Abstract: Most accounts of the ethical problems facing researchers across a broad spectrum of research fields come from ethicists, ethics committees and specialists committed to the study of ethics in human research. In contrast, this study reports on the ethical questions that researchers, themselves, report facing in their everyday practice. Fifty-five Swedish researchers contributed 109 examples of ethical dilemmas, conflicts and problems in research. They were all researchers at the post-doctoral level in the fields of medicine, the humanities, education and social sciences, who devoted at least 50% of their working hours to research. They reported issues they face before, during, and after gathering data. Their range of issues is broader than generally discussed and point to the importance of researchers’ ethical sensitivity.

Key words: research ethics; ethical problems in research; informed consent; risks of harm

This study has its origin in the legislative regulation of research ethics, which was introduced in Sweden – as it was in a number of other countries – over the course of the last decade. A critical discussion has taken place in the international research community. The ethical review's relevance to the social sciences has been questioned. Burr & Reynold (2010) pose the question of whether the social sciences have been asked to conform to the wrong paradigm, and Shrag (2011) confirms this development with a range of examples of mismatches between researchers in the social sciences and ethical review boards. Dingwall (2012) has undertaken an extensive secondary analysis of the primary literature on the ethical regulation of research ethics in the social sciences. He points out that, for example, the scientific community has shown itself to be "capable of self-policing and articulating a professional consensus that was responsive to external criticism" (p. 11). He also warns that ethical regulation "creates perverse incentives" (p. 18), i.e. it could result in researchers attempting to adapt themselves to make the process of ethical review as smooth as possible. Such developments could result in a reduction in researchers' ethical sensitivity and in their ability to identify ethical problems in the practical research process. The legitimacy of ethical review boards has also been discussed within the medical research community (Elster, 2007).

This article is, however, not primarily a contribution to the above debate; rather a contribution to the knowledge about the ethical problems which researchers
actually face in their everyday practice. It is not, primarily, spectacular events that are sought, perhaps not even events which are complicated. Part of the problem can be solved with the help of reflection. The generation of researchers who are active in the period examined by this study have been educated and were active prior to the legislative regulation of ethics in Sweden and may, therefore, constitute interesting research subjects when it comes to their identification of ethically problematic events in research practice. It follows that researchers are familiar with the ethical regulations, but they have, hopefully, not yet been affected by the "perverse incentives" that Dingwall (2012) warned of.

**Theoretical background**

One starting point for this project is to regard research ethics as one of many governing factors in the planning and realisation of research. In the everyday practice of research, the researcher faces situations, which actualise the conceptual tension between different considerations and standards. The standards which govern research and which may, but not necessarily do, come into conflict with the ethical standards of research are: the ideal research standards which define what is of a good scientific quality, research policy standards and legal standards (Petersson, 1994). The legal standards are shared by all area of research. This concerns, for example, confidentiality legislation, the law concerning the management of personal information and, not least, the law concerning the ethical review of research involving humans. The standards of research policy relating to the value of research and societal goals are also general. The standards which concern how good scientific quality is achieved vary, however, between different academic disciplines and, sometimes, even within the same subject. Different research efforts and methods are used to tackle different problems and deal with questions in different ways. This can involve control, reproducibility and generalizability, just as it can also relate to authenticity, the researcher's proximity or distance and interpretation. This also means that researchers within different disciplines face different kinds of conflicts between quality standards and the standards of research ethics. Experimental research and field studies have, for example, completely different preconditions for maintaining control of research events. Therefore, the basic principles of research ethics are applied differently, depending on the research tradition.

Another starting point is that research ethics may be regarded as professional ethics, in the sense that ethical standards are applied in professional practice and in the professional relationship between researcher and their research subject. This means that the professional relationship is regarded as asymmetrical. The researcher has the advantage – one could say they have power – over the research subject, as a result of the researcher being the professional, and thus governing
the agenda. As with other professions and the power relationships, which exist between, for example, doctor and patient, teacher and pupil, psychologist and client, the researcher has a moral responsibility to ensure that the relationship is to the benefit of the research subject and does not cause them harm. The ethical values that professional ethics rests on are nothing more than the general ethics, which forms the foundation for the other moral standards in society; however, these ethics are precise in their application in various professional practices. Bayles (1989) indicates that the standards of professional ethics must be derived from values, which are broadly shared in the society in which the profession practices. Examples of these values are:

- Protection from harm. Protecting individuals from harm, e.g. from being harmed by others. These values are necessary for society to function.
- Autonomy. To be free from the limits set by others and to act as you please, as long as this does not conflict with other values.
- Equality of opportunity. Everyone shall have the same opportunity to access what society offers, regardless of race, religion, ethnicity or sexual orientation.
- Private life. To have control over the information which others hold about you.

