

# SEVEN

## Avoiding Harm, Doing Good and Seeking Justice

### Introduction

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We might expect that researchers would be very careful to protect participants from at least physical harm caused by their research programmes. After all, most moral systems require people to refrain from hurting anyone else intentionally unless there is good reason. However, as I discussed in Chapter 3, research ethics grew as a result of the need to protect participants from the considerable harms that had been done to them in biomedical research. The appalling impact of medical experimentation on vulnerable groups, it was argued, made it imperative that researchers not be allowed to regulate themselves. As a result, early ethical codes sought to protect research participants from various forms of harm.

Contemporary researchers are normally expected to minimize risks of harm or discomfort to participants (the principle of non-maleficence). In some circumstances, they may also be expected to promote the well-being of participants or maximize the benefits to society as a whole (the principle of beneficence). In this chapter, I examine the ways in which social scientists have grappled with the concepts of harm and benefit and how they have sought to balance the two. Researchers have not always been successful. We know some of our colleagues still leave participants feeling exploited, 'seething with rage and determined to skin alive the next aspiring researcher who seeks access' (Punch, 1986, p. 47; see also Ellis, 1986; Darou et al., 1993; Schepers-Hughes, 2000).

## Avoiding harm

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The meaning of harm itself is debatable. Joel Feinberg (1984) defined it as the 'defeating of an interest', where the interests of an individual are defined as 'the range of things in which that individual has a stake'. Although the influence of bioethics means harm is most often understood in physical terms, it also includes psychological, social, economic, legal and environmental damage. Indeed, in social science research, harm is generally more likely to involve psychological distress, discomfort, social disadvantage, invasion of privacy or infringement of rights than physical injury.

Just one research study may cause a range of harms. Consider three examples, the first hypothetical, the second and third real. The first involves a study of sexual practices among employees of a particular organization. Perhaps in an effort to assess the existence of discrimination or unsafe sexual practices, employees are asked whether they are sexually active, what types of sexual activities they have engaged in and the gender(s) of their partners. Various harms may flow from this research if, for example, confidentiality were to be breached and answers given by individual respondents revealed to current or prospective employers and fellow employees. As a result, one employee may be refused promotion or a new job because of his sexuality, another may be physically abused by colleagues because she is HIV-positive, a third might fear a break-up of his relationship with his partner after revelations of his sexual history, and so on.

The second case concerns social scientists in Iraq and Afghanistan operating within the United States Army's Human Terrain System. The American Anthropological Association Commission on the Engagement of Anthropology with the US Security and Intelligence Communities (CEAUSSIC) found that the programme might be engaged in research while also gathering intelligence, albeit inadvertently. They might also be 'performing a tactical function in which the military mission of combating an insurgency is the primary objective of data collection' (2009, p. 53). The Commission concluded Human Terrain Teams were unable to control the use of data they collected and therefore could not ensure participants received adequate protection. Indeed, as the AAA Executive Board had concluded two years earlier, there was a risk such data 'could be used to make decisions about identifying and selecting specific populations as targets of U.S. military operations ...' (CEAUSSIC, 2007). The 2009 AAA Code required researchers 'ensure' no harm came to research subjects. The 2012 Code took a more realistic view of anthropologists' capacities and simply required they sought to avoid causing harm. The activities of the Teams also threatened the future of anthropology by encouraging the military, local populations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and social scientists working for the

army, to equate counterinsurgency with ethnography. Reuse of data for military or terrorist ends has been termed 'dual use'. It has become a matter of concern in health and scientific research (Miller and Selgelid, 2007), but has also troubled anthropologists, geographers, sociologists, political scientists and international relations experts in the face of a long history of covert and overt funding of social science research by American military and intelligence organizations (Horowitz, 1967; Social Science Research Council, 2008; Engerman, 2009; Bryan, 2010).

In the third example, Sudhir Venkatesh (2008) was studying the illicit economy in a Chicago housing project. Having interviewed tenants, he was invited to discuss his findings by two key informants, JT and Ms Bailey, who had brokered his access to other residents. He provided 'breakdowns on each hustler's earnings'. When he next returned to the project, he was told the key informants had used this information to 'tax' various tenants, and that JT 'beat the shit out of Parnell and his brother because he thought they were hiding what they were doing' (p. 203). Venkatesh's naïveté had triggered a small wave of violence and extortion, led to rumours that he was spying for the local gangs and receiving kickbacks, and consequently made it difficult for him – or possibly anyone else – to complete research there. As Venkatesh (p. 204) acknowledged to C-Note, one of his interviewees, '... I fucked up. I told them things, and I had no idea that they would use that information.' C-Note responded bluntly: 'That has to be one of the stupidest things I ever heard you say'.

Usually, researchers should try to avoid imposing even the *risk* of harm on others. Of course, most research involves some risk, generally at a level greater in magnitude than the minimal risk we tend to encounter in our everyday lives. The extent to which researchers must avoid risks may depend on the degree of the risk (prevalence) as well as the weight of the consequences that may flow from it (magnitude): 'It is commonly said that benefits and risks must be "balanced" and shown to be "in a favourable ratio"' (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). Or, put another way, 'Grave risks require commensurately momentous goals for their justification' (Beauchamp and Childress, 2001, p. 118).

Ellsberg and Heise (2002) offered an example based on research on violence against women in developing countries. For them, the major danger when working with abused women:

is the potential to inadvertently cause harm or distress. Respondents might be vulnerable to physical harm if a partner finds out that she has been talking to others about their relationship. Additionally, there is the potential for respondents to become distressed by an insensitive interview, or from having to recall painful or frightening experiences. (pp. 1599–1600)

So, domestic violence victims in Mexico have been revictimized by partners because they participated in a survey that explored their experiences (Health and Development Policy Project, 1995), and refugee women who discuss their experiences of sexual assault have faced violence and social exclusion from their own communities in refugee camps in Kenya and Thailand (Zwi et al., 2006).

While interviewing people who have experienced violence, investigators might help participants reduce isolation and support their recovery or, alternatively, they may end up retraumatizing them (Sikweyiya and Jewkes, 2012). In their discussion of prison research, Bosworth and her colleagues (2005, p. 258) identified a 'collective failure' among researchers 'to acknowledge the pain their questions may evoke in their participants'. On the other hand, Griffin and his collaborators concluded that trauma survivors 'are not too fragile to participate in trauma research even in the acute aftermath of a traumatic experience' (Griffin et al., 2003, p. 221). However, little empirical evidence exists for researchers and regulators seeking to make informed decisions.

