



FH KREMS
UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED
SCIENCES

Qualitative Research Methods



erlebnis → studium

I. Ethics in Research

- **Ethical issues arise in the design and conduct of research and in the reporting of results:**
 - to plan your research and frame questions in an ethical manner
 - to carry out data generation and analysis in an ethical manner
 - to report results in an ethical manner

Research should be an ethical practice at every stage!

Principles:

1. **No harm** should befall the research subjects.
2. Subjects should take part **freely** and on the basis of **informed consent**.

- **Harm:**

- particularly in medical/biological research
- in tourism and leisure research:
the question of harm arises mainly in the use of data in particular over the issue of **confidentiality** and **privacy**.
- privacy is a valued right in western society.
- obligation on the researcher to ensure confidentiality of any data collected.

- Where data are collected directly from the individual:
 - check whether information is being given “on the record” or “off the record”.
 - in interviews where sensitive matters arise, it is wise to ask informants whether they are prepared to be quoted.
- When data are confidential...
 - measures must be taken to protect that confidentiality through **ensuring the security of the raw data** (interview tapes, transcripts or questionnaires)
 - care must be taken in the way the results are written up (code numbers, false names)

- **Free Choice:**

- individuals should not be coerced to become involved in research projects
- critical areas:
 - population census, children, research in hospitals...
 - observations where large numbers of subjects are involved – choice on the part of the subject is virtually impossible

- **Informed Consent:**

- involves being informed about the purpose of the research and the nature of the sponsor or beneficiary.
- researchers have to identify to their informants the organisation which will be the beneficiary of the research.
- **Grey areas:**
 - in some cases the **research would be invalidated** if subjects knew fully what its purpose was:
e.g. quasi-experimental research on people's attitudes based on reactions to pictures – responses will be affected if respondents are told too much about the research.

- Give information about the research which is relevant to subjects' decisions about whether to participate
- Make sure that subjects understand that information
- Ensure that participation is voluntary (e.g. by requiring written consent)
- Where subjects are not competent to agree (e.g. children) obtain consent by proxy (e.g. from their parents)

- **General research ethics:**
 - Competence:
 - researchers should not embark on research involving the use of skills in which they have not been adequately trained
 - Literature review:
 - to ensure, as far as possible, that the proposed research has not already been done elsewhere
 - Plagiarism:
 - the use of others' data or ideas without due acknowledgement and, where appropriate, permission, is unethical
 - Falsification of results:
 - Falsification of research results or the misleading or incomplete reporting of results is clearly unethical

- **Some important questions to be answered:**

- What is the purpose or are the purposes of the research?
- Which parties, bodies, and practices are potentially interested or involved in or affected by this research?
- What are the implications for these parties, bodies, practices of framing these particular research questions?
- Have I honoured my commitments about confidentiality and privacy?
- Have I acted in the spirit of the informed consent which I received?
- Have I used data sources in an ethical manner?
- Have I fulfilled my responsibility to produce good quality research?
- Have I used my research, and my explanations, effectively and morally?
- Do I have a responsibility to anticipate how others might use my research and explanations?
- In general, am I clear about both my rights, and my responsibilities, in respect of my data, my analysis and my explanations?

(Mason 2005, p. 41, p. 201)

Interviews

- What justifications can I offer for the ethics of my interview practice and style?
- Conducting interviews in an ethical way
 - What you ask
 - How you ask
 - What you let your interviewees tell you
 - Whether and how you can guarantee the confidentiality and anonymity of your interviewees
 - The power relations of the interview interaction.
- Gaining informed consent!