Doing the Right Thing or Doing the Thing Right: Implications of Participant Withdrawal

Andrea Stevenson Thorpe[1]

Abstract

This article discusses implications of participant withdrawal for inductive research. I describe and analyze how a third of my participants withdrew from a grounded theory study. I position my example, ensuing issues, and potential solutions as reflective of inductive methodologies as a whole. The crux of the problem is the disruption inflicted by withdrawal on inductive processes of generating knowledge. I examine the subsequent methodological and ethical issues in trying to determine the best course of action following withdrawal. I suggest three potential options for researchers: Continuing the study with partial data, continuing the study with all data, and discontinuing the study. Motivated by my experience, and wider theoretical considerations, I present several suggestions and questions, with the aim of supporting researchers in determining the best course of action for their individual field circumstances.

This article discusses implications of participant withdrawal, with a specific focus on inductive research. I draw on my experience of one particular field in a case study (Yin, 2009), which I explored using a grounded theory approach (Bonoma, 1985; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Leonard-Barton, 1990; Locke, 2001). A third of my participants withdrew, and this invoked multiple debates underpinning the overall question of determining the most appropriate response.

Some of the subsequent dilemmas were methodological. My study was inductive, for example, and this led me to consider whether I could "unthink" about data once they had been withdrawn: I was able to quarantine data and destroy them on a practical level, but the same data may have influenced my theoretical sampling, for instance, still constituting data use. This would not have been an issue for a deductive study.

[1]Aston Business School, Aston University, Birmingham, UK

Corresponding Author:
Andrea Stevenson Thorpe, Aston Business School, Aston University, Birmingham, B4 7ET, UK.
Email: andrea_thorpe@mail.com

Many of the dilemmas also had an ethical dimension. I discuss, for instance, the difference between participants' *rights* and their *wishes*. I describe how I extensively sought and gained informed consent, and yet it is clearly ethically controversial to deny anxious or distressed participants their wish to withdraw their data after they have partaken in a study.

To contextualize the methodological and ethical issues that were raised concerning participant withdrawal in my study, I primarily draw on principles of inductive research, as well as theoretical ethics. I make a contribution to ethics development by discussing the implications of withdrawal for contemporary ethical codes, especially in relation to methodology. I make a further contribution to understanding the particular dynamics between principles of induction and participant withdrawal. As the main purpose of this article in an applied sense, my field experience, and my theoretical discussion motivate a series of questions and recommendations pertaining to each potential course of action. I hope researchers might find these useful for their future endeavors.

I now move to describe the field and circumstances of participant withdrawal that invoked my reflections.

My Field Experience

Brooklands was an experimental community devised in the 1960s. It set out to explore whether people of varying nationalities could live and work alongside each other harmoniously and productively. The development of Brooklands was organic, but the community was strongly defined on legal, financial, and social bases at the outset. In the former two contexts, the community reflected a regular business enterprise, and was administered accordingly. Brooklands' raison d'être though was driven by its social and ideological identity. The ethos of the community rejected core capitalist principles and yet simultaneously hosted multiple small and medium-sized businesses, which, via internal taxation, enabled Brooklands' financial sustainability. It was this paradox I wanted to explore.

Before arriving in the field, I started the process of gaining informed consent via a series of emails. With a member of Brooklands' governing body, we agreed the study's scope and my proposed length of stay in the community. I stated that neither the community in general nor individual participants would be identified. I also described our intended methodology. It was understood and accepted by the governing board that my methodological approach meant that I was unable to state the exact composition of my sample, the specific direction of the study, and other nuances pertaining to induction. Following our discussions, the overall research proposal was approved. I then liaised on the best way to inform community residents of my research. A notice in the community newsletter was circulated. This outlined the study, and stated that individual participation was voluntary and anonymous. The notice also overtly stated that "participants could withdraw at any time."

Overall, I was extensively transparent in communicating my intentions throughout the whole of the project, not least for the reason of building trust. This was important: Brooklands was suspicious of attention from external bodies, after contact with covert investigative journalists had procured unwanted publicity for the community.

