

Issues in Ethical Review for Australian and New Zealand Journalism Academics

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Grumble, groan!

Commonly expressed concerns about ethical review:

- Inappropriate medical/health presumptions that researcher–participant relationships are like doctor–patient relationships
- Processes/protocols are unwieldy, time consuming, and restrictive
- Ethical clearance isn't necessary/journalism, social sciences and humanities should be exempt
- Review committees don't understand our disciplines



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By contrast, some dismiss critiques:

- “social science victim narrative” based on “provocative” + “anecdotal ‘horror stories’” (Stark 2007)
- Often rely on individual perspectives and experiences, so they aren’t necessarily generalizable (Wynn 2011)
- Fixes real problems in applications (Batterbury 2014)

Section 1: Who are the academics, students, other researchers needing ethical review?

Generational change?

- Research on sociologists and anthropologists suggests that senior, male academics resist ethical review as threat to autonomy/freedom
- Junior, female academics are more compliant and cooperative (Taylor & Patterson 2011; Wynn 2011)

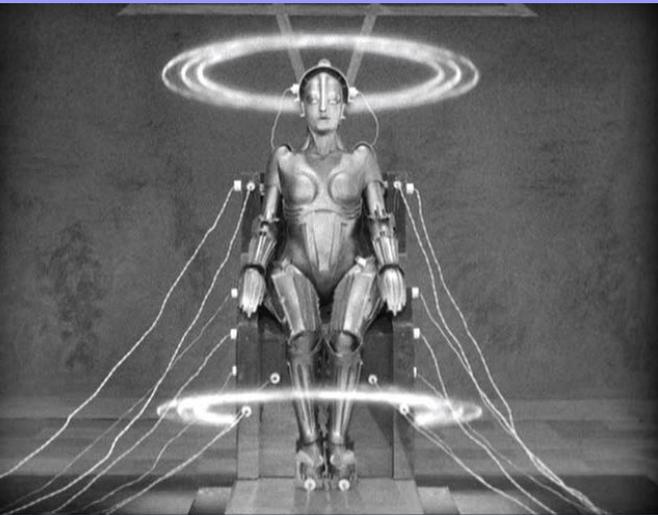


Section 1: Who are the academics, students, other researchers needing ethical review?

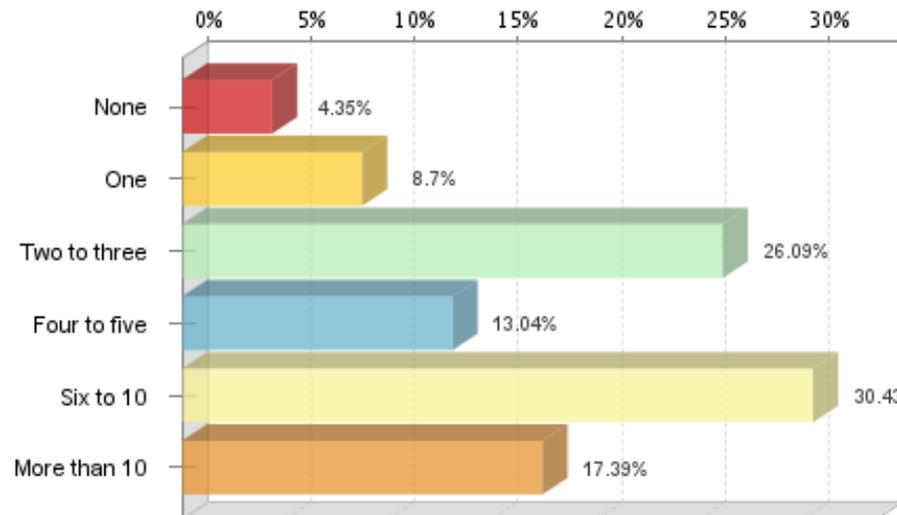
- 10 NZ+13 Aussie respondents so far
- Type of employment
- Ongoing, contract, sessional, other
- Student, RHD supervisor, neither
- Traditional vs non-traditional research
- Highest qualification
- When highest qualification was obtained
- Gender and age



Section 2: Experiences and Views of Ethical Review

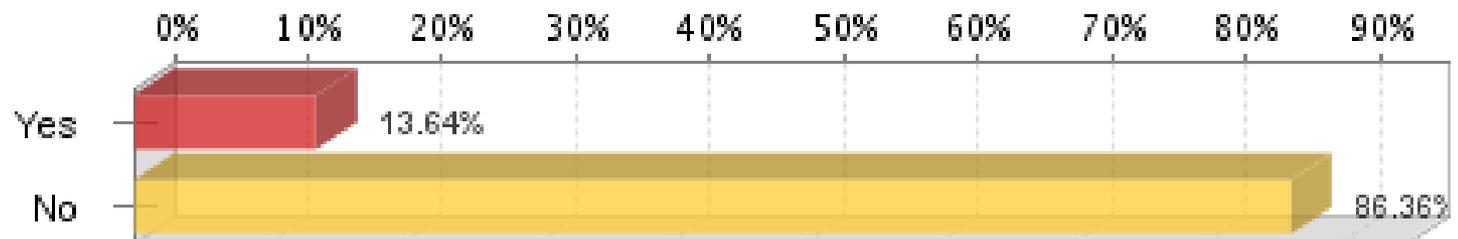


To date, I have submitted the following number of ethical review applications to the ethics committee at my current institution ...

