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Abstract

The pursuit of a doctorate is a rite of passage that requires a student to successfully navigate the transition from "student" to "scholar." One area of practice that is often marginalized, however, is the role of ethics. Though there is no formal coursework in ethics, its importance cannot be understated. This essay examines the conceptual role of ethics in doctoral research as both an individual reflective essay as well as a broader discussion of ethics in general. The ethical dimension considered is conceptualized as eight principles for ethical research and practice in doctoral research. The "Eight Ethical Principles" will serve as a "checklist" for doctoral and novice researchers.

Introduction

The doctoral process immerses students in the methods and theories of professional practice. But, in addition to these accoutrements, ethics plays a considerable role in the development of the student into a scholar. Though students might not take formal coursework in ethics, explorations into the ethical dimension of practice, research, and scholarship is present in every phase of the doctoral journey. Ethical questions come to the forefront in doctoral education; however, as students complete their coursework and embark on their dissertation, they are confronted with the challenges of undertaking original research and ethical considerations. This rite of passage is unfamiliar terrain, requiring the novice researcher to draw upon every resource and skillset they have acquired throughout their academic and professional lives in the culminating project leading to the doctoral degree. The ethical "checklist" that every doctoral learner will become thoroughly familiar with considers the following eight applications: plagiarism and honesty, risk assessment, informed consent, privacy and confidentiality, data handling and reporting, mistakes and negligence, working with a mentor, and Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines. This essay will explore these questions in undertaking research as well as present a general philosophy of research ethics in education.

Rationale for Eight Ethical Principles

In graduate schools of education, doctoral degrees require a certain number of research courses to fulfill that component of the program. In this writer's program, seven research courses were required. The school attended has since revised their research courses and are no longer offering many of those this writer completed. Therefore, the courses this writer took might not necessarily be available to current doctoral students, might be labeled differently, or contain different prefixes. While this writer was a doctoral student, however, the first research course was "Educational Research Methodology," followed by a course called "Research

Design." These two courses were considered the foundational research courses upon which all others were built. Because PhD students were required to be proficient in several research modalities, two courses in intermediate and advanced Statistics were required. Furthermore, to build upon the qualitative and quantitative foundations, specialized courses in Qualitative and Quantitative Research Design were also required. The final research course doctoral students took was a capstone course titled "Planning Dissertation Research in Education," which led to a complete dissertation proposal. Aside from Statistics, the conceptual importance of ethics was emphasized in every research class, especially the foundational courses mentioned above, and was one of four major exam fields in the Comprehensive Examinations. The importance of ethics, therefore, was part and parcel of this writer's doctoral education from beginning to end.

Two research textbooks, in particular, were used in focusing and refining the eight principles that underlie doctoral research ethics. These textbooks were chosen for two reasons: 1) they are popular textbooks used by many schools of education across the United States and, 2) these research handbooks were required in many of this author's research courses, including two foundational courses where the concept of ethics was first introduced. Creswell's popular *Research Design* (2009), now in its fourth edition, discussed the ethical dimension of research at length with specific sections devoted to various stages of the research process (pp. 87-92).

Creswell's treatment of ethics is commendable but brief; Cozby and Bates' *Methods in Behavioral Research* (2012), however, is a thoughtful and exploratory analysis in ethical practice that every doctoral researcher should carefully consider. Cozby and Bates systematically explore the ethical challenges and questions that researchers must anticipate and plan for to ensure the integrity of their research (pp. 39-67). These textbooks show considerable overlap in their treatment of ethics in the research process and the eight principles discussed in this essay are culled from their pages. The author's doctoral program required the above textbooks for most research courses, but, a more meaningful discussion of research ethics requires a broader lens and scope. The eight principles of ethical research are contextualized and examined through the supplemental perspectives offered by other notable research experts including Leedy and Ormrod (2010), Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), and Patton (2014). Though these ethical applications are not qualitatively ranked "more" important than any other single factor, taken corporately, they comprise a set of ethical benchmarks that will help guide and shape ethical research practices in educational settings.