The process of making sense of the field began when I discovered Brooklands from popular media sources. As a qualitative researcher oriented on grounded theory, I saw my media-based explorations, as well as my initial communication with council members, as contributory factors to the preliminary formulation of fragile and shifting schematic frameworks of understanding (Kant, 1783/2004; Piaget, 1985). In the field I used bricolage (Lévi-Strauss, 1966) to adopt the most appropriate data collection methods in response to specific circumstances as they arose. This helped to maintain flexibility along the continuum of the study, and encouraged constructs and themes to arise.

On entering the field, I spent the first two days without formally collecting data. I made maps, visited public buildings, ate in the community kitchen, and so on. I formulated and reformulated

loose ideas and schemas. The complexity of the field challenged my a priori knowledge, and I began to see nuanced layers of meaning.

On my fourth day in the field, I began to formally collect data using document reviews, observations, and interviews. With the latter two methods, I pursued informed consent at an individual level. It was impractical to do so when I observed large groups, but these observations were public, generic, and nonintrusive. The aforementioned circulated notice also gave ample opportunity for residents to object. In my formally scheduled interviews, a standardized preamble partially sought informed consent:

> Thank you for agreeing to talk to me. So you already know that I am a researcher interested in how [Brooklands] was formed, how it has developed and how it has changed over the years. Yes? I am also interested in what it is like now and your experience of being here and what you can tell me will really help me to understand [Brooklands]. I am talking to as many people as I can throughout my stay, from as many parts of the community as I can.

> I think that you have already been told this but just to reiterate, please be aware that we can stop at any point, we can take as long or as short amount of time to talk to me as you want. What you say and your participation will be confidential. I will give you a pseudonym when I write this up, so no one will know it is you and also if there is any information that could identify you, for example from the job that you do or perhaps the specific part of the community that you live in, that will also not be included in the write up.

> If you change your mind afterwards after participating, just let me know as soon as you can. You can find me at the [Uppsala] Guesthouse. You can just leave a message there for me if I am not there. Also, if you have any questions that you want to ask that you forget to ask me during this or you have any concerns, it is no problem if you want to come and find me to chat.

Each interview started with this statement, but I frequently imparted much of its content informally, usually a few days prior to scheduling. This gave interviewees time to change their minds, although no one did. In the context of the community's sensitivity toward ''outsiders,'' I felt that seeking written informed consent might invent a heightened sense of risk participation. Thus I only sought participants' verbal agreement.

Gaining informed consent in ad hoc interviews was less structured: I introduced myself and explained my presence. Very often interviewees already knew, and the circulated newsletter notice was frequently mentioned—confirming its wide dissemination. After I talked to residents, I asked them if I could use our conversation as data. I also paraphrased the above statement on issues of anonymity and withdrawal. This format encouraged a natural flow of conversation and enabled a better rapport.

My sense making (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991; Prasad, 2005; Stake, 1995) continued to shift. What I saw, heard, and experienced tacitly bombarded my senses as an ongoing ''reality shock'' (Hughes, 1958), far beyond the first few days of the study. Ideas and connections continued to change in definition and meaning. Retrospectively, I equated this process with Van Maanen's notion of making sense of new environments via the construction of cognitive maps of time and space (Van Maanen, 1977), to which my own life experience and cultural background undoubtedly impacted (Dick, & Cassell, 2002; Watson & Watson, 1999). Yet this source of knowledge emergence was parallel to, and sometimes inextricably entwined with, tangible data. After a few days I started to gain insight via my formal data regarding norms, values, creativity, social and work structures, and the dynamics between ideology and economic activity, for instance. I wrote a narrative, and started to apply loose codes to my material, which I changed and refined throughout the process of iteration (Berelson, 1971; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Locke, & Golden-Biddle, 1997; Ryan & Bernard, 2000).