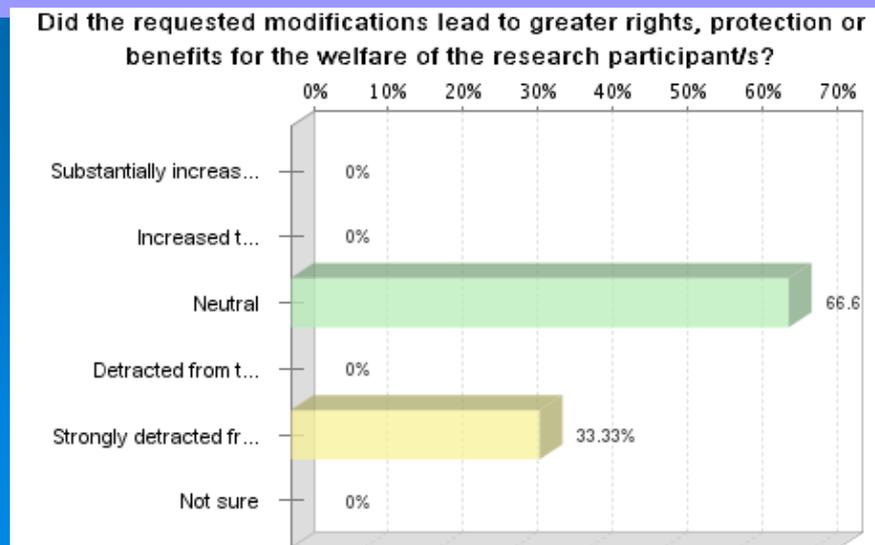
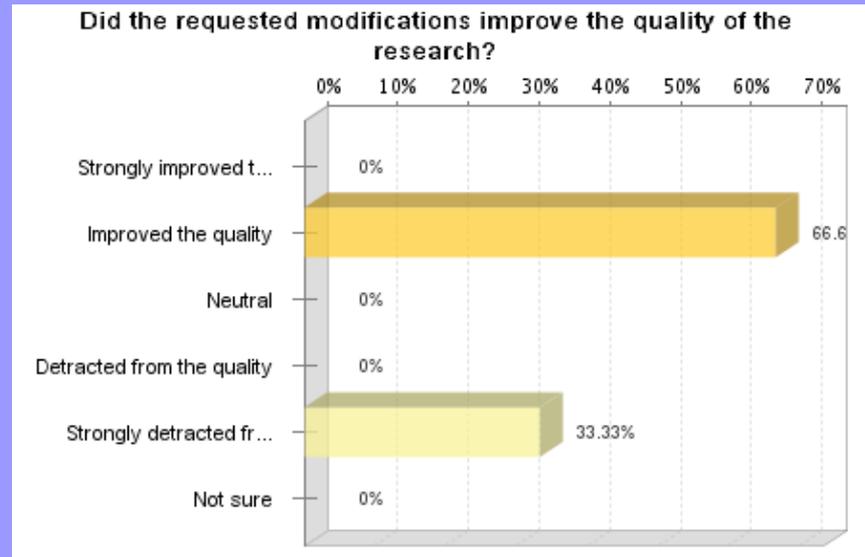
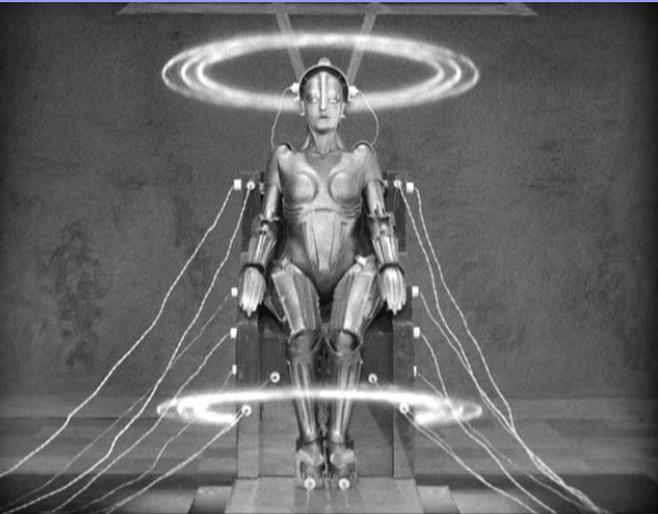


In my most recent ethics applications, I was asked to make significant

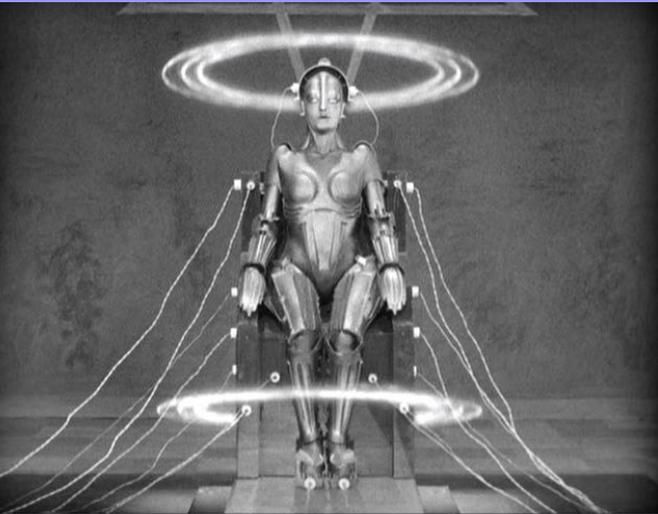
modifications to one or more of my research ...