Bayles (1989) proposes a structure for the relationship between the various levels of precision in professional ethics, for both comprehension and justification of the various standards.

SOCIAL VALUES

Standards of virtue

Principles of responsibility

Rules of duty

Figure 1. Norms of professional ethics, adapted from Bayles (1989, pp. 25-27)

The social values apply in all relationships, even in professional relationship which, however, also place additional demands on the professional than those which apply between people in personal relationships. Professionals are placed in situations, which are specific to their professional practice. This may result in the professional sometimes being expected to make exceptions to these values. In these cases the exceptions must be encompassed by clear restrictions. One
example is that of a doctor who must intervene to save a life, despite not having informed consent. Another is that of the teacher's duty to give a pupil a failing grade, even though this may break the pupil's heart. For this reason, amongst others, applications are formulated, based on the wider social values, for the specific duties, which a profession – research, in our case – has taken upon itself. The norms of professional ethics may have different degrees of precision.

Virtues refer to character traits of the professionals and are not, in reality, norms of the same type as the others. They are concerned with moral characteristics, which, certainly, also govern our conduct, but in a more indirect way. However, Bayles (ibid.) considers these to be part of the system of standards. An obvious virtue is to be competent. Other virtues, which we can derive from the classics, are loyalty, fairness, discretion, honesty and diligence. Honesty is a virtue that also applies to researchers. Loyalty applies to those who are placed in a position where they are dependent on the professional, in our case the research subject, but may also concern loyalty to an employer and to colleagues. Virtues can, most easily, be recognised by their opposites – when a researcher, for example, lacks competence, is a liar or disloyal.

Principles of responsibility are standards, which set out different responsibilities and duties. They govern, but they do not control actions in detail. They leave space for professional judgement. Because they are broad, they may come into conflict with one another. Principles of responsibility clarify standards of virtue and can be justified by both these and by social values.

Rules of duty are prescriptive, stipulate specific events and leave no room for professional judgement or freedom. They are determinate and cannot be weighed against one another or be justified by principles. Rules of duty specify the conduct which the principles require in certain types of situation in which professionals are in danger of ending up. Because they are so strictly prescriptive or proscriptive, they are set out in written ethical codes. Furthermore, they can be even more prescriptive when they are written down in laws, as in the case of the law concerning ethical review.

Bayles' figure shows that the basis for the ethical choice of action may, in part, be more or less clearly defined in the form of the applicable principles and rules, and, in part, that it should be possible to derive the choice of action from the general social values. When faced with an ethical problem, the researcher can, in some cases, act with the support of the rules of duty, which provide clear guidance. The same researcher can, in other cases, act with the support of the principles of responsibility, which take it for granted that professional judgement will be employed. In cases where researchers are faced with, for example, unexpected and unusual situations which demand ethical consideration, there is support to be
found in the wider values, but the application of these takes place within the scope of the principles of responsibility that indicate the researchers responsibilities. The researcher is then expected to be able to independently find a reasonable solution in a situation, which could not have be foreseen.

The reason why the standards of research ethics are regarded as a system of standards with various degrees of precision is that it, thus, becomes obvious that the researcher cannot rely simply on the precise directions being sufficient justification for their actions. It would be impossible to set out rules which take into account all possible situations and events. The researcher should, when faced with an ethical dilemma, be able to deduce how to act in a way which is compatible with research ethics, and also be able to justify their actions with the help of the underlying principles and values, as well as weighing these against the requirements which are in conflict with the ethical, e.g. the standards of scientific method.

A third starting point is that knowledge about what is relevant to and critical of research ethics can be sought in the experiences of practising researchers. In their contact with research subjects, researchers have the opportunity to identify variations of ethical challenges. The method of asking for researchers' experiences of ethical problems in research is based on the assumption that researchers are able to discern ethically critical situations in their research, and that they have professional judgement and discretion. Furthermore, it is assumed that they are willing to share at least some of their experiences.

An alternative way to go about this would be to question research subjects about their experiences of being ethically or unethically treated. Smyth & Williamson (2008) observed that research subjects are seldom involved in discussions about research ethics and that it is hard to arrange for their voices to be heard. However, it is also complicated to find out in retrospect about research subjects' experiences of taking part in research, especially as their identity is protected. Moreover, when the outcome of an ethical conflict is good, they will not be aware of the problems and considerations that are at play in the researcher's head.

