



**Ethical Challenges in Conducting Research with Sex Workers:  
An Annotated Bibliography**

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## **Ethical Challenges in Conducting Research with Sex Workers: An Annotated Bibliography**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this literature search was to explore ethical concerns in researching sex workers, especially sex workers who were victims of crime, such as statutory rape and rape, trafficking and sexual slavery, and violence.

### **Search History**

This annotated bibliography was generated through the systematic search of several online databases including Sociological Abstracts, Medline, and Anthropological Literature to locate peer-reviewed literature, as well as Google.com to locate gray literature. Search terms used include sex work\*, research ethic\*, illegal, vulnerable, and ethnography and ethics.

Articles in this annotated bibliography are organized as follows:

- I. Sex work and research ethics
- II. Trafficking and research ethics
- III. Violence against women and research ethics
- IV. Ethnography and research ethics theory
- V. Structural interventions and research ethics theory

### **I. SEX WORK and RESEARCH ETHICS**

#### **1. Agustin, L. M. (2004). "Alternate ethics, or Telling lies to researchers." Research for Sex Work Jun 2004 (Sex workers' health, HIV/AIDS, ethical issues, care and research): 6-8.**

**Abstract:** On the subject of ethics in sex work research, we usually think of the insensitivity and careerism of researchers whose interest is in obtaining information they will take credit for. This article points to another problematic area: the issue of whether those being researched are honest with researchers. After all, why should people who are being treated as objects of curiosity tell the truth?

**Notes:** The article discusses the issue of workers' motivations in telling truth or lies to researchers. Participants may operate on an alternate ethics of self-preservation and control over others' perceptions. They may tell researchers only what they want to hear. Underage workers, for example, may lie about their age to avoid legal action. Ways researchers can avoid being lied to include engaging in long-term participant observation, developing rapport with insiders, and showing respect.

#### **2. Metzenrath, S. (1998). "In touch with the needs of sex workers." Research for Sex Work 1: 11.**

**Abstract:** At the network steering committee meeting of Calcutta of the Asia Pacific Network of Sex workers and Support Groups, discussions were held about how this network links to Research for Sex Workers. The following recommendations were made.

**Notes:** Recommendations from sex workers to researchers include the following: recognize sex work as an occupation; acknowledge that workers are female, male, and transgender; recognize that it is unsafe conditions at work, rather than the work itself, that causes health risks; recognize that police abuse is part of the unsafe work environment; involve sex workers at future AIDS conferences; protect sex workers' rights to travel so they can attend conferences. The article also discusses how sex workers may not be willing to talk to researchers because they do not see the good in it for themselves; how researchers do not use research to help sex workers often enough; and how research can be (but should not be) used against sex workers.

**3. Pyett, P. (1998). "Doing it together: sex workers and researchers." Research for Sex Work 1: 11-13.**

**Abstract:** One of the ethical guidelines for sex work research is involving sex workers in all aspects of the research process. Priscilla Pyett of La Trobe University, Australia, describes such a collaborative research program. After an anonymous questionnaire proved to be a successful research tool among legalized brothel-based sex workers, a new methodology was adopted to reach out to the more vulnerable groups, such as drug-dependent girls working on the streets.

**Notes:** The article recommends ways researchers can overcome the obstacle of sex workers mistrusting researchers and resisting research. Recommendations include the following: develop collaborative working relationships with sex workers; maintain confidentiality; use sex workers as researchers; and maintain a sensitive and responsive approach.

**4. Shaver, F. (2005). "Sex work research: methodological and ethical challenges." Journal of Interpersonal Violence 20(3): 296-319.**

**Abstract:** The challenges involved in the design of ethical, non-exploitative research projects with sex workers or any other marginalized population are significant. First, the size and boundaries of the population are unknown, making it extremely difficult to get a representative sample. Second, because membership in hidden populations often involves stigmatized or illegal behavior, concerns regarding privacy and confidentiality are paramount and difficult to resolve. In addition, they often result in challenges to the validity of the data. Third, in spite of evidence to the contrary, associations between sex work and victimization are still strong, dichotomies remain prevalent, and sex workers are often represented as a homogeneous population. Drawing on three research projects in which the author has been involved—all grounded in a sex-as-work approach—as well as the work of others, this article provides several strategies for overcoming these challenges. Clear guidelines for ethical, non-exploitive methodologies are embedded in the solutions provided.

**Notes:** The article offers detailed description of ethnographic methods of gaining trust and getting interviews with sex workers in three cities. Fieldwork strategies involved gaining entry and walking the stroll. Gaining entry involved two to four weeks of introductions and public relation activities to legitimize the study and the researchers. Specific approaches included: researchers pointedly introduced themselves and the study to the street sex workers, handed out business cards, and obtained street names from potential informants (and remembered them). They continued to create a presence on the streets for several weeks, holding informal conversations, reassuring people they were not cops, and gaining respect. They also adopted approaches and attitudes on the streets to avoid making the sex workers feel uncomfortable: never cornering them, never approaching from two sides, never approaching from behind, never approaching when they have customers, carrying “stroll kits” (which included band-aids; matches; and lists of resources; but not condoms or bleach kits, because they wanted to be identified as researchers, not outreach workers). They selected participants who were regulars and who were not under the influence at the time. Whenever leaving the stroll, they pointedly said goodbye and thanked workers, even if they had not been interviewed. All this helped them gain respect and rapport and develop a presence as researchers.