At this point, participants started to withdraw in multiple ways. Overall, 45 people out of a total sample of 143 withdrew their consent over several days, and between 2 and 6 days after their interview. Six people saw me personally. I did not try to persuade them to revoke their withdrawal. I typically offered a response that amounted to a smile and "Not a problem, don't worry." I did not make transcripts of these conversations, but, overall, people were nonspecific in their reasons. Tones of participation being "not a good idea," for fear of reprisal from key bodies in the organization, were common though. I reiterated anonymity, and my intention to destroy their data.

An additional 35 people left a written withdrawal message at my on-site guesthouse. One read, for example, "Sorry but I have changed my mind about being in your study. Please ignore everything yesterday. Reasons are very personal." I avoided approaching these participants to maintain anonymity. Six withdrawn people left written messages to request a visit. I appropriately emphasized anonymity and confidentiality in response to their questions. I repeated that participation was voluntary, and that if they withdrew their consent I would destroy my notes. I did not engage in "nudging" (Cohen, 2013). Four out of the six participants withdrew. Two chose to continue.

Tracing back on my timeline, I destroyed my notes from withdrawn interviewees, along with notes in which they were implicated. Eradicating withdrawn data destroyed the tangible evidence of the participants' existence. But cognitively, it was impossible to "unlearn" the insight I had gained and to which withdrawn data had contributed. I actively sought to replace the lost data from other sources, with some success. One exception was a particular construct that concerned issues of power. This was derived almost exclusively from withdrawn data, and I abandoned the construct's development.

Analysis

My problem in Brooklands pivoted on participant withdrawal. My qualitative study set out to build theory in a very specific environment. Yet, the implications that arose can be widely generalized and defined within the parameters of what Maxwell (2005) describes as a generic inductive qualitative model.

I chose to continue the study, but without the withdrawn data. My experience uncovered three phenomena worthy of discussion. First, participant withdrawal has differing methodological implications for studies that are based on induction and theory building, compared to more deductive approaches. Second, the immediate outcome of participant withdrawal presents ethical dilemmas for the researcher, of which the options are impacted by assumptions and principles pertaining specifically to inductive approaches. Third, inductive research presents specific considerations for how ethics are policed. In this section I explore these three phenomena as the outcome of participant withdrawal. I illustrate my discussions with literature, and by drawing on my Brooklands example.

Method

The process of iteration that encourages insight into themes and constructs is pivotal in the distinction between inductive and deductive approaches, and is a key principle of the former (Southern & Devlin, 2010). It refers not only to the cyclical collection and analysis of data, as detailed by Eisenhardt (1989), Glaser and Strauss (1967), and Yin (2009), for example, but also to more preliminary stages, as I experienced with my initial sense making of Brooklands. Boellstorff, Nardi, Pearce, and Taylor (2012) describe the importance within ethnographic research of maintaining flexibility in what to study. As a central aim of ethnography, practitioners strive to experience the lives and realities of actors within the field (Geertz, 1983; Malinowski, 1922). But to identify a focus that rotates on the most exciting theme(s)—not always identifiable before field entry—requires flexibility. Boellstorff's explorations of the virtual world Second Life typify this: He

immersed himself in the field via an avatar, and allowed his initial virtual experiences to ignite, define, and redefine the direction of his topic (Boellstorff, 2010).

Equally significant for inductive research is the induction of knowledge driven by the iterative process of data collection, and analysis—again, something that was strongly present in Brooklands. Dacin, Munir, and Tracey (2010), in exploring college dining traditions at Cambridge University, illustrate the centrality of inducing knowledge in multiple ways, and in close similarity to Brooklands: As I did, Dacin et al. used snowball sampling, for example, where interviewees recommended other people to participate; neither I nor Dacin et al. planned the direction of our data collection, but it was instead determined by a response to other field data gathered—reflecting common techniques and processes within inductive research as a whole (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Goulding, 2002; Idrees, Vasconcelos, & Cox, 2011; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Several themes of importance arose for me that I did not predict beforehand, again, something reflected in Dacin et al.: The main thrust—that rituals and traditions within Cambridge dining supported macro class structures—lay dormant, waiting to be induced, and was done so only during data collection and analysis, again reflecting a common feature for inductive research as a whole.