The project, of which this article is a part, therefore studies researchers' experiences of the conflicts and dilemmas of research ethics as they, themselves, describe them. The researchers come from various disciplines in which research that involves humans takes place. The idea is to investigate the variation in that which can be of practical relevance to research ethics. An ethicist himself, Tranøy (1983) proposed that discussions about research ethics should be based on "both certain important events from our own past and a proper and sober knowledge in depth and width, of our own present practices" (p. 12). This project aims to contribute to this "sober knowledge".
This article is based on examples of descriptive, rather than normative, research ethics. Descriptive research ethics investigates the standards and systems of norms, which actually exist in different research contexts and the conflicts between standards, which arise in researchers' practice. Within descriptive research ethics, questions are posed about which ethical problems arise in research, which standards form the basis of researchers' work and about the prioritisation, which takes place. In normative research ethics, questions are answered about how researchers should act, both in general and in specific situations. Advice is given, and principles or rules are formulated about how researchers should behave. Normative, unlike descriptive, research ethics takes a position with regard to a certain action (Petersson, 1994).

Aim

The aim of this article is to contribute knowledge about the ethical problems in researchers' practice. The questions, on which this analysis and discussion are based, are:
- Which ethical problems from their own practice do researchers describe?
- Which standards, both of research ethics and more generally, are brought to the fore in these problems?
- What prioritisation of standards can be implied from the solutions to the ethical problems that are described?

Method

The article presents parts of a larger study. The findings are comprised of various dilemmas experienced by practising researchers. Data has been collected by asking researchers about their experiences of ethical problems in the practical aspects of their research, according to the method described below.

The main study of the researchers' experiences of ethical dilemmas, conflicts and problems in research has been conducted using the critical incident technique, which has shown itself to be suitable for the investigation of ethical dilemmas in professional practice (Pope & Vetter, 1992; Lindsay & Colley, 1995; Author). The method has been in use since the 1950s and is appropriate for the study of events that occur discontinuously (cf. Travers, 1964). The research subjects themselves, in this case the researchers, select the events they wish to report. In other words, it is the awareness and judgement of the researchers that defines what is an ethical problem, conflict or dilemma. This is the core of the method as it enables the search to include events that are not necessarily those which are
defined by the authorities or by codes and laws. Naturally, the established norms will influence the awareness of the researchers but, as the method specifically requests incidents experienced in practice, it successfully encompasses even atypical events. This leads to variation in the data.

Procedures and sample

The procedure requires that the research subjects answer one question about their own experiences of ethical problems. The return rate in similar studies of ethical dilemmas in other professions, for example, psychologists and teachers, has been remarkably high. The question was formulated as follows: “Describe a situation within the framework of your research in which you or a research colleague has had to tackle something which has raised difficult or challenging research ethical issues for you.”

The space available for the reply was unlimited. Some researchers gave a detailed account of events that encompassed ethical conflicts or dilemmas. Others gave shorter answers. The incidents contributed by the researchers constitute the basis of several analyses of descriptive ethics, one of which is the analysis presented here.

The written question was sent to 120 researchers along with written information about the project. In spite of a reminder, the return rate was only 19% (n = 23). Therefore, further data collection took place using a sample of 45 researchers, invited to take part in an audiotaped telephone interview in which the same question was asked. The return rate for the telephone interviews was 68% (n = 32). Preparations for this interview included an introductory e-mail to the researcher, which provided information about the forthcoming telephone conversation and presented the question along with additional information about the research project. When contacted by telephone, the subject was asked to suggest a later time at which they would be available for interview. Some chose to answer immediately while others suggested a later time. As the same question was posed in both the telephone and the written interviews, the answers have been regarded as a single data set of the responses of 55 researchers.

The participants were researchers at the post-doctoral level in the fields of medicine, the humanities, and social and educational sciences. At the time of data collection they had all been awarded grants from the Swedish Research Council and could, therefore, be presumed to devote at least 50% of their working hours to research. The selection has been stratified with regard to academic discipline, but is randomised within each group. As several researchers have contributed two or more critical incidents, the total data collection comprises 109 examples of ethical dilemmas, conflicts and problems in research, reported by the 55 researchers.
Research ethics

The contributing research subjects were given written information regarding the aim of the project, what effort participation would entail, the fact that participation was voluntary, that their answers would be rendered unidentifiable, how the results would be published and who had overall responsibility for the project. The fact that an individual replied to the question has been taken as confirmation of their informed consent to participate.

The project does not fulfil the criteria for ethical review, according to the legislation. We neither collected sensitive personal information nor performed the study using methods that could affect or harm the subjects physically or psychologically. It was not, therefore, encompassed by the ethical review legislation and, consequently, it was not sent to the regional ethical review board for evaluation. The subjects were rendered unidentifiable and their statements were used in a way that prevents recognition.

Analysis

The events reported in the main study were analysed by using qualitative data analysis (Bryman, 2001). The aim of the analysis was to discover which of the standards and values of research ethics were both at stake and revealed in the ethical problems that the subjects described. These ethical standards also conflict with other norms, such as the legislative or quality standards of research methodology.