**5. Wahab, S. and L. Sloan (2004). "Ethical dilemmas in sex work research." Research for Sex Work Jun 2004 (Sex workers' health, HIV/AIDS, ethical issues, care and research): 3-6.**

**Abstract:** The authors of this article argue that research into sex work is often limited to the more visible and accessible sectors such as street prostitution, and that a mix of class and gender discrimination and a theoretical bias based on radical feminist convictions leads to an overemphasis on the victimized, powerless and marginalized sex worker. This ignores the diversity and heterogeneity that exist among

workers in this occupational group. As a result, mainstream studies arrive at recommendations that advocate inappropriate interventions or policies.

**Notes:** The article discusses research biases such as the following: street sex workers are over-represented compared to other types of sex workers; there is more research on street workers as opposed to less visible workers, so they are singled out disproportionately by law enforcement and moral and religious attention; male sex workers are invisible in research; theory sometimes overrides what the workers are actually telling researchers; the sex worker-as-victim paradigm obscures issues of agency; problems of "maintaining objective distance" is not real nor necessarily desirable. The article also notes there are ethical issues in affluent, white, Western researchers studying South Asians or Africans. The article suggests that researchers collaborate more with sex workers; that they be aware of sociological, political, economic, personal, and power issues that affect workers; that they bring the research results back to the community; and that sex worker communities and organizations do their own research and/or hire researchers.

## II. TRAFFICKING and RESEARCH ETHICS

### 1. Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women (2005). Human Rights Standards for the Treatment of Trafficked Persons, Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women. (Online at <http://gaatw.net/>).

**Abstract:** The Human Rights Standards for the Treatment of Trafficked Persons (HRS) aims to promote respect for the human rights of individuals who have been victims of trafficking, including those who have been subjected to involuntary labor and/or slavery-like practices. The HRS can be used as a guide in providing assistance to women and taking legal action against traffickers.

**Notes:** The following is quoted from the Summary section:

- “Trafficking: All acts and attempted acts involved in the recruitment, transportation within or across borders, purchase, sale, transfer, receipt or harboring of a person involving the use of deception, coercion (including the use or threat of force or the abuse of authority) or debt bondage for the purpose of placing or holding such person, whether for pay or not, in involuntary servitude (domestic, sexual or reproductive), in forced or bonded labor, or in slavery-like conditions, in a community other than the one in which such person lived at the time of the original deception, coercion or debt bondage.
- Principle of non-discrimination: States shall not discriminate against trafficked persons in substantive or procedural law, policy or practice.
- Safety and Fair Treatment: States shall recognize that trafficked persons are victims of serious human rights abuses, protect their rights notwithstanding any irregular immigration status, and protect them from reprisal and harm.
- Access to justice: The police, prosecutors and court shall ensure that their efforts to punish traffickers are implemented within a system that respects and safeguards the rights of the victims to privacy, dignity and safety. An adequate prosecution of traffickers included prosecution, where applicable, for rape, sexual and other forms of assault (including, without limitation, murder, forced pregnancies and abortions), kidnapping, torture, inhuman or degrading treatment, slavery or slavery-like practices, forced or compulsory labor, debt bondage, or forced marriage.
- Access to private actions and reparations: States must ensure that trafficked persons have a legal right to seek reparations from traffickers as well as assistance in bringing such actions, if necessary.
- Resident status: States shall provide trafficked persons with temporary residence visas (including the right to work) during the pendency of any criminal, civil or other legal actions and shall

provide trafficked persons with the right to seek asylum and have the risk of retaliation considered in any deportation proceedings.

- Health and other services: States shall provide trafficked persons with adequate health and other social services during the period of temporary residence.
- Repatriation and reintegration: States shall ensure that trafficked persons are able to return home safely, if they so wish, and when they are able to do so.
- Recovery includes medical and psychological care as well as legal and social services to ensure the well being of trafficked persons.
- State cooperation: States must work cooperatively in order to ensure full implementation of these Standards" (p. 1).