There are some exceptions, and these may form the basis for a move towards evidence-based informed decisions by researchers and regulators. For example, Kuyper and her collaborators (2012) found 899 self-selected young people in the Netherlands were not distressed by answering survey questions about sexual behaviours. Another team investigated the perceptions of adult women who had participated in their research on experiences of childhood sexual maltreatment (Newman et al., 1999). Although some underestimated the upset they thought they would experience, most reported their participation in the interview- and questionnaire-based study had been a positive experience despite the sensitive nature of the questions. Hlavka and colleagues (2007) interviewed 142 women incarcerated in Minnesota and asked about their involvement in both violent offending and victimization. Whether and how people agreed to complete the interview were related to the nature and extent of the violence they had experienced. Some women did not wish to talk about their victimization, some talked around their experiences, while others were only willing to talk outside the formal interview:

participants want to talk with interviewers about a range of traumatic experiences, but for some (and particularly those who have been revictimized) it needs to be on their own time and on their own terms ... (p. 914)

Management researchers often agree to brief corporations on their findings in return for access to the organization. In such situations, the boundaries between consultancy and research may become blurred, producing some unpleasant outcomes for participants. When data is collected for network analysis, Borgatti and Molina (2003) claimed employees are rarely offered sufficient information about what management will see, how results might be used and what the consequences could be for the participant. And yet, briefings

by researchers to management might lead to participants being dismissed from their job. Management researchers might not be able to promise not to do any harm, but they could at least avoid harming innocent employees by allowing non-participation and making clear what the consequences of the study might be.

Programme evaluators face similar issues. As Leviton (2011) noted, the only inherent justification for an evaluation is that it may be of value to funders, administrators, staff, beneficiaries or other stakeholders. Evaluations may have a direct or indirect impact on whether a programme continues. To the extent they might influence funding decisions, flawed evaluations might damage a successful programme or support the wasting of resources on an unsuccessful programme. Other forms of research may also have an impact on policy formation. For example, in the Sahel, representing particular communities as nomadic pastoralists or arable farmers may be used to support or deny the claims to land of specific ethnic groups (Nyamnjoh, 2006).

Researchers are normally expected to adopt risk minimization strategies which might involve monitoring participants, maintaining a safety net of professionals who can provide support in emergencies, excluding vulnerable individuals or groups from participation where justifiable, considering whether lower-risk alternatives might be available, and anticipating and counteracting any distortion or misuse of research results that might act to the detriment of research participants.

In randomized experiments and quasi-experiments in field settings, some participants may find the conditions to which they are assigned leave them at a disadvantage, either relative to other participants or to non-participants. For example, it is typical to compare a new programme or intervention with a condition that is thought to be relatively ineffective. As a way of reducing risks or mitigating harm, Mark and Lenz-Watson (2011) suggested researchers might compare a new programme with current 'best practice' rather than 'practice as usual', unless there was little prospect of the best practice option ever being adopted across the study population. Participants might also be offered the more effective practice once the study has been completed. In other field experiments, participants may be placed in real situations and required to make decisions that impact on their well-being. For example, where economists seek to test a policy by introducing incentives in a real market to see if it produces a desired change in behaviour, they may also have to provide a safety net so participants cannot lose more than a certain amount.

Martacan Humphreys (2011) considered the ethics of embedded experimentation in political science, pointing to the possibility that researchers might be involved in projects of the kind that blocked access to political information in some areas or led to the use of water cannon in others. In each case, Humphreys noted such experimentation rode on the back of existing government initiatives and occurred without the informed consent of citizens.

Humphreys pointed out social scientists might evade their ethical responsibilities by distinguishing between their roles as consultants or activists on the one hand and researchers on the other. He also acknowledged these government initiatives were likely to be pursued with or without the involvement of academics. As a result, Humphreys described the ethics of such situations as largely 'unanswered and unanswerable' (p. 23) but attempted to develop an argument based on separate 'spheres of ethics'. He sought to distinguish between those parts of the experiment that might be the ethical responsibility of the host agency and subject to the standards associated with its sphere of activity and those that might fall within the domain of the researcher:

if the intervention may be implemented ethically by the implementer, and if the intervention with a research component is at least as good as the intervention without, then the implementation with the research component is ethical also, even if, when undertaken by researchers alone, it violates ethical standards of the research community. (p. 23)

Humphreys argued researchers would only be justified in taking part if: the implementing partner were acting with legitimacy and independently of the researchers; where possible, experimental conditions involved variations that decreased risks; potential benefits justified risks; and the researcher were free of conflicts of interest, including financial remuneration for the work being undertaken.

Several methodological practices might also limit harm caused within randomized and other experiments. Power analysis can identify the minimum number of participants required to test a hypothesis, thereby avoiding either putting too many participants at risk or leaving the study at too small a scale to provide useful information. Some studies can be designed to incorporate a 'stop rule' which ensures data gathering stops once a significant effect has been observed (Maxwell and Kelley, 2011). Mark and Lenz-Watson (2011) also advocated the use of adaptive randomization which biases the allocation of new participants towards more effective conditions as these are determined through the study, and regression-discontinuity design (Imbens and Lemieux, 2008) which could enable participants to be assigned non-randomly to different conditions on the basis of need, circumstance or merit.

It may be difficult to assess whether non-statistical methods developed to minimize risks are adequate. Debriefing has been used extensively within deception-based experimental research as a risk-minimization strategy. Once data have been collected, the researcher explains to participants the true nature and purpose of the research. Critics of the value of debriefing have caricatured the process as meeting the needs of the researchers rather than of the participants by allowing the former to imagine that they have achieved a 'magical undoing ... an eraser for emotional and behavioural residues' (Tesch, 1977, p. 218) thereby allowing researchers to maintain their self-image as virtuous seekers of truth.

However, the process of debriefing may also suffer from several defects depending perhaps on how it is conducted and whether it is part of a respectful dialogue or a didactic lecture designed as 'cooling the mark off' (Tesch, 1977). Rather than wiping away the impact of manipulation, Ortmann and Hertwig (2002) concluded effects may extend well beyond a debriefing. Indeed, the debriefing itself may exacerbate or even constitute the only source of harm. For example, Finn and Jakobsson (2007) ran experiments in which they subjected students and eBay users to a fake phishing attack – an attempt to obtain by deception private information via the internet that might subsequently be used for fraud. The researchers were concerned that participants who were unaware that they had been scammed (without actual harm being caused) might become angry, upset or anxious only when discovering the scam during debriefing and that, because the experiment was being conducted outside the lab, researchers might have little opportunity to respond to these feelings. Several psychologists have also found participants may not place great value on the information they received during debriefings (Smith and Richardson, 1983), sometimes even believing it was an additional part of the deception.

