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## The Human Study of Human Beings

The growth of importance of the study of human behavior raises a host of new ethical problems, at the head of which I would place the need for consent to the research by both observer and subject. Studies of the behavior of animals other than man introduced a double set of problems: how to control the tendency of the human observer to anthropomorphize, and so distort his observations, and how to protect both the animal and the experimenter from the effects of cruelty. In debates on the issue of cruelty it is usually recognized that callousness toward a living thing may produce suffering in the experimental subject, but it is less often recognized that it may produce moral deterioration in the experimenter.

Further problems arise when living human beings are studied in their natural habitats, in laboratories, or in partially simulated situations. The observer or experimenter must control his individual and cultural bias at the same time that he uses his membership in the species and in a culture as tools of research. He must systematically allow for the effect of his research methods on the behavior he is observing. He must protect his subjects from damage during and subsequent to his investigations. He must protect his particular scientific discipline and science in general from any loss of confidence that might make future scientific work more difficult. And he must protect from ill effects other human beings who are not involved in his particular set of observations.

The first two of these ethical and scientific imperatives are reasonably well understood, although many natural scientists may not be fully conversant with the various disciplined ways in which individual and cultural bias are allowed for—through, for example, allowance for countertransference in psychiatry or the employment of different observational methods with comparison groups. One possibility for dealing with the third imperative was discussed in *Science* [132, 989 (1960)], but much more specific safeguards are needed to protect the subjects of research, sometimes in terms of their own identity, sometimes in terms of their capacity to trust themselves or to trust other individuals of higher status. In regard to loss of confidence, there is a general recognition that a social investigator should not infuriate the local citizenry or outrage the board of trustees of a university by his research methods or the way in which he presents his results.

But the last requirement is one on which scientists have not yet adequately come to terms. The question can be stated simply: Is it scientifically and ethically permissible to deceive the subjects of research by disguising oneself as a "participant observer," or by introducing stooges into an experiment, or by making use of long-distance television or hidden microphones or other devices for concealed observation? When a human being is introduced who is consciously distorting his position, the material of the research is inevitably jeopardized, and the results always are put in question as the "participant"—introduced as a "psychotic" into a mental ward or as a "fanatic" into a flying-saucer cult group—gives his subjects false clues of a nonverbal nature and produces distortions which cannot be traced in his results. Concealed instruments of observation may not distort the subjects' course of action, but the subsequent revelation of their presence—as in the jury room that was tapped for sociological purposes—damages the trust both of the original participants and of all others who come to know about it. The deception violates the conventions of privacy and human dignity and casts scientists in the role of spies, intelligence agents, Peeping Toms, and versions of Big Brother. Furthermore, it damages science by cutting short attempts to construct methods of research that would responsibly enhance, rather than destroy, human trust.—MARGARET MEAD, *American Museum of Natural History, New York*.