**2. Melrose, M. (2002). "Labour pains: some considerations on the difficulties of researching juvenile prostitution." International Journal of Social Research Methodology: Theory & Practice 5(4): 333-351.**

**Abstract:** This paper reflects on an empirical, retrospective study of juvenile prostitution. It aims to explore the ways in which the practical constraints, practical difficulties and ethical considerations that are inevitably encountered in a 'sensitive' area of research, such as young people who are exploited through prostitution, are intrinsically linked to choice of methods and the process of the research. It argues that in such research pragmatism in choice of methods is necessary to achieve the epistemological aims, of allowing the voices of disadvantaged young people who are exploited through their involvement in prostitution to be heard, while maintaining ethical integrity. In addition the paper reflects on the emotional impact of research such as this on researchers and suggests ways in which research design and the collaborative efforts of research teams may minimize potentially negative impacts on researchers. The author suggests that by anticipating problems posed by research into young people who are sexually exploited through prostitution, ethical and practical difficulties might be negotiated to enable research in this field to be taken forward in the future.

**Notes:** This article discusses various issues of studying juveniles involved in the sex industry. The author argues against using the term "sex worker" for underage workers, since it "obscure[s] the enormity of the violation," and it is "increasingly accepted that young people who become involved in prostitution are victims of sexual abuse." The author continues that, "young people involved in prostitution are now more commonly referred to as 'young people who are sexually exploited through their involvement in prostitution' (Pearce, et al 2000a)." Youth prostitution exists "within the context of fundamental social inequalities based on class, gender and age," and is thus "necessarily more vulnerable" (p. 335). British law does not distinguish between adults and children (for example, it is possible for a ten year-old to be charged with attempting to sell sex, even though she cannot legally consent to sex until she is sixteen). The law also defines a prostitute as female only. Regarding confidentiality, the author notes, "In circumstances in which a young person may be in a life-threatening situation or in which on-going abuse is discovered, for example, the researcher would be forced to breach her guarantees of confidentiality.... Participants were therefore informed in advance of the conditions under which confidentiality would be breached" (p. 337, 342). Research on child/youth prostitution is necessarily sensitive social-politically, ethical-legally, and emotionally. Regarding ethical considerations, the article states that since the research involved people who had been sexually abused or exploited, they also needed to provide information and/or services to provide support and intervention if desired by participants. The study was mainly retrospective (adults talking about their experiences as juveniles), but six of the 50 participants were still juveniles (but not currently working in the sex industry). These six were in touch with service agencies already, so the researchers did not feel ethical constraints with regards to them, as appropriate action was already being taken on their behalf. The researchers felt that interviewing juveniles currently engaged in prostitution would make it their duty to

inform the relevant authorities. They therefore avoided any such participants. The researchers have an ethical duty to "defend our participants from unwanted attention from the media.... [and] ensure that findings were disseminated sensitively so that sensationalist media coverage, for example, was successfully avoided" (p. 343). The author includes a discussion of the emotional "labour pains" she went through as a researcher of such sensitive topics, such as physical and sexual violence against youths perpetrated by clients and parents.

### **3. World Health Organization (2003). WHO Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Interviewing Trafficked Women. p. b. C. Zimmerman, WHO: 36.**

**Abstract:** Guidelines and recommendations for interviewing trafficked women.

**Notes:** Trafficked women face complex circumstances. Not only can interviews with women who are currently in trafficked situations be risky for various reasons, but also interviews of women outside of trafficked situations can be risky, both physically and psychologically. Not all women who have been trafficked consider themselves victims, are traumatized, or wish to escape or go home. Many have contradictory and ambivalent feelings toward their situations and their traffickers/employers.

1) *Do no harm.* "Treat each woman and the situation as if the potential for harm is extreme until there is evidence to the contrary. Do not undertake any interview that will make a woman's situation worse in the short term or longer term." This includes personal psychological harm, as well as situational harm (exposing her situation to immigration officials, alerting her traffickers, or making her susceptible to violence or fees, etc.).

2) *Know your subject and assess the risks.* "Learn the risks associated with trafficking and each woman's case before undertaking an interview." Possible risks include the following: reprisal against respondent by employers, traffickers, pimps, or police; reprisal against family or children; shame and rejection by family members or community; identification by foreign authorities (which could lead to jailing, re-trafficking, or deportation); reprisal by home country authorities; betrayal by co-workers, residents, or community; lies about age (especially minors); loyalty to and dependence on agents, employers, pimps, etc. The WHO recommends interviewing women who are safely removed from the trafficking situation, or contacting women through agencies they trust. If this is not possible, then be very aware of the woman's situation before undertaking the interview. In some places, the interview will pose no problem, such as where sex work is tolerated or ignored (but this should not be simply assumed).

3) *Prepare referral information. Do not make promises that you cannot fulfill.* "Be prepared to provide information in a woman's native language and the local language (if different) about appropriate legal, health, shelter, social support and security services, and to help with referral, if requested."

4) *Adequately select and prepare interpreters and co-workers.* "Weigh the risks and benefits associated with employing interpreters, co-workers or others, and develop adequate methods for screening and training."

5) *Ensure anonymity and confidentiality.* "Protect a respondent's identity and confidentiality throughout the entire interview process—from the moment she is contacted through the time that details of her case are made public." In addition, "...information should not be shown to others (e.g....police, immigration) without her [the interviewee's] informed and explicit permission."