Ethical Application #1: Plagiarism & Honesty

Plagiarism is considered by many to be a ubiquitous problem in education (Ison, 2015). Now that the internet has become an integral part of education and, especially so, in online education, many critics are linking a proliferation of plagiarized materials with the internet and online education. To combat this menace, plagiarism tools, such as Turnitin.com[®], have become a staple in providing faculty and institutional oversight. But is plagiarism really more prevalent today than in the past? According to a study by Ison (2015), plagiarism in PhD dissertations before 1994 (aka: the pre-Internet Age) compared to those after 2010 (aka: post-Internet Age) showed that there is no significant evidence to substantiate the claim that plagiarism is on the rise (p. 159). Though this does not mean that plagiarism is not an issue, what it does mean is that the incidence, in general, is no more or less pervasive than in previous decades (Ison, 2015).

Doctoral education is a process; anyone who has undertaken it understands that it requires a great deal of investment and sacrifice on the part of the doctoral student (Harman, 2003). This shift from "student" to "scholar" can be overwhelming, and, as Mitchell and Carroll (2008) concluded, some students, unable to cope with the demands of doctoral education, take

the easy way out and, in the process, compromise their integrity. Honesty, too, is an essential element of ethical practice in relation to working in-the-field with study participants or in acknowledging intellectual debts to colleagues and peers (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). These two areas—plagiarism and honesty—can become ethical gray areas where a desirable outcome might unduly influence a researcher's interaction with study participants, lead to the manipulation of data, or even misinterpret findings in order to achieve a significant result or convincing conclusion (Miles et al., 2014). Instances of overt ethical misconduct are "unlikely" but, as Miles et al. (2014) noted, deception and "broken promises are not unknown" (p. 62). Safeguards against violating the ethics of honesty and trust include recognizing the contributions of others and seeking complete transparency in all areas of research, but, especially, in interacting with human subjects (Miles et al., 2014). As an emergent stakeholder in a community of scholars, it is important that the integrity of ethical standards is maintained in the production and protection of knowledge.

Ethical Application #2: Risk Assessment

Risk assessment is an important aspect of ethics as it ensures that measures have been taken to assess and evaluate a given research design and its parameters for potential risk to the participants. A researcher's concern should be, first and foremost, the safety and well-being of the participants. The research that generally occurs in educational settings, however, tends to be more inclined towards observation and survey/questionnaire information and, as such, poses *minimal risk* to participants. But, in the case of teacher practitioner research, this becomes even more important as the teacher assumes the dual-role of researcher and gatekeeper. As Mockler (2014) suggests, ethics becomes an even greater consideration in classroom contexts where research and practice come together in the person of the teacher and, thus, influences the quality of that research (pp. 146-147).

The researcher should be aware that they alone are responsible for the ethical considerations of their study and that the onerous is not shared with faculty and staff at research sites. Brindley and Bowker (2013) found that internal risk assessment, within schools, was largely absent. Furthermore, the important role of the gatekeeper, whether this individual is the researcher (which it is assumed) or a department head or lead teacher at a given school, is often prioritized at the expense of students who are "participating" in a research study (pp. 297-298). When surveying 53 teachers in an ethics module for a M.Ed. program at the University of Cambridge's Faculty of Education, Brindley and Bowker (2013) found that teachers who were actively involved in their own research or were asked to "volunteer" their students as part of a project overwhelmingly did so unilaterally, essentially suspending students' rights in the process. This discovery was alarming to the researchers but, as they came to realize, the real issue at work was a set of *a priori* assumptions and beliefs concerning research. As the authors noted in their discussion, many teachers, gatekeepers, and the like assumed that the researcher(s) were informed on such ethical considerations and never thought to question the legitimacy, much less ethical dimensions, of the research (Brindley & Bowker, 2013, p. 303).