Their unusual field contexts aside, both Boellstorff (2010) and Dacin et al. (2010) utilized relatively standardized practices to gather and analyze data pertaining to ethnographic and grounded theory inquiry respectively. Dacin et al., for instance, quote Eisenhardt (1989), Glaser and Strauss (1967), and Locke (2001) as influential in the mechanics of the analysis they employed. Furthermore, they explicitly illustrate the deep connection between "established techniques and procedures for naturalistic inquiry and grounded-theory building" (p. 1400) and the concept of induction. They describe their analysis as being a "recursive rather than a linear process" (p. 1401) and how they "moved iteratively between first-order categories and emerging patterns in [our] data until adequate conceptual themes emerged" (p. 1401).

Boellstorff et al. (2012) emphasize the importance of staying immersed in the field over a lengthy period of time to aid insight into participants' realities. Although also valued by some grounded theorists, this is a robust and long established principle of ethnography (Boellstorff et al., 2012): Seminal work by Malinowski (1922), Powdermaker (1933), and the sometimes controversial Mead (1928; Freeman, 1983), for instance, all signify the importance of time in the field to encourage understanding. Both ethnographers and grounded theorists may also adopt systematic coding practices (O'Reilly, Paper, & Marx, 2012), notwithstanding the methodological bifurcation between founders Strauss and Glaser (Glaser, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; also see Miles & Huberman, 1994).

These characteristics distinguish inductive methodologies as distinct from deductive approaches, and, in Table 1, I summarize several other examples of difference that have implications for participant withdrawal. As opposed to deductive methodologies, many inductive approaches frequently emphasize the intangible, tacit, and cognitive dimension of gaining insight into the field, which begins on first exposure, for instance (Maxwell, 2005). Idrees et al. (2011) note that the initial stage of "uncertainty" (p. 188) in a grounded theory application, for example, involves the "formation" of the "primary focus" (p. 188), hinting that induction is conceptually present at the start of a study. This mirrors the ethnographic experiences of Boellstorff (2010) and Dacin et al. (2010). In Brooklands also, an inductive process was manifested along the study's continuum, starting with the first exposure to the case. I continuously thought about what I was experiencing, and I equated this to "cognitive pottering." While I tried to record my thoughts in a diary, I failed to capture their richness and speed, the connections between phenomena, and how I discarded and redefined knowledge (Polanyi, 1967).

The crux of my problem in Brooklands was the disruption that participant withdrawal was inflicting on the process of inducing constructs and theory. Withdrawal procures specific issues for inductive research in the options for resolution, and these are distinct from the choices generated within

Table 1. Examples of Factors of Difference in Inductive and Deductive Approaches Pertinent to Participant Withdrawal.

Inductive Methodologies	Deductive Methodologies
Data are found in both tangible and intangible forms.	Data exist only in tangible forms.
Iteration is a key process in knowledge generation.	No empirical value in iteration.
Researcher cognition is often explicitly acknowledged as contributory to knowledge generation.	No empirical value in researcher cognition.
Potential methodological problems with researcher exposure to withdrawn data. Data may still be used indirectly, e.g., to inform study direction.	Researcher exposure to withdrawn data is irrelevant. Data use extends only to tangible analysis.
Withdrawal can be "messy"—strong likelihood of "leakage" of data across multiple constructs.	Withdrawal is usually "clean." E.g., participants can easily be replaced that are matched on relevant variables.
Withdrawal may present problems of data integrity. E.g., data sets may be considered incomplete.	If participants are replaced or statistic software can accommodate withdrawn data, data integrity issues are less likely.
Informed consent can be difficult to gain, owing to the frequently unpredictable nature of a study's development.	Informed consent can be more tangibly gained. E.g., data testing enables the researcher to avoid ambiguity in describing the study.
Transfer of data to other researchers only partially addresses the continued "use" of withdrawn data.	Data parameters exist only tangibly. Transfer of data to other researchers presents no methodological problem.

the parameters of deductive research. In the latter approach, the premise is that analysis begins after data collection is completed, and frequently involves formal and tangible statistical testing. Withdrawn participants can often be replaced "cleanly," with often little perceived impact on the value of results and conclusions (see, e.g., Olinsky, Chen, & Harlow, 2003; Penn, 2007; Rustum & Adeloye, 2007; Zuccolotto, 2012).