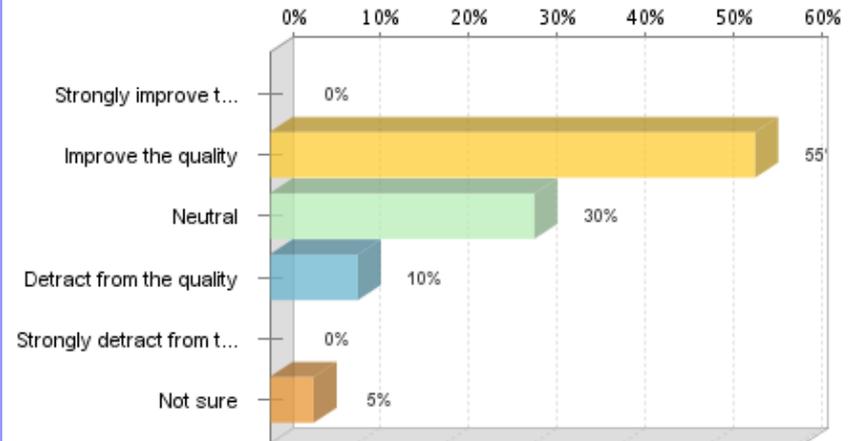
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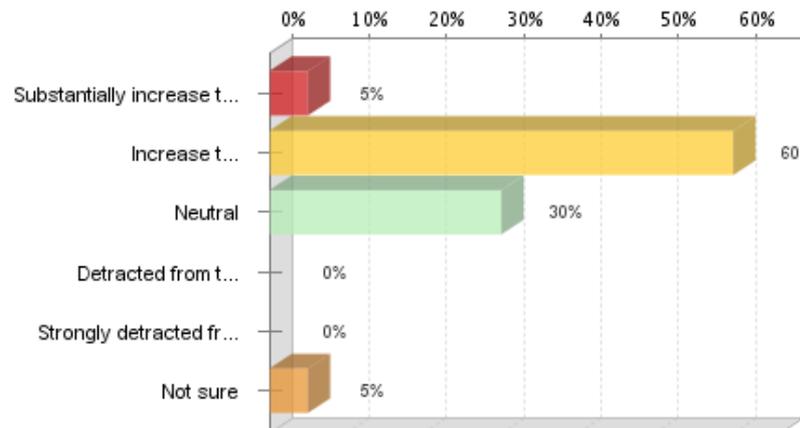
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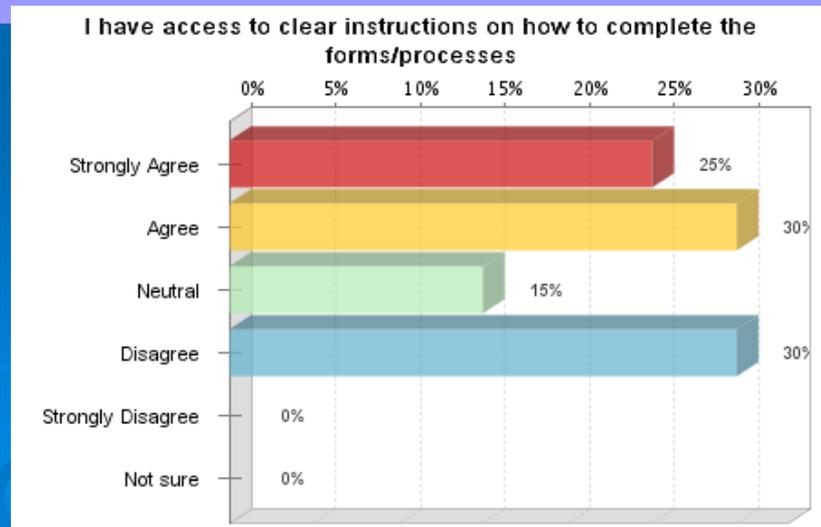
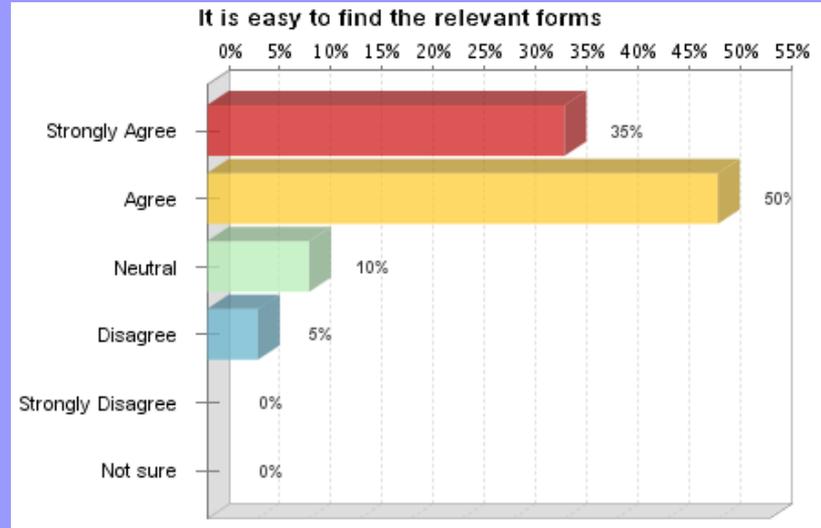
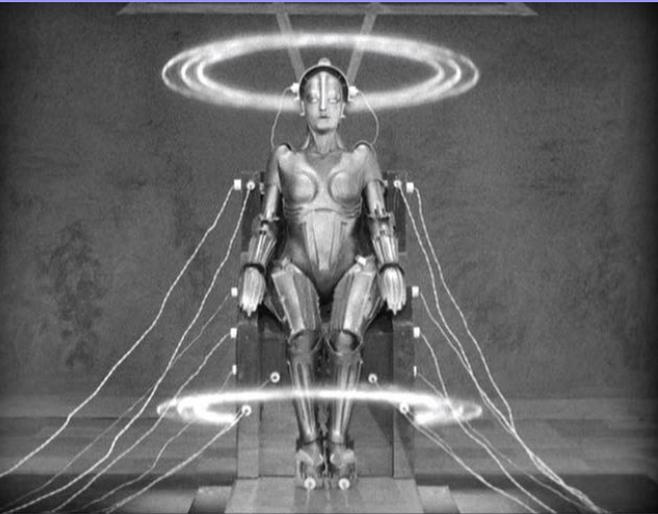
Overall, do ethical review processes improve the quality of journalism research?



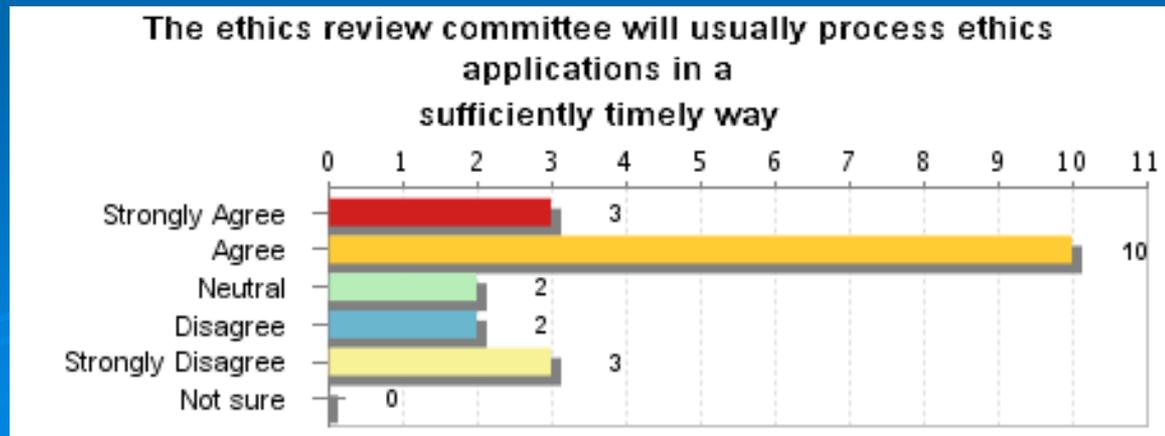
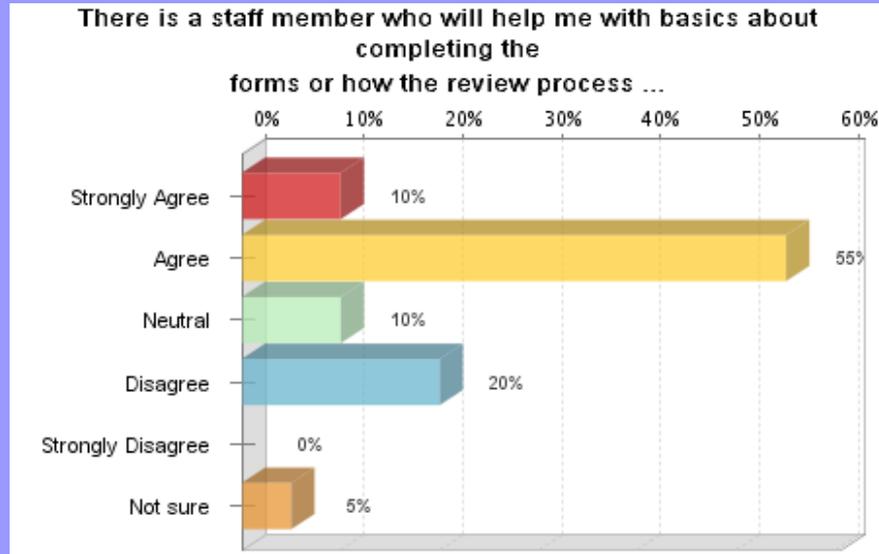
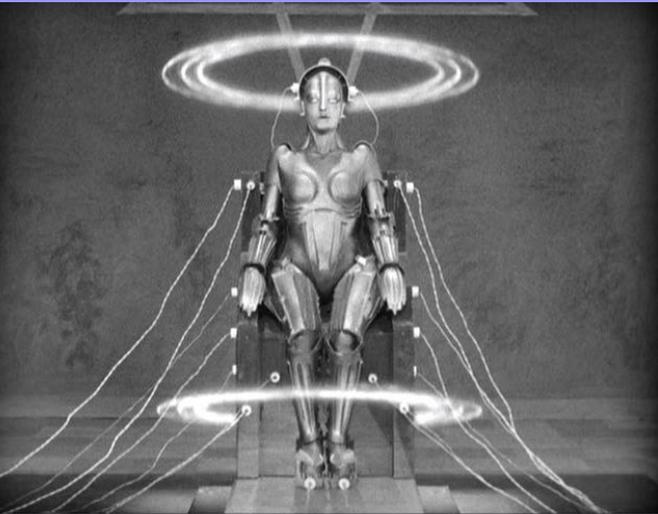
Overall, do ethical review processes protect the rights or welfare of the research participant/s?



