

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate](#)

Research Ethics | May 2018

[View this email in your browser](#)

Stop centring Western academic ethics: deidentification in social science research

This blog will provide a discussion of issues present in deidentifying marginalised research participants, or research participants who request to be identified, in the publication of qualitative research. As my research is mixed-method (quantitative and multi-method qualitative) it included several data collection techniques and analyses. For this discussion, I will specifically focus on the face-to-face and Skype interviews I conducted with participants in Russia and the United States.

My PhD study investigates intergenerational transmission of combat-related trauma from parent to child, focusing on the Soviet–Afghan war, 1979–89. This research includes

interviews with Soviet veterans and family members of veterans; it was these interviews that raised questions of participant erasure and agency. From 12 face-to-face and Skype interview participants, one participant requested complete deidentification; one requested that their real name not be used but their location and other identifying details remain; two participants requested that only their first names be used and their location and other identifying details remain; the eight remaining participants requested that they be fully identified, with some participants sending me photographs of them and their families for inclusion in research publications. Given the social and political sensitivity that persists in Eastern Europe around the discussion of the Soviet invasion into Afghanistan, I had to consider and discuss with participants that requested they be identified the issue of their safety.

My research participants are marginalized participants by virtue of the topic of my research, the Soviet–Afghan war, and the ongoing silencing treatment they’ve received during and following the war by the state:

[Read more](#)

The inclusion of retracted trials in systematic reviews: implications for patients’ safety

After a paper has been through peer review and has been published it is the obligation of the scientific community to scrutinise an author’s work. If a serious error or misconduct is spotted the paper should be retracted and the work is removed from the evidence base. Over the past ten years there has been an exponential growth in the number of retracted papers. Much of the increase may be explained by the use of technology that has made it easier to spot duplicate publications, or fabricated data, for example. Once a paper is retracted researchers should not cite this work in future publications; this is, however, not the case. Many papers continue to be cited long after they have been retracted. Retraction Watch has a list of the [ten most highly cited retracted papers](#). The paper that currently holds the number one spot has been cited a total of 942 times, after retraction. It is plausible that researchers are using retracted work to justify further study. This may be the scientific equivalent of “fruit of the poisonous tree”. That is to say, if the research is based on tainted work then that work is itself tainted. Authors may also include retracted work in systematic reviews and meta-analyses. In clinical disciplines – such as nursing or medicine – this is particularly worrisome.

Clinical practice should be based on the best available evidence, i.e. from systematic reviews. If a review were to include a retracted paper then the resulting meta-analysis would be contaminated and recommendations for practice emerging from the study would be unsound; ipso facto putting patients at risk because a clinician is using evidence that is flawed. To date we have found five examples in the nursing literature where this has

happened. We have written to the journal editors to advise them of the error that authors have made. In our minds this is a cut and dry issue. The author has clearly made an error, potentially a serious error and one that will need to be resolved. Either the editor will need to issue an erratum or potentially retract the review (and there are examples in the literature where this has happened).

[Read more](#)

Can Your HREC Benefit from Coaching?

Atul Gawande, an American surgeon and researcher, sparked a debate in the medical community seven years ago with his *New Yorker* article [Personal Best](#), in which he explored the benefits of coaching. The best athletes in the world, he reasoned, rather than sitting on their hard-earned laurels, employ coaches as a matter of course, to scrutinise and review their game, work on imperfections and amplify their strengths. He discovered that many elite musicians do, too. So why did other types of professionals not consider the advantages of coaching as an option for improving performance? Professionals, he concluded, are educated in a discipline, and then, their learning complete, sent out into the world to get on with it.

Much the same, we at AHRECS have found, are many Human Research Ethics Committees. In Australia, members are engaged for their “relevant skills and/or expertise”, as required by para 5.1.28 of the [National Statement for the Ethical Conduct of Human Research](#), but exactly what those are is not spelled out, and a lack of volunteers sometimes means institutions will settle for a person who merely falls within the membership criteria in para 5.1.30. While a wise recruiter of HREC members will raise questions about familiarity with ethical frameworks, and group decision-making dynamics, the National Statement does not mandate the possession of skills in either of these.

[Read more](#)

OPTIONAL REVIEW

You may have missed...

BLOG

1. [What's been going on at AHRECS](#)
2. [On the Problem of “Worldlessness”. Do The Declaration of Helsinki and the Council for International Organizations of Medical Science Guidelines Protect the Stateless in the Research Context?](#)
3. [Hints for Using Worked Examples in Training Sessions](#)

4. [“More what you’d call guidelines”](#)
5. [Disaster Research and its Ethical Review](#)

RESOURCE LIBRARY

1. [Europe’s open-access drive escalates as university stand-offs spread](#)
2. [Facebook’s New Data Restrictions Will Handcuff Even Honest Researchers](#)
3. [Publishers cannot afford to be coy about ethical breaches](#)
4. [What factors do scientists perceive as promoting or hindering scientific data reuse?](#)
5. [Science isn’t broken, but we can do better: here’s how](#)

END REVIEW

You can this post and earlier posts at www.ahrecs.com/blog



Do you know someone who hasn’t subscribed yet to the Research Ethics Monthly? Please encourage them to subscribe now and help us grow this community

Got an idea for a post or a suggestion for a guest?

Send an email to gary@ahrecs.com



Do you have a view, feedback or some constructive criticism on this or other posts? Every item has comment link so you can have your say and continue the conversation.



RESOURCE LIBRARY

Have you checked out the resource library recently? New items are added daily. There are separate sections for Human Research Ethics and Research Integrity. There are subsections for different categories of items e.g. ‘In the news’ and books.

We hate spam and definitely don’t want to bother you with unwanted emails.
[Click here](#) to change your subscription settings.

This newsletter is authorized by the AHRECS team, [click here](#) for contact and other details.

We would never divulge your details to anyone else, including not disclosing you're a subscriber, without your permission.

This email was sent to <<Email Address>>

[why did I get this?](#) [unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)

Australasian Human Research Ethics Consultancy Services (AHRECS) · 14 Sovereign Way · Samford Valley, Qld 4520 · Australia

The MailChimp logo is displayed in a white, cursive font within a grey rectangular box.