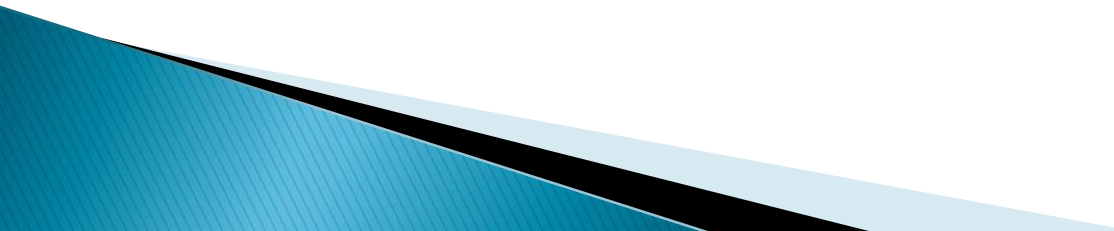




Research ethics in evidence-based policing

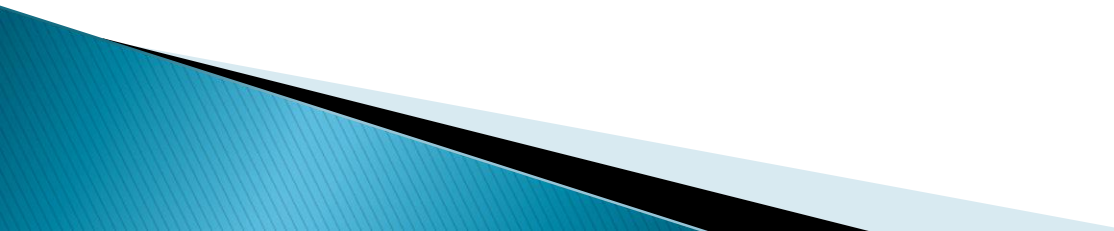
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What is 'ethical research'?

- ▶ Recent College of Policing 'Code of Ethics':
'Integrity' 'honesty' 'respect' as some of nine principles
 - ▶ 'These principles should also underpin every decision and action across policing'
 - ▶ How does this translate into 'ethical research'?
- 

Two-minute brainstorm

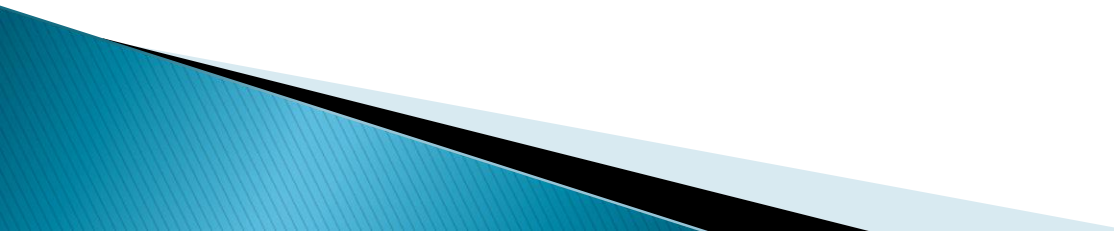
- ▶ An ethical researcher is someone who...



You can't avoid ethical dilemmas

- ▶ *'In all social research involving human subjects there is the potential for harm to come to those subjects. Guidelines for ethical behavior can never eliminate that potential; all they can do is attempt to minimize the risk. It would be disingenuous of researchers to pretend that such risks are nonexistent. We must face our moral and ethical dilemmas rather than side-stepping them. As researchers we can never be sure that our actions won't have adverse consequences for our subjects.'* (Reid, 1996, p. 173)

A very brief history of research ethics

- ▶ Concern over the maltreatment of participants following experimentation in World War 2
 - ▶ Numerous ethics codes (Belmont)
 - ▶ Mostly originate in medical research– are they relevant to evidence–based policing?
- 

Zimbardo's Stanford prison experiment



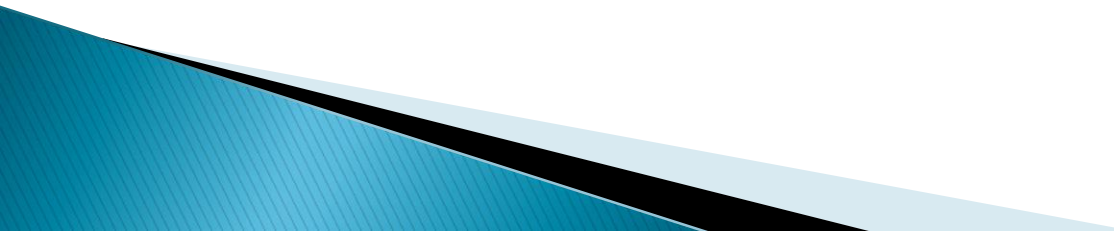
Ethical principles

- ▶ Basic principles: balancing...