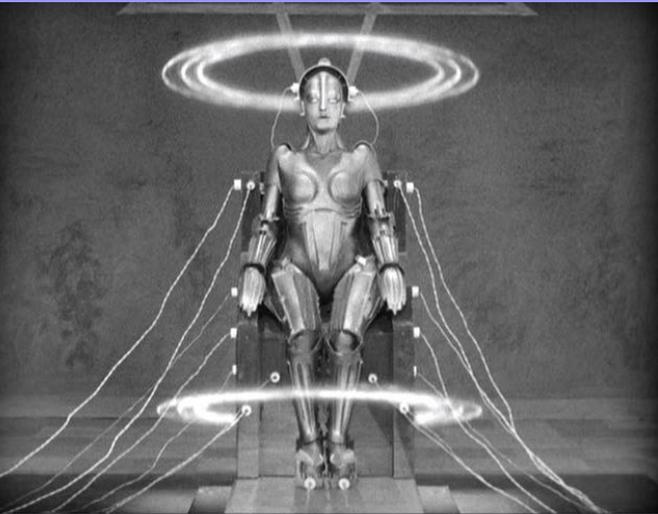
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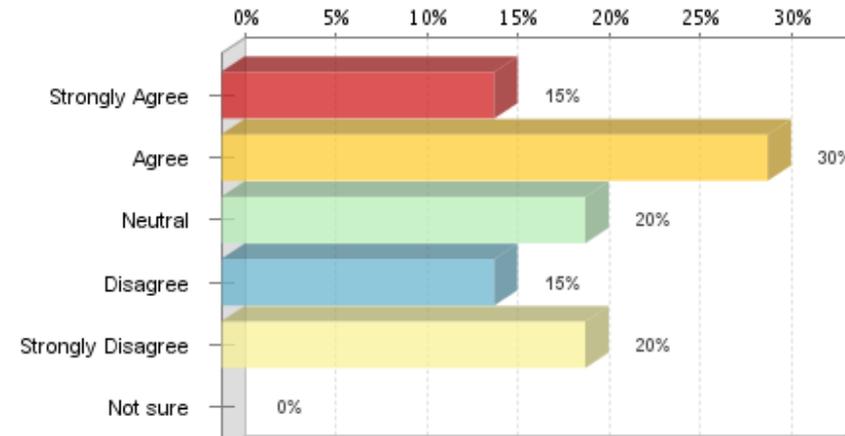


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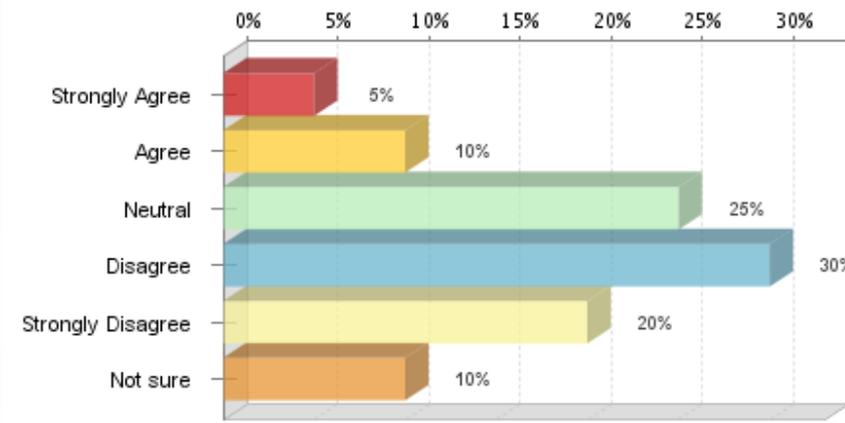
The ethics review committee has a sufficient understanding of the methods