The potential for study participants to experience imagined or real harm or risk must be mitigated by the researcher. Recommendations to lessen the adverse effects of such outcomes begin with abiding by the ethical parameters outlined in the *Belmont Report: Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research* (1979). The most significant risk assessment principle is beneficence (Cozby & Bates, 2012). Beneficence can be assured through a risk-benefit analysis where researchers thoroughly anticipate, examine, and scrutinize potential benefits, challenges, and risks to study participants to ensure their safety and well-

being. There are also considerations of short- and long-term effects due to study conditions, physical harm incurred because of unique circumstances, and stress (Cozby & Bates, 2012; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). A corollary to evaluating potential risk is revealing benefits to participating in a given study (Cozby & Bates, 2012). Study participants might experience a beneficial interest, for example—compensation for participation or inclusion in published work—by agreeing to participate in a study (Creswell, 2009). Researchers are placed in a position of trust and authority; informing participants of any potential conflicts, harm, or risk, to the best of one's ability, is requisite to ethical research practice.

Ethical Application #3: Informed Consent

Northcentral University's *Institutional Review Board Handbook* (2015) states that "informed consent is a process" and every precaution should be taken to ensure that prospective study participants understand exactly what is expected of them and the significance of their participation (p. 17). A well-designed study will anticipate potential questions and will address them accordingly so that prospective study participants have the best and most accurate information available to make an informed decision. Researchers are mandated to avoid confusing terminology and academic jargon as well as communicate the parameters of the study and general expectations at or below an 8th grade level of comprehension and understanding (IRB Handbook, 2015, p. 18). There are several elements outlined by the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services' "Common Rule" in regards to informed consent, but Northcentral University's *Institutional Review Board Handbook* (2015) focuses on three determinants: 1) a reasonable amount of time for prospective study participants to review and reflect upon the consent document, allowing for questions to be thoughtfully answered; 2) that the form be written in accessible language free of confusing terms and jargon; and 3) does not adversely affect the prospective study participant in any way (p. 19).

One ethical quandary connected to informed consent is transparency. How much or how little information should be included in informed consent forms is hotly debated and the literature presents a range of varying positions on acceptable degrees of transparency (Cozby & Bates, 2012; Creswell, 2009; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; Miles et al., 2014; Patton, 2014). The intent behind the informed consent should convey sufficient transparency to enable prospective participants to make an educated decision; every courtesy and precaution should be extended to potential study participants so that they give their consent voluntarily and in good faith (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). A second ethical quandary concerns respect for participant autonomy (Cozby & Bates, 2012). When children or other vulnerable populations are involved (e.g., pregnant women or special populations), informed consent becomes more complex, requiring sensitivity on the part of the researcher as more elaborate assurances, considerations, and measures are made to guarantee a high-degree of transparency (Miles et al., 2014). Threats to autonomy, such as coercion, should be taken into consideration and the welfare of the participant should remain a priority to the researcher (Cozby & Bates, 2012).

The informed consent form in one part of the informed consent process culminating in a brief outline of the study before proceeding to the interview stage, according to Patton (2014). But, how extensive should these informal, pre-interview dialogues be? "Statements of purpose should be simple, straightforward, transparent, and understandable" (Patton, 2014, p. 497). In fact, overemphasizing matters related to informed consent, Patton (2014) warned, can be taken to extremes, such as a long prefatory remark before an interview, which can produce an unintended subtle shift in the participant's frame of mind or trigger anxiety. In the interest of all concerned, it is best to have a reasonably detailed informed consent form signed prior to the interview with a

brief recapitulation of the study highlighting essential points at the time of the interview (Patton, 2014).

