

Ethics

- *Field-based research*, because it is conducted in natural settings, *differs significantly from clinical/laboratory research*, although Hailman and Strier (page 7) argue that there is no fundamental difference in terms of epistemology.
- Any fieldworker must present honest statements about research he/she is doing and how it will be used.
- Why?
 - Community members will eventually figure out any misrepresentations anyway.
 - Honesty will lead to a better understanding on everyone's part; this in turn will lead to better assistance forthcoming to you as researcher
- Make clear from the beginning what you can and cannot do for people.
- For those engaged in social science research *protection of the individual as a research subject*, including anonymity of one's informants/consultants, *is paramount*.
- Research on human subjects normally subject to intensive review by an institutional review board to ensure that participants in the proposed research are not harmed.
- [Belmont Report](#) – issued in 1979; based on studies done by National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research (1974-1978), and Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) <http://ohsr.od.nih.gov/guidelines/belmont.html>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belmont_Report
- The report arose largely because of the uproar among researchers over the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment
- 3 Fundamental ethical principles for using any human subjects for research are:
 1. *Respect for persons*: protecting the autonomy of all people and treating them with courtesy and respect and allowing for informed consent.
 2. *Beneficence*: maximizing benefits for the research project while minimizing risks to the research subjects.
 3. *Justice*: ensuring reasonable, non-exploitative, and well-considered procedures are administered fairly.
- **Informed consent** – people who are potential subjects of research **must** be informed about nature of research, advised of possible risks, and given option of whether or not to participate.
- Key components:
 1. *Communication* of information
 2. *Comprehension* of information
 3. *Voluntary* participation.
- It is an *interactive process* whereby researcher informs potential participants of purposes & procedures of research, risks & benefits associated with study, and how data provided by participants will be protected and stored.
- Researcher bears responsibility of ensuring that participants are fully informed of intent of ethnographic research, how participants' information contributes to research, and anticipated risks and benefits participants may expect to occur as a result of their agreement to participate.
- Research with human subjects can involve significant risks.

- If, for example, a public event is videotaped and used by researcher or others for purposes that may harm participant(s) and compromise protection of participants' identity then the research involves higher risk.
- Particularly true in research involving vulnerable populations, such as those with a potentially stigmatizing illness (e.g., HIV/AIDS), individuals engaged in illegal activities (e.g., sex work, drug use), those who are mentally or physically disabled, or those whose civil rights have been compromised.
- If project is long-term, process of obtaining informed consent may be continuous and incremental throughout course of research, and review of consent obtained may be periodic.
- **Several Examples of high profile ethical breaches in anthropology**
- **Project Camelot** < http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Project_Camelot >
- Social science research project initiated by the United States Defense Department in 1964.
- Goal was to assess causes of internal war and to identify actions governments could take to preclude such wars.
- When news of proposal came out it caused considerable controversy among social scientists,
 - Many argued that such a study would end up using social scientific research to strengthen established government and put down revolutionary movements in Latin America and similar (then-volatile) places.
- Project was canceled as Defense Department came under increasing critique for attempting to subvert social research.
- **Darkness in El Dorado**. 2000. < http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Darkness_in_El_Dorado >
 - **See also** [*Jungle Fever: Did two U.S. scientists start a genocidal epidemic in the Amazon, or was The New Yorker duped? By John Tooby*](#) < <http://www.slate.com/id/91946/> >
 - [American Anthropological Association Statement on Ethics](#) < <http://www.aaanet.org/stmts/ethstmt.htm> >
- In book published in 2000, journalist Patrick Tierney alleged that geneticist James V. Neel and anthropologist Napoleon Chagnon committed acts of ethical misconduct, including starting a deadly measles epidemic among South America's Yanomami Indians in 1968 by inoculating villagers with a dangerous vaccine.
- Chagnon was also targeted in the book on another front, that his research with the Yanomami was often staged, and therefore unreliable.
- American Anthropological Association formed a task force to investigate the allegations.
- 300 page final report concluded that in truth the measles vaccination probably saved many lives. Chagnon was guilty of at worst bad judgment when using high level political connections to access Venezuelan military aircraft, thereby enabling him to fly into Yanomamo territory without proper research clearance from Venezuelan government (which had already been denied by Indian Agency) and without following quarantine procedures.