In a systematic review of the ethics of debriefing, Miller et al. (2008) cautioned that the *prima facie* wrong of deception may at best be ameliorated rather than erased by debriefing. While accepting deception might be justifiable in some situations, they called for the researchers responsible for deceiving participants to demonstrate respect by offering a sincere apology to those who had been deceived, and asking participants to consent to the use of data obtained through deception. They hoped that such requirements might act as a check on 'cavalier' use of deception. Finally, in an effort to build an empirical base around the use of deception and debriefing, they urged researchers to report on participants' 'approval or disapproval of deceptive methods, trust in science, willingness to participate in future research, appraisal of the debriefing process, and the number of participants electing to withdraw their data' (2008, p. 248).

The argument of Miller and his colleagues has not been universally accepted. Bryan Benham (2008), for example, cautioned against placing a moral obligation on researchers to provide an apology. Benham was concerned that turning an apology into part of the protocol risked rendering the expression of regret void of meaning but full of 'insincerity and condescending paternalism' (p. 264) and might also place too much moral significance on minor ethical transgressions. Instead, he called for an enhanced debriefing process that offered enhanced benefits for participants (Benham, 2007). Oczak and Niedźwieńska (2007) found participants – in their case a small sample of Polish university students – were more likely to value a debriefing that, while revealing the nature and rationale for the deception, also provided strategies for identifying and resisting manipulation. This offered the possibility

of improving how participants felt about involvement in the experiments and, indeed, in psychology as a discipline, and provided a direct benefit for those who participated in the experiments, the result advocated by Benham.

Another way of responding to the possibility of harm is by incorporating in the planning and running of the research members of those communities who form the focus of the work. For example, Patricia Lundy and Mark McGovern (2006) joined the committee of the Ardoyne Commemoration Project which was gathering grassroots-based testimonies to the 99 deaths that had occurred within that North Belfast Republican working-class neighbourhood during almost 30 years of conflict. Community members 'collaboratively controlled the decision-making process and worked with the academics on an equal basis to identify action strategies' (p. 55). Transcripts were returned to interviewees to edit and subsequent drafts were then circulated among all interviewees connected to a particular case study so that differences of opinion and disputes might be negotiated before documents were published. Researchers also brokered access to community-based counselling groups for victims and survivors. Interviews with participants at the end of the project revealed members of the community had found the need to recount traumatic experiences to be difficult but also important and necessary so that their stories might be told with their own voices. The relative of one victim described the interview as not offering 'any healing in it whatsoever ... I found it more upsetting but worthwhile' (p. 59).

One criticism of traditional views of risk minimization has emerged within anthropology. Graves and Shields (1991) argued codes of ethics overstated the knowledge of, and autonomy of action available to, social scientists:

in biomedical experimentation the research paradigm gives researchers both maximum control over subjects and maximum potential to harm them irreversibly ... (p. 135)

In contrast ... it is not at all clear in most forms of social science research who we are protecting, how we are protecting them, what we are protecting them from, or what constitutes the limits of our capacity to protect ... (p. 136)

While Teela Sanders (2005) was conducting fieldwork on sex industry workers in Birmingham, in the United Kingdom, her participants were sexually and physically assaulted, imprisoned or separated from their children by child protection agencies. She concluded 'I was not a social worker but a researcher, and although awful to witness, I was relatively powerless in making any difference to individual situations' (p. 36). Similarly, Christopher Kovats-Bernat (2002), an American anthropologist engaged in fieldwork with street children in Haiti, has criticized those who assume anthropologists are powerful enough to control or negotiate danger on behalf of those with whom they are working. Kovats-Bernat suggested such a belief was part of his discipline's 'colonial legacy' (p. 214):



the ability to protect against harm or to offer aegis is not the exclusive domain of the anthropologist but, rather must be regarded as power shared among actors in the field toward the well-being of everyone concerned. (p. 214)

Kovats-Bernat is pointing towards a far more sophisticated understanding that draws on Foucauldian notions of power relations which are contingent and multiple rather than fixed.

Another challenge to the idea that researchers should 'do no harm' derives from covert ethnography. During covert work on violence in the nighttime economy, a British criminologist worked as a bouncer (Winlow et al., 2001). In this role, he had to deal with violence, witness violence and sometimes do violence. The research team argued it would be naive and dangerous to imagine such research could be done without engaging in violence and that 'Complying with formal academic codes when we seek to understand the complex interaction of social worlds that do not acknowledge such bourgeois conceits is an unrealistic tactic, particularly for ethnographers' (p. 546). The team suggested the value of the work justified the legal harm that might be caused by, and indeed to, the researcher. Other criminologists have gone further and have maintained it was necessary to commit criminal offences in order to be accepted in a covert role as a soccer 'hooligan' as 'a refusal to commit crimes on a regular basis would have aroused suspicions and reduced research opportunities. As a result, I committed "minor" offences' (Pearson, 2009, p. 246). The offences included participating in pitch invasions, smuggling alcohol onto football trains and threatening other supporters. Although Pearson acknowledged his main motivation was to gather data for his thesis without disturbing the field, he thought his decisions might be justifiable in order to reveal harm and injustice in the longer term.

Independent evaluators employed to produce reports by government have been particularly concerned by their inability to protect participants. For example, Williams et al. (2011) pointed to the difficulties they and their colleagues had encountered working with remote Indigenous communities: commissioners of the project might provide inadequate time or funding for an appropriate relationship to be negotiated; parameters of the work were often pre-set by contract; funders might refuse to allow results to be shared with participating communities. Finally, results might be used to defund a programme or initiative valued by a community.

This can be particularly frustrating if the evaluator has put in a positive report on a program, which is then de-funded, and the evaluator is required not to explain to the program personnel that the evaluation findings were positive. (p. 6)

Williams and her colleagues were troubled that evaluation was treated as a subset of research and the differences between evaluation and research

inadequately understood by the ethics literature and research ethics governance processes.