6) *Get informed consent.* "Make certain that each respondent clearly understands the content and purpose of the interview, the intended use of the information, her right not to answer questions, her right to terminate the interview at any time, and her right to put restrictions on how the information is used."

7) *Listen to and respect each woman's assessment of her situation and risks to her safety.* "Recognize that each woman will have different concerns, and that the way she views her concerns may be different from how others might assess them.... A woman's choices regarding whether to respond to a health concern, talk about her feelings, escape her situation, or other personal matters must be respected—no matter how dangerous or abusive the situation may seem to the interviewer. Unsolicited rescues, contact

with authorities, contact with family, passing of information to counselors, etc. are not necessarily appreciated—or in the best interest of the woman."

8) *Do not retraumatize a woman.* "Do not ask questions intended to provoke an emotionally charged response. Be prepared to respond to a woman's distress and highlight her strengths."

9) *Be prepared for emergency intervention.* "Be prepared to respond if a woman says she is in imminent danger." If the woman requests immediate assistance, "[o]ffering help can be life-saving and is an ethical and moral duty. But offering assistance in the wrong way or at the wrong time can backfire." Issues discussed relating to contacting authorities include the following: risks of detention or deportation (especially since corruption and hostility may be involved); hostile or unhelpful police; pressure to testify (with accompanying risks); and police, immigration, and embassy officials' involvement in trafficking rings.

10) *Put information collected to good use.* "Use information in a way that benefits an individual woman or that advances the development of good policies and interventions for trafficked women generally."

#### **4. Zimmerman, C. and C. Watts (2004). "Risks and responsibilities: guidelines for interviewing trafficked women." Lancet 363(9408): 565.**

**Abstract:** None.

**Notes:** This short article gives "10 guiding principles for the ethical and safe conduct of interviews" with trafficked women (the WHO ethical guidelines above). These are the following:

- 1) Do no harm. Author notes that even approaching a woman can cause trouble and raise suspicions (for her, her community, her family, or people that trafficked her or control her).
- 2) Know your subject and assess the risks.
- 3) Prepare referral information. Do not make promises that you cannot fulfill.
- 4) Adequately select and prepare interpreters and co-workers.
- 5) Ensure anonymity and confidentiality.
- 6) Get informed consent.
- 7) Listen to and respect each woman's assessment of her situation and risks to her safety. Author notes that well-meaning actions based in sympathy or researcher's emotions can create even worse situations. Contacting police may only lead to deportation, re-trafficking, etc.
- 8) Do not retraumatize a woman. Author notes that reliving memories or trauma can cause extreme reactions.
- 9) Be prepared for emergency intervention.
- 10) Put information collected to good use. Author notes data must include safeguards to ensure women's safety.

#### **5. Scheper-Hughes, N. (2004). "Parts Unknown: Undercover Ethnography of the Organs-Trafficking Underworld." Ethnography 5(1): 29-73.**

**Abstract:** This article addresses some of the ethical, ethnographic and political dilemmas of an idiosyncratic multi-sited research project exploring the illegal and covert activities surrounding the traffic in humans and their body parts by outlaw surgeons, kidney hunters and transplant tourists engaged in 'back-door' transplants in the global economy. In its odd juxtapositions of ethnography, documentation, surveillance and human rights work, the project blends genres and transgresses longstanding distinctions between anthropology, political journalism, scientific reporting, political engagement, public interest anthropology and human rights work. How does one investigate covert and criminal behavior anthropologically? When, if ever (and on what grounds), is it permissible to conduct research 'under cover'? When crimes are being committed, to whom does one owe one's divided loyalties? Following a discussion of politically engaged research I pluck a few 'backstage' scenes from this Goffmanesque study of the organs trade to illustrate the very different forms, practices and emotions it encompasses. I want to

recapture the 'basic strangeness' of a routine medical procedure—kidney transplant—that has become increasingly dependent on medically supported claims and rights to the healthy bodies of marginalized 'others.' I close with an argument against bioethics and its capitulations to medical markets in bodies.

**Notes:** Some quotes that discuss the ethics of researching known criminal acts and human rights violations include the following:

- "How does one investigate covert and criminal behavior as an anthropologist? To whom does one owe one's divided loyalties? Under normal conditions anthropologists proceed with a kind of 'hermeneutic generosity' toward the people they study...But in this study all the normal rules of fieldwork practice and ethics seemed inadequate...These ethnographic engagements required me to enter spaces and into conversations where nothing can be taken for granted and where a hermeneutics of suspicion sometimes replaced earlier fieldwork modes of bracketing, cultural and moral relativism, and suspension of disbelief." (p. 41)

- "The disadvantage of anthropological research, however, is the normal reluctance of fieldworkers to take a critical, let alone an activist or a political stance, vis-à-vis the communities and events observed, even when they concern, as they sometimes do, criminality, mass violence and genocide (Starn 1992)... It was quite clear to me that some findings had to be made known to a broadly concerned public as quickly as possible so that measures could be taken to correct abuses that were threatening to undermine transplant medicine as a humane practice." (p. 42)

