

Chapter 2: Ethical Consideration in the Practice of Research

Overview of chapter

The profession of counseling strengthens through its research. Ethical research practices must be followed when conducting counseling research. Researchers follow the principles of the Belmont Report to insure respect for participants, beneficence, and justice throughout the process. This chapter covers the development and importance of ethical research practices and practicing research integrity. In addition, it provides a clear link between responsible conduct of research core areas and the ACA Code of Ethics.

Key words

Research ethics- “study or science of right and wrong—of what one ought to do when confronted with conflicting values or obligations” (Steneck, 2003, p. 240).

Research integrity – “a commitment to intellectual honesty and personal responsibility” (Institute of Medicine, 2002) and “adherence to rules, regulations, guidelines, and commonly accepted professional codes or norms” (Office of Research Integrity [ORI], 2003).

Responsible conduct of research (RCR) – “conducting research in ways that fulfill the professional responsibilities of researchers, as defined by their professional organization [e.g., ACA], the institutions for which they work [e.g., university, school district, state agency, community agency], and when relevant, the government and public” (Steneck, 2006, p. 55).

The Belmont Report –the foundation of the majority of ethical codes surrounding research human subjects

Beneficence – to do good

Justice - questions concerning who has to bear the burden of risks and who should receive the benefits in research; ensures fair treatment

Institutional Review Board (IRB)- examines a research study prior to it being conducted in order to weigh the risks versus benefits, determine how the client will be directly impacted, protections in place for possible risks, procedures participants will endure, and the method of informed consent.

Chapter Outline

- I. Research Ethics and Integrity
 - a. Ethical decisions (i.e. informed consent, best practices, client anonymity in research)
 - b. Importance of research integrity
 - c. Responsible conduct of research (RCR)
 - d. Office of Research Integrity (ORI) core areas
 - i. data acquisition
 - ii. management, sharing, and ownership
 - iii. mentor/trainee relationships
 - iv. publication practices and responsible authorship
 - v. peer review
 - vi. collaborative science
 - vii. human subjects
 - viii. research involving animals
 - ix. research misconduct
 - x. conflict of interest and commitment
- II. Irresponsible Research
 - a. Implication and impact of unethical research
 - b. Potential for client harm
 - c. ACA ethical inquiries related to research

- III. III. Roles and Responsibilities of Researchers in the Counseling Profession
 - a. Researcher responsibilities
 - b. Key studies influencing development of research ethical standards
 - i. Nazi medical war crimes – horrendous medical experiments on prisoners in concentration camps
 - ii. Tuskegee syphilis study – falsely told participants they would receive treatment for the disease
 - iii. Jewish chronic disease hospital study - patients injected with live cancer cells
 - iv. Willowbrook study – required that children be injected with hepatitis in order to be admitted into the school
 - c. The Belmont Report set the foundation for ethical research of human subjects
 - i. Respect for persons
 - 1. individuals should be treated as autonomous agents
 - 2. additional protection must be provided to individuals with diminished autonomy (e.g., mental health disabilities, developmental disabilities, language barriers, dementia, and children)
 - ii. Beneficence
 - iii. Justice
 - d. Institutional Review Board (IRB)
 - i. Typically present at universities and in agencies where research is conducted
 - ii. Typically made up of members from various disciplines
 - iii. IRB tasks
 - 1. examines a research study prior to it being conducted
 - 2. weighs the risks versus benefits
 - 3. determines how the client will be directly impacted
 - 4. ensures protections are in place for possible risks
 - 5. evaluates procedures participants will endure
 - 6. approves the method of informed consent.
- IV. Additional Researcher Responsibilities
 - a. Relationships with research participants
 - i. Nonprofessional or dual relationships
 - ii. Sexual harassment
 - b. Collaboration with sponsors of research, colleagues, or agencies
 - i. Keeping them informed about procedures and changes
 - ii. Collaborative science – setting ground rules and boundaries
 - c. Confidentiality and data management
 - i. Procedure for removal of identifying information
 - ii. Securing data
 - d. Reporting results
 - i. Need for accuracy
 - ii. Significant vs. insignificant results
 - iii. Plagiarism and citations in writing
- V. Multicultural Considerations in Conducting Ethical Research
 - a. Counseling research competencies
 - i. Counselor awareness of own cultural values and biases
 - ii. Counselor awareness of client's world view
 - iii. Counselor use of appropriate intervention strategies

Suggested Activities

1. Visit the ACA website at www.counseling.org and download the 2014 Code of Ethics (<https://www.counseling.org/resources/aca-code-of-ethics.pdf>). Review section G which specifically relates to research in counseling. How do these codes promote the concept of research integrity as defined in the chapter?
2. Review the entire Code of Ethics. What codes outside of section G are not specific to research but important to consider when conducting counseling research?
3. Visit your university's IRB office or website. Who makes up the IRB? What steps are outlined for engaging in research? What forms must be completed? What is the timeline?
4. Pay specific attention to your university's IRB policy on informed consent. Create an informed consent that would meet university policy for responsible conduct of research.
5. The chapter mentions three competencies for multicultural considerations in conducting ethical research. The first competency is the counselor's own awareness of cultural values and biases. Visit the Harvard Implicit Test website at <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>. Take one or more of the tests provided and discuss the results in class. Do you agree with the results? Why or why not?