## Doing good

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Researchers and research ethics governance structures have tended to concentrate on the need to avoid harming others, but some ethicists have argued researchers' obligations extend well beyond this. On the basis of the principle of beneficence, some have claimed that, in certain situations, we should also act to benefit others. For example, Beauchamp and Childress (2009) argued that because we all obtain benefits from being members of a society, we all might be under an obligation of *general beneficence* – to everyone else – under certain limited circumstances. Paraphrasing Beauchamp and Childress, a researcher might have to act if he or she knew: other people were at risk of significant loss or damage to a major interest; the researcher's action were needed to prevent loss or damage; the researcher's action had a high probability of preventing it; the action would not entail significant risks, costs or burdens to the researcher; and the benefit that others could be expected to gain outweighed any harms, costs or burdens the researcher was likely to incur.

Researchers might therefore be expected to owe a duty of beneficence to people even if they are not directly affected by the study. For example, the National Committees for Research Ethics in Norway (2006) argued researchers had a responsibility to disseminate the results of their research in a way that was socially relevant, informed the formation of public opinion and contributed to the maintenance or development of cultural traditions (p. 33). This meant researchers from small linguistic communities should publish in their native language as a way of contributing to the flourishing of their own culture (p. 8). However, although some ethicists have suggested that perhaps we should try to help as many other people as much as possible (Singer, 1999), the obligations of beneficence are normally limited in some way. For some commentators, there needs to be a special relationship between the person who is under an obligation and the person or class of people to whom he or she has an obligation. So, an obligation of *specific beneficence* might flow from family or friendship bonds, or from a legal contract. It might also be the product of a formal relationship created by a negotiated research agreement. In short, undertaking research may impose duties and obligations on the researcher to act to the benefit of participants.

One example of this occurs when commercial biomedical research takes place in developing countries. Here, the Council for International Organizations of Medical Sciences (CIOMS) (2002) has acted to stop research undertaken on behalf of multinational pharmaceutical companies exploiting research subjects.

Instead, CIOMS required researchers to be responsive to the health conditions and needs of vulnerable participants. The 2013 Declaration of Helsinki adopted similar language. CIOMS and the UNESCO (2005) Declaration, however, were more specific when it comes to implementation. So, this might involve: supplementing health services where the government is unable to meet local needs (CIOMS Guidelines 10 and 21); or 'enabling developing countries to build up their capacity to participate in generating and sharing scientific knowledge, the related know-how and the benefits thereof', thereby helping build the local research base by contributing to the host country's 'sustainable capacity for independent scientific and ethical review and biomedical research' (Commentary on Guideline 12). There has been some debate about the extent of the obligation that might flow from such concerns, and the degree to which it might transcend the questions of distributive justice, how benefits from the research should be fairly distributed. Emanuel (2008) argued biomedical researchers could not be expected to 'address underlying background global injustice' (p. 727). In contrast, London (2005) claimed Western countries had contributed to the existence of these underlying conditions and that all citizens of those countries therefore had a humanitarian duty to act to rectify injustice faced in low-income countries.

Facing criticism for failing to remove Kenyan sex industry workers from the sex trade during a 25-year observational study, Lavery et al. (2010) reflected on their decisions and sought to delineate the duty of biomedical researchers on the basis of 'relief of oppression', a term borrowed from public health. They called for researchers to work with research participants to generate the kinds of benefits – and distribute them in such a way – that might 'ameliorate some of the effects of the background conditions that limit fundamental freedoms of research participants'. Molyneux et al. (2009) noted a household study in Limpopo Province in South Africa had set up a community office to link local residents to social workers and social grants, and to allow researchers to donate second-hand clothes.

In social science, scholars often claim that by contributing to a general body of knowledge, the class of people who make up the participants might eventually benefit from the research. For example, in the field of research on HIV and intravenous drug users, medical anthropologist, Merrill Singer and his colleagues pointed to several benefits that have flowed from their anthropological studies, including:

documenting the rapid diffusion of HIV among injection drug users ...; identifying little known routes of HIV transmission in drug-using population; determining the important role of crack cocaine in the sexual transmission of HIV ...; monitoring the emergence of new drug use and HIV risk patterns ...; documenting the effectiveness of outreach approaches to the recruitment of hidden populations of drug users into intervention ... (Singer et al., 2000, p. 390)

This may be of limited utility to research participants. While working in a camp for internally displaced people in northern Uganda, Ross (2009) offered to send a camp leader a copy of the resultant article:

He laughed and said: 'Sure send your paper. When we get it (here he made a gesture of rolling a set of papers into a log) we can put it into the fire and maybe have a hot dinner, if there is any food. Send a book! Ha ha'. (p. 184)

As a result, Lisa Fontes (1998) took issue with approaches that stopped at the point of data gathering and analysis and argued for

increasing use of research designs that benefit the participants directly ... Here I am not referring to some theoretical benefit down the road, but rather to the extent to which these specific participants benefit from their participation. (p. 58)

In fact, Singer et al. (2000) were sympathetic to arguments such as these. Indeed, they made an even stronger assertion:

in working with high-risk populations, researchers should also be concerned with using their research findings and interactions with vulnerable individuals to help protect participants from harm that might befall them outside of the research context. (2000, p. 391)

In short, Singer (1993) maintained researchers need to take an active stance to combat social suffering. Although Singer's team had used research money to fund a range of services for drug users in Hartford, Connecticut (including outreach educators, HIV testing and counsellors), had referred research participants to treatment and other health and social services, and had supported the development of a number of new service providers, following the death of one of their participants team members still wrestled with the possibility that they – and researchers like them – were just not doing enough (Singer et al., 2000; VanderStaay, 2005).

When working in countries controlled by more-authoritarian regimes, researchers may become involved with pro-democracy groups. Smeltzer (2012) preferred providing back office support for Malaysian non-government and community-based organizations and social movements rather than entering a front-line struggle she thought might endanger her, her students and the activist groups. She wrote grants, proofread documents, conducted background research, coordinated internship placements and, as a communications specialist, provided assistance with new media campaigns.

Guidelines produced by indigenous groups have called on researchers to maximize the benefits of research to indigenous peoples:

Research in Indigenous studies should benefit Indigenous peoples at a local level, and more generally ... A reciprocal benefit should accrue for allowing researchers access (often intimate) to personal and community knowledge. (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 2012, Principle 11)

This might occur by 'training, local hiring, recognition of contributors, return of results' (Tri-Council Policy Statement, 2010, Article 9.13), by providing broader education and training to Indigenous researchers, communities and organizations so that they can conduct partnered or autonomous research, or by helping a community to develop evidence-based policy and social interventions (Aboriginal Research Ethics Initiative, 2008; van den Scott, 2012).

