

Ethical Red Flags

Risky Topics

- o Any topic or company that has recently experienced controversy (especially as evidenced by the news).
- o Race or ethnic identity
- o Sexuality
- o Gender identity
- o Sensitive personal issues
- o Sensitive cultural issues
- o Mood states, depression, anxiety
- o Gambling
- o Illicit drug taking
- o Substance abuse
- o Self report of criminal behaviour
- o Eating disorders
- o Parenting
- o Anything related to pregnancy
- o Anything related to health problems
- o Anything related to grief, death, suicide, or serious or traumatic loss
- o Anything related to psychological disorders

Risks to researchers

- o Research undertaken in unsafe environments or trouble spots
- o Potential to become privy to information that a person feels morally or legally obligated to report to authorities, but which a subject might consider confidential.

Risky procedures

- o Use of personal data obtained from a Government Department or Agency
- o Deception
- o Concealing the purposes of the research
- o Concealing the sponsors of the research
- o Covert observation
- o Audio or visual recording without consent
- o Recruitment via a third party or agency (does information get delivered)
- o Withholding from one group specific treatments or methods of learning from which they may 'benefit'
- o Psychological interventions or treatments
- o Administration of physical stimulation
- o Invasive physical procedures
- o Infliction of pain
- o Use of records where participants can be identified
- o Unusual participant compensation methods or unusually large amounts of participant compensation

Vulnerable populations

- o Those in a dependent relationship with the researchers (e.g. Students/lecturers or employee/employer)
- o Members of a socially identifiable group with special cultural or religious needs or political vulnerabilities (e.g., Maori ...)
- o Those who may be unable to give free informed consent because of difficulties in understanding the information statement (e.g., language difficulties)
- o People whose ability to give consent is impaired

- o Minors without parental or guardian consent
- o Participants who may be identified (identifiable) in any final report without giving specific consent for this.
- o People highly dependent on medical care
- o Residents of a custodial institution
- o Suffering a physical vulnerability
- o Suffering a psychological disorder

Injury

Risk of injury means a probability of injury or a magnitude of injury greater than the population would encounter in daily life.

Injury could be physical, economic, social, psychological, or legal.

Physical injury – internal or external wounds to body

Economic injury -- e.g., damage to insurability, credit worthiness, credibility

Social injury -- e.g., damage to working relationships, credibility

Psychological injury -- e.g., stress, embarrassment, emotional stability

Legal injury -- e.g., civil or criminal liability

If any of these risks are present (related to topics, procedures, populations, likelihood or magnitude of injury), the researchers need to plan and implement extra precautions. Applications involving these risks may take longer to assess and researchers should plan accordingly.

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Adapted from the *Ethical Red Flags* document from the Waikato Management School, University of Waikato.