that are used in traditional journalism research

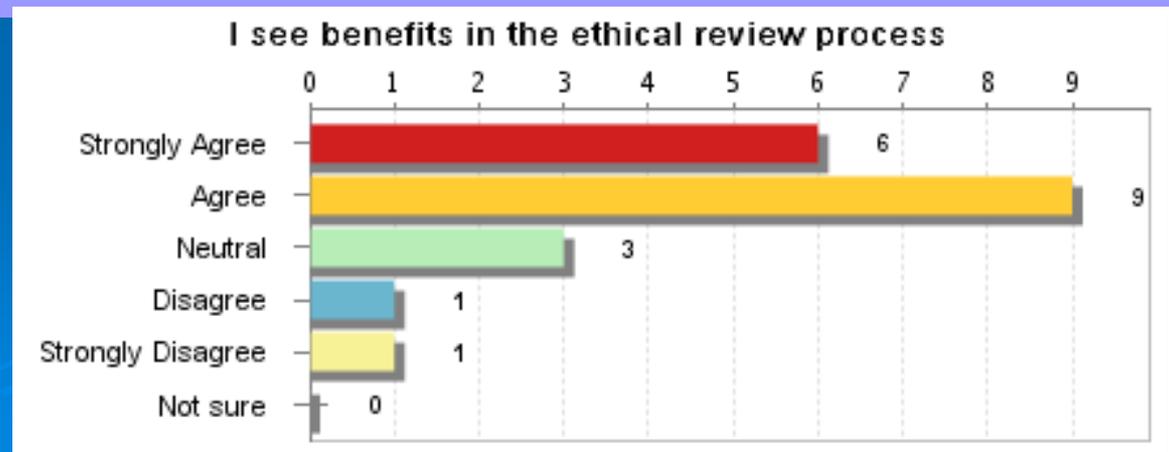
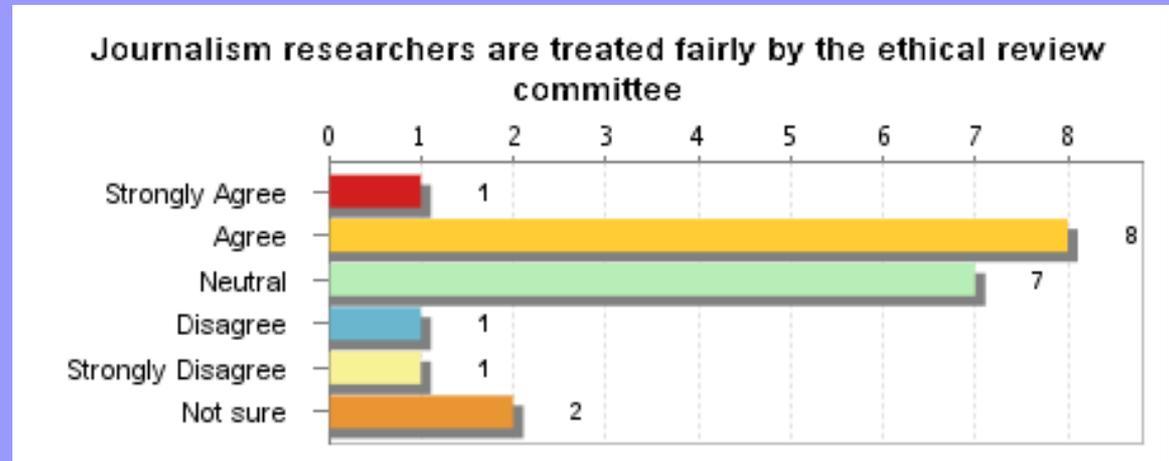
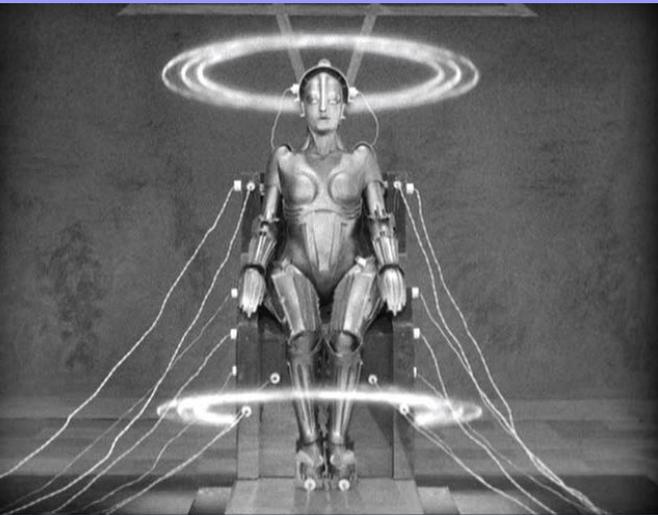


The ethics review committee has a sufficient understanding of the methods

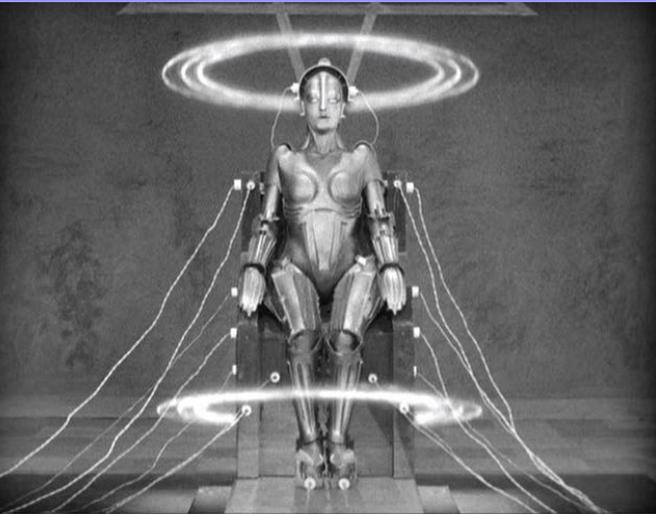
that are used in non-traditional journalism research (including practice-based ...)