Ethical Application #4: Privacy and Confidentiality

Privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity are three terms that are often confused and misunderstood in research (Miles et al., 2014). Privacy entails restricting third-party access to protected or sensitive information and taking appropriate action to ensure data are safe. Confidentiality is a pre-arranged understanding between researcher and participant(s) about the intended use(s) of the data collected from their participation. Anonymity disguises the identifying information of participant(s), thus protecting their identity (Miles et al., 2014). Matters concerning privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity come to the forefront when data sources include visual or photographic evidence and, even in the best circumstances, complete identity protection is unrealistic. Maintaining a strict policy of privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity will strengthen the relationship and trust between researcher and study participant. And, in certain cases, applying for a Certificate of Confidentiality from the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services is prudent to further protect data from being subpoenaed as admissible evidence in a court of law (Cozby & Bates, 2012; Miles et al., 2014).

The use of fictitious names and generic identifiers is in accordance with the guidelines set in Northcentral University's *Institutional Review Board Handbook* (2015) and is also a customary practice in the field of education research (pp. 33-34). Saunders, Kitzinger, and Kitzinger (2015) outlined several strategies they developed in concert with study participants in regards to highly sensitive research studies where issues of anonymity and privacy were of paramount importance. For example, they would employ multiple pseudonyms/fictitious names to add additional layers of protection and, in some instances, consider amending the scope of consent forms (p. 134). The location of research should not be disclosed to provide further anonymity. General information such as the state, or geographical area, can be shared to provide readers some reference, for instance "in a large, public school district in the southeastern United States." Using pseudonyms, fictitious names, and generic labels for locations are commonplace and encouraged in research studies in order to ensure privacy and confidentiality but there has been a trend in recent years, according to Patton (2014), toward publicly revealing participant identity in special circumstances and suspending confidentiality (Creswell, 2009). In a study Patton (2014) was involved in that dealt with victims of physical abuse, he "encountered women who were combating the stigma of their past by telling their stories and attaching their real names to their stories as part of their healing, empowerment, and pride" (p. 499). There are arguments for and against such transparency, Patton (2014) cautioned, but the traditional notion of confidentiality is challenged by some participants and groups (Creswell, 2009).

Ethical Application #5: Data Handling and Reporting

A recommendation made by Miles et al. (2014) in facilitating effortless data handling and processing is the use of computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS). The myriad types of data—archival documents, audio/visual recordings, transcriptions—require accurate categorization, labeling, and coding/memoing, and a CAQDAS can streamline data collection and expedite data analysis. CAQDAS provide additional benefits including efficient storage and retrieval of raw data in one user-friendly location (Miles et al., 2014, p. 46). Raw data and any-and-all related documentation should be kept in a safe place and a CAQDAS can meet that need. Furthermore, encrypting sensitive data or using password-protected functions is seamless using CAQDAS (Creswell, 2009). An encrypted or password-protected CAQDAS can

protect against loss of privacy or confidentiality protecting data and the safety of the participants involved in the research (Cozby & Bates, 2012). One of the strengths of CAQDAS, according to Yin (2014), is in developing a functional database; however, CAQDAS is not a substitute for human agency in analyzing raw data and drawing meaningful interpretations and conclusions. Scholars, generally, do not make recommendations as to specific CAQDAS programs, but popular options include ATLAS.ti (www.atlasti.com), Dedoose (www.dedoose.com), and NVivo (www.qsrinternational.com).

While a CAQDAS can reduce a researcher's workload, it is not the sole data management tool (Miles et al., 2014). The need for physical storage for research-related hard copies of documentation is necessary in qualitative research (Miles et al., 2014). Online quantitative instrumentation, such as SurveyMonkey$^{®}$, can be used for survey research and questionnaire data while being stored remotely in the Cloud or with a trusted third-party administrator (Creswell, 2009). Similarly, a consideration often taken for granted, but no less important, is having multiple copies of data at hand. "Remember that most research data are irreplaceable. If they are lost, erased, vandalized, or damaged, you are out of luck. *Back up all of your work*" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 51). Studies involving a single researcher minimize threats to the integrity of the evidentiary chain-of-command concerning participant files, documents, tapes, and the like (Creswell, 2009; Yin, 2014). Research classified as *minimal risk*, as defined by Northcentral University's *Institutional Review Board Handbook* (2015), poses little to no threat to participants and there is little reason to take excessive precautions beyond those mentioned above because most action research takes place in common educational research settings.

