

## On the Road to Ethical Research

Dr. Ladel Lewis and Dr. Bernadette Wright, July 25, 2014

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As you write that winning proposal, it's important to anticipate ethical issues that may arise during your project. These issues arise in specifying the research problem; identifying a purpose statement and research questions; and collecting, analyzing, and disseminating the results of the data. Below you will find examples of what we mean.

### Research Statement

As the research problem is identified, ethical researchers must ask "how will this benefit the individuals being studied/served?" This avoids marginalizing and disempowering the study participants. For example, don't conduct a study about the needs of the poor without the intent to meet their needs or benefit.

### Purpose Statement/Research Questions

Participants must have a clear understanding of the purpose of the study. A great example of this is the Tuskegee Syphilis Study. Participants were not informed that they had Syphilis nor were they informed they were not receiving proper medical care. Ethical researchers tell participants the purpose of the study.

### Data Collection

Ethical researchers must gain informed consent from ALL participants. That includes giving participants the right to withdraw at any time, letting them know what to expect (process and impact), respecting their privacy, and collecting signatures of the participant and researcher (who serves as a witness) to validate consent. Moreover, ethical researchers must leave research sites just how they found them or better off (e.g., minimizing intrusion that would disturb their regular activities and setting up experimental studies so that ultimately all groups can benefit from the treatment).

### Data Analysis, Interpretation & Storage

Confidentiality of all participants must be ensured at all times. This includes giving participants aliases and disassociating names during the coding process. Ethical research also has an expiration date for the data, meaning that after a certain amount of time the dataset will be destroyed to limit the chance of it being misused in the future.

### Data Dissemination

Lastly, ethical research must not use biased words reflecting participants' disability, race, gender, sexual orientation, or age. People who participate in research should have the right to obtain the results. But most importantly,

data should not be falsified to meet the researchers' or the stakeholders' needs. If the project didn't yield the results anticipated, it is okay. It is not the end of the world. This is an opportunity to fine tune your methods or examine potential side effects (unintended benefits created by the program). And what does that mean? The possibility to receive more funding, improve your effectiveness, and increase your positive impact!

If you have any questions or would like assistance, contact us at:  
[info@meaningfulevidence.com](mailto:info@meaningfulevidence.com). Your success is our goal!



Meaningful Evidence, LLC  
1069 West Broad Street #141  
Falls Church, VA 22046  
703.348.0061 | [info@meaningfulevidence.com](mailto:info@meaningfulevidence.com)