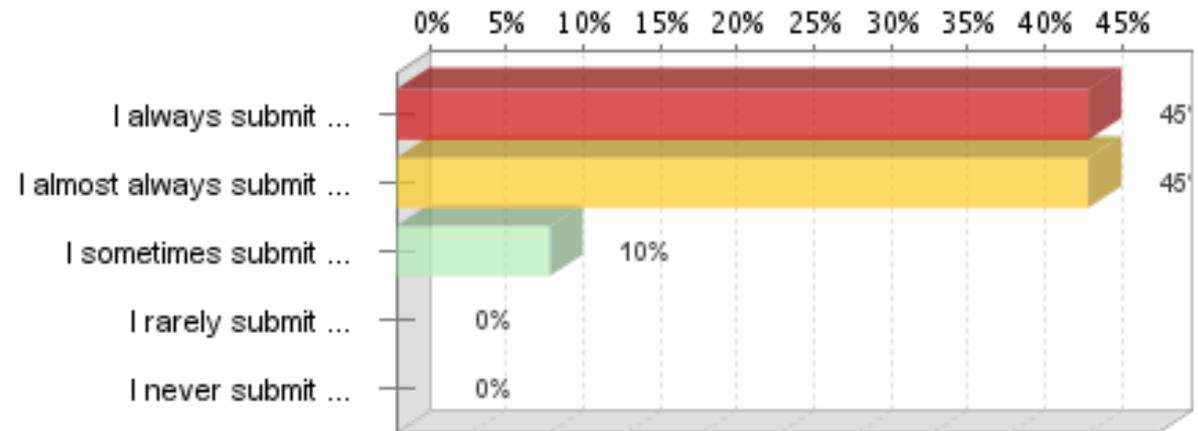
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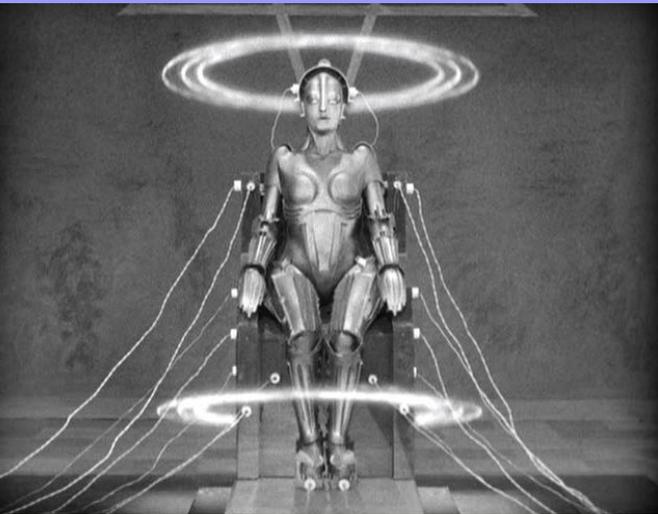
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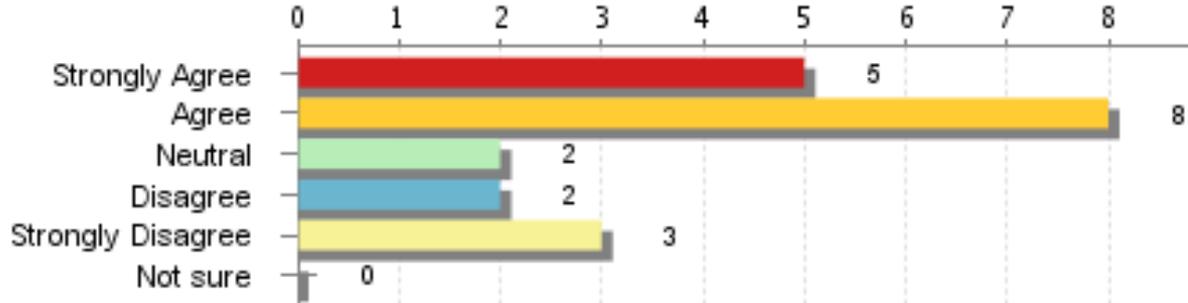
When I conduct research involving human participants (e.g. interviews, focus groups, surveys, observations, certain types of practice-based or practice-led research, ...



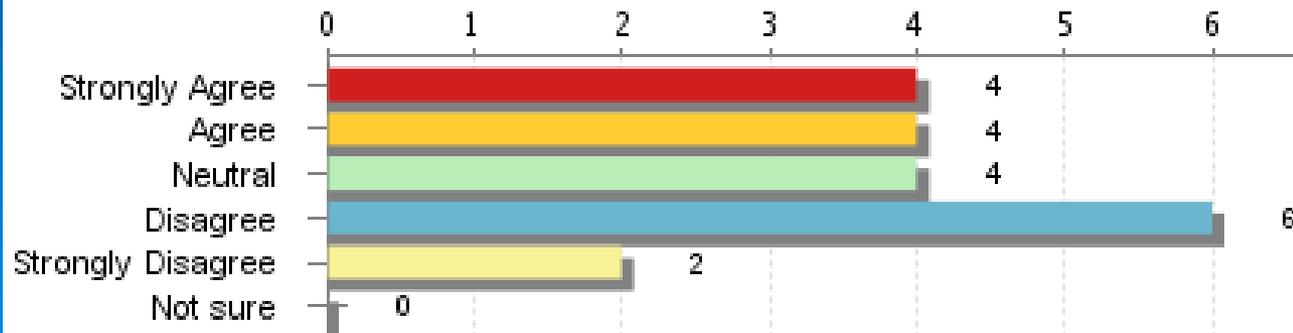
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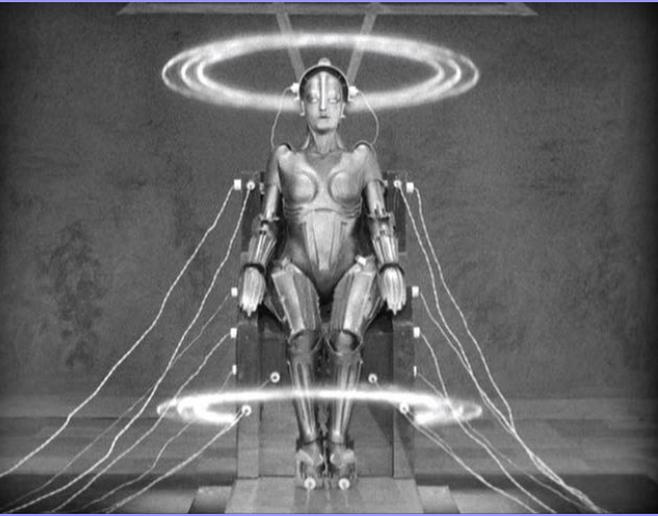
There is little risk in journalism research compared to medical or health research.



Formal review of journalism research by a research ethics committee is not necessary.