Ethical Application #6: Mistakes and Negligence

A scholarly convention that is often seen in dissertations and in general scholarly literature is a simple proviso that hardly raises an eyebrow for most, yet is pregnant with ethical significance. Usually inserted after the "Acknowledgements" section, the author's disclaimer that reads something like, "any and all errors are mine and mine alone" before diving headlong into the introduction or first chapter. As the author of a given piece of scholarship, they, not their colleagues or mentors, bear the burden of responsibility for the work they produce. While some authors might see such a caveat as a mere formality, others feel the full weight of those words.

Mistakes and negligence come in many forms and in varying degrees. Some can be simply labeled as harmless or minor infractions while others can be more serious, such as scholarly misconduct, or worse, potentially dangerous to human participants or vulnerable populations (Resnik & Stewart, 2012). Negligence, however, is the more serious of the two terms discussed and is more problematic when human participants are involved. However, in general educational settings, most research designs will utilize observational data and instrumentation, or a mixture of the two, which keeps researchers at arm's length from human participants and vulnerable populations. Designs such as ethnographic and phenomenological research, however, are more "involved" with human participants as researchers look closely and, oftentimes, insert themselves as a participant to share and/or experience a certain phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). These designs are much more problematic as the researcher assumes a role of agency rather than simply observing from a distance. In such cases, the line between researcher and human participant becomes blurred and mistakes and negligence can occur (Creswell, 2009).

The surest way to protect against mistakes and negligence is to be cognizant of potential red flags throughout the research process and, if appropriate, to include others as collaborators

(Patton, 2014). Quantitative research, for example, can greatly benefit from an additional pair of eyes to review design, methodology, and statistical analyses. Sophisticated statistical analyses, such as MANOVA or other multi-level analyses with large numbers of variables, require additional consideration in terms of ensuring construct validity as well as addressing potential threats to validity (Cozby & Bates, 2012). Confounding variables must be determined as well as constructs (e.g., mediating and moderating variables), operationalizations, sufficient statistical power (performed through a G*Power data analysis), and descriptive and exploratory statistical data analysis. It is **not** uncommon to recruit an external methodologist or statistician for data analyses or to run simulations to ensure validity and reliability of the results (Creswell, 2009).

Ethical Application #7: Working with a Mentor

Schools of Education are adopting the mentor model in doctoral education. Brook, Catlin, DeLuca, Doe, Huntly, and Searle (2010) argued the many benefits of working in and with a community of like-minded scholars as doctoral students moved from "student" to "scholar."

Specifically, Brook et al. reflected upon the collegial environment of their own doctoral program at Queen's University (Canada) where mentorship is deeply ingrained in the intellectual culture of this close-knit community (p. 659). The mentor model provides the necessary conditions for intellectual risk-taking to occur naturally without fear of consequence and with the full support of colleagues, peers, and mentors alike. The top-down approach of the mentor model does not appear to have many disadvantages but, when seen from its reciprocal perspective, there are inherent tensions in the student-mentor relationship.

