This fresh, confident second edition expands its focus on the theoretical and practical aspects of doing qualitative research in light of new ethical dilemmas facing researchers today.

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• maps the changing and increasingly technology-reliant aspects of research relationships and practices
• provides researchers with guidance through practical examples, enabling those engaged in qualitative research to question and navigate in ethical ways.

This book is essential reading for all those engaged in qualitative research across the social sciences.

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MAXINE BIRCH is a senior lecturer at the Open University, Faculty of Health and Social Care.
MELANIE MAUTHNER spent fifteen years as a social science lecturer teaching and researching gender issues before becoming a translator.
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ETHICS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH
SECOND EDITION

ETHICS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

edited by
TINA MILLER, MAXINE BIRCH
MELANIE MAUTHNER & JULIE JESSOP
ETHICS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH
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Contents

Contributors’ biographies vi
Introduction to the second edition 1
Maxine Birch, Tina Miller, Melanie Mauthner and Julie Jessop

1 Ethics and feminist research: theory and practice 14
Rosalind Edwards and Melanie Mauthner

2 Reconfiguring research relationships: regulation, new technologies and doing ethical research 29
Tina Miller

3 The ethics of intention: research as a political tool 43
Val Gillies and Pam Alldred

4 Consenting to what? Issues of access, gate-keeping and ‘informed’ consent 61
Tina Miller and Linda Bell

5 Divided loyalties, divided expectations: research ethics, professional and occupational responsibilities 76
Linda Bell and Linda Nutt

6 Encouraging participation: ethics and responsibilities 94
Maxine Birch and Tina Miller

7 ‘Doing rapport’ and the ethics of ‘faking friendship’ 108
Jean Duncombe and Julie Jessop

8 Knowing responsibly: ethics, feminist epistemologies and methodologies 122
Andrea Doucet and Natasha S. Mauthner

9 Eliciting research accounts: re/producing modern subjects? 140
Pam Alldred and Val Gillies

10 ‘Accounting for our part of the entangled webs we weave’: ethical and moral issues in digital data sharing 157
Natasha S. Mauthner

11 Conclusion: navigating ethical dilemmas and new digital horizons 176
Melanie Mauthner, Maxine Birch, Tina Miller and Julie Jessop

Author index 187
Subject index 189
Editors

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Maxine Birch is a Senior Lecturer with the Faculty of Health and Social Care at The Open University. Maxine’s teaching and research interests centre on experiences of health and well-being, qualitative research methods ethnography, and narrative. Maxine’s interest in ethics and feminist research, developed in the first edition (Mauthner et al., 2002), has led to facilitating workshops to encourage ethical thinking for qualitative researchers.

Melanie Mauthner spent 15 years as a social science lecturer teaching and researching gender issues before becoming a translator and poet. She has written books about sibling relationships including Sistering: Power and Change in Female Relationships (Palgrave, 2005) and co-edited Waterwords: Lido Poems (BLU Press, 2008) She translates articles for Justice Spatiale/Spatial Justice (www.jssj.org), writes short stories (www.etherbooks.com) and belongs to Malika’s Kitchen Poetry Collective. Her ethical thinking has influenced her community activism. She was Chair of Trustees at the Women’s Therapy Centre (www.womenstherapycentre.co.uk) and Chair of BLU, campaigning for 10 years to save an outdoor pool from closure and oversee its regeneration as a partnership between users, Lambeth Council and a not-for-profit leisure company (www.brockwelllido.com).