The analysis was carried out by examining and coding every critical incident in detail, so that the various conflicts with ethical standards, which the researchers described, were made clear. These provided the data for categorisation. The coding and categorisation of the responses was based on the core principles and phenomena of research ethics. Thereafter, the analysis turned to focus within each of these categories. This analysis of ethical problems in research practice allows us to gain a new, more detailed understanding of the ethical problems in research practice. These are presented as variants and supported by excerpts in the results section below.

The categories are shown in Table 1. The findings show that the interest of the researchers was directed towards the central ethical values in research, such as protection from harm, informed consent and questions related to privacy. The results also show that the researchers identified ethical problems, which were related to the ethical review legislation and the ethical review boards, as well as to the misconduct of research colleagues. Those categories are presented in other articles (author).
Table 1. *Ethically troubling incidents in research practice*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
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<tr>
<td>Confidentiality</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>Informed consent</td>
<td>17</td>
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<td>Ethical review</td>
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<td>Harm</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colleagues’ conduct</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privacy</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Publication</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Archival</td>
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<td>Personal information</td>
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<tr>
<td>Remuneration</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>6</td>
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</table>

Table 1 shows the distribution of ethical problems, sorted into categories of conflicts and dilemmas, as reported by the researchers.

**Findings**

The general classification principle for the cases which the researchers reported and which involve ethical problems or dilemmas in their relationship to research subjects is based on that of Petersson (1994). He divides the research process into three stages: Measures connected to data collection, data collection and processing. In this study the three stages are called: Before data collection, during data collection and after data collection. The purpose of following this type of classification is to direct attention towards the fact that ethical problems can arise throughout the entire research process. The researcher is not finished with research ethics once the project has been approved by an ethical review board. Even though the preparations have been scrupulous and attempts have been made to anticipate the problems that may arise, unpredictable complications may still appear to researchers who are attentive. As ethical review takes place prior to the research commencing, it demands, out of necessity, only that which can be anticipated.

The problems and dilemmas which are identified in the researchers' critical events, and which are reproduced in this article, depict issues involving informed consent and the risks of harm. The selection of examples, which are reproduced here, show the variation in the ethical problems which arose.

**Before data collection**
The Ethical Problems of Research

The questions which concern researchers' ethical consideration of research subjects before data collection takes place mainly involve different variations of problems relating to consent. These involve, for example, the information letter design, the requirement for consent and what will be happen if consent is not given. Even the choice of scientific theme, research problem or object for investigation raise ethical issues.

Choice of research problem
Questions concerning research ethics arise as early as the stage at which the theme or object to be researched are chosen. A researcher who studies self-harming behaviour points out the risk that the research itself may reinforce the harmful behaviour. The research subjects receive attention and, up to a point, appreciation because they are, as a result of having self-harmed, the objects of the research. There is a risk that the research affirms the adolescent's identification of themselves as self-harmers, and thus cause more harm or worsen pre-existing harm.

Information for the research subject
The comprehensive requirement to provide information to the research subjects, which is stated in the instructions for ethical review, causes two types of problem for researchers. The first is that far too much information can rouse the suspicion of, and lead to resistance from, those who are invited to participate. Some researchers maintain that fewer people consent when the information provided to them is detailed. For example, when research subjects are presented with a form, in which they need to cross a box to give their permission for recorded material to be shown in a research context, this causes resistance rather that playing down the seriousness of the procedure.

The other problem involves the requirement that those invited to become research subjects should be told about the fact that participation is voluntary and that they have the right to withdraw. The researchers who highlight this as a problem consider this to be a necessary requirement, however, one which carries the risk of bias in selections in, for example, questionnaire studies in school classes.

...there should not be any pressure, it should be completely voluntary...you get pretty large groups of students who say, 'no, I don't fancy answering that right now'. We get a response rate which is about half that of comparable studies that we performed 15 years ago, when the regulations were a little bit different. We follow the recommendations from the ethics committee. I think that it is obvious that this should be done. The consequences are that you end up with a dataset which is much worse and, above all, and we really believe this: the students who do not feel at home in school, it is those students who refuse to take part, but it is their voices which really should be heard.
The researcher indicates that the requirement to provide information about the voluntary nature of participation and the right to withdraw leads to problems with the quality of the data and that the risk is that valuable data will be missed. Quality standards for methods, as a consequence, come into conflict with the standards of research ethics.

**Consent**

Problems, which relate to consent appear in many variants. The researchers demonstrate, through their accounts, that they respect the standard relating to informed consent, but at the same time, in certain cases, they complain that quality is sacrificed as a result; however, in other cases, they are able to solve the problems without losing important data.

