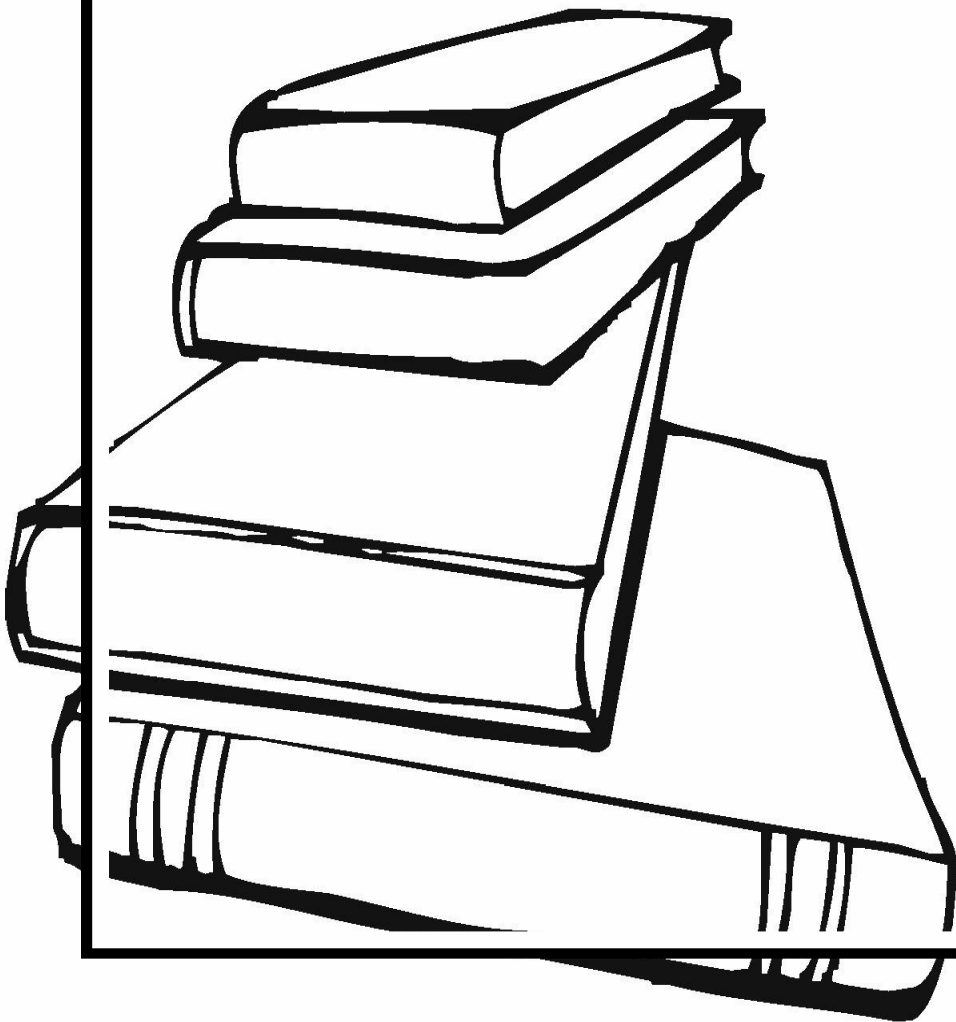


Partnership Research IN EDUCATION:

An Ethics Protocol

A Manitoba Education Research Network Handbook



2007

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Manitoba Education
Research Network

Partnership Research in Education: An Ethics Protocol

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**2007
Manitoba Education Research Network**

Cataloguing in Publication Data

370.72 Partnership research in education : an ethics protocol.

Includes bibliographical references.

1. Education—Research—Moral and ethical aspects. I. Manitoba Education Research Network. II. Manitoba Education Research Network. Ad Hoc Research Ethics Advisory Committee. III. Tooth, John. IV. Lutfiyya, Zana. V. Sokal, Laura.

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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide information on research ethics involving human subjects to assist the development of education partnership research projects. It is intended for use when such initiatives involve participation of people who may be unfamiliar with this aspect of research study.