Julie Jessop completed her PhD into the psychosocial dynamics of post-divorce parenting at the Centre for Family Research, University of Cambridge in 2001. She went on to become a Senior Research Associate at the Centre and worked on various research projects in the field of family sociology, including divorce, interventions and support services for children and the ethical implications of organ donation. During this time she was a member of the Cambridge Socio-legal Group, and contributed
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Linda Nutt is an independent child care consultant. She completed her doctoral research when employed by the National Foster Care Association (now the Fostering Network). While there is an established body of research on children who are fostered, there is little work on the views of foster carers. Her research ‘Foster carers’ perspectives: the dilemmas of loving the bureaucratized child’ therefore makes an original contribution to the field.
Introduction to second edition

MAXINE BIRCH, TINA MILLER, MELANIE MAUTHNER AND JULIE JESSOP

In the first edited collection of this book (2002) we set out to address the perplexing area of ethics in qualitative research from our positions as feminist researchers. We examined the ethical dilemmas we had encountered at a time when less attention had been paid to ethics when conducting qualitative research. We argued that the complexities of researching private lives and placing accounts in the public arena raised multiple ethical issues for the researcher that could not be solved solely by the application of abstract rules, principles or guidelines, and that the kind of ethical issues encountered when doing qualitative research were empirical and theoretical and permeated the qualitative research process. As researchers we had found that we were faced with the inherent tensions that characterize qualitative research – fluidity and inductive uncertainty – and that could not be met by ethical guidelines, which were static and increasingly formalized. In this new edition we continue to integrate the theoretical and practical aspects of ethical dilemmas in qualitative research studies to highlight the ways in which ethical decision processes and ‘thinking ethically’ throughout the qualitative research process have become ever more necessary in a changing research environment. We also reiterate our call for a contextual, situational, and practice-based approach to ethics in qualitative research that is increasingly conducted in more technologically sophisticated and globally immediate circumstances. The translation of the first edition of this book into Mandarin provides just one example of this dynamic and rapidly changing sphere.

The first edition proved to be a timely publication that encouraged ethical thinking as awareness and attention towards ethical research became heightened, alongside the growing acceptability of qualitative methods and the use of mixed methods in larger scale research. During the 10-year period between editions the production of professional ethical frameworks and formal processes to gain ethics research approval from regulatory committees – before commencing data collection – have been established and is now observed widely. Ethics approval processes scrutinize the familiar ethical principles of protection, informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity across the research design that in turn provide new ways to justify and judge the integrity and quality of social research. Ten years on, as both the ethical and methodological choices that face qualitative researchers increase, the ethical
dilemmas we raised regarding research boundaries, informed consent, participation, rapport and data interpretation, have become even more significant for qualitative researchers.

The new landscape of ethical research: regulation and new technologies

Ethical questions in the research relationship, the use of data and the interpretative and analytical processes have all become more significant as the landscape of qualitative research continues to change and researchers face new issues when using new tools to produce knowledge. Ethical dilemmas about how much information to disclose to whom and in what contexts, the blurring boundaries of privacy, access to and sharing of information, face so many more of us, not only within research worlds but in multiple layers of connection and communication with others. This means that suddenly we have all become more responsible for looking after and for caring about what we reveal and under what conditions. When we published the first edition in 2002 we could not have foreseen the importance of ethical thinking and its application beyond the preserve of experts and professionals: but behaving ethically has become a much broader concern.

This changing research landscape has been accompanied by a rapid increase in research ethics regulation and governance. The consequence of this for social researchers has evoked a range of, sometimes polarized and heated responses, which will be explored in more detail below. In the first edition of this book attention was drawn to the momentum that had ‘grown apace’ in relation to regulation and ethics in social research. This was at a time when academic institutions were, individually, in the process of ‘setting up ethics committees to which researchers … should submit their projects for approval’ (Edwards and Mauthner, 2002: 14). Ten years on, it is commonplace (taken-for-granted even) that academic researchers must gain ethics approval from a university (or other) research ethics committee (UREC/REC) before commencing their research: but this does not mean it is universally accepted or welcomed.