In certain studies, the requirement for consent is hard to determine or hard to implement. Studies, which are carried out online raise new problems as a result of, for example, data being easily accessible without consent. The fact that people have voluntarily published their affairs online does not mean that they have agreed to take part in research. A researcher who studies the cultural expression of grief says:

"People who publish information online must be aware that others can look at it and that they do not have control over what other people do with it. But I, as a researcher, have a responsibility to my informants."

The problem is that, when the researcher makes contact in order to gain consent, they run the risk of " barging in on their extremely difficult situation". The researcher in this case did not seek consent, but neither did she reveal the sources, i.e. websites, from which the data was collected. The informants were protected, but the researcher's dilemma is that this involved her making an exception to the standards of scientific quality, which she espouses because it is not possible for anyone to check her sources. And she has, certainly, not obtained the research subjects' informed consent.

In certain types of project, researchers would like to make exceptions to the consent requirement as a result of the method that will be used. In studies of discrimination in the labour market, methods are used which involve submitting fictitious job applications. Asking the employer being studied to consent will thwart the aim of the study. The ethical review board did not approve the study. The reason was that confidence in research is at risk if researchers study people's actions without them being aware that they are taking part in research. Another ethical review board approved a similar study, which stands out as perplexing to the researchers.
Not all of the potential research subjects who are invited to participate in research consent to take part. In classroom studies problems sometimes occur when all of the parents of the children in a class do not give their consent for their children's participation in a study. In an observational study, which involved video recording, one participant demanded total anonymity. The researcher solved the problem by diming the recorded material.

One researcher, who filmed in a classroom at a high school, where one of the pupils had refused to take part, pointed the camera so that the specific student was not filmed. There was a problem when the pupil moved about in the classroom. A similar case is described in the following way:

...it can happen that there are pupils who do not want to take part, that's happened to me over the years, it is also a dilemma when you are going to film in a classroom... We usually do it so that we point the camera in such a way that the children do not appear...though now, there is often a lot of movement in the classroom which means that these children end up in the shot, in which case we usually, we erase them directly, so we take that out, it may be children who are living under a protected identity...who think it is important that they are not shown...

The researcher takes the problem seriously and does not exclude the possibility that there may be good reasons why a pupil does not wish to be filmed. The problem may be solved with the help of technology.

Another problem arises where a study is stopped because a parent says no, but the pupils had, at the same time, become enthusiastic about the possibility of taking part in the project. The researcher in this case indicates that it is "a little bit delicate withdrawing in such a way as to prevent there being repercussions for the child whose parents said no". She thinks there is a risk that the pupils' disappointment about the cancelled research project may be directed against the pupils whose parents caused the project to be cancelled.

Children and parents have, all too often, different attitudes to taking part in a research project. In a classroom study, which involved the recording of pupils speech during lessons, all but one of the pupils' parents had consented to their children taking part. The researchers set up microphones on all but one of the pupils' desks. Not unexpectedly, this pupil would also like to take part in the project. She would also like to have a microphone on her desk. The researchers felt they were forced to comply with the parents' decision.

Adolescents who have provided their consent to take part in a study may, sometimes, fail to appear for the interview. This can be interpreted as a refusal to take part or it may simply be that they have forgotten the agreed time. The researcher's problem is in deciding which of these is the case. If the subject does not wish to take part, but has trouble, saying no directly to the researcher, it would
be wrong to contact them to remind them about the agreement, according to the researcher.

In summary, we can see that researchers have to deal with a variety of problems related to informed consent. This may concern a conflict between standards of method and standards of research ethics. This applies to, for example, methods for recruiting participants, easing the access to data and concealing the ultimate aim of the research in order to be able to draw conclusions from the data. The requirements of the method are weighed against the standards of research ethics with regard to the research subjects' right to information and consent. In the examples, which have been provided by the research subjects in this study, research ethics carry more weight than the requirements of the method. The costs are, in certain cases, low, such as when removing a pupil, who refused to take part, from a recording. They are higher when it comes to the effect of the voluntary nature of participation on the selection.

During data collection

In the contact between researchers and their subjects that occurs when data are collected, various problems and risks of an ethical nature may arise. The values, which are at play are, above all, the risk of harming the research subjects physically or psychologically, or of violating their right to personal integrity and of self-determination. The principle of informed consent is brought to the fore again during the data collection process if it has not been possible to obtain consent in advance.

The risk of psychological or physical harm
Researchers may risk harming the research subjects psychologically in interview studies into topics, which are sensitive, shocking or worrying. That a question is sensitive can sometimes come as a surprise to the researcher. It is, therefore, important to be prepared for unexpected things to happen.

