


Chapter 8


Beyond the Proposal: Guiding Dissertation Researchers Through Feasibility and IRB Challenges

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter, the authors explore the Institutional Review Board (IRB) application process paying special attention to dissertation researchers while also providing guidance to dissertation advisors. Working from the perspective that the dissertation research journey is nuanced and complicated, the authors' goals are to inform dissertation researchers and dissertation advisors about challenges faced once the IRB application process begins as well as those faced throughout the application process. Preparatory academic courses might not inform dissertation researchers of the requirements of IRB application, and dissertation advisors might not have the needed familiarity with the IRB application process to successfully guide student researchers. In this chapter, the authors provide the key components of research feasibility and IRB process as they dovetail specifically with the dissertation researcher experience.

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INTRODUCTION: KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR ETHICAL RESEARCH

In this chapter, the authors explore the Institutional Review Board (IRB) application process paying special attention to dissertation researchers while also providing guidance to dissertation advisors. Working from the perspective that the dissertation research journey is nuanced and complicated, the authors' goals are to inform dissertation researchers and dissertation advisors about challenges faced once the IRB application process begins as well as those faced throughout the process. Preparatory academic courses might not inform dissertation researchers of the requirements of IRB application, and dissertation advisors might not have the needed familiarity with the IRB application process to successfully guide student researchers. In this chapter, the authors provide the key components of research feasibility and IRB process as they dovetail specifically with the dissertation researcher experience. Acknowledging the IRB application process is one of several milestones to be achieved during dissertation researchers' programs, the authors hope to inform readers of the crucial roles feasibility, and the IRB application components, play in their overall success.

The objectives of the chapter are to articulate the key considerations for ethical research while providing dissertation researchers and advisors the tools to help evaluate the feasibility of their research. Additionally, the authors work to guide both dissertation researchers and advisors regarding the IRB submission process. Furthermore, in this chapter, the authors focus on helping dissertation researchers be flexible problem solvers regarding their research topic and approach. Finally, we contextualize the elements of the chapter within cases typical of the dissertation research experience.

Beginning with the foundational components of IRBs, this chapter provides essential guidance for all researchers, with a particular focus on dissertation researchers. A key objective is to articulate the ethical considerations that guide human subjects research, including design clarity, informed consent, risk minimization, confidentiality, responsible data use, and community impact (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012). Beyond compliance with federal regulations and institutional policies, dissertation researchers must engage in ethical reflexivity, assessing how their research design, recruitment strategies, and data collection impact participants. As Resnik (2020) noted, "many of the norms of research promote a variety of other important moral and social values, such as social responsibility, human rights, animal welfare, compliance with the law, and public health and safety." By emphasizing these principles, the authors hope to equip dissertation researchers with knowledge needed to navigate ethical challenges and uphold research integrity.

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