Remonstrating against this significant turn to regulation and capturing the mood of some researchers, Dingwall notes that ‘we have not suddenly developed new techniques that can kill people’ (2006: 53). The growth of ethical jurisdiction in social research (which now encompasses other bodies such as research funding councils) has raised further concerns about the remit and reach of research ethics regulation (Dingwall, 2006; Haggerty, 2004; Hammersley, 2009; Stanley and Wise, 2010). And although most researchers would agree that research should be carried out in ways that are ethical, and which do not wilfully exploit, harm or coerce (potential) participants, the extent to which research ethics committees are best placed or able to ‘ensure that research is conducted ethically’ remains highly contested (Richardson and McMullan, 2007: 1116). There is no doubt then that in the intervening years since the first publication of this text, issues of research ethics have come to the fore.
as concerns over the regulation of ‘knowledge production endeavours’ are increasingly expressed (Haggerty, 2004: 391; Hedgecoe, 2008). Questions over whether increased ethics regulation and standardization lead to, or can ‘ensure’, research practice that is more ethical – and importantly who decides these issues and when – has provoked a potent and, sometimes, divided debate among research communities (Dingwall, 2006; Hammersley, 2009; Richardson and McMullan, 2007).

Developments in the regulation of research ethics across the UK, mainland Europe and North America has resulted in greater external control exerted at the institutional, organizational and funding body levels over research projects and processes. Through this process there has been a discernible shift from a discourse of moral integrity and researcher self-regulation guided by professional codes of practice, to one of external regulation and governance (Haggerty, 2004; Miller and Boulton, 2007). The landscape in which this external control operates has become progressively congested as professional ethics guidelines have been augmented (and so supplanted?) by funding body, as well as university and health RECs, ethics requirements. These shifts have not surprisingly provoked concerns that universal research ethics and ‘generalist criteria’, which are ‘context free’, are being (inappropriately) applied (at times) by those who lack an understanding of qualitative research approaches (Mattingly, 2005:453; Reissman, 2005; Stanley and Wise, 2010).

There is then a sense that ‘a form of ethics creep’ has changed the research landscape for social scientists, potentially compromising – or at least reconfiguring – research endeavours (Haggerty, 2004: 391). But the context in which this ‘creep’ is evident has become more complex in other ways too, for example, concern over litigation (at the institutional and individual level) as well as legislative changes (for example, the Data Protection Act 1998; Freedom of Information Act 2000) that have changed aspects of research practice. But perhaps of greater significance have been developments in technologies that have provided new research tools, for example, the use of web-based/online forums including chat rooms, social networking sites and email. These new ways of researching the social world have created new research sites in virtual spaces and new possibilities for collecting and sharing digital data (see Chapters 2 and 10, this volume). They can provide ‘ethical benefits’ for example when researching ‘sensitive or potentially taboo subjects’ anonymously via Internet forums (Rundall, forthcoming), but they also provoke new ethical concerns and questions too about what should – or can – be regulated.

Ethics guidelines and research governance in the social sciences have been significantly influenced by statements of ethical principles and standards for medical research put in place following the Second World War and Nazi experiments on human subjects (Miller and Boulton, 2007; Weindling, 1994). Subsequently, the legacy of biomedical research ethics regulation has patterned models of ethics review practice in social research too, prompting critical comment on the appropriateness and (mis)fit between biomedical and social science research practices (Aldred, 2008; Dingwall, 2006). Yet these debates have not stemmed the regulatory tide and since the millennium there has been ‘a rapid increase in research ethics activity’ marked by the introduction of both health and social science ethics governance frameworks.
The first of these in the UK, which was acknowledged to have implications for social science researchers working in areas related to health, was the Department of Health Research Governance Framework (RGF) introduced in 2001 (Alderson and Morrow, 2005: 406). This framework, among other things, ‘specified the responsibilities of funders and sponsors of research which included ensuring that research protocols were reviewed by an appropriate REC’ (Miller and Boulton, 2007: 2203). This led UK universities, which relied upon biomedical and health funding research support, to strengthen their research ethics review mechanisms in order to meet these new RGF requirements (Tinker, 2004). In response in part to these developments, four years later the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) in 2005 published its own Research Ethics Framework (REF) (Webster et al., 2004; see Alderson and Morrow, 2005 for an overview of research ethics governance developments during this period). The ESRC has more recently published an enhanced Framework for Research Ethics (FRE) which combines elements of the ESRC’s 2005 Research Ethics Framework with new requirements for researchers.