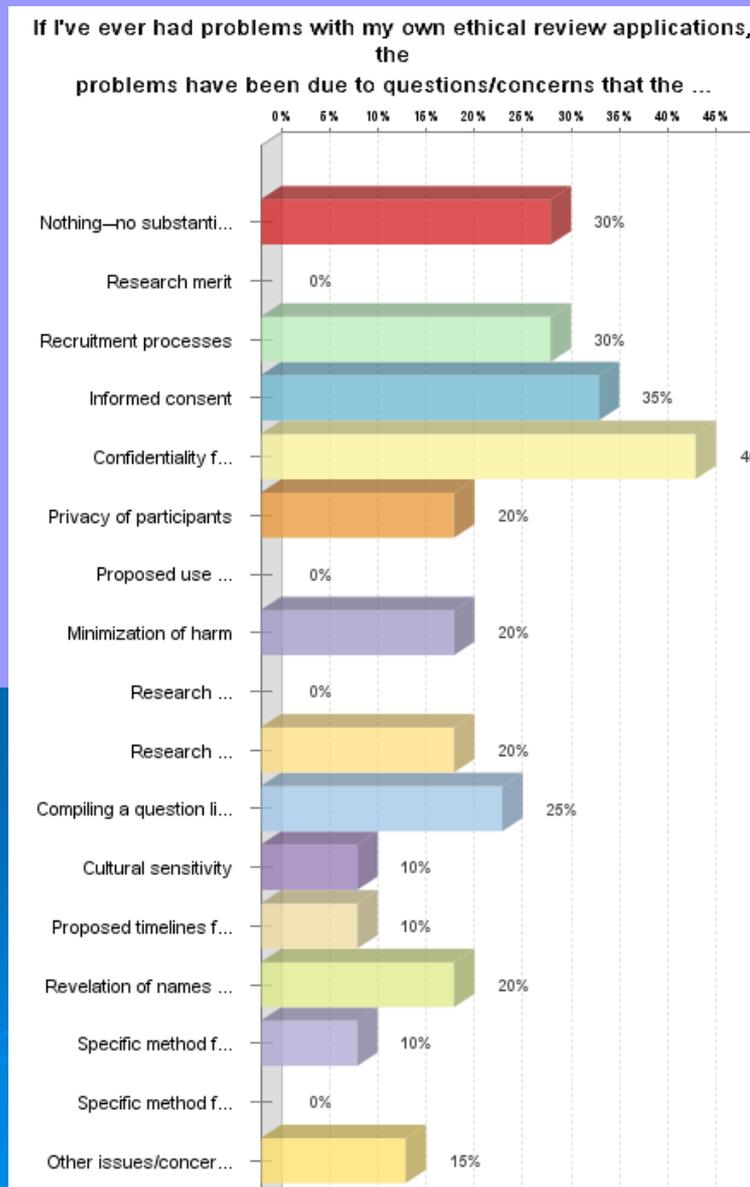


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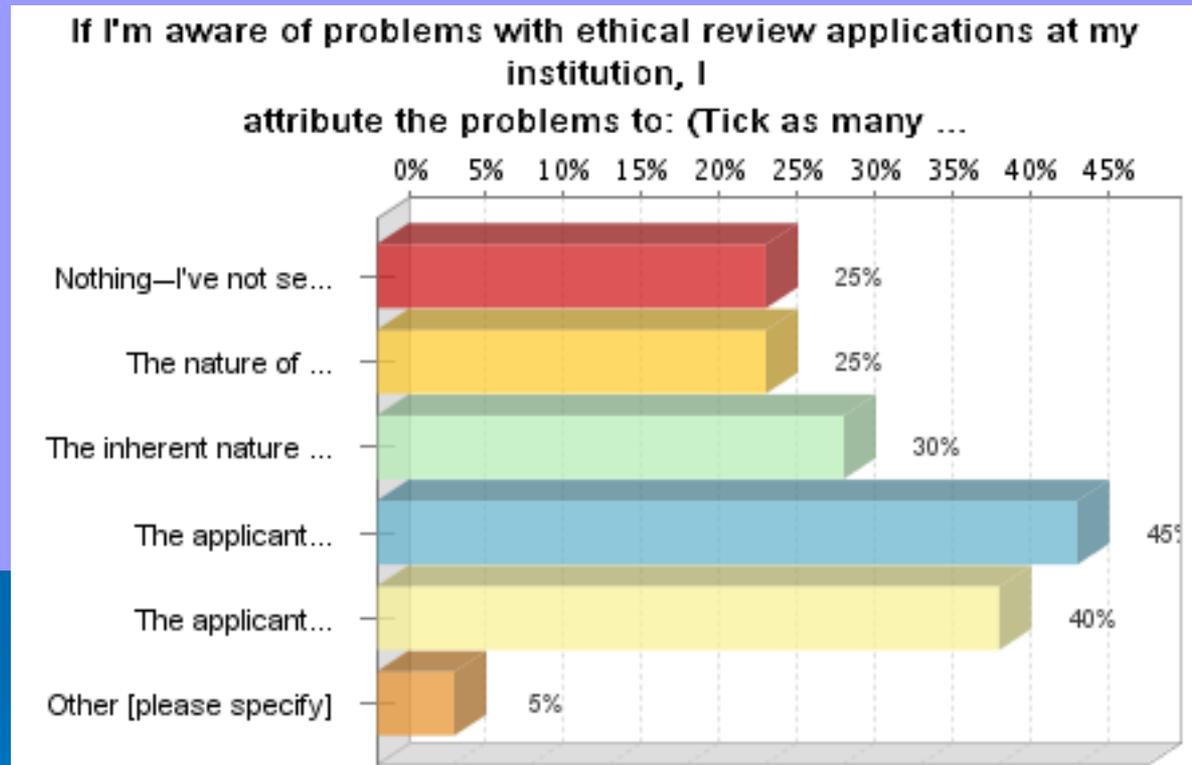


- What should ethics committees focus on in journalism research projects?
- How would you change the system if you had a chance?