One example of an study which is undoubtedly and predictably sensitive is an interview study with relatives of patients who have committed suicide. Despite careful preparation, the researcher only discovered during the interview that the man they were interviewing had not previously realised that his wife had killed herself. The interview subject, the husband, became shocked when he realised what had happened. The researcher took the ethical responsibility by arranging for the subject to receive help to process this shocking realisation.
It can be important to be prepared for unexpected and unpredictable situations, even within research areas that are not necessarily regarded as sensitive or shocking. Many questions can be sensitive and personally shocking. Interviews on lifestyle is one such area. Research into prenatal diagnosis is another example. One researcher discovered that even interviews about football may upset delicate feelings.

We interviewed a man who had been very involved in a football club; he was not a player, but a supporter of this particular club... he broke down in tears and then it emerged that he had been ill and had received, while he was in hospital, if I remember correctly, he received a bunch of flowers from the club... he became so emotional while he described this; this football club means so much to him, when he is lying in the hospital and is very much alone and then he gets this bunch of flowers... it was an example of what can really happen when you least expect it.

It is not unusual that researchers are surprised by an ethical problem, and this can happen in all kinds of study, but the risk increases when they find themselves in an authentic environment in which they lack control over the conditions.

High school pupils constituted the research subjects in a project which dealt with climate change. The adolescents were involved in group discussions and several pupils really forced the issue and asserted that the end of the world was near. A doomsday mood spread through the group and the researcher felt that the discussion had become too heavy and did not want the pupils to take this mood away with them. The researcher was placed in an ethical dilemma; to remain in the role of researcher and leave the pupils in that state or to leave that role and attempt to instil a little hope in the pupils. This researcher chose the latter and pointed out, for example, the solutions to the climate problem, which are being worked out at a political level, in order to change the mood of despair to one of "a little more hope".

In one study of chemistry teaching, the researchers witnessed the pupils pouring poisonous material down the sink. The teacher had their attention focused in another direction. The researchers were surprised and could not bring themselves to intervene. This case concerns harm that could occur to third parties because mercury poisons the environment we all share.

The risk of violating privacy and the private sphere can crop up in research of various kinds. Classroom research brings privacy issues to the fore, particularly when it involves recordings being made. Children may, for example, disclose sensitive personal information during an otherwise harmless study. Researchers who have been involved in video recordings describe how they edit out just such information from the film.

The question of what is considered sensitive personal details according to the Personal Data Act is, however, not clear in all situations. If a pupil indicates that
a classmate is ill, this constitutes information about their state of health and can be considered as, in a legal sense, sensitive personal data. The researcher faces the question of whether this should be deleted.

One research project investigates whether patients have received information about the potential secondary effects of the treatment they are undergoing. The risk that this question worries the patients is obvious. To send a questionnaire in which the research subjects are asked whether they have received information about possible side-effects demands careful consideration.

The ethical problem here deals with how you are going to send out questionnaires and invite patients to take part in a study in which we ask them whether they have received certain information that is important for them... because the risk is very high that they have not received this information which is important and what happens then: that is to say, what kind of worry does this bring out? Can you send a letter or a questionnaire to people saying, 'hi, you have been through this treatment, have you received information that there are potential side-effects'?

The researcher in question has tested both the projects information letter and questionnaire on several people in order to find a way to formulate it that minimises the risk to cause worry.

The risk of revealing sensitive information about third parties, e.g. colleagues, can be a barrier in interviews. It is, therefore, a sensitive topic for a research subject when describing their experiences of collaboration in a team or working group. The research subjects are careful not to reveal something, which they do not wish to reveal. The researcher attempts to avoid forcing the research subject to reveal something they do not wish to, but yet still acquire the data they need for the study.

Research that involves children places particular demands on the researcher's awareness about the risks of causing harm. In one project, children's memory of unpleasant medical treatments was studied.

You cannot subject children to... the treatment is in place whether you do the research or not, so it’s not something you can do anything about, but the memory testing, there may be components there, where it will be uncomfortable for the child...

The researchers showed the child objects from the treatments, e.g. an inhalation mask, and wanted to measure their pulse with a pulse oximeter, but the child reacted negatively to this. The researchers decided to investigate other parameters. The researchers were disappointed that the study could not be conducted as planned. It had been all too much for the children. They chose a method, which did not provide all the information they had hoped for, but which they viewed as ethically sound.
Consent in emergency situations

Questions, which arise in connection with the fact that researchers would like to have the informed consent of their research subjects to take part in the research project, most often appear before the start of the research. However, problems may arise in projects where it is not possible to know who the possible candidates are. This type of case seems to arise primarily within medical research. The dual roles of doctor and researcher that exist in clinical research can create ethical problems because it is not always ethically feasible to carry out that which would be most interesting from a scientific point of view.