The entry of the principal UK research funding body – the ESRC – into the arena of ethics review was seen to mark a ‘watershed’ (Aldred, 2008: 889), requiring British institutions to put in place ‘internal processes equivalent to those of Institutional Review Boards (IRB) in the US’ (Dingwall, 2006: 51). Not surprisingly, it has elicited a range of responses from expressions of broad support to concern about academic freedom and surveillance. The more recent iteration of the framework (FRE) published in 2010 extends the provisions of the earlier document including the role of the RECs that is now to be responsible for ‘reviewing all research proposals accepted by the ESRC and other funding bodies … funding will depend on the REC review, with its purview extending through a project’s life’ (Stanley and Wise, 2010). The document has been declared ‘not fit for purpose’ in a recent article, and the debate will surely continue (Stanley and Wise, 2010).

Increased regulation can be seen, in part, as a response to the growth in new technologies and an attempt to oversee the use of these technologies in social research. Social networking is a good example of a new virtual space where some of these issues come to the fore in questions about who decides and who censors what information users have access to and share. In some countries of course the state operates as a censor. This brings us to consideration of our own ‘ethical responsibility’ as researchers and how it is connected to that of ‘thinking ethically’. For example, in the film that charts the development of the social networking space, Facebook (The Social Network, 2010) the dichotomy between caring and not caring about ethical issues is concretely presented. In the film the ethical issues surface in the context of business entrepreneurship, capitalism, leisure and the increasing use by social actors of these new, virtual spaces in which as users they had to decide what actions to take and what level of responsibility to accept for any potential ethical consequences. In this changing environment we are all then increasingly faced with more complex – ethical – challenges as researchers, activists and citizens.

In this second edition we suggest that ethics matter now more than they did a decade ago when we identified a ‘turn to ethics’ in the first edition of this
book. This is because of the impact of new information and apparently borderless, digital technologies on our daily lives and the ways in which these have now seeped into everyday life making ethical dilemmas, and questions on right and wrong actions more visible and transparent, or contrarily, more invisible and fraught. Recent abuses of power and unethical actions on the part of professionals entrusted with managing national financial systems provides a pertinent example of more public concerns with ethical behaviours. Such individual concerns can also now be collected, shared and mobilized, using internet based technologies and other mediums and so this becomes a more ethically complex period – but also an exciting one because of the new possibilities for engagement in political and social change. And finally, ‘thinking ethically’ has become a more urgent concern in our daily lives as it falls upon citizens to detect and confront more readily than before abuses of power they may witness. Making our voices heard in this way reminds us of the links between ethics and power, an examination of which has occupied feminist researchers for many years. Alongside these specific shifts, the growth and popularity of qualitative research over the last ten years together with the new possibilities for dialogue and the democratization of research spaces and the sharing (archiving) of data make this an exciting time to once again contemplate ethics in qualitative research.

Being a feminist researcher

In our continued interest in the interplay between public, social knowledge and private and personal lived experiences we describe ourselves as ‘feminist researchers’ (Edwards and Ribbens, 1995; Mauthner et al., 2002; Ribbens and Edwards, 1998; Weller and Rogers, 2012). This reflects our concern with conducting research about personal lives, grounded in individual experiences and from a particular theoretical and methodological perspective that we continue to call ‘feminist’ despite the breadth and evolution of the term (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2007; Hughes and Cohen, 2010; Letherby, 2003; McRobbie, 2008; Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002). The arguments we present here affirm our identities as feminist researchers as we understand and employ the term within our research practices. As Bell notes, ‘feminism has been an articulation, set of demands, forces and strategies, the success of which I for one have inherited and benefited from’ (1999: 1), an inheritance that continues to have resonance for our professional lives, our epistemological perspective and the qualitative research we undertake (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008).