In domestic violence research, Ellsberg and Heise (2002) maintained that interviews could provide an important opportunity for victims who might 'welcome the opportunity to share their experiences with someone who will not judge or condemn them' (p. 1600). However, Fontes (2004) warned that how women who had been the victims of violence weighed up the consequences of participating in research might vary with the culture of the participant. Most research that considered the impact of participation is not longitudinal and is unlikely therefore to detect psychological harm over time: 'Clearly, there is a disincentive for researchers to ask these questions' (Fontes, 2004, p. 166). Many studies do try to provide emotional and practical support for victims, offering information about, and organizing access to, formal and informal services, offering feedback to the study community and relevant agencies, and supporting or engaging in advocacy on behalf of abused women (Usdin et al., 2000; World Health Organization, 2001).

Rebecca Campbell and her colleagues (2010) identified those elements of feminist research methodologies – reducing hierarchy, providing information and communicating warmth – that might play a role in reducing harm and offering benefits for survivors of sexual violence. The research team acted as a doorway to information and brokered referrals to support agencies. They found victims of trauma generally saw participation in research as helpful rather than harmful. Their project offered participants an opportunity to talk to a supportive and engaged listener, and control what was revealed and how. Survivors remarked that they gained new insights into their experiences and the recovery process. However, not all feminist researchers have found their political agendas matched those of their research participants. Drawing on experiences studying prostitution in Lima, Lorraine Nencel (2001) was concerned an assumption by feminist anthropologists that research must provide direct benefits to participants 'could ultimately lead to a process of exclusion of a large group of women whose unwillingness to cooperate is, for example, attributable to their desire to avoid confrontation with their pain' (p. 82).

Many social scientists have been troubled by their position as data collectors who offer little more than the illusion of change to the subjects of their

research. In disability studies, traditional research practices have also been vulnerable to attack from a politicized disability movement that described studies of disability as the exploitation and victimization of people with disabilities at the hands of traditional, non-disabled researchers who seemed more concerned with developing their own careers than in changing the position of disabled people. In the 1990s, some social scientists shifted away from notions of participatory research towards what they termed emancipatory research (Barnes, 2009; Zarb, 1992). For Oliver (1992), it was exploitative to engage in research that simply captured the perspectives of disabled people. Instead researchers had a responsibility to work with people with disabilities and use their research to develop ways of empowering people with disability, by influencing policy-making and practice. Lloyd et al. (1996) argued that researchers should share knowledge, skills and experience with people with disabilities and offer them greater opportunities. Following such an agenda, Stevenson (2010) collaborated on a research project with young people with Down Syndrome in Australia, ensuring her co-researchers were paid and their voices were 'continually in earshot, their presence felt, and their influence brought to bear at most stages of the research journey' (p. 48).

Researchers engaged in action research aim to generate knowledge that would be of value to 'the well-being of individuals, communities, and for the promotion of large-scale democratic social change' (Brydon-Miller et al., 2003, p. 11). Building on an action research framework, Hugman et al. (2011) described the possibilities of reciprocal research in social work where 'research participants are actively involved in all stages and it is they who determine what is to count as a "gain"' (p. 1279):

the way that this research began was through establishing relationships that demonstrate actual benefits for the participants (in this case, prior provision of a valued service). It then progressed through the direct involvement of participants in all stages of the research, including establishing the agenda and the questions to be asked. Then, following initial stages, the participants continue to be involved in taking action, review and further questioning. (p. 1280)

The 1998 Code of the American Anthropological Association maintained that its members 'should recognize their debt to the societies in which they work and their obligation to reciprocate with people studied in appropriate ways' (1998, Section IIIA, point 6). Debates in anthropology, however, suggest that we should be cautious. For example, it may not always be easy to know how best we might support vulnerable populations. In 1995 American anthropologist, Nancy Scheper-Hughes, called on her colleagues to engage in militant anthropology, taking an activist stance as comrades in the face of oppression, 'colluding with the powerless to identify their needs against the interests of the bourgeois institution' (1995, p. 420). Scheper-Hughes' more recent work on

the international trade in human organs led to her deciding to avoid remaining complicit in the behaviours she was studying which constituted international crimes against vulnerable populations (Scheper-Hughes, 2009). Instead, she established a university-based documentation centre to research human rights abuses in this field, alerted local law enforcement agencies to abuses, and sought 'to challenge and to change':

the international transplant profession. I wanted them to acknowledge what was happening within their field, how it was being transformed by organs markets. And I think that that I have accomplished that. (quoted in Bartoszko, 2011)

Rylko-Bauer et al. (2006) argued anthropologists should not reject the obligations of reciprocity, finding it

ironic, and more than a little self-serving, to legitimize advocacy for the compendium of knowledge or promotion of anthropology while questioning its appropriateness for the very groups who give of their time, knowledge, and other resources so that we in our individual careers and as a discipline might benefit. (p. 184)

Maiter et al. (2008) explored how the nature of reciprocal relationships might shift over time as the flows involved in exchanging knowledge, skills and support changed in nature and extent.

However, Scheper-Hughes' calls for a more activist discipline drew sharp comment from some respondents. D'Andrade (1995), Kuper (1995) and Gledhill (1999) pointed out it was 'not always obvious that the oppressed constitute a clearly defined class with an unambiguous shared interest' (Kuper, 1995, p. 425). Other ethnographers have found it painful to contemplate how and when to intervene in complex and dangerous situations. Despite his conclusion that ethnographers could not walk away from a family's self-destruction, Steven VanderStaay (2005) believed his attempt to pay the electricity bill of the great-grandmother of a teenage research participant in the United States may have played a small part in precipitating 'a horrific sequence of events that included several drug deals, a murder, the arrest and imprisonment of my subject, and the ruin of his mother ... wreaking havoc in several lives, including my own' (p. 372). Indeed, as Philippe Bourgois (1995) found in his study of the crack scene in Spanish Harlem, the attempts of a researcher to contribute to the host community can be met with utter derision from research participants and may jeopardize the research project:

they thought I was crazy ... On several occasions my insistence that there should be a tangible political benefit for the community from my research project spawned humiliating responses.

Caesar: Felipe, you just talking an immense amount of shit. (pp. 46–47)

The requirement of reciprocity was dropped in the AAA's (2012) Statement in favour of a call to 'weigh competing ethical obligations due collaborators and affected parties' (Principle 4).

