CHAPTER 3

UNDERSTANDING RESEARCH ETHICS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of this chapter the student should be able to:

- Appreciate the importance of research ethics.
- Critique research from an ethical perspective.
- Engage in critical reflection on the ethics of their research.
- Consider, explain and resolve the ethical issues and dilemmas in their research.
- Seek and secure formal ethical approval, where necessary, for their research project.
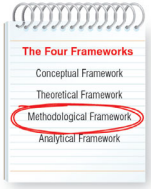
RESEARCH SKILLS

At the end of this chapter the student should, using the exercises on the accompanying online platform, be able to:

- Provide an ethical reflection on a given project.
- Critique a given ethical reflection.

The aim of this chapter is to explain ethics, to introduce the student to ethics in business research, and to help the student develop an ethical perspective on research in general and business research in particular. The chapter explains the basic precepts of research ethics, explores fundamental ethical issues and details some possible approaches to dealing with the ethical issues and dilemmas of research projects. The chapter will help you, the student, develop a critical reflective ethical approach to research.
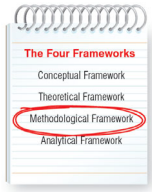
RESEARCH DIARY ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 3.1

Read again Jack's research proposal, (the end-of-chapter case study in Chapter Two of the textbook. In your research diary write a brief ethical reflection on this proposed research. Briefly explain the ethical issues you highlight and the reasons for your concern regarding them.
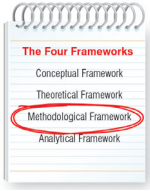
ANSWER:

ACTIVITY 3.2

Think about the potential harms that could arise while you are conducting your research project. When thinking in terms of potential harms in your own research, think about the field within which you are situating your research. Think about the participants in your research, the institutions and organisations as well as the individuals who have agreed (or you hope will agree) to participate in your research. Try to think of all of the harm, and all of the different kinds of harm, that might possibly be caused to your participants by your research or by participating in your research. Then try to think of how that harm, or those harms, can or might be avoided. Note your reflections in your research diary.
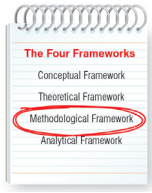
ANSWER:

ACTIVITY 3.3

As detailed in the chapter, one critical question that should be asked of every research project is whether the project warrants all the work, the expenditure of all of the resources, and the trespass on the time and experiences of potential participants. In order to be worth all of this, the research project must make a substantial contribution to knowledge. Think about these issues in relation to your research project. Note your reflections in your research diary.
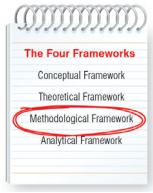
ANSWER:

ACTIVITY 3.4

In your research diary, detail your key ethical concerns in terms of your own research project. (This is taken from the end of chapter questions. The responses that you make to this activity and the following two activities can be used as the basis for the ethical reflection on your research that you present in the methodology section or chapter of your thesis/report of your research)
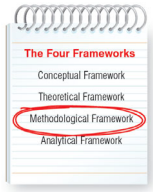
ANSWER:

ACTIVITY 3.5

In your research diary, explain how you intend to overcome these ethical concerns (see Activity 3.4).
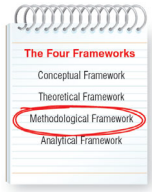
ANSWER:

ACTIVITY 3.6

In your research diary, write a critique of your approach to overcoming the ethical concerns you have about your research project.

ANSWER:

ACTIVITY 3.7

As requested in the end of chapter case study, in your research diary briefly record the key elements of Disney's business ethics framework. If you think any aspect of this framework is of use to you in relation to your own research, write a short paragraph about this. Write another short paragraph in your research diary critiquing Disney's business ethics framework. Use what you have learned from your reading of Chapter Three of the textbook to help you write this critique.

ANSWER:

Your Research Diary

Please use this section to start your own Research Diary and keep accurate records of your research as it progresses

Date:

Research Element/Aspect:
Detail the topic or section of research being undertaken

Source:
Record website addresses, book citations, library references, contact details etc.

SUMMARY:
Reflect on your experiences, thoughts, ideas and developments

NOTES:
Make general notes on your research, for example questions for further reflection and/or investigation, your thoughts, your observations and plans for future research.