Our personal and research experiences reveal how ethical concerns are increasing in our everyday lives and arise at all stages of the research process and how our responses to them may not, on reflection, have always been ethical. Nevertheless a feminist perspective provides a key starting point for us and enables us to re-examine and challenge the assumptions that underpin feminist research practices. We argue that researchers need to invoke contextualized reasoning and not just appeal to
abstract rules and principles. While all ethical models contribute to ethical knowing our feminist perspectives draw more upon a reflexive model of ethics as identified within Hegelian philosophy to examine ethical practice. Here the negotiation of ethics moves beyond a model of reasoning and rationality and enables the acknowledgment of feelings and emotions. The reflexive self becomes a key constituent in enabling ethical reflection through evaluation and reconsideration in the research process (Fraser, 2000). Thus ethics become part of our relationships, our interactions and our shared values portrayed in the sense of belonging to a community (Benhabib, 1992). It is apparent then that ethics in qualitative research require a combination of theoretical models to enable us to make sense of ethical decision making and a reflexive self to develop and guide ethical thinking. Most vital to the feminist discussions developed here is the theoretical development of the ethics of care. Rosalind Edwards and Melanie Mauthner’s chapter establishes a helpful review of ethics and feminist research: theory and practice. Against the deontological, consequential, virtue and justice ethical models, the ethics of care framework can provide practical guidance for ethical thinking in research practice and endorses a feminist, communitarian approach to forge ‘collaborative, trusting and non-oppressive relationships between researchers and those studied’ (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008: 53).

This edition continues to question the emergence of a professional ethical and ‘caring’ researcher as an ‘ideal type’ and explores whether the feminist contribution to this ‘ideal type’ leads to a perception of ethics as a promise to be a ‘caring’ professional demonstrated through being a committed and responsible researcher. We are concerned that if the label ‘feminist perspective’ has become synonymous with ethical ways of working, then it can be misleading and offer more than it can deliver (Mauthner, 2000). Corresponding to the shifts in ethical research and qualitative methods the ethics of care has also received increasing academic attention during the past 10 years and its theoretical application is far reaching (Gilligan, 2011; Held, 2006). At the heart of care ethics is the negotiation between people in caring relationships and this association with the research relationship is questioned in this book in Duncombe and Jessop’s chapter on ‘faking friendship’. The philosophical position underpinning care ethics view caring relationships as essential for life to flourish and for individuals, groups and communities to reach their potential and achieve a sense of well-being (Held, 2006; Sevenhuijzen, 2002). Within networks of relationships ethical dilemmas arise where varying dimensions of care are negotiated and balanced ‘for the self, for others and for relations between these’ (Sevenhuijzen, 2002: 132). This perspective does not imply notions of care as altruistic acts or involve judgments on selfish or selfless acts, but looks at the complexity of care as sets of feelings, activities and resources that enable a caring relationship to support one another (McCarthy and Edwards, 2011). Therefore a caring relationship ‘involves cooperative well-being of those in the relation and well-being of the relation itself’ (Held, 2006: 12). Importantly, it encourages the ‘capacities that constitute our humanity and alerts us to the practices that put them at risk’ as we strive for ethical responsibility in our research endeavours in increasingly complex times (Gilligan, 2011: 177).
The writing process