- "Another departure from normal anthropological practice was a decision to report some of these findings to responsible officials.... I tried to give a general picture without reference to particular individuals, hospitals or transplant specialists. But as I became privy to information on criminal practices regarding the trafficking of desperate people as well as of purloined organs and tissues into the US, I shared some of this data, selectively, with criminal investigators from the US Food and Drug Administration, the US Attorneys Office in NY, FBI special agents and with the State Department's Visa Fraud Division.... I went to [South Africa] to work with the South African Police in its round up of organs traffickers. The information I gave concerned only the traffickers and surgeons and not the people who had been trafficked.... When I found that some Russian and Eastern European workers were being trafficked into the US as involuntary kidney sellers by violent, gun-wielding brokers, I shared this information with police and FBI agents. But I had no precedents to follow and had to rely on my conscience and on the values of social justice, equity and human dignity." (pp 43-44)

- "...But there are times when one must ask just whom the codes [of human subjects protection committees] are protecting." (p. 44)

- The author gained an "exceptional dispensation from the university's human subjects committee, requesting that, for the purpose of this study, I be viewed as a human rights investigative reporter with the same rights as my colleagues in the Berkeley School of Journalism." (p. 45)

- "These new engagements required not only a certain militancy but also a constant self-reflexive and self-critical rethinking of professional ethics, the production of truth and the protection of one's research subjects." (p. 45)

### III. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN and RESEARCH ETHICS

**1. Fontes, L. A., T. Riley, et al. (2004). "Ethics in violence against women research: the sensitive, the dangerous, and the overlooked." Ethics and Behavior 14(2): 141-74.**

**Abstract:** Traditional disciplinary guidelines are inadequate to address some of the ethical dilemmas that emerge when conducting research on violence against women and girls. This article is organized according to the ethical principles of respect for persons, privacy and confidentiality, justice, beneficence, and non-maleficence. In the article, I describe dilemmas involved in cross-cultural research, research on children, informed consent, voluntariness, coercion, deception, safety, mandated reporting,

and dissemination. In the article, I include examples from qualitative and quantitative studies in many nations. I also offer suggestions for researchers and institutional review boards. This paper presents issues which arose in the conduct of qualitative evaluation research within a cluster-randomized, community-level, preventive intervention trial. The research involved the collection of narratives of practice regarding the intervention by community development officers working in eight communities over a two-year period. The community development officers were largely responsible for implementing the intervention. We discuss the challenges associated with the collection of data as the intervention unfolded, in particular, the disputes over cues to revise and adjust the intervention (i.e. to use the early data formatively). We explore the ethical uncertainties that arise when multiple parties have different views on the legitimacy of types of knowledge and the appropriate role of research and theory in various trial stages. These issues are discussed drawing on the fields of ethnography, community psychology, epidemiology, qualitative methodology and notions of research reflexivity. We conclude by arguing that, in addition to the usual practice of having an outcome data-monitoring committee, community intervention trials also require a process data-monitoring committee as a forum for debate and decision-making. Without such a forum, the relevance, ethics and position of qualitative evaluation research within randomized controlled trials are destined to be a point of contention rather than a source of insight.

**Notes:** This article broadly covers ethical issues in research about violence against women. The author writes that in researching sensitive topics (i.e. violence, AIDS, sex work, homosexuality), researchers must be aware that, for example, "women who agree to speak about their victimization are speaking out in a societal context of disbelief, fear, and shame" (p. 143). The ethical concerns are divided into five topics: respect for persons, justice and fairness, beneficence, and non-maleficence.

○ *Respect for persons* involves informed consent and voluntariness, with the awareness that participants may "lack...clarity about the nature of the process to which they are consenting...[C]an women in (or recently emerging from) chronically abusive and traumatizing relationships give informed consent, or is their judgment impaired?... [M]ost women and girls in these circumstances can give informed consent, whereas some may suffer from severe disorientation or mental impairment and cannot" (p. 145). Respect for persons should also inform use of deception and covert research, including research such as interviewing perpetrators of violence against women, and getting information from them about the women (without the women's consent). Coercion in gaining consent is complicated; for example, researchers' authority and financial/material compensation can make it hard for people to refuse consent. Among other recommendations, the author suggests giving participants clear decision points throughout the interview where the participant can decide whether or not to continue. There are also ethical considerations in the solicitation of participants that could bias results (e.g. women in homeless shelters reinforced classist and racist view of violence). Researchers should also be aware of cross-cultural factors. Some cultures may make it harder for women or children to give true consent, and in some cultures information is considered collective, and cannot be given out by an individual without community consent. Ethical advice specific to research of children is that researchers generally must get informed consent from parents or guardians, then assent from children, except where there may be serious conflict of interest for parents (e.g. getting parents' consent to interview a child abused by the parents).

