarding participants keeping the information discussed confidential. This method is, of course, not foolproof, as it is unclear that any penalties for breaching the agreement could be imposed, but at least you are undertaking due diligence to protect participants and others.

Deceit

In some cases, that telling respondents your true intent might modify their response or behavior. For example, if your group were undertaking an experiment to determine whether an interviewer's attire or gender influence respondents, you would not want to tell respondents this, as it would most likely bias the results. However, for the most part deceit should be *avoided* at all times. This is one of the situations in which researchers might be tempted to apply a teleological ethical view; that is, does the benefit of misleading the respondents outweigh any potential harm to participants.

In some cases, the deceit may be minor; for example, in examining the impact of health labels on alcohol, respondents are told it is a study of factors affecting alcohol consumption. However, in other cases, such as the one related to collecting competitive data under the guise of student research, it is more substantial. Deceit should only be used if no other method of researching the issue is available and the students' instructor is well aware of what is happening. In addition, at the conclusion of the intervention, for instance, at the end of the survey in the first example, participants should be informed (i.e., debriefed) of the study's real purpose and be given the right to have their information withdrawn (i.e., not used). In extreme cases of deception, the debriefing may need to be more detailed and structured, although student researchers should generally not undertake studies requiring excessive deceit.

Observation

Another ethical issue that may arise when undertaking projects involves the observation of participants. This becomes an ethical issue especially when you are observing people in a public or quasipublic place. For example, what if you want to examine how respondents behave in the ice cream section of a food store (i.e., how much time they spend there, what products they look at, etc.)? In this situation, it is likely that asking to observe people will

modify their behavior, and therefore, researchers may not want to explicitly ask each person if he or she can be watched. One solution to this issue is to have notices placed at the entrance of the store indicating that researchers will be operating in this area at these times. Individuals not wishing to participate could then avoid this area at these times. Should you wish to videotape these encounters, it may also be advisable to seek permission using a consent form to use the information after the participant has been taped, even if a notice is used (if someone declines, you should erase this person's data). Broader covert observation, such as hidden cameras in work areas without employee awareness (and possibly consent), should be avoided, and it is not only usually inappropriate but often illegal as well.

Permission From Organization/Location

One ethical issue that students frequently overlook relates to getting written permission from the organization in which the research is being undertaken or the location in which the data is being collected. Students have been ejected from shopping malls simply because they did not have written permission to be there. In one case, the person who gave them oral permission had simply not passed this information on to those responsible for security. In another case, the students' contact suddenly left the organization, and since the students did not have permission in writing, they were not allowed to proceed.

When getting written permission, it is also important that the person you talk with has the ability to give that permission and that your activities are organized well in advance. For example, one group had been planning for several months to examine employees in one organization, assuming that getting permission would be easy, and waited until the last minute. Unfortunately, they discovered that their request would have to go through several levels within the organization and, therefore, would take more time than they had.

Video/Audio Taping

In a number of situations, you may wish to audio record or videotape the specific intervention. This can be done for a number of reasons, such as to ensure that no verbal information is missed in a focus group or interview. Alternatively, you may be attempting to capture nonverbal information, such as body language. Taping of participants has been discussed earlier, but the ethical issues associated with it should be reinforced here as well. It is essential that when taping participants, you clearly state in the information sheet and consent form that you will be doing so. You should also allow participants to have some ability to edit the tape, and as with all activities, allow participants to withdraw, even during the taping process. You should tell participants what will happen to the taped material after it has been analyzed, and in some cases it may be worthwhile to offer the tape to the participant. In most cases, the tapes will be erased after the data has been transcribed. We also recommend that you obtain consent forms from participants when taping

activities. Though participants can withdraw at any time, this still provides some evidence that participants initially agreed to participate.

Consent Forms

Whenever interviewing (other than a researcher-administered survey), audio/videotaping, or conducting a focus group, we strongly suggest that you not only use an information sheet but have the respondent sign a consent form as well. You should keep the consent form as an indication of informed consent by the respondent, should any question arise. However, you need to remember that a person who signs an informed consent form can still rescind their consent (i.e., it is not a binding document) for any reason, and you must not use the information they provided.