Test Questions

- 1) Examples of ethical concerns related to research include ALL BUT WHICH of the following
 - a) Issues of informed consent
 - b) Client anonymity
 - c) Ensuring best treatment for clients
 - d) Fees and billing arrangement for counseling appointments
- 2) Researchers who practice with “a commitment to intellectual honesty and personal responsibility” and “adherence to rules, regulations, guidelines, and commonly accepted professional codes” are considered to be following the principles of
 - a) Research norms
 - b) Ethical mandates
 - c) Research integrity
 - d) Client anonymity
- 3) Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) is
 - a) Exemplified in the counselor who follows the ethical codes and maintains research integrity
 - b) Defined as “conducting research in ways that fulfill the professional responsibilities of researchers, as defined by their professional organization, the institutions for which they work, and when relevant, the government and public”
 - c) Required by law
 - d) All of the above
 - e) a & b only
- 4) ALL BUT WHICH are some of the core areas for counselors to consider if they are to engage in RCR
 - a) Mentor/trainee relationships
 - b) Writing for publication
 - c) Research misconduct
 - d) Conflict of interest and commitment
- 5) The strongest implication related to unethical research practices in counseling is
 - a) Concern for client or human participant harm
 - b) Poor research writing/reporting
 - c) Data storage procedures
 - d) A well-documented history of client death in counseling research practices
- 6) Which of the following is most true regarding ethical complaints related to research in counseling
 - a) For the last decade, no complaints have been filed related to research
 - b) The ACA does not track complaints by category
 - c) Ethical complaints related to research are some of the most discussed complaints in the literature
 - d) Approximately 1% of ethical inquiries of ACA relate to research and publication
- 7) In the study by Davis, Wester and King (in press) reported in the chapter, the researchers found that 24% of respondents
 - a) reported a willingness to use deceptive practices to get clients to participate in a research study
 - b) indicated they would be extremely likely to report inaccurate results in order to get a grant or get published
 - c) self-reported a likelihood that they would unethically compensate participants to get a study off the ground
 - d) indicated that they would never engage in unethical research practices

- 8) An event which raised questions about the adequacy of informed consent and freedom of human participants, especially children, was
- Nazi Medical War Crimes
 - Tuskegee Syphilis study
 - Jewish Chronic Disease hospital study
 - Willowbrook study
- 9) An event which involved extreme medical experiments which tormented patients to death in the name of science was
- Nazi Medical War Crimes
 - Tuskegee Syphilis study
 - Jewish Chronic Disease hospital study
 - Willowbrook study
- 10) Researchers in which of the following examples did not inform participants they were being injected with cancer out of fear that it would frighten the participants and out of a belief that consent was not necessary
- Nazi Medical War Crimes
 - Tuskegee Syphilis study
 - Jewish Chronic Disease hospital study
 - Willowbrook study
- 11) One of the longest running unethical research projects known was
- Nazi Medical War Crimes
 - Tuskegee Syphilis study
 - Jewish Chronic Disease hospital study
 - Willowbrook study
- 12) Which of the following is not true about The Belmont Report
- Was created by the National Commission for Research Ethics
 - Arose out of the legal implications of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study
 - Is the cornerstone document of research ethics
 - All of the above are true
- 13) Belmont Report principles include ALL BUT WHICH of the following
- Respect for persons
 - Beneficence
 - Justice
 - Veracity
- 14) The Belmont principle that references the concepts that individuals should be treated as autonomous agents and provides protection for those with diminished autonomy is
- Respect for persons
 - Beneficence
 - Justice
 - Veracity
- 15) Questions related to who bears the burden of risks and who should receive the benefits of research fall under the principle of
- Respect for persons
 - Beneficence
 - Justice
 - Veracity

- 16) The quality or state of doing or producing good is known as
- a) Respect for persons
 - b) Beneficence
 - c) Justice
 - d) Veracity
- 17) The Institutional Review Board
- a) Is typically comprised of a minimum of five members
 - b) Is charged with making decisions related to risks and benefits to participants
 - c) Determine appropriateness of informed consent
 - d) All of the above
- 18) The ACA ethical code related to relationships between researchers and research participants
- a) Is similar to the codes related to relationships between counselors and clients
 - b) States that nonprofessional relationships with participants is always avoidable
 - c) Differs from codes related to counselors and their clients because nonprofessional relationships are encouraged between researchers and research participants
 - d) Does not address documentation of rationale for the proposed interaction
- 19) Reporting results of research
- a) Contains no inherent ethical pitfalls
 - b) Requires accuracy as well as a responsibility to report both significant and insignificant results
 - c) Does not require the researcher to be concerned about plagiarism as journal editors will address citation issues
 - d) None of the above
- 20) All but which of the following are competencies to guide researchers who work with individuals from diverse backgrounds
- a) Counselor use of appropriate intervention strategies
 - b) Counselor fluency in multiple languages
 - c) Counselor awareness of client's world view
 - d) Counselor awareness of own cultural values and biases

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Answer Key

1. d
2. c
3. e
4. b
5. a
6. d
7. a
8. d
9. a
10. c
11. b
12. a
13. d
14. a
15. c
16. b
17. d
18. a
19. e
20. b