○ *Confidentiality and Privacy.* Women may be concerned about the use of their names and stories, fearing further victimization or subpoena. Researchers should establish policies and procedures to ensure confidentiality and to handle breaches; should have a variety of (safe, private) interview sites; should be trained to change the subject if they are interrupted; should be cautious about their answering machine message; should compensate in cash or goods (no paper trails); should make sure the batterer cannot know the victim participated; and should disguise revealing details of women in reporting. Mandated reporting is a concern as well. In the US, researchers may be obligated to report child abuse, elderly

abuse, etc. Some researchers avoid gathering any information that would obligate them to report, or research anonymously to avoid any possible reporting. Even if they get around the legal issues, researchers still have to deal with feelings of moral obligation to intervene in certain cases. In some situations, mandated reporting (and therefore, researchers' skirting those situations) covers up and ignores problems and allows more victims to be hurt. Of special interest are immigrants and undocumented aliens, who may fear deportation or reprisal by home or current governments. Privacy issues are of concern. At what point has a woman given up rights to her story, to what she said? Some may give information they never intended to, or may regret their interview later. A interviewer with excellent rapport and good coaxing skills may illicit more detailed, intimate responses than the participant would otherwise be comfortable sharing.

- *Justice*. Studies should benefit the population they study. Misreporting and misinterpretation of data may harm the population. (For example, one study showed that men and women hit each other equally as often in domestic fights, without investigating enough to see that men still had the upper hand in most of the fights—women slapped ineffectively, and men drew blood with their more forceful striking. This led to change of public opinion and masking of women as victims.) Researchers should disseminate their research so that it can affect change.

- *Beneficence*. Researchers must weigh benefits versus risks. Potential benefits vary across cultures.

- *Non-maleficence*. There are risks of retraumatization and emotional distress. There may also be economic harm (e.g. abuser husband withholds funds when he discovers her participation), social harm, political harm, or physical harm. It may be helpful to brainstorm with the community potential harms at the beginning of the study. Cross-cultural researchers may introduce ideas or categories of harm where none existed before. Researchers themselves can also be at risk (e.g. physical or emotional).

**2. Miller, J. (1997). Researching violence against street prostitutes: Issues of epistemology, methodology and ethics. Researching sexual violence against women: Methodological and personal perspectives. M. D. Schwartz. Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publications, Inc: 144-156.**

**Abstract:** (from the chapter) Examines some of the unique issues that arise in qualitative interviewing, particularly when studying sensitive issues such as experiences of violence and victimization, and problems that result from researching a group of women labeled "deviant" by the larger society. The author addresses several interrelated issues that arise (though not exclusively) in qualitative research: (1) the relationship between research subjects and researchers and how these relationships shape the investigation, and (2) the ways in which we come to define evidence as authentic and thus as a reflection of reality. The author presents a brief introduction about how she became involved in research on violence against street prostitutes; provides an overview of the methodology she employed; and discusses some of the issues that arise in trying to create knowledge within social research, and the unavoidable ways in which our frame of reference as scholars shape how this is accomplished.

**Notes:** The author focuses partly on analyzing her role as researcher and the relationship between researcher and participant. For example, participants viewed her as naïve, straight-laced, judgmental, and fundamentally different. The author questioned her role as voyeuristic, exploitive, emotional, and vulnerable. A privileged white women interviewing "deviant" disadvantaged, sex-working women is not objective. "Our understanding of the experiences of these individuals are shaped by our own life histories and by our political and theoretical understanding of the social world" (p. 150). She also focused on how knowledge is created and who has the power of creating it. For example, the researcher started the interviews with a dichotomy of women as agents (they chose prostitution) and victims (of violence), when, in the actual interviews, many women refused to be seen as victims, and victim and agent were much more complex, fluid categories. The researcher has the power to decide what to exclude, include, what questions to ask, and which to not ask, and subjectively interprets everything according to her reality. Some researchers recommend that researchers only study populations they are

members of, and others say this is not necessary if the research(er) is reflexive. The author suggests that most of these research dilemmas are unsolvable.

#### IV. ETHNOGRAPHY and RESEARCH ETHICS THEORY

**1. Goodwin, D., C. Pope, et al. (2003). "Ethics and ethnography: an experiential account." Qualitative Health Research 13(4): 567-77.**

**Abstract:** In this article, the authors discuss an ethical dilemma faced by the first author during the fieldwork of an ethnographic study of expertise in anesthesia. The example, written from the perspective of the first author, addresses a number of ethical issues commonly faced, namely, the researcher-researched relationship, anonymity and confidentiality, privacy, and exploitation. She deliberates on the influences that guided her decision and in doing so highlights some of the elements that combine to shape the data. The authors argue that this process of shaping the data is a symbiotic one in which the researcher and the community being studied construct the data together.