For the most part, the information contained in the consent form should be similar to the material in the information sheet, but there is more emphasis on what the respondent is agreeing to do and that they understand any potential negative consequences, as described in the information sheet. Exhibit 5.3 provides an example of a consent form. Some specific information that should be included relates to whether the participant agrees to be quoted in the final report and what happens to any tapes of the interview/focus group that might exist. As discussed in the focus group section, there is also a clause related to keeping any information discussed during the focus group confidential, which is designed to protect the other participants in the focus group discussions.

Exhibit 5.3 Example of a Consent Form

<Italic material should be filled in for the specific project.>

<UNIVERSITY LETTER HEAD>

<Supervisor's/Lecturer's

Contact Details>

CONSENT FORM

<Title of Project>

I, (please print) _____ have read the information on the research project <Title of Project> that is to be conducted by <Student name(s)> from the University of <X>, and all queries have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in this investigation, which involves <X>. [If this consent form is for a focus group, students may wish to include a statement such as: I agree to keep all information confidential and not discuss it with individuals other than the student researchers.]

I understand that I can withdraw from this project at any time without reason or penalty. My responses will remain confidential and any documentation, including audio/visual tapes, will be destroyed once the project is completed. My identity will not be revealed without my consent to anyone other than the investigator conducting the project. [This clause would state that they had given their consent to be quoted if they had.]

<Signature>

<Date>

Conclusion

As has been discussed in this chapter, there are various potential ethical issues that you should carefully consider when planning your research. Though the discussion in this chapter can be used as a guide, it is important that you determine what the appropriate rules within your institution are. The objective of these guidelines is to ensure that potential respondents have full information before voluntarily participating in your research. In addition, you need to put yourself in the participant's position and determine if there is any reasonable possibility of harm arising. It is your responsibility to eliminate, or at least minimize, this possibility. Addressing the potential for harm might require a modification of the research design or of the specific questions asked. For this reason, it is important that this issue be considered when designing the study rather than once the project has substantially progressed.

Note

1. The instances of students researching their own workplace may increase as part-time and/or mature student enrollments increase.

Appendixes

Appendix 5.1 AMA Code of Ethics

Members of the American Marketing Association are committed to ethical professional conduct. They have joined together in subscribing to this Code of Ethics embracing the following topics:

Responsibilities of the Marketer

Marketers must accept responsibility for the consequences of their activities and make every effort to ensure that their decisions, recommendations and actions function to identify, serve and satisfy all relevant publics: customers, organizations and society.

Marketers' Professional Conduct must be guided by:

1. The basic rule of professional ethics: not knowingly to do harm;
2. The adherence to all applicable laws and regulations;
3. The accurate representation of their education, training and experience; and
4. The active support, practice and promotion of this Code of Ethics.

Honesty and Fairness

Marketers shall uphold and advance the integrity, honor and dignity of the marketing profession by:

1. Being honest in serving consumers, clients, employees, suppliers, distributors, and the public;
2. Not knowingly participating in conflict of interest without prior notice to all parties involved; and
3. Establishing equitable fee schedules including the payment or receipt of usual, customary and/or legal compensation for marketing exchanges.

Rights and Duties of Parties in the Marketing Exchange Process

Participants in the marketing exchange process should be able to expect that

1. Products and services offered are safe and fit for their intended uses;
2. Communications about offered products and services are not deceptive;
3. All parties intend to discharge their obligations, financial and otherwise, in good faith; and
4. Appropriate internal methods exist for equitable adjustment and/or redress of grievances concerning purchases.

It is understood that the above would include, but is not limited to, the following responsibilities of the marketer:

In the area of product development and management:

- disclosure of all substantial risks associated with product or service usage;
- identification of any product component substitution that might materially change the product or impact on the buyer's purchase decision;
- identification of extra cost-added features.

In the area of promotions:

- avoidance of false and misleading advertising;
 - rejection of high-pressure manipulations, or misleading sales tactics;
 - avoidance of sales promotions that use deception or manipulation.
-

In the area of distribution:

- not manipulating the availability of a product for the purpose of exploitation;
- not using coercion in the marketing channel;
- not exerting undue influence over the reseller's choice to handle a product.