In education research, faculty and students of Canadian universities follow ethics principles as stated in the “[Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans](#).”¹ Anyone affiliated with a university who conducts research in education requires an approved research ethics certificate for each project. In most cases of partnership research, someone from a university will be a researcher and a protocol will be in place. When this is not the case, or if there is uncertainty regarding ethics review for partnership research, it is advisable to consult a university research ethics board.²

Some types of research involving human subjects do not require an ethics review. For example, this would include any research that falls within the mandates of schools and divisions such as assessing the performance of employees or students, or the analysis of school division data from provincial standards testing.

¹Canada’s three national research organizations – the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research – will only fund individuals and institutions that certify compliance with the “Tri-Council Policy Statement.” (http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/english/pdf/TCPS%20October%202005_E.pdf)

² Please see the last section of this document which provides links to ethics procedures and forms for the University of Winnipeg, the University of Manitoba, Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface, Brandon University, and the District School Board of Niagara, St. Catharines, Ontario.

Principles for Partnership Research

Principles for partnership research adapted from the “Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans” (1998, 2005) are outlined below:

- *Respect for Human Dignity*

The cardinal principle of modern research ethics...is respect for human dignity. This principle aspires to protect the multiple and interdependent interests of the person – from bodily to psychological to cultural integrity – and it forms the basis for ethical obligations in research.

- *Respect for Free and Informed Consent*

Individuals are generally presumed to have the capacity and right to make free and informed decisions. Respect for persons means respecting the exercise of individual consent. In practical terms within the ethics review process, the principle of respect for persons translates into ensuring provision for dialogue, process, rights, duties and free and informed consent by the research subject.

- *Respect for Vulnerable Persons*

Respect for human dignity entails maintaining ethical obligations towards vulnerable persons whose diminished competence and/or decision-making capacity make them vulnerable. This obligation will often translate into special procedures to protect the interests of children, institutionalized persons or others who are vulnerable as they are entitled, on grounds of human dignity, caring, solidarity and fairness, to special protection against abuse, exploitation or discrimination.

- *Respect for Privacy and Confidentiality*

Respect for human dignity also embodies principles of respect for privacy and confidentiality to protect access to, control and dissemination of personal information. In doing so, such standards help to protect mental or psychological integrity and are consonant with values underlying respect for privacy, confidentiality and anonymity.

- *Respect for Justice and Inclusiveness*

Procedural justice requires that the ethics review process has fair methods, standards and procedures for reviewing research protocols, and that the process be effectively independent. It includes concern for the distribution of benefits and burdens of research. Distributive justice means that no segment of the population should be unfairly burdened with the harms of research. It imposes particular obligations toward individuals who are vulnerable and unable to protect their own interests, to ensure that they are not exploited for the advancement of knowledge and it ensures advances in research benefit all.

- *Balancing Harms and Benefits*

The ethics of human research requires a favourable harms-benefit balance – that is, that the foreseeable harms should not outweigh anticipated benefits. Harms-benefits analysis thus affects the welfare and rights of research subjects, the informed assumption of harms and benefits, and the ethical justifications for competing research paths. Because research involves advancing the frontiers of knowledge, its undertaking often involves uncertainty about the precise magnitude and kind of benefits or harms that attend proposed research. These realities as well as the principle of respect for human dignity, impose ethical obligations on the prerequisites, scientific validity, design and conduct of research. These concerns are particularly evident in biomedical and health research; in research they need to be tempered in areas such as political science, economics or modern history (including biographies), areas in which research may ethically result in the harming of the reputations of organizations or individuals in public life.

- *Minimizing Harm*

A principle directly related to harms-benefits analysis is non-maleficence, or the duty to avoid, prevent or minimize harms to others. Research subjects must not be subjected to unnecessary risks of harm, and their participation in research must be essential to achieving scientifically and

societally important aims that cannot be realized without the participation of human subjects. In addition, it should be kept in mind that the principle of minimizing harm requires that the research involve the smallest number of human subjects and the smallest number of tests on these subjects that will ensure scientifically valid data.

- *Maximizing Benefit*

Another principle related to the harms and benefits of research is beneficence. The principle of beneficence imposes a duty to benefit others and, in research ethics, a duty to maximize net benefits. Beneficence has particular relevance for researchers in professions such as social work, education, health care and applied psychology. Human research is intended to produce benefits for subjects themselves, for other individuals, or society as a whole through the advancement of knowledge.