This second edition continues the collaboration of members of the Women’s Workshop on Qualitative/Household Research and its successful publication record of five edited collections that prioritize exploration of the gap between public and private, and the tensions between personal experiences and the practices of creating academic knowledge. If we trace the history of this research and writing group we can chart the different concepts that we have explored: from research dilemmas (Edwards and Ribbens, 1995; Ribbens and Edwards, 1998), to ethics (Mauthner et al., 2002), power dynamics in academia (Gillies and Lucey, 2007), and understanding caring relations, identities and cultures (Weller and Rogers, 2012). As a group of women working as researchers and lecturers in higher education the workshop provides space to critically appraise and interrogate contemporary ‘social problems’ alongside in-depth exploration of subjectivity and personal experiences. Currently the workshop consists of 43 members, ranging from doctoral students to professors from over 20 institutions who are based not only in the UK but also in Canada, Denmark, France and Switzerland. The members research and teach from different disciplinary backgrounds that include Anthropology, Geography, Psychology, Sociology and Social Policy and these disciplinary perspectives are applied to areas which include Education, Health and Social Care, Family, Childhood and Youth studies (Weller and Rogers, 2012). The regular meetings and discussions in the Workshop continue to explore ways of investigating and making sense of ‘lived experiences’ and the meanings of these experiences for both those being researched and the researchers.

All authors in the edited collections are members of the Women’s Workshop, but membership styles – for example, attending the workshops – vary. Previous edited collections have established the model of inviting all members to participate in book discussions, irrespective of authorship, and contribute to the development of the book. In this way membership has been likened to the serving of an apprenticeship (Wellers and Rogers, 2012) where the multifaceted experiences, skills and knowledge of writing and research are shared. The initial meetings to develop our ethical thinking for this book provided a supportive forum for us to question standard practice or admit uncertainties and doubts about our own research practice. We could reflect on our actions and discuss practical ways forward. In the first edition we emphasized the contributions that all members of the group made to the development of our ethical thinking; it is important to acknowledge this vital aspect once again, the value of this collective and ‘safe’ thinking space should not be underestimated.

As a working group it is also interesting to see how our writing collaborations have increasingly benefited from new technologies. In the next Workshop book on Care (Weller and Rogers, 2012), the editors have fostered inclusive collaboration through the use of a shared, members only Internet-based, electronic folder into which recordings of workshop discussions and work-in-progress are uploaded. Interestingly the ethical questions posed by digital data sharing are explored by Natasha Mauthner in a significant new chapter in this edition of the ethics book (Chapter 10). We have benefited from the use of internet conferencing and data sharing in the production...
of this book too and note this here in order to make visible, explicit and transparent our reliance on different technological tools to facilitate collaborative working and writing. Clearly these new technologies are having an impact on us and our way of working has evolved as a consequence of these developments and possibilities. At the same time, our shared history permits an intimacy that can transfer to the videoconferencing medium – by virtue of web cams virtually ‘stepping into’ each other’s personal writing spaces at home. Such technological tools are being increasingly used in all areas of education and research, prompting questions about the ways in which boundaries between public and private spheres are becoming increasingly disrupted/reconfigured: some of the consequences of these shifts are examined in a new chapter in this edition by Tina Miller (Chapter 2).

In the first edition we chose to write each chapter with a co-author to promote collaboration and cohesion in the practice of sharing and developing our ideas and experiences. During this period of working on the book we held a series of book meetings where our discussions stimulated and provided much food for thought. We valued these precious spaces for ‘talk’, away from the pressurized working environments of higher education. This second edition – which has been undertaken to address specific changes in the research environment occurring since the first edition – was initially instigated by one of the editors (approaching SAGE Publications with the idea) and the collaboration has been led by the existing editors. The project this time around has involved notifying all the workshop members of the new edition and requesting updated biographies as well as information about any publications or other experiences relevant to this new edition. References (and other changes for example in relation to professional requirements) have also been updated by authors of chapters in the first edition. Our decision to request additional chapters from specific authors has been led by academic and pragmatic reasoning and editorship of the new edition reflects who did the work to get the contract as well as recognition of institutional research demands – rather than ideal notions of collaboration.

This second edition, although presented within the established academic framework of named authors and editors, deemed necessary for our professional credibility, still seeks to challenge academic writing conventions and be more imaginative and radical in our collective writing. We hope that our continued use of personal pronouns and personal research experiences succeed in making this an accessible research text. By presenting our personal, private research stories we seek to get inside research practices and to interrogate, illuminate and share the ethical dilemmas we have encountered.