Much of the literature that has urged researchers to provide greater benefits to research participants has been based on work with disadvantaged, powerless communities apparently in need of help. However, there has been little discussion of what scholars might owe powerful or dangerous groups – should researchers be required to provide benefits to corporations or government departments who are not paying for their services, to racist political groups or to men who engage in sexual violence? Gallaher (2009) regretted appearing with members of an American militia on a television show run by the movement, fearing the militia had derived legitimacy through attachment with a university researcher. Sehgal (2009) considered her position compromised when she was filmed sitting on the podium at a meeting of a Hindu right-wing movement. In those cases, would it really be inappropriate for researchers who might otherwise have a commitment to emancipatory or activist research to undertake work on, but not for or with, these groups? Of course, attitudes may change to host institutions during fieldwork. Given that the nature of many social science research projects may evolve during the course of the research, even researchers who enter the field intending to provide benefits may find that they reach conclusions that are quite critical of participatory institutions – conclusions that may not always be welcomed by host organizations.

In isolation, the principles of non-maleficence and beneficence might justify a researcher acting against the wishes of others on the basis that he or she knows what is best. For example, a researcher might decide not to tell participants about all the risks they might face if they take part in a study. She might say the risk is small and she does not want to worry participants. Alternatively, she might claim that even though the risk might be significant, many other people would suffer if the participants refused to take part in the research. These are paternalist arguments and could be criticized on a range of grounds. Antipaternalists such as Ronald Dworkin (1978), James Childress (1982) and Joel Feinberg (1986) would argue that such a decision by the researcher displayed disrespect to autonomous people, failing to treat them as moral equals. On the other hand, Beauchamp and Childress (2009) would accept people might be able to weigh autonomy against paternalism, and conclude that where very minor impositions on an individual's autonomy prevented significant harm or provided major benefits, there might be some justification for overriding an individual's wishes. However, their discussion of the possibility of justifying paternalism has been limited to significant preventable harms associated with medicine and it may be difficult to extend that argument to social science.

A more likely argument in social science is whether vulnerable populations (Santi, 2013), such as victims of violence (Becker-Blease and Freyd, 2006; Newman and Kaloupek, 2009), should be excluded from the opportunity to



participate in research, and have their voices heard, on the basis that the project may place them at risk. Writing about research ethics in general, Miller and Wertheimer (2007) suggested outright antipaternalism obscured distinctions between decisions made with respect to non-autonomous and autonomous individuals. They described decisions made in relation to the former 'soft' and those in relation to the latter 'hard' paternalism. In addition, they pointed out that 'policies justified by paternalism were typically targeted at groups of individuals, not all of whom have impaired judgment' (p. 28). They termed this *group soft paternalism* and claimed regimes of research ethics governance largely justified regulation of work involving vulnerable groups on the basis of group soft paternalism, 'the unfortunate and unavoidable by product of a policy designed for the sake of those who are not capable of acting autonomously' (p. 28).

Returning to the victims and survivors of interpersonal violence, one consequence of making decisions for this group could be that research codes block scholarly investigations and as a result there is insufficient information available to allow that group to be helped. However, there may be an argument that we ought to curtail activities involving victims of violence that are likely to result in exploitative and extractive encounters but yield little benefit to victims directly. So, while fostering students' capacities as researchers may generally be seen as a good, Mitchell (2013) warned against the commodification of the experiences of the powerless in the developing world merely in order to create marketable fieldwork experiences for students from developed nations.

### **Balancing costs, risks, benefits and opportunities**

Even research that yields obvious benefits may have costs. It is likely to consume the time and salary of the researcher, or the time of participants. It may also have negative consequences, causing various harms. In general, obligations to do no harm override obligations to do good. However, this may not be always the case, such as on those occasions where we might produce a major benefit while only inflicting a minor harm (Beauchamp and Childress, 2009). In such a situation, the decision whether or not to proceed with research might draw, in part, on utilitarian principles (Chapter 2). In the following four examples, Canadian, American and British scholars had to assess whether risks of harm to participants might outweigh the possible benefits.

Buchanan and his colleagues (Buchanan et al., 2002) investigated the use of syringes by intravenous drug users in Connecticut and Massachusetts. As part of the research, ethnographers followed informants and, with their consent, watched where they obtained their syringes. However, African-American and Puerto Rican informants who hung out with white ethnographers in particular

neighbourhoods were more likely to be picked up by the police who appeared to assume that any minority person found in the company of a white person was likely to be purchasing drugs for them. The researchers, and indeed the informants, had to weigh the benefits of identifying which sources might be distributing contaminated needles against the increased possibility that participants might be arrested.

In the second case, a Canadian postgraduate student analysed discussions relating to the human papillomavirus vaccine among adolescent girls and young women on a public internet message board (Battles, 2010). Some dangers were obvious. The researcher, a participant in the discussions, might have intruded into private and sensitive conversations among young people who had no wish to take part in the research, triggering a 'rippling sense of resentment and betrayal' (online respondent quoted in Eysenbach and Till, 2001). These messages might also be reported in such a way that the online or offline identities of the senders become identifiable. As a result, the research might have posed a threat to the continued existence of the community that used the message board. Battles gained informed consent from the administrators of the website (who had also been involved in moderating the postings), and from participants who had contributed to the relevant threads. She ensured that the research was anonymous by de-identifying data and avoiding quotes that might be entered into a search engine, and concluded that she had minimized risks of harm.

In the third example, Merlinda Weinberg (2002) investigated the use of a particular planning document by a maternity home that helped young single mothers in Ontario. Use of this document was a mandatory requirement for homes licensed under provincial legislation. Weinberg found that, although the executive director believed the home was complying with regulations, front-line staff had bypassed the legislative requirements. At the request of the research participants, the researcher had agreed to provide some benefit to residents by naming those who had helped her with her work. However, if she allowed the licensing authority to identify the home, the home might lose its funding. Weinberg was reluctant to harm an institution that, for all its faults, 'ultimately supported and protected the very young women whom I was concerned about serving' (p. 91) and concluded the potential harm caused by the threat to the home outweighed the minor benefit offered through acknowledging those who participated in the research:

There is no simple, pat hierarchy of ethical principles ... in evaluating the conflicting needs of different participants, the researcher should assign very high priority to the needs of the most disadvantaged in determining which route to take. However, doing no harm also maintains prominence as an ethical principle. Additionally, a researcher must weigh potential costs and benefits, which he or she can determine only situationally. (Weinberg, 2002, pp. 93–94)

Finally, members of a research team investigating inequalities hoped their work might challenge homophobia in English primary schools and promote equality through exploration of a 'crucial and under-explored area of social justice' (DePalma, 2010, p. 224). However, they had to weigh such possible benefits against a broad array of risks whose magnitude rose in the face of 'disgust and outrage' (p. 217) expressed by media determined to portray the project in a sensationalist manner. The potential harms included discomfort for and/or media exposure of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) teachers, parents and children in LGBT-headed families. The team found it 'impossible to predict the long-term repercussions on people whose "controversial" family or personal characteristics are now public knowledge' (p. 222). The project also prompted: physical threats to researchers and participants; and the possibility that participating teachers might lose their jobs, and schools their funding if parents transferred their children to another institution.

