



Ethical Quandaries in Social Research: Conversations from the Field

Seminar series co-hosted by HUMA and FREC,
Second semester, 2011

Questions of ethical regulation have become increasingly prominent in late modern societies, across the spectrum from government through the professions, business and religious institutions, to universities. Typically inspired by an effort to give positive content to human rights discourses, the commitment to transparent and accountable public practice has also intertwined with moves to bureaucratize, scrutinize and regularize. A heightened consciousness of the ethics of public practice is laudable - including in the universities, where the world of social research has sometimes been less accountable to ethical norms and standards than it ought to have been. But technical processes for ensuring compliance shouldn't substitute for a more intellectually substantial engagement with questions of ethical practice, and the wider contexts within which ethical decision-making is enacted.

In this spirit, HUMA and the Faculty of Humanities Research Committee (FREC) co-hosted a series of lunchtime conversations intended to grapple with some of the complexities and challenges of our efforts to practice research in ethically appropriate ways. We surely readily accept that as researchers we have obligations to the wider society, to our research subjects, to our donors, and to our professional communities. But giving fuller, more positive content to what these obligations comprise - and to the tensions between them - is a demanding and controversial exercise.

Deborah Posel and Fiona Ross are currently co-editing a volume inspired by this series.

1. Ethics Seminars (in collaboration with the Humanities Research Ethics Committee, UCT)

27-Jul-11	The ethics of narrative non-fiction in a voyeuristic age	Jonny Steinberg (HUMA)
03-Aug-11	In depth, out of my depth: Ethically challenged in the field of HIV/AIDS	Deborah Posel (HUMA)
10-Aug-11	Jacketed women: the ethics of disclosure in sexualities research	Jane Bennett (UCT)
17-Aug-11	Transnational excursions: the ethics of northern anthropological investigations going south	Leslie London & Helen McDonald (UCT)
24-Aug-11	Ethical and personal dilemmas in police ethnographies	Monique Marks (UKZN)
31-Aug-11	Researching psychotherapy: Ethical dilemmas	Sally Swartz (UCT)
14-Sep-11	Disability research, ethics and the problem of representation	Leslie Swartz (University of Stellenbosch)
21-Sep-11	Watching the watchers: ethical dilemmas of research with children	Andy Dawes & Rachel Bray (UCT)
28-Sep-11	Ethical issues in the academic/policy interface in post-apartheid urban research	Sue Parnell (UCT)
05-Oct-11	Photography on the frontline: an exploration of ethics and photography	Paul Weinberg (UCT)
12-Oct-11	Reaching for an ethical response: responsibilities to all participants in conducting and supervising research with the aged	Jennifer Grant & Fiona Ross (UCT)
02-Nov-11	Doubts, Dilemmas and Decisions: Towards Ethical Research on Gender and Schooling in South Africa	Robert Morrell (UCT)