**Notes:** The author describes and analyzes an ethnographic situation that could be ethically compromising. She conducted an ethnography of the anesthesia ward of a hospital where she already worked for several years. This created dilemmas where it was unclear in informal conversations whether participants were regarding her as a coworker/friend or a researcher (i.e. should she record the conversation or not?). One particular situation came up where, during a surgery, while she was obviously taking notes, two anesthetists engaged in a conversation, specifically calling it "confidential," right in front of her. She had to immediately analyze the situation, decided not to take notes (but noted later that the situation occurred). While she turned her attention to the patient instead of the confidential conversation, she noticed the patient was in need of immediate medical attention, and was again faced with a dilemma of whether or not to step out of her "researcher" role and enter her former "nurse" role. The author argues that ethical dilemmas often arise spontaneously, and must be resolved situationally. There are also "often conflicting interests of those involved" (p. 568). "Ethical conduct is not fixed, but is personally, socially, and contextually constructed" (p. 569). Regarding the confidential conversation and whether or not to report it, she wondered if she would be "maintaining their privacy or keeping the secrets" (p. 574) (and therefore not presenting a balanced, "real" view of the culture).

**2. Guillemin, M. and L. Gillam (2004). "Ethics, Reflexivity, and "Ethically Important Moments" in Research." Qualitative Inquiry 10(2): 261-280.**

**Abstract:** Ethical tensions are part of the everyday practice of doing research—all kinds of research. How do researchers deal with ethical problems that arise in the practice of their research, and are there conceptual frameworks that they can draw on to assist them? This article examines the relationship between reflexivity and research ethics. It focuses on what constitutes ethical research practice in qualitative research and how researchers achieve ethical research practice. As a framework for thinking through these issues, the authors distinguish two different dimensions of ethics in research, which they term procedural ethics and "ethics in practice." The relationship between them and the impact that each has on the actual doing of research are examined. The article then draws on the notion of reflexivity as a helpful way of understanding both the nature of ethics in qualitative research and how ethical practice in research can be achieved.

**Notes:** Procedural ethics is defined as the early, pre-field process involving the research ethics committee (IRB, HIC, etc.). Ethics in practice involves the every day ethical occurrences in the field. (For example, if a researcher is interviewing a woman about her heart disease, and she breaks into tears and explains that she just found out her daughter has been sexually abused by her father for years. What does that researcher do in that moment?) "Being reflexive in an ethical sense means acknowledging and being sensitized to the microethical dimensions of research practice and in doing so, being alert to and prepared

for ways of dealing with the ethical tensions that arise" (p. 278).

**3. Howell, J. (2004). "Turning Out Good Ethnography, or Talking Out of Turn? Gender, Violence, and Confidentiality in Southeastern Mexico." Journal of Contemporary Ethnography 33(3): 323-352.**

**Abstract:** Ethnographers face a dilemma once they become privy to sensitive information shared with them in the role of "friend" rather than in the role of researcher. The author explores this topic using as case study information that emerged when friends in southern Mexico confided their personal experiences with sexual violence, arguing that it may be only through the sharing of confidences that firsthand accounts of responses to violence can enter the ethnographic record. Yet the women's concerns that their experiences might become public knowledge coincide with broader debates of researchers' preservation of informants' privacy, particularly when discussing culturally sensitive topics such as rape.

**Notes:** The article questions putting personal rape stories in print, when the information was given to the researcher as a friend, not as a researcher. It focuses on issues of privacy. It does not discuss whether or not to talk to police about the perpetrators.

**4. Kleinman, A. (1999). "Moral experience and ethical reflection: can ethnography reconcile them? A quandary for "the new bioethics"." Daedalus 128(4): 69-97.**

**Abstract:** None.

**Notes:** "With hastening pace, bioethics in American is moving in manifold ways to deal with serious problems in its *modus operandi*.... So much is changing so fast that we might well speak of "the new bioethics": more inclusive of alternative approaches, seemingly more willing to employ a broader variety of perspectives, more empirical, and even experimental—in the sense of trying out, albeit gingerly, new methods of inquiry.... For all these efforts at repair and reform, however, bioethics is confronted with an extraordinarily difficult quandary: how to reconcile the clearly immense differences in the social and personal realities of moral life with the need to apply a universal standard to those fragments of experience that can foster not only comparison and evaluation but also action" (p. 69. 70). The article explores how ethnography can inform bioethics; it recommends that the "ethnographic approach be developed more generally as a means of teaching about moral processes and examining their practical implication" (p. 90). An ethnographer "should emphasize the process of soliciting and engaging multiple perspectives as the most valid means of relating internal and external approaches. That processual framework, with its specific implications for policies and programs, then becomes the grounds for community-wide conversations between stakeholders (e.g. laypersons and professionals), out of which will emerge an agenda for practical action. At each level, the ethnographic task is to encompass and incarnate both agonistic and antagonistic framings. It is not the ethnographer's responsibility to resolve these tensions, but rather to clarify and relate them in such a way that they can be better seen and understood and handled by participants" (p. 92).

