

Case Study

Chapter 2

Professor Kerr is studying student-group formation and would like to use data from her current courses on how students are selecting their groups.

She'd also like to interview students about the selection process. She may or may not use the information in her research paper.

Some students are hesitant to be interviewed, but feel obligated to say yes to their professor.

Professor Kerr publishes her paper after the semester is completed. She uses some data from her observations and the interviews, but does not mention any students' names out of privacy.

- 1. Is it appropriate for Professor Kerr to use observational data from her classes if she tells the students ahead of time?**
- 2. Is it appropriate for Professor Kerr to interview students? How should she handle this in case students do not want to be interviewed?**
- 3. Does Professor Kerr need to get permission from students before using this data even if she doesn't use any names?**
- 4. What should Professor Kerr do if she wants to use this information in her paper?**
- 5. Why is it important to follow research ethics guidelines?**

Sample Answers:

1. Professor Kerr must get approval from a research board and inform the students before recording observations for research and publication purposes.
2. Professor Kerr must get approval from a research board before interviewing students and using their data. She may be asked by the research board not to interview current students, so they don't feel pressured to participate. She may be asked to contact students via email, so they can decide whether or not to participate.
3. Yes, Professor Kerr needs to get permission from students even if she doesn't use any names. Students should be given the option to participate and must provide formal consent if they agree to participate. Professor Kerr should also get formal approval from a research board before asking students to participate.
4. The Research Ethics Board or Ethics Review Board (often referred to as REB or ERB) is a policy developed by Canadian research agencies to govern the use of research and human participants. Professor Kerr should apply to the board with her research proposal, outlining what she wants to do and wait for approval before proceeding.
5. In the past, some data regarding human participants was not collected ethically and consent was not provided. Some participants experienced harm as a result. Following research ethics guidelines not only ensures your data is sound, but it allows human

participants the option of participating and protects them from harm once they agree to participate. The research process should be transparent at every stage.