The very nature of a student-mentor relationship is problematic because of the immense pressures exerted upon both members and the innate inequities present due to assumed roles of each member. This is not to mean that the student-mentor relationship is in some way deficient or undesirable; it is a uniquely human relationship that is influenced by myriad external and internal factors that contribute to its perception as being a positive or negative experience. Gilbar, Winstok, Weinberg, and Bershtling (2013) investigated the complexities of the doctoral student-mentor relationship and concluded that dissatisfaction generally occurs because of unrealistic expectations by either side, miscommunication, or a generally unbalanced relationship as far as fulfilling expectations and obligations. Since "[T]he advisor is the candidate's most important asset in this quest" of completing an acceptable dissertation, it is incumbent upon both parties to "form a creative and open relationship" and "discuss mutual expectations" to avoid common pitfalls (Gilbar et al., 2013, p. 75; p. 74). The solution, the authors contend, is to draw up an agreement before embarking on the dissertation that, generally speaking, details the expectations and obligations by both parties in this student-mentor relationship. These duties should be mutually agreed upon and, as time goes on, if a conflict does arise, it should be addressed and, if necessary, the original agreement should be amended. The purpose of this agreement, however, is to set down in concrete terms the general expectations of each party and their mutual duty and obligation to one another in the pursuit of a finished dissertation.

Gilbar et al. (2013) conclude that two main components are integral to a student-mentor agreement and include the following: 1) the advisement process (p. 77) and, 2) intellectual property rights (p. 78). The advisement process can be further sub-categorized into the following clauses: coordination of expectations, collaborative work procedures, choosing the research subject, the research examination process, conflict between two advisors, consultation with outside experts, the accompanying thesis committee, and terminating the supervision process (pp. 77-78). Intellectual property rights can be further sub-categorized into the following clauses: *the research question*, *conceptual-theoretical framework*, *method*, *database*, *data*

analysis, *research results*, *published work*, and *conference presentations* (pp. 78-79). What the authors stress throughout their article is that the dissertation is a process and requires the full engagement and participation of both student and mentor for it to come to fruition. The agreement is simply a document that provides clearly articulated guidelines that both parties agree to and can amend/modify as time goes on to suit their needs. The relationship between a student and mentor is dynamic and personal; the agreement, a type of social contract between both members, serves as a public and visual reminder of their duties and obligations to one another (Celik, 2013; Gilbar et al., 2013).

Ethical Application #8: Institutional Review Board (IRB) Guidelines

Research involving human subjects affiliated or conducted under the auspices of federally-funded institutions or organizations must receive clearance from an internal or Institutional Review Board (IRB) before beginning a study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). In doctoral research, the IRB review process begins at the proposal stage of the dissertation (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). There are three broad categories of research evaluation used by IRB review boards: *exempt*, *minimal risk*, and *greater than minimal risk*. No risk or *exempt* research poses no perceivable threat to human subjects but must still be approved by IRB (Cozby & Bates, 2012). Research using surveys and questionnaires of an anonymous nature and interview methods as the primary instruments, for example, generally satisfy requirements for *exempt* status (IRB Handbook, 2015, p. 14). Research can also be fast-tracked for Expedited Review, in certain cases, if the study poses little to no risk to participants (IRB Handbook, 2015, 3.2). Moreover, the IRB Chair in conjunction with the Director of IRB Management and Operations, might determine that the research under consideration is *exempt* from review because it satisfies predetermined criteria outlined in the *Institutional Review Board Handbook* (2015, p. 14).

The second category is *minimal risk* research. *Minimal risk* research is not controversial, sensitive, or involving participants from Parts B, C, or D under The Common Rule (45 CFR part 46). According to the Northcentral University's *Institutional Review Board Handbook* (2015), *minimal risk* is defined as an adverse outcome (emotional, mental, or physical) that does not exceed that encountered in daily life (p. 6). Studies that do not pose a significant risk to prospective participants would generally be classified as *minimal risk*. "When minimal risk research is being conducted, elaborate safeguards are less of a concern and approval by the IRB is routine" (Cozby & Bates, 2012, p. 53).

Greater than minimal risk is the most stringent categorization and requires complete transparency on the part of the researcher with most, if not all, of the instrumentation, protocols, and protective measures, such as informed consent and confidentiality, pre-approved before granting permission (Cozby & Bates, 2012). This process does not end at the completion of the initial review; in fact, due to the complex nature of the research, IRB continually monitors research until data collection, processing, and analysis have been finalized. In cases where the duration of the project exceeds several years, IRB review will be undertaken on an annual basis (Cozby & Bates, 2012).