**5. Meyers, C. (2004). "Institutional culture and individual behavior: creating an ethical environment." Science and Engineering Ethics 10(2): 269-76.**

**Abstract:** Much of the work in professional ethics sees ethical problems as resulting from ethical ignorance, ethical failure or evil intent. While this approach gets at real and valid concerns, it does not capture the whole story because it does not take into account the underlying professional or institutional culture in which moral decision-making is imbedded. My argument in this paper is that this culture plays a powerful and sometimes determinant role in establishing the nature of the ethical debate, i.e., it helps to define what are viable action options, what is the organization's genuine mission, and what behaviors will be rewarded or criticized. Given these conclusions, I also argue that consulting ethicists need more than an understanding of ethics theory, concepts and principles; they also need a sufficiently rich

understanding of organizational culture, and a willingness and an ability to critique that culture.

**Notes:** The author asks, "Why do good people do bad things?" and explains why that question itself is too simple. Within an organization, employees learn and internalize the institution's goals, interests, and methods. They then "become the filter through which employees see their world, understand its norms, and make organizationally 'correct' choices" (p. 270). Sometimes these organizationally correct choices are unethical from another viewpoint outside the organization. One must take into account the institutional culture when exploring ethics. Employees also need to recognize when to break out of the culture and make (to the outside) ethical decisions, even when the decisions are not ethical within the institutional framework.

## **V. STRUCTURAL INTERVENTIONS and RESEARCH ETHICS THEORY**

**1. Monahan, J., P. Appelbaum, et al. (1993). "Ethical and legal duties in conducting research on violence: lessons from the MacArthur Risk Assessment Study." Violence and Victims 8(4): 387-96.**

**Abstract:** This article addresses the ethical and legal duties that must be confronted in any study of the risk of interpersonal violence in the community. Ongoing research—the MacArthur Risk Assessment Study—on the markers of violence among released mental patients is taken as illustrative. Methods by which the researchers are discharging their legal and ethical duties are described and justified. Strategies center around the duty to protect research subjects from their own violence, and the duties to protect research staff and third parties from subjects' violence. By airing these rarely discussed issues, the authors hope to initiate a professional dialogue on crucial ethical and legal aspects of the research process.

**Notes:** This article discusses how a particular study (risk of violence among mental patients) addressed the question of what to do if a participant appears to be imminently violent to him/herself, the staff, or another person. It divides duties into ethical and legal duties to subject, researchers, and third parties. The APA has a formal code of ethics (The APA Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct) that deals in greater detail with the research process, but in clinical settings, not other research settings. The Code states "Psychologists disclose confidential information without the consent of the individual only as mandated by law, or where permitted by law for a valid purpose, such as...to protect the patients or client or others from harm (Standard 5.05 [a])" (p. 389). In the US, legal codes stipulate that researchers must act appropriately to reduce risk of suicide (by subject), and harm to third parties and research staff. All states require reporting of child abuse, and many states require reporting of abuse to the elderly and mentally impaired. Researchers must also act appropriately when research procedures themselves (when the research questions trigger emotions/actions tied to past traumatic events) increase risk of subjects' suicide or violence to others. Article then outlines how the researchers handled their subjects and staff to reduce violence in the research situation.

**2. Riley, T., P. Hawe, et al. (2005). "Contested ground: how should qualitative evidence inform the conduct of a community intervention trial?" Journal of Health Services and Research Policy 10(2): 103-10.**

**Abstract:** This paper presents issues which arose in the conduct of qualitative evaluation research within a cluster-randomized, community-level, preventive intervention trial. The research involved the collection of narratives of practice regarding the intervention by community development officers working in eight communities over a two-year period. The community development officers were largely responsible for implementing the intervention. We discuss the challenges associated with the collection of data as the intervention unfolded, in particular, the disputes over cues to revise and adjust the intervention (i.e. to use the early data formatively). We explore the ethical uncertainties that arise when multiple parties have different views on the legitimacy of types of knowledge and the appropriate role of

research and theory in various trial stages. These issues are discussed drawing on the fields of ethnography, community psychology, epidemiology, qualitative methodology and notions of research reflexivity. We conclude by arguing that, in addition to the usual practice of having an outcome data-monitoring committee, community intervention trials also require a process data-monitoring committee as a forum for debate and decision-making. Without such a forum, the relevance, ethics and position of qualitative evaluation research within randomized controlled trials are destined to be a point of contention rather than a source of insight.

**Notes:** The authors were part of a team that conducted on-going evaluation (economic and ecologic) of a community intervention trial on maternal health. The paper discusses conflicts that arose when their evaluations clashed with the intervention's vision of the intervention. Theory-based discussion of the issues raised the following: nature of harm in community-level preventive intervention studies; accountability and protecting the interests of the most vulnerable; different and disparate views of reality. Suggests that qualitative research and interventions should model after medical interventions and provide knowledge of risk and benefits, and develop standard procedure for subjects withdrawing for the trial, etc.