When patients arrive in an emergency, it can be inappropriate to ask for their consent in the acute phase. Patients with, for example, acute myocardial infarction are affected by pain and medication and have difficulty making decisions about their participation in a research study. They are put in an explicitly dependent situation and can be easily influenced. They do not have time, or are in no condition to, interpret information about the research. At the same time, a research project is directed at precisely this emergency treatment. Following discussions with the ethical review board, the researchers have solved the problem by first asking the patient for their approval prior to the treatment being started, while the actual consent is postponed until the patient has been brought up to the ward and, in peace and quiet, can study the information and give their consent, or withdraw. The researchers describe this as postponed consent.

In one research project concerning emergency caesarean sections – in order to avoid the problem of asking for consent to the taking of samples for research in emergency situations – the researchers chose an anticipatory solution.

I work a lot with women who are in labour and I take biopsies, which we then analyse, and then it's a question of asking the parents in as calm a phase as possible and it can sometimes not be totally simple when they are going to perform an emergency caesarean section. When should I ask the parents, when is it reasonable? Emergency caesarean sections are done in a pressurised situation... it has resulted in us providing information to the patients when they come in to the labour ward that, should there be an emergency caesarean section, could you then consider that we be allowed to take a tissue biopsy in connection with the caesarean.

The researchers have identified two alternatives by which to gain consent for gathering the data they require. In one case, they inform and ask for consent should an emergency caesarean section take place. In the other case, the researchers provide information to the parents when they arrive on the labour ward with the question of whether they would consider allowing the researchers
to take a sample in connection with a potential caesarean section. They have chosen the alternative they regard as most reasonable.

The right to withdraw is connected to consent and brings to the fore the question of whether it is the right of children or their parents to decide. The researchers who mention this dilemma have let the child decide. They have acted in this way even when the parents have been of the opinion that the researcher should continue the session. The researchers in question thus act against the opinion of the parents and follow the child's wishes.

It is also evident in other cases that the researchers allow the wishes of the child to be superior to both the methodical quality of the research and the views of their parents.

In summary, we can note that the risks of harm which research may cause to research subjects and which emerged in this study are of a psychological nature, even in the examples, which were presented from medical research. Primarily, this involves worry, upset or depressed feelings and the risks of harming the research subject's social position in the workplace. The knowledge sought by the researchers demands methods that are moderately intrusive and therefore constitute a risk of causing harm, which stands in opposition to the standards of research ethics. The researchers describe how they balance these different considerations by adapting their methods in order to minimise the risk of harm. We can also see how the researchers attempt to balance the standards of research ethics with the scientific standards in order to acquire the best possible data.

After data collection

The ethical problems or dilemmas, which arise after data collection at the time of e.g. processing or before publication concern:

- selection of quotes, cleaning up the language
- anonymity for publication
- the risk that the results be misused
- filing of data
- the accessibility of raw data in accordance with the principle of public access

The variants presented here comprise the researcher's ethical obligations in relation to the subjects of their research, which amounts to the first two categories.
**Authenticity – selection of data, cleaning up the language**

When analysing data, the researcher makes a judgement about whether specific data are relevant or not for the research question. One researcher describes having doubts about why all of the data are not reported. The screening of the information itself creates a feeling that "one is almost lying in some way". The researcher indicates that this also affects the replicability of the study.

Another fidelity problem concerns the transcription of speech, which almost always looks bad when written down. Respect for the research subjects stand in conflict with being faithful to the data. The researchers in question tidy up the language because in their project this does not affect the analysis or interpretation. However, they have a sense of doubt about whether their actions are correct, as it reduces the authenticity of the statements.

**Anonymity of data for publication**

Protecting informants by rendering their statements and other data anonymous may involve problematic balancing acts. The researchers consider how many factors in a contextual description it is possible to report without there being a risk that these are recognisable, and how the interview data may be used without anyone being recognised.

Researchers from various projects and disciplines have requested consent prior to the publication of quotes from the research subjects whose position in the workplace may be at risk. This opportunity did not exist for an ethnographer who was uncertain whether the information, which she wished to publish, had been given to her in her role as a researcher or as a friend of the informants. She had left the field and the informants could not read English, which was the language the report was written in. She hoped, therefore, that they would not be able to read what she had written. Another researcher had rashly promised to pass on recorded material to a journalist as an example of their research. By distorting the voices of the recorded research subjects, the researcher minimised the risk that they be recognised.

One problem concerns publication of names of dead people who have been convicted of crimes according to previous legislation. The question concerns the length of time that should have passed. This can, for example, concern homosexual acts, which were previously illegal. The publication of names can be seen as an invasion of privacy, but may also provide redress to the forgotten. Anonymity can be seen as a way of passing on the discussion of taboos.