Institutional Review Boards and ethics committees have been the brunt of criticism from scholars and researchers in education (Cozby & Bates, 2012; Monaghan, O'Dwyer, and Gabe, 2013; Parsell, Ambler, and Jacenyik-Tawoger, 2014). The charge, Parsell et al. (2014) noted, stems from such advisory boards viewing *all* research, irrespective of field, through a biomedical lens and stifling, if not derailing, legitimate research (p. 166). Strict ethical standards, however, are necessary, according to Patton (2014), because of less reputable practices used in the past:

> Doctoral students frustrated by having their fieldwork delayed while they await IRB approval, need to remember that they are paying for the sins of their research forebears, for whom deception and covert observations were standard ways of doing their work. But the necessity for such procedures comes out of a past littered with scientific horrors, for which those of us engaging in research today may still owe penance. (p. 341)

But, in spite of such criticisms, advisory boards serve a valuable purpose, if reasonably adjudicated (Cozby & Bates, 2012). Northcentral University's *Institutional Review Board Handbook* (2015), for example, is a product that combines features of the *Belmont Report*, Title 45 Part 46 "The Common Rule," and the U. S. Department of Human and Health Services' regulations pertaining to research involving human participants (p. 4). In the interest of protecting human participants, every precaution should be taken (Patton, 2014).

Northcentral University's *Institutional Review Board Handbook* (2015) requires that the Dissertation Chair and the doctoral candidate complete Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI®) training before submitting an IRB application. Developed by the University of Miami and used by respected institutions such as Stanford University, the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), Northwestern University, and the University of North Carolina, CITI® training's purpose is "to promote the public's trust in the research enterprise by providing high quality, peer reviewed, web based, research education materials to enhance the integrity and professionalism of investigators and staff conducting research" ("CITI Program Mission Statement", 2016). The Institutional Review Board will run compliance before an application will be considered and, in certain circumstances, will require additional training if vulnerable populations are included (p. 17). When complete transparency has been maintained, and confidentiality and informed consent secured through the proper procedural channels, and *exempt*, *minimal risk*, or *greater than minimal risk* status has been granted for a specific study, an institution's institutional review board's oversight function has fulfilled its ethical duty and moral obligation.

Conclusion

Ethics is an important consideration in research and scholarship. As doctoral students complete their coursework and embark on their dissertation, however, they are confronted with the challenges of undertaking original research and ethical considerations. This rite of passage is unfamiliar terrain, requiring the novice researcher to draw upon every resource and skillset they have acquired throughout their academic and professional lives in the culminating project leading to the doctoral degree. The ethical "checklist" that every doctoral learner will become thoroughly familiar with considers the following eight applications: plagiarism and honesty, risk assessment, informed consent, privacy and confidentiality, data handling and reporting, mistakes and negligence, working with a mentor, and Institutional Review Board guidelines. Doctoral learners are gradually introduced and trained in the methods and theories of ethical practice as they move from "students" to "scholars." Understanding the nature of ethics in educational research and the common guidelines established by governing bodies, such as the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services and Institutional Review Boards, and their role in enforcing compliance and upholding strict standards separates the doctoral "student" from the doctoral "scholar." Furthermore, understanding that the role of the researcher is not only one of inquiry but also a moral obligation to protect and ensure the safety of human participants. This ethical duty is not a burden, but an opportunity to elevate the role of human participants in research while adhering to the highest quality of ethical practice in the pursuit of knowledge. The pursuit of knowledge, no matter how promising or precious, should in no way subordinate

or suspend the rights and voice of human participants. Modeling an ethical worldview will enable, rather than hinder, excellence in scholarship.

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