

# Researcher Integrity and Ethics

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# Integrity

- The quality of being honest and having strong moral principles.
- Research integrity means the active adherence to research ethics and principles of good practice.

# Ethics

- Moral principles that govern a person's behaviour or the conducting of an activity.
- Greek roots: *ethos* = *customary or habitual way of behaving*
- Aristototele referred to 'rhetoric', the leader's 'art of influence and persuasion' (Aristotle 1984: 2152, from his Rhetoric), an art which shows people what virtues the leader has, and thereby helps create the organisation's 'ethos'
- Often interpreted as the study of good and bad conduct (Shephard, 2002).

# Morals

- Standards of behaviour; principles of right and wrong.
- Research ethics refers to moral deliberation, choice, and accountability on the part of researchers (Edwards & Mauthner, 2002).
- What “ought to be done and what ought not to be done” (Denscombe, 2002, p.59)

# Types of ethics



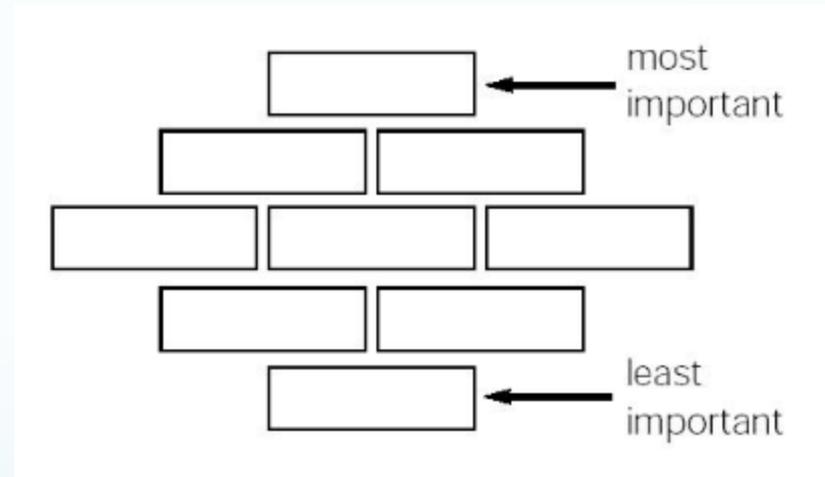
# Why do we have research ethics?

# Ethical checklists

- Notably The Belmont Report, which became the primary ethical framework for protecting human subjects in the US (Zimmerman, 1997).
- Most research institutions have an ethical checklist to ensure planning for ethical practice.
- This is a product – an output, an approval on a piece of paper.

# Ethical checklists

- Rank the different elements of this ethical checklist into a diamond nine.
- How have you decided which is most important?
- Break each one down into more detail – think about all the things it might entail – add these to the cards.



# Ethics in reality

- Use your ethical checklists to try to decide what to do in each of these situations.
- If they do not help, develop your own answer.
- Note how many were answered by the checklist or from yourselves.

# Dangers of checklists

- Tick box rather than considered process
- Reduces the complexity of each of the issues
- A ‘one off’ activity
- Simpson (2011) ethics panels act as a “uniform aperture through which to pass research of all different shapes and sizes” (p 378).
- Constricting process and therefore need for more flexible ethics.
- Serve to protect the organisation not the participants (Sparkes and Smith, 2014).

# Ethics as a process

- Running ethics (Ramcharan & Cutcliffe, 2001)
- Rules of conduct (Denscombe, 2010)
- Continual, emergent, in action (Schon)
- Research has a “series of ethical moments which arise throughout the research...rather than a single moment at its outset” (Simpson, 2011 p. 377).

# What next: Aspirational Ethics?

- Lahman et al. (2011) considered aspirational ethics to include *virtue, relational, feminist, narrative, caring, and reflexive ethics*
- These ethics are based on the contexts and practices in which research is conducted
- Rely to some extent on the moral background and reflexivity of the researcher – their integrity (Blee and Currier, 2011)

# What next: Research Virtues?

- Research ethics consist of a set of *negatives* (Stern, 2011)
- **don't** harm participants and **don't** identify participants
- These negatives can be limiting and, moreover, can result in less focus on positive gains
- Stern (2011) therefore proposes focussing on positive research virtues

# Product, process or relationship?

- Are ethics something to prepare as a product?
- Or something to do as a process?
- Are they a relationship with participants?
- Or a reflective tool to measure researcher integrity?

# Final questions

- What is your definition of integrity, ethics and morals now?
- How much integrity do you have as a researcher in the light of this new information?
- What are key actions you will take away from today?

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