In the area of pricing:

- not engaging in price fixing;
- not practicing predatory pricing;
- disclosing the full price associated with any purchase.

In the area of marketing research:

- prohibiting selling or fundraising under the guise of conducting research;
- maintaining research integrity by avoiding misrepresentation and omission of pertinent research data;
- treating outside clients and suppliers fairly.

Organizational Relationships

Marketers should be aware of how their behavior may influence or impact the behavior of others in organizational relationships. They should not demand, encourage or apply coercion to obtain unethical behavior in their relationships with others, such as employees, suppliers, or customers.

1. Apply confidentiality and anonymity in professional relationships with regard to privileged information;
2. Meet their obligations and responsibilities in contracts and mutual agreements in a timely manner;
3. Avoid taking the work of others, in whole, or in part, and representing this work as their own or directly benefiting from it without compensation or consent of the originator or owner; and
4. Avoid manipulation to take advantage of situations to maximize personal welfare in a way that unfairly deprives or damages the organization or others.

Any AMA member found to be in violation of any provision of this Code of Ethics may have his or her Association membership suspended or revoked.

Appendix 5.2 ICC/ESOMAR International Code of Marketing and Social Research Practice

Introduction

Effective communication between the suppliers and the consumers of goods and services of all kinds is vital to any modern society. Growing international links make this even more essential. For a supplier to provide in the most efficient way what consumers require he must understand their differing needs; how best to meet these needs; and how he can most effectively communicate the nature of the goods or services he is offering.

This is the objective of marketing research. It applies in both private and public sectors of the economy. Similar approaches are also used in other fields of study: for example in measuring the public's behaviour and attitudes with respect to social, political and other issues by Government and public bodies, the media, academic institutions, etc. Marketing and social research have many interests, methods and problems in common although the subjects of study tend to be different.

Such research depends upon public confidence: confidence that it is carried out honestly, objectively, without unwelcome intrusion or disadvantage to respondents, and that it is based upon their willing cooperation. This confidence must be supported by an appropriate professional Code of Practice which governs the way in which marketing research projects are conducted.

The first such Code was published by ESOMAR in 1948. This was followed by a number of Codes prepared by national marketing research societies and by other bodies such as the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), which represents the international marketing community. In 1976 ESOMAR and the ICC decided that it would be preferable to have a single International Code instead of two differing ones, and a joint ICC/ESOMAR Code was therefore published in the following year (with revisions in 1986).

Subsequent changes in the marketing and social environment, new developments in marketing research methods and a great increase in international activities of all kinds including legislation, led ESOMAR to prepare a new version of the International Code in 1994. This new version sets out as concisely as possible the basic ethical and business principles which govern the practice of marketing and social research. It specifies the rules which are to be followed in dealing with the general public and with the business community, including clients and other members of the profession.

ESOMAR will be glad to give advice on the implementation of this Code; and also offers an arbitration and expert assessment service to help resolve technical and other disputes relating to marketing research projects.

Other aspects of marketing—in particular Direct Marketing and Advertising—are covered by separate International Codes of Practice published by the ICC. Copies of these may be obtained from the ICC Secretariat in Paris.

Appendix 5.3 Contents of the APA's Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct**TABLE OF CONTENTS****INTRODUCTION AND APPLICABILITY****PREAMBLE****GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