**Outline**

The key themes of the book concern ethical responsibility and accountability in applied feminist research practice within offline and online research communities in contexts that increasingly have global reach. The contributors approach the themes
of responsibility and accountability from several angles: some challenge the practical reality and desirability of achieving such elevated ethical standards, others question whether being a feminist researcher requires such a caring responsible identity, others propose some practical frameworks for doing things differently, while others explore the implications of new technologies for researcher and participant relationships and the consequences of digital data sharing. The book is intended for a wide readership including all those who want to understand and/or carry out qualitative research in ways that are ethically, theoretically and practically informed. It is divided into 11 chapters that between them interrogate in different ways aspects of ethical research practice: spanning theoretical and practical research examples and concluding by drawing attention to the ethical benefits and costs associated with qualitative research in a more regulated and technologically more democratized era.

In the first chapter Rosalind Edwards and Melanie Mauthner establish the practical and theoretical context for a focus on ethics in conducting feminist research. They consider the growing interest in ethical issues among health, medical and social research as well as legal frameworks and implications from distinct epistemological perspectives. They review current ethical concerns and assess prevalent models. They then consider political approaches to theories of ethics and morality, and feminist theorizing of an ethic of care, and their respective value bases. Finally, they bring a feminist ethics of care to bear on the research process and explicitly elaborate some practical guidelines for researchers to contemplate. Below are outlined the questions they pose, which are implicitly and explicitly addressed across the subsequent chapters.

Questions

1. Who are the people involved in and affected by the ethical dilemmas raised in the research?
2. What is the context for the dilemma in terms of the specific topic of the research and the issues it raises personally and socially for those involved?
3. What are the specific social and personal locations of the people involved in relation to each other?
4. What are the needs of those involved and how are they interrelated?
5. Who am I identifying with, who am I posing as other, and why?
6. What is the balance of personal and social power between those involved?
7. How will those involved understand our actions and are these in balance with our judgement about our own practice?
8. How can we best communicate the ethical dilemmas to those involved, give them room to raise their views, and negotiate with and between them?
9. How will our actions affect relationships between the people involved?

These questions share a concern with care and attention to relationships when doing research (Weller and Rogers, 2012) and have become even more pertinent in the changing research environments in which we find ourselves.
In the next chapter Tina Miller discusses ethical issues related to new technologies and how these have redrawn the contours of research relationships and practices during the last decade. She uses recent research examples to ask how the parallel developments in institutional ethics regulation alongside new (unregulated) research forums pose new questions about ethical research practices as well as configure research relationships in new ways. This is followed by Val Gillies and Pam Alldred who engage with theoretical debates among post-structuralist feminists who have problematized the notion of ‘truth’ as a justificatory foundation underpinning statements, claims or actions. They argue that this epistemological shift necessitates scrutiny of the intentions underlying feminist research. Focusing in particular on feminist efforts to represent women’s voices, initiate personal change and to undermine oppressive knowledge structures, they identify potential ethical dilemmas contained within each approach.