**In summary**, the researcher is faced with a deliberation, within the context of the writing process, when it comes to being faithful to the research subjects' actual
contributions. Furthermore, ethical standards may be incompatible when concerned with anonymity, if openness is an important value.

Discussion

The study shows that ethical problems in research, which researchers have reported from their own practice, have a greater variety and are more nuanced than the regulations and legislation appear to indicate. The broad variation is shown already in the range of problems that the researchers choose to report. Moreover, if we accept that there are a large number of ethical events, which the researchers choose not to describe, perhaps because they have not been successful at solving them satisfactorily, we can assume that the variation is even greater. No regulation could be so detailed that it encompasses all possible ethical problems that can arise in all forms of empirical research. The variation that appears in this study is especially striking when it comes to informed consent. Amongst other things, it emerges that the problem of consent is not concluded simply because consent has been obtained. New events may occur which demand new adaptation on the part of the researcher. The researcher's ethical sensitivity, discretion and judgement are thus a necessary guarantee of the ethical standards of the research. The question of how such judgement develops and is maintained thus becomes important.

It is interesting to note that the researchers in these authentic cases from research practice make few references to regulations or principles. The ethical standards are considered to be implied, perhaps obvious. One exception are the cases in which rules constitute such a great barrier that they threaten the scientific quality of the research, for example, when the selection becomes biased because the participating adolescents have been informed that participation is voluntary and hence decide not to take part, or when there is a difficulty in fulfilling the consent requirements in emergency medical cases. In both medical research and the social sciences, researchers are able to create reasonable models with which to obtain informed consent. The medical researchers' problem with consent prior to potential future participation can be compared to the ethnographer's consent from all the individuals in a school in the event that they should be observed. In the cases where the researchers found a reasonable solution to their problems, they indicate what they would like to achieve, but seldom with reference to laws or other regulations. The ethical responsibility they assume seems to rest on internalised standards.

Furthermore, it may be noted that it is rarely spectacular situations that the researchers describe. There is, however, no reason to belittle these events, rather we must be pleased with the ethical sensitivity of the researchers. It has been
questioned whether research within the social sciences actually involves significant risk of causing harm (Capron, 1983). There is not, perhaps, a risk of serious harm. However, researchers fortunately also attempt to avoid various less serious risks. The very fact that the ethical problems are more everyday in nature also makes them hard to anticipate. Consequently, they are not considered during ethical review, which is sometimes pointed out in a condescending manner by the ethical review boards (Author). Again, we can see that the researchers' ethical sensitivity and professional judgement are one requirement in order for the research subjects to be treated in an ethically reasonable way.

The variation and everyday nature of the ethical problems gives relevance to the model, which Bayles (1989) proposed for analysis and justification. When detailed rules and laws do not provide instructions for action, the researcher needs to have other reference points, which can support their deliberations. This support can be found in the general principles of the researcher's responsibility, and in the broadly shared social values. However, the applications are left to the researcher. In this study, the researchers provided examples of how their choices of action can be justified with support from social values and a general ethical responsibility. There are reasons to assume that the self-policing, which Dingwall (2012) referred to, has survived thus far.

Moreover, it may be noted that ethics win over other standards in the cases, which have emerged from this study. In the cases where ethical consideration has come into conflict with scientific quality, the researchers give more weight to the ethical requirements. Researchers alter their plans in order to fulfil their ethical responsibilities. This involves them, sometimes, not acquiring the data, which the research project required.

The method for this study has its limitations. The researchers describe situations, which they solved with careful consideration given to the standards of research ethics in order to protect the research subjects. Other descriptions, such as those where the research ethics had lost their power, must be investigated with other methods. In studies of other professions, e.g. psychologists and teachers, ethical dilemmas often elicit criticism of colleagues' violations of work ethics, which is one way to obtain data on ethical failings (Campbell, 1993; author). This provides information on the bad examples. Even in this study, criticism is to be found of colleagues who act dishonestly in their relationship to the research community. However, this does not concern their relationship to the research subjects, but instead how they handle the authors' credits on articles, steal ideas from others and similar breaches of standards. One potential explanation is that researchers have a limited insight into colleagues' actual contact with the research subjects.
Within the context of how this study was conducted, one strength of the telephone interview emerged. The researchers shared not only the ethical problem and its solution but also their deliberations behind the solution. The interview method, which originally was a substitute method with which to increase the return rate, consequently showed itself to be superior to the written method. The researchers expanded on their answers much more in the telephone interviews than they did in writing.

This study should be followed by further studies. One of the most important would be to study the development and maintenance of the ethical sensitivity that these established researchers have demonstrated evidence of, as well as to study how the doctoral students of today are educated. How is the researcher's ethical responsibility discussed in the legislatively controlled ethical review discourse?

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