The Belmont Report (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, NCPHSBRR, 1979) called for a 'systematic, non-arbitrary analysis' (para 1. 9-1. 10) of the risks that research may pose to participants and the benefits the work may produce for participants and the wider society. Attempts have been made to reduce the relationship between benefits and costs into financial terms. Cost-benefit analysis allows research programmes with different goals to be compared. Although, in principle, any form of measurement could be used, in practice most measurements are expressed in financial terms. Any attempt to reduce relationships into such terms has its problems, partly because the process of reduction often displaces key non-financial values. While cost-benefit analysis has gained some purchase within biomedical and other forms of experimental research, Cassell (1982) and MacIntyre (1982) questioned its value in supporting ethical decision-making by most social scientists. MacIntyre argued that even in more predictable, quantifiable and definable experimental and quasi-experimental research projects, cost-benefit analysis could never by itself determine the appropriate course of action as it took no account of matters of distributive justice - who received the benefits and who bore the costs - and placed no constraints on what costs might be morally intolerable. In the less predictable realm of ethnography,

cataloguing potential harms and weighing them against benefits before research is carried out becomes primarily an exercise in creativity, with little applicability to the real ethical difficulties that may emerge during the conduct of research. (Cassell, 1982, p. 150)

MacIntyre also warned that cost-benefit analysis was neither culturally nor morally neutral. In order to decide what counts as a cost and what counts as a benefit, 'we must first decide who is to have a voice in deciding what is to

count as a cost or a benefit' (1982, p. 183). This is a concern that can be raised for all harms and benefits. Freedman (1987) argued any assessment of the value of research required an investigation not only of the views of academic peers but also the opinions of the community as a whole, including, one would imagine, the many different views that may be found among research participants. Some studies have started to examine how participants might view costs and benefits. When Milgram (1977) conducted a 12-month follow-up of participants in his obedience study, he found fewer than one per cent regretted they had participated in the research. In follow-up interviews with participants in his simulated prison study, Zimbardo (1973) also found no persistent negative effects (see Chapter 5). However, Warwick (1982) criticized the methodology used in these follow-up studies, claiming the researchers had adopted exactly those forms of instruments they had discarded in favour of the simulations in the first place. Gina Perry's interviews over 40 years later with American and Australian participants in Milgram's own and replicated studies also reveal a more complex picture (Perry, 2012). As I have already discussed, there may be more sophisticated ways of engaging with the views of research participants.

Researchers working with active drug users in Hartford, Connecticut sought to develop an evidentiary base for assessing the harms and benefits associated with research conducted with potentially vulnerable populations. Using focus groups of Hispanic illicit drug users, Singer et al. (2008) found participants were 'prepared to accept significant risk in the pursuit of valued benefit' (p. 366), weighing the risks that damaging personal information about their HIV-status or drug use might find its way to their families and communities against financial incentives, and access to health information and services. This assessment of costs and benefits was a continuing part of their lives as drug addicts.

It may be difficult to assess how costs, benefits and risks might be distributed across a population both socially and spatially (Smith, 1998). In one situation, the same person may face all the risks and stand to receive all the benefits. However, in another case, one person may bear all the risks while another is likely to receive all the benefits. Alternatively, several people may bear the risks but only a few obtain the benefits or, conversely, all may reap the benefits but only a few share the risks. For example, according to Fontes (1998), one Indian researcher decided not to investigate what had happened to women who had been burned by their husbands as a result of disputes about dowries. She was unwilling to place the women at further risk. However, Fontes drew attention to the costs of this decision: it also removed any possibility that the women interviewed – and women like them – might benefit from an end to their isolation and vulnerability. In this case, the researcher had to balance the potential harm to participants against the possible benefits to a larger group of women.

It may be tempting to over-generalize obligations of beneficence, non-maleficence and justice on the basis of principles developed to meet the needs of biomedical research. Indeed, I suggested in Chapters 3 and 4 that several ethical codes do. However, as DePalma discovered in her participatory action research on sexuality-based equalities in English schools, 'whether, when and whom to protect ... are complex issues and difficult to separate from the contexts in which they arise' (2010, p. 216). Research undertaken in the social sciences may quite legitimately and deliberately work to the detriment of research participants by revealing and critiquing their role in causing 'fundamental economic, political or cultural disadvantage or exploitation' (Economic and Social Research Council, 2010). For example, I have explored the violent counter-exile activities of South African intelligence agencies in the 1960s (Israel, 1998). I had little interest in minimizing harm to those agencies. Similarly, researchers uncovering corruption, violence or pollution need not work to minimize harm to the corporate or institutional entities responsible for the damage, though, as far as the Economic and Social Research Council (2010) is concerned, they might be expected to minimize any personal harm. Canadian and Finnish guidelines also acknowledge the issue by recognizing that research 'should not be blocked through the use of harms/benefits analysis' (Tri-Council Policy Statement, 2010, Article 3.6) and 'research concerning the use of power and the functioning of social institutions must not be restricted on the grounds that results can have negative effects for subjects' (National Advisory Board on Research Ethics, 2009, p. 9). The Finnish guidelines explicitly rejected a utilitarian cost-benefit analysis on the basis that assessing value and risks was 'a question of normative evaluation of values that are in themselves incommensurable' (p. 14).