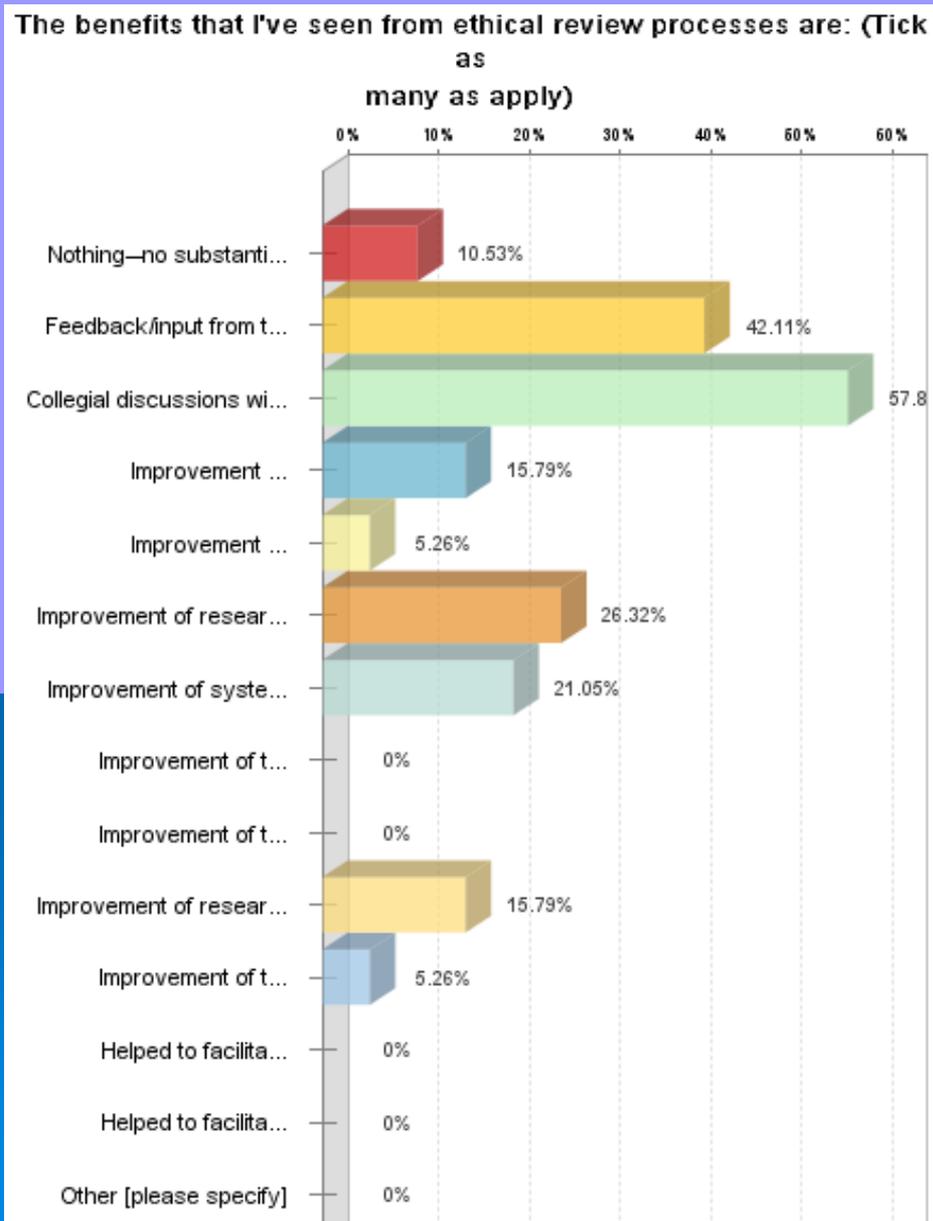
Section 3: Problems + Benefits



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Results

Email a one-page summary to participants and anyone else who requests it

Identify broader sets of experiences—positive and negative—for ethical review

Find best practice and problems, to improve the overall culture

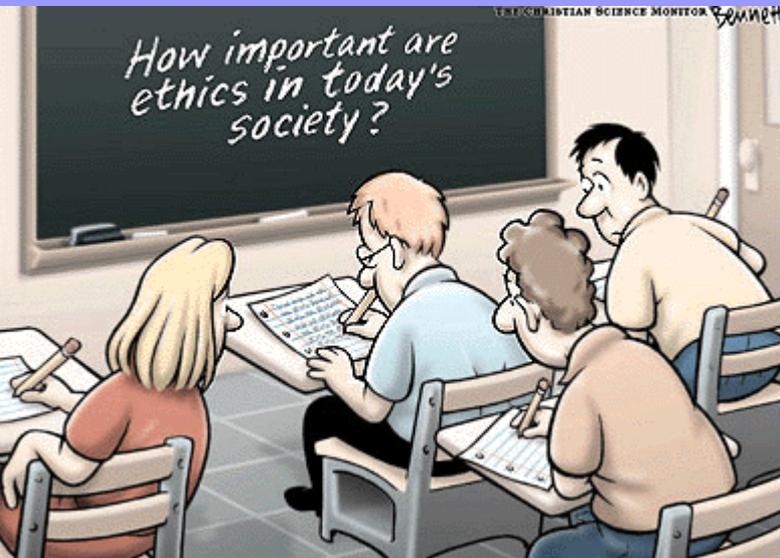
Open new windows for dialogue, negotiation and leverage about ethical review



Seeking Ethical Clearance to Study Ethical Clearance

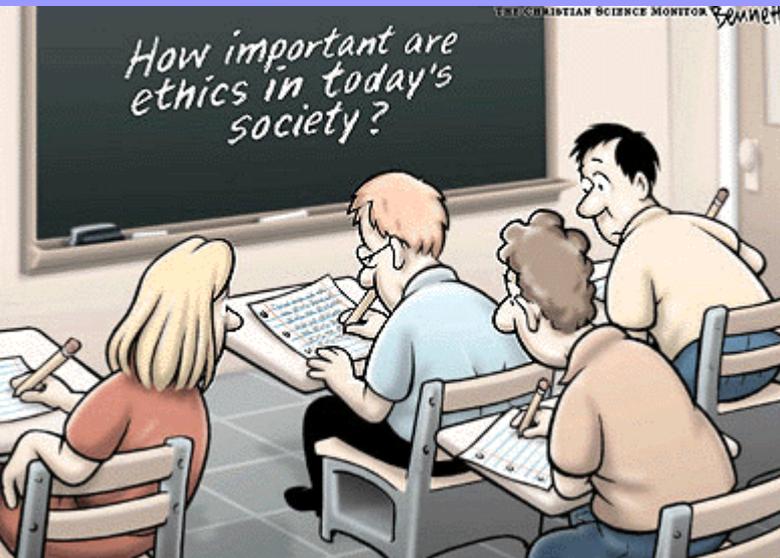
AR: “In identifying both problems and strengths of ethical review processes, the research enables possibilities for developing ethically sound ways of overcoming/reducing obstructions while enhancing positive elements.”

Committee: “This sentence presumes that there are ‘problems – and obstructions’”



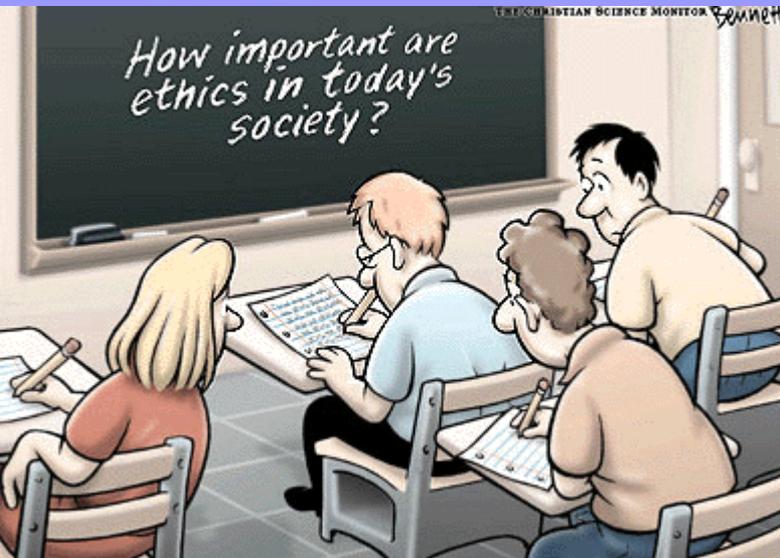
Seeking Ethical Clearance to Study Ethical Clearance

AR: “In identifying both problems and strengths of ethical review processes, the research enables possibilities for enhancing the positive elements and developing ethically sound ways of overcoming/reducing the types of obstructions identified by journalism scholars (eg Davies 2010, 2011; Posetti 2011; Richards 2009)...”



Seeking Ethical Clearance to Study Ethical Clearance

“... and scholars in similar disciplines (eg Evans, 2007; Israel, 2004; Israel & Hay, 2006; Gunsalus et al., 2007; Joseph, 2014, Langlois, 2011).”



Questions?