Yet for inductive research, participant withdrawal is "messier." As discussed, I removed an entire construct relating to power, and was able to do so because its data flowed almost exclusively from withdrawn participants. In other constructs though, the data were dispersed across the whole sample. I extracted and destroyed the appropriate written notes, and then rebuilt rigor in the weakened constructs with data from other sources. But for inductive research this highlights further problems. First is the issue of data exclusion. Each participant holds a rich and unique viewpoint and position in the field (Maguire & Phillips, 2008; Selvi, 2011; Yakura, 2002), which cannot be replaced on a like for like basis. And for grounded theorists in support of the maxim "all data is [*sic*] data" (Glaser, 1998, p. 8), the value of representation is compromised. A second issue is the aforementioned role that cognition plays in the induction of knowledge. Destroying tangibly recorded data—transcripts, notes, diagrams, and so on—removes the physical trace of withdrawn data. Yet for inductive researchers, the cognitive aspects of construct emergence are an ensuing problem, as I described in Brooklands, and as Chreim (2005) and McInerney (2008) point out in their view of the inseparability of observation and theory. Gephart (2004) makes a similar point: An interpretive approach, for instance, involves the researcher identifying and replicating meanings stemming from actors in the field under investigation, indicating a much more active cognitive role for the researcher in analyzing data, compared with a deductive approach. This might suggest that within the scope of a qualitative inductive approach, researcher experience can potentially influence the process and outcomes of a study. In Brooklands, for instance, I found it impossible to "unthink" ideas and other phenomena, which may have influenced my decisions on sampling and the direction of the study, especially when I triangulated data.

Ethics

My Brooklands experience also procured ethical dilemmas in determining the best course of action in response to withdrawal. These fall loosely into two areas. First, when withdrawal ensues, the overall question is whether, ethically, the study should continue. The heart of this question is the notion of participant wishes, and whether these are impervious and superior to other considerations. A second point of deliberation shifts the focus on to data and theory integrity. The crux here is whether the impact of data withdrawal undermines the generated theory, and to consider the ethical implications of presenting knowledge based on incomplete data sets.

Participant Wishes. There are numerous relevant ethical paradigms within which to explore the consequences of data withdrawal, and to aid deliberations on potential courses of action. These are manifested in varied ethical schools, which, for the purpose of this article, I have collapsed into three that collectively reflect a well-established conceptual organization of ethical thought: Consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics.

A consequentialist approach suggests that an action can be judged as morally worthy or not by focusing on an analysis of the predicted outcome of an action or decision (Bentham, 1789/1961; Mill, 1861/1998; Sidgwick, 1907). The means of producing the outcome is of less ethical relevance (Kagen, 1998). This is in direct contrast to deontology, which argues that it is precisely the actions involved that should be under scrutiny as a basis for judging moral worth (Kamm, 1996; Kant, 1785/2005; Ross, 1930). However, both approaches agree that the drivers of moral worth lie exogenous to the individual (Waller, 2005). This contrasts with the position of virtue ethics, whose proponents argue that it is the ingrained and subjective values within an individual that drive morally worthy actions (Aristotle [see Broadie, 1991]; Hume, 1739/1949; Stocker, 1976).

In applying the above principles to academic research, and to the issue of withdrawal, we can speculate that a consequentialist perspective might argue that the researcher must center on the supposed outcomes pertaining to each of the multiple responses that he or she could advocate. The "end" should be the focus. From a consequentialist approach, the researcher should be asking questions such as: What is the best possible outcome for the most people? (Bentham, 1789/1961). The researcher must not be distracted by the likely impact on the participants themselves if they represent a distinct minority, compared to the benefits that the study might bring to a wider audience. In this context, the "end" could include the dissemination of accumulated knowledge to the wider academic community, policy makers, and so on. Consequentialists would urