
Research And The Internet

Drawing On The Underpinning Values Of The National Statement

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Conducting Research With People

- When we perform research involving people
 - We form a relationship between ourselves as researchers and our research participants (N.S. p, 11)
 - The N.S. identifies the values around which research involving people should be conducted
 - These values shape the relationship between researcher and research participant
 - the relationship is one of *trust*



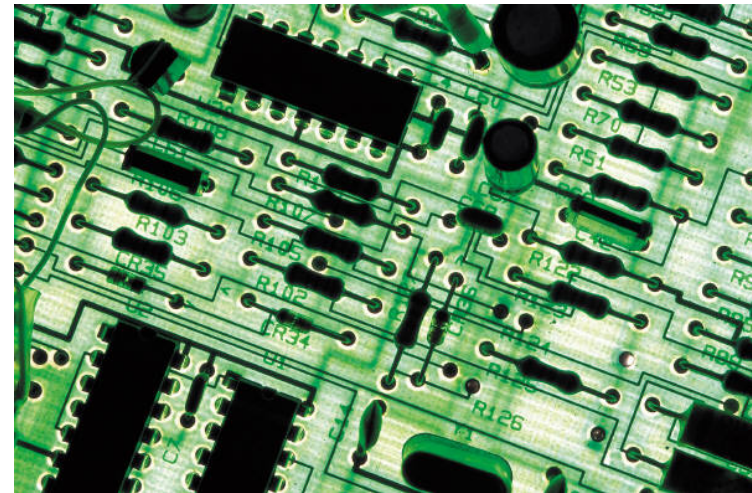
Values That Shape The Relationship Between Researcher And Participant

- Research merit and integrity
- Justice
- Beneficence
- Respect



Research And The Internet

- “There is an absence of physical contact between researcher and research participant
- This restricts the researcher’s capacity to monitor, support or even terminate the [research] if an adverse event becomes apparent”



- British Psychological Society *Guidelines for ethical practice in psychological research online, Report of the Working Party on Conducting Research on the Internet, 2007.*
http://www.bps.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/conducting_research_on_the_internetguidelines_for_ethical_practice_in_psychological_research_online.pdf



The Values That Shape The Relationship Between Researcher And Research Participant

- Research Merit And Integrity
 - “Unless proposed research has merit, and the researchers who carry out the research have integrity, the involvement of human participants in the research cannot be ethically justifiable”
 - Given the lack of physical contact between researcher and participant, careful consideration must be given to research design to ensure participant welfare and the validity of the research data



Research Merit And Integrity

- Other Issues

- Population bias of a study that recruits only those who are computer literate or subscribe to specific social media networks
- Verification of the identity of research participants (e.g. their age / gender)
- The inability of the researcher to control the immediate environment of the participant while s/he is engaging in the research activity
 - Who the participant is
 - How they react with research material
 - What other activities/distractions are occurring while they are participating in the research activity



Justice And The *National Statement*

- Fair distribution of benefits and burdens of research

And

- Fair treatment in the recruitment of research participants
- Issues that may need to be considered include
 - The burden of research on younger participants who access and use the Internet and social media sites
 - How research is advertised so that potential participants are given sufficient opportunity to opt in



Beneficence – Assessing & Managing Harm And Potential Benefit

- “The likely benefit of the research must justify any risks of harm or discomfort to participants” (N.S. 1.6)
- *Research on the Internet necessarily involves lack of physical contact between the researcher and research participant*
 - Monitoring the consequences of research on research participants
 - Protection of research participants and researchers



Respect And The *National Statement*

- “...having due regard for the welfare, beliefs, perceptions, customs and cultural heritage, both individual and collective, of those involved in research” (*N.S.* 1.10)
 - Informed Consent (providing adequate information and allowing voluntary choice)
 - Ability of participant to freely withdraw (both now and in the future)
 - Protection of participant’s data



Respect And The National Statement

- Public versus private spaces on the Internet
 - Are potential participants aware of the differences between public and private spaces and the permanence of records
- The use of email
 - Unsolicited emails may be considered “spam”
 - Unencrypted emails may be inadvertently disclosed



The Aim Of This Workshop

- Recognition that the Internet is a legitimate tool for researchers to conduct research that can produce valuable data and increased knowledge
- A recognition that HRECs have a duty of care to research participants
- Identification of ethical issues associated with research using the Internet
- Planning a way forward