Principle A: Beneficence and Nonmaleficence

Principle B: Fidelity and Responsibility

Principle C: Integrity

Principle D: Justice

Principle E: Respect for People's Rights and Dignity

ETHICAL STANDARDS

1. Resolving Ethical Issues
 - 1.01 Misuse of Psychologists' Work
 - 1.02 Conflicts Between Ethics and Law, Regulations, or Other Governing Legal Authority
 - 1.03 Conflicts Between Ethics and Organizational Demands
 - 1.04 Informal Resolution of Ethical Violations
 - 1.05 Reporting Ethical Violations
 - 1.06 Cooperating With Ethics Committees
 - 1.07 Improper Complaints
 - 1.08 Unfair Discrimination Against Complainants and Respondents
2. Competence
 - 2.01 Boundaries of Competence
 - 2.02 Providing Services in Emergencies
 - 2.03 Maintaining Competence
 - 2.04 Bases for Scientific and Professional Judgments
 - 2.05 Delegation of Work to Others
 - 2.06 Personal Problems and Conflicts
3. Human Relations
 - 3.01 Unfair Discrimination
 - 3.02 Sexual Harassment
 - 3.03 Other Harassment
 - 3.04 Avoiding Harm
 - 3.05 Multiple Relationships
 - 3.06 Conflict of Interest
 - 3.07 Third-Party Requests for Services
 - 3.08 Exploitative Relationships
 - 3.09 Cooperation With Other Professionals
 - 3.10 Informed Consent
 - 3.11 Psychological Services Delivered to or Through Organizations
 - 3.12 Interruption of Psychological Services
4. Privacy and Confidentiality
 - 4.01 Maintaining Confidentiality
 - 4.02 Discussing the Limits of Confidentiality
 - 4.03 Recording
 - 4.04 Minimizing Intrusions on Privacy
 - 4.05 Disclosures
 - 4.06 Consultations
 - 4.07 Use of Confidential Information for Didactic or Other Purposes
5. Advertising and Other Public Statements
 - 5.01 Avoidance of False or Deceptive Statements

(Continued)

Appendix 5.3 (Continued)

- 5.02 Statements by Others
 - 5.03 Descriptions of Workshops and Non-Degree-Granting Educational Programs
 - 5.04 Media Presentations
 - 5.05 Testimonials
 - 5.06 In-Person Solicitation

 - 6. Record Keeping and Fees
 - 6.01 Documentation of Professional and Scientific Work and Maintenance of Records
 - 6.02 Maintenance, Dissemination, and Disposal of Confidential Records of Professional and Scientific Work
 - 6.03 Withholding Records for Nonpayment
 - 6.04 Fees and Financial Arrangements
 - 6.05 Barter With Clients/Patients
 - 6.06 Accuracy in Reports to Payors and Funding Sources
 - 6.07 Referrals and Fees

 - 7. Education and Training
 - 7.01 Design of Education and Training Programs
 - 7.02 Descriptions of Education and Training Programs
 - 7.03 Accuracy in Teaching
 - 7.04 Student Disclosure of Personal Information
 - 7.05 Mandatory Individual or Group Therapy
 - 7.06 Assessing Student and Supervisee Performance
 - 7.07 Sexual Relationships With Students and Supervisees

 - 8. Research and Publication
 - 8.01 Institutional Approval
 - 8.02 Informed Consent to Research
 - 8.03 Informed Consent for Recording Voices and Images in Research
 - 8.04 Client/Patient, Student, and Subordinate Research Participants
 - 8.05 Dispensing With Informed Consent for Research
 - 8.06 Offering Inducements for Research Participation
 - 8.07 Deception in Research
 - 8.08 Debriefing
 - 8.09 Humane Care and Use of Animals in Research
 - 8.10 Reporting Research Results
 - 8.11 Plagiarism
 - 8.12 Publication Credit
 - 8.13 Duplicate Publication of Data
 - 8.14 Sharing Research Data for Verification
 - 8.15 Reviewers

 - 9. Assessment
 - 9.01 Bases for Assessments
 - 9.02 Use of Assessments
 - 9.03 Informed Consent in Assessments
 - 9.04 Release of Test Data
 - 9.05 Test Construction
 - 9.06 Interpreting Assessment Results
 - 9.07 Assessment by Unqualified Persons
 - 9.08 Obsolete Tests and Outdated Test Results
 - 9.09 Test Scoring and Interpretation Services
 - 9.10 Explaining Assessment Results
 - 9.11 Maintaining Test Security
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10. Therapy
 - 10.01 Informed Consent to Therapy
 - 10.02 Therapy Involving Couples or Families
 - 10.03 Group Therapy
 - 10.04 Providing Therapy to Those Served by Others
 - 10.05 Sexual Intimacies With Current Therapy Clients/Patients
 - 10.06 Sexual Intimacies With Relatives or Significant Others of Current Therapy Clients/Patients
 - 10.07 Therapy With Former Sexual Partners
 - 10.08 Sexual Intimacies With Former Therapy Clients/Patients
 - 10.09 Interruption of Therapy
 - 10.10 Terminating Therapy
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