A Partnership Research Review Process

The university ethics review process and consent forms require that a researcher provide specific information. In partnership research, ethics protocol suggests that similar information be required:

- researcher(s)'affiliations
- summary of the research project citing purpose methodology and methods of the study
- description of research instruments (e.g. questionnaires, tests, interview schedules) to be used in the study
- identification of study subjects, recruitment and special steps to be taken if the subjects are vulnerable, and the nature/duration of their commitment
- informed consent (for adults) or informed assent (for minors), withdrawal from the study at any time and without penalty, contact person for concerns about the study
- the use of deception, if employed in the study;
- feedback for study subjects after the completion of the study (e.g. short summary report)
- identification of risks and benefits
- anonymity (steps taken to ensure the identity of study subjects will not be revealed to others) and confidentiality (steps taken to ensure that information/data gathered will be kept secure) assurance
- compensation, and
- disposition of the data.

In an academic setting, it is usual practice for two to three individuals to read and comment on a research application. In cases where research might pose risk to participants beyond a minimum level, a complete research ethics board meets to discuss the proposal.

For purpose of partnership research involving schools and divisions, the establishment of a research review committee, as a standing committee of a school board for example, would formalize the ethics review process either to approve or deny research proposals involving human subjects.

Membership on the Research Review Committee could consist of:

- Two school trustees (one of which could be chair)
- Local representative of the Manitoba Teachers' Society
- School Division Consultant Responsible for research/assessment/evaluation
- Early Years', Middle Years' and/or Senior Years' principal(s) depending on the level of the research proposal
- Early Years', Middle Years' and/or Senior Years' teachers(s) depending on the level of the research proposal
- Member of/appointment by the superintendent's department (ex officio)

In the case of a school division, the recommendations from a research review committee could be made to the Superintendent to be brought forward for board approval.

School boards may wish to model their ethics forms based on those in the electronic links section which follows.

Electronic Links

This section of the guidelines document contains links to ethics procedures and forms in use in Manitoba universities, the Winnipeg School Division and the District School Board of Niagara in St. Catharines, Ontario.

University of Winnipeg:

- “Human Ethics Policies and Procedures”
http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/index/cms-filessystem-action?file=pdfs/research/forms/scehrs_pols_pros.pdf
- “Human Ethics Checklist”
http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/index/cms-filessystem-action?file=pdfs/research/forms/ethics_checklist.pdf
- “Guidelines for the Preparation of Proposals”
(includes sample consent form for studies involving children or schools)
http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/index/cms-filessystem-action?file=pdfs/research/forms/scehrs_guidelines.pdf

University of Manitoba:

- “The Ethics of Research Involving Human Subjects”
(includes policy and procedures)
http://umanitoba.ca/admin/governance/governing_documents/research/373.htm
- “Protocol Submission Forms and Guidelines”
(includes the consent form template)
http://www.umanitoba.ca/research/media/protocol_submission_form.doc

Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface:

- Policy is available to authorized personnel under Partage sur 'Provencher' (H:)/Politiques/Politiques en matière d'éthique de la recherche.

Brandon University:

- “Brandon University Research Ethics Committee Guidelines for Research Involving Humans”
<http://www.brandonu.ca/administration/vpacademic/research/documents/ResearchPolicies.pdf>
- “Checklist for projects involving Human Participants in Research”
<http://www.brandonu.ca/research/BURC/researchprojectchecklist.htm>
- “Sample consent form”
<http://www.brandonu.ca/research/BURC/consentForm.htm>
- “Brandon University Research Ethics Certificate”
http://www.brandonu.ca/administration/vpacademic/research/documents/BUREC-FORM_Certificate.doc

Winnipeg School Division:

- “Research Projects, Surveys and Questionnaires”
(includes a research application form)
<http://www.wsd1.org/departments/rpt/exresearch.htm>

District School Board of Niagara (St. Catharines, Ontario)

- “Research Process – Overview”
<http://www.dsbni.edu.on.ca/Curr/Research/overview.htm>
- “Research Proposals – Forms”
<http://www.dsbni.edu.on.ca/Curr/Research/forms.htm>

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Printed in Canada
Imprimé au Canada