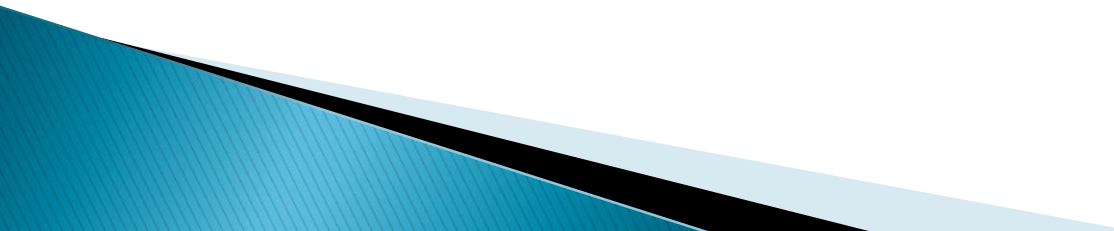
1. Voluntary participation (respect for people)
2. Do no harm
3. Justice: who benefits?
4. PAC: privacy, anonymity and confidentiality
5. Academic freedom/integrity of research

Core value: Informed consent

- ▶ Based on the principle of autonomy (so making your own decisions)
 - ▶ Voluntary consent= asking participants if they freely want to participate
 - ▶ Usually in a written consent form but oral consent also used (in exceptional circumstances)

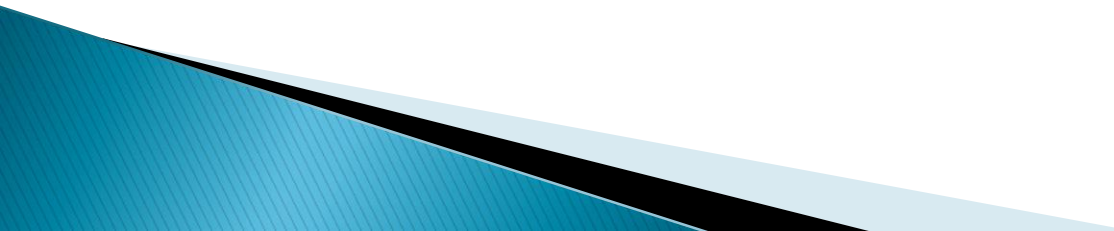
 - ▶ Covert research
- 

Core value: Confidentiality and anonymity

- ▶ Anonymity= hiding the identity of participants (or the case study) to protect them
 - ▶ Assign them a number/fake name
 - ▶ Confidentiality– not sharing beyond project
 - ▶ Tied in with Data Protection Act which allows you to keep data indefinitely for research purposes (without identifiers)
- 

Core value:

Vulnerable subjects

- ▶ Who may not be able to give fully informed consent (children, elderly)
 - ▶ Whose participation may not be fully voluntary (institutionalised individuals)
 - ▶ Who may be vulnerable to harm inflicted by research (e.g. in abusive situations, psychologically vulnerable)
 - ▶ Could exclude, but right to participate/tell their story too?
 - ▶ Additional safeguards needed for these groups
- 

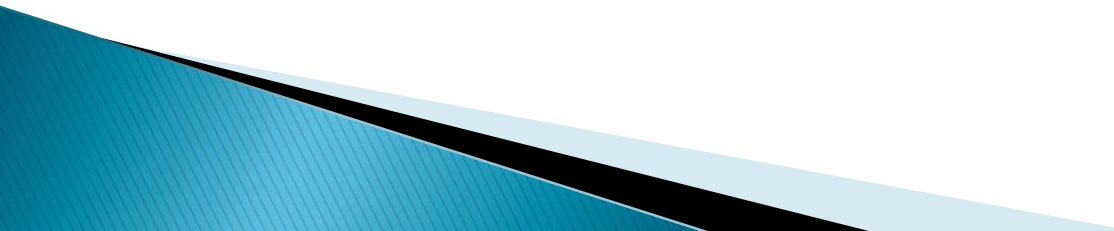
Core value: Assessment of possible harm

- ▶ Assessment of possible harm: 3 types of risk which require risk management
- ▶ Physical (e.g. in situations of violence)
- ▶ Emotional/psychological (e.g. distress)
- ▶ Commercial/institutional (e.g. compromised identity/commercial secrets)

Also...

- ▶ Risk to researcher (esp. in conflict situations, but also one-to-one at home)

Research ethics in a policing context

- ▶ In the medical and social sciences, all research has to go through 'ethics review' in which a committee made of up specialists and a lay member reviews the ethical aspects
 - ▶ The National Offender Management Service (prisons and rehabilitation)/Armed Forces now have research ethics committees
 - ▶ Applications can take months/require paperwork but also provide official evidence of ethical scrutiny and guidance for those new to the field
 - ▶ Do you think the police should follow the same route? Why or why not?
- 

More resources

- ▶ <http://www.college.police.uk/What-we-do/Ethics/Pages/Code-of-Ethics.aspx> (not a research ethics code as such, but the basis for ethical practice in policing)
- ▶ British Society of Criminology code of ethics
<http://www.britsoccrim.org/docs/CodeofEthics.pdf>
- ▶ ESRC Research Ethics Guidebook for social science
<http://www.ethicsguidebook.ac.uk/>
- ▶ Farrimond, H. (2012) *Doing ethical research*, London, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.