Early ethical codes were concerned primarily with the welfare of individuals. For Emanuel and Weijer, for example, Belmont 'was written under the grip of an individualist vision' (2005, p. 181). Ethicists have also become interested in how communities might be protected in research on the basis that people perceive their identity and values in relation to broader groupings, and the nature of the relationship between individuals and communities varies in different societies. Charles Weijer and his colleagues (Weijer et al., 1999) identified 23 specific requirements for the protection of communities that had been adopted by national or international research ethics documents. Of course, there may be considerable difficulty in defining a community or identifying what steps might be justified in order to protect one. In Chapter 5, I discussed attempts to negotiate with indigenous communities. Indigenous communities may have shared histories and cultural traditions, can be geographically bounded and may elect their own political representatives. It may be more difficult to negotiate with other collectivities based on ethnic, political, sexual, professional or other commonalities.

## Seek justice

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While explorations of research ethics may have concentrated on harms and risks, more recent interest has focused on two elements of distributive justice – fair access to participation in, and to the results of, research – on the basis that:

no persons should receive social benefits on the basis of undeserved advantageous properties ... and that no persons should be denied social benefits on the basis of undeserved disadvantageous properties ... (Beauchamp and Childress, 2009, p. 248)

The Belmont Report endorsed the relevance of justice to bioethics arguing that 'research should not unduly involve persons from groups unlikely to be among the beneficiaries of subsequent applications of the research' (NCPHSBBR, 1979, p. 10). It is easy to identify matters of justice in a tradition of biomedical research in the United States that has harmed prisoners and delivered benefits to those who can pay for private health insurance. Researchers in the United States initially responded to Belmont by barring vulnerable groups from participating in research. However, even if better protected from exploitation, such groups remained firmly excluded from the benefits of research. For example, Weijer (1999a) highlighted the adverse consequences for health provision of excluding women from clinical trials. A similar argument might be made for research that influences social policy on the basis of a sample that excludes ethnic minorities, women, children or the elderly, or people from developing countries (Morrow and Richards, 1996; Nama and Swartz, 2002). As a result, since 2001 the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in the United States have required women and ethnic minorities be included within clinical research so research results may be generalized across the population. While not specifically aimed at social sciences, the NIH definition of clinical research included patient-oriented outcomes and health services research. The Canadian Tri-Council Policy Statement (2010) also required researchers not to restrict their sample population by means of culture, language, religion, race, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, linguistic proficiency, gender or age without a 'valid reason' (p. 48) connected to the scope and objectives of the project. So, children and the elderly cannot be excluded from a general population pool simply on the grounds of administrative convenience. Researchers requiring people to have access to particular technologies to allow them to participate need to take care not to exclude already marginalized groups.

There are various suggestions that the principle of justice has long been neglected within the research and bioethics literature (Jonsen, 1998). In addition, there are claims that justice has been conceived inadequately by research ethicists and that much is lost by reducing justice to questions of distribution of the benefits and risks associated with research. For example, in the field of social

work research, Hugman et al. (2011) argued obligations of non-maleficence and beneficence had to be integrated with concepts of respect and justice so researchers and participants shared understandings of the nature and distribution of benefits. Hugman's concerns take us beyond the questions of distributive justice considered by Belmont and into matters more closely related to procedural justice. King (2005) also called for researchers to take compensatory justice seriously by providing redress for those harmed through their participation in research activities.

One difficulty with the research ethics literature has been its concern with small-scale issues related to individual research projects. In contrast, the Uppsala Code developed by Swedish researchers in the 1980s called on researchers to avoid undertaking research that might result in ecological harm or the development of weapons, or that might be in conflict with human rights (Gustafsson, 1984). Fontes (2004) spoke for many social scientists when she pointed out that 'Research that is truly just will illuminate relevant issues of social injustice' (p. 161).

A significant challenge to traditional formulations of justice has come from Alex London. For London, reducing issues of justice to questions relating to fair access both to participation in, and to the results of research was based on a minimalist and 'particularly anemic theory of justice' (2005, p. 25). In the context of clinical trials in developing countries, he pointed out that the minimalist position enabled research to be justified if it improved the lives of the desperately poor who might be participating in the trial. Given their situation, such help could be offered at small cost when compared to the profits from a clinical trial or even from taking advantage of the difference in cost between conducting research in a poor rather than a wealthy country. London argued a minimalist theory thereby allowed researchers, their funders and sponsors both to absolve themselves of any responsibility for international inequalities and to exploit their bargaining position in relation to poor communities (London and Zollman, 2010). Even if researchers themselves were unhappy with operating in this way, they faced pressure from their funders to limit the benefits that they might offer a host community. In contrast, London sought to enable researchers to engage with broader questions of justice and 'consider whether the interests that are frustrated or defeated by less-than-decent social structures are so fundamental as to generate a duty on the part of others to assist them' (2005, pp. 31–32), because justice is not about working around unjust social structures, but rather is about building basic social structures 'that guarantee to community members the fair value of their most basic human capacities' (p. 32). Aware that many international clinical trials would fall short of this requirement, London wanted discussion around justice to occur at a higher level as decisions are made 'about what scientific questions should be explored, which research initiatives should be funded, where research should be carried out, and how research can benefit those who most need aid' (p. 34).

## Conclusion

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In most contexts, researchers are expected to minimize the risks of causing physical, psychological, social or economic harm to research participants. Our strategies include debriefing after an experiment in psychology as well as the participatory and emancipatory methodologies adopted by feminist, indigenous and activist scholars.

In addition, many researchers seek to provide benefits to participants either as individuals or as collectivities. Researchers in those parts of social science such as disability studies or Indigenous anthropology who work regularly with disadvantaged groups are particularly keen to improve conditions for their research groups. Nevertheless, some of their colleagues have been concerned these goals overstate the ability and resources of researchers to achieve meaningful change in the lives of the groups they study. Others have noted that attempts by researchers to help may be judged paternalist, misguided, partisan or simply incredibly stupid. In many regulatory environments, those researchers who investigate more powerful parts of society may have to justify not only their failure to promote the interests of elite groups but also the possibility that their findings might be intended to undermine the privileged positions of such groups.

Many research projects in the social sciences do provide some benefit, but at some cost. As a result, researchers may have to assess the relative weight of a diverse array of potential harms and benefits. They may also discover that these harms and benefits have different impacts on, and different meanings to, various parts of a community. Assigning financial values to each element may be attractive in some situations but, in others, such an exercise runs the risk of ignoring key non-financial matters and imposing the researchers' values on participants. It is not surprising, therefore, that many researchers have found it particularly difficult to use rule-based approaches in the field and have adopted other situated responses, and have also chosen to challenge limited understanding of harms, benefits and justice.