Next, several authors examine in detail the ethical implications of using qualitative methods in the field and how viable or desirable a feminist ethic of working towards a responsible committed research relationship is. Tina Miller and Linda Bell examine notions of what constitutes ‘informed’ consent. They explore the interplay between access, coercion and motive/motivation in three research projects that encompass issues of gender, power and ethnicity. They examine the role of the gate-keeper in relation to access being granted to those who may be in less powerful positions. They suggest that consent should be ongoing and renegotiated throughout the research process and that researchers need to continually reflect on what it is that research participants have consented to. In a chapter updated to capture more recent professional requirements, Linda Bell and Linda Nutt explore how professional and occupational responsibilities translate into empirical research dilemmas. They focus on the ethical difficulties that accompany divided loyalties towards research and employment, specifically in the health and social care fields. They draw on two examples from different parts of the social work ‘practitioner spectrum’ to explore issues of ‘confidentiality’ and ‘negotiation’. Maxine Birch and Tina Miller question the dimensions of participation encouraged in research to show how difficulties are encountered during the various phases of their projects. Maxine and Tina argue that carrying out ethically responsible research requires the researcher to negotiate these different levels of participation at the outset of a project. Jean Duncombe and Julie Jessop pick up on the themes of consent and negotiation. They evaluate the idea of ‘rapport’ that supposedly promotes empathy, genuineness, authenticity and disclosure in ‘the good interview’, particularly where women talk to women. They argue that as the emotions and emotion work of ‘doing rapport’ become professionalized and commercialized, the ‘skills’ of negotiating rapport become a substitute for the awkward ethical problems of negotiating consent.

Wider ethical implications of conducting qualitative research are then explored across the following chapters. Inspired by the Canadian philosopher Loraine Code’s writings on ethics and feminist approaches to epistemologies and methodologies Andrea Doucet and Natasha Mauthner describe a research practice aimed at ‘knowing well’ and ‘knowing responsibly’. Drawing on Code’s idea that one way of grounding a theoretical discussion on the inseparability of epistemology and ethics into actual
research practice is to seek ways of conducting and then presenting ‘responsible knowledge of human experience’ (Code, 1993: 39), they ask what it means to ‘know responsibly’ or to ‘know well’. In their chapter Pam Alldred and Val Gillies argue that researchers construct participants as modernist subjects through both the interview interaction and in research accounts because conventional ways of negotiating, conducting and transcribing interviews rest on this understanding of ‘the individual’. Unsurprisingly, interviewees, as well as researchers, re/produce themselves through the dominant individualistic subjecthood, and ethical practice rests on this. This means that we reinforce the Western model of the subject, with its exclusions and oppressive view of its Others, even as we strive to do ‘ethical research’. But elements of such constructs may be set to shift as new technologies can enable our participants to ‘answer back’ (to position the researcher as ‘subject’) in public forums such as ‘blogs’ (see Miller, Chapter 2).

In the penultimate chapter Natasha Mauthner explores our ethical and moral responsibilities as researchers to study and not just to use, methods: to understand what they do and what else they are entangled with and to contest and rework the moralisms and normativities that they are situated within. Natasha demonstrates the ways in which (new) digital data sharing methods are being promoted as good science and good research practice on scientific, ethical, moral and political grounds, but she asks good for whom? From whose perspective and on whose terms? This chapter importantly contextualizes contemporary debates about what happens once we collect and analyse our data, and we are reminded that just as in the physical material world, our concerns with pervasive issues of care, control and power remain relevant in virtual electronic spheres too (Gillies and Lucey, 2007). In the concluding chapter, co-written by the editors, the ethical issues of accountability and responsibility are returned to both retrospectively and prospectively as new digital horizons are contemplated.

The ethical issues discussed in this book, while informed by a broadly feminist perspective, are obviously applicable to other aspects of social science research. Although they represent the particular ethical dilemmas that we encountered as researchers working mainly within family and household studies, they are relevant for any research, which aims to increase knowledge using qualitative, personal experience methods. While our endeavour has not been to provide a comprehensive account of ethical dilemmas which may arise, we believe that drawing attention to areas which are not always seen as problematic will open up and expand much needed ethical debates. In the intervening years since publication of the first edition, societies have become ever more complex, and researchers must be able to act reflexively and practice ethically as research dilemmas are set to increase alongside new research possibilities and processes. The nine questions posed earlier in this introduction provide a way of grounding reflections and thinking and acting ethically through aspects of our research plans and practices. Indeed increased research ethics regulation has not diminished the need to formulate guidelines for research, which take a much broader ethical stance and are borne of practice – and it is hoped that the new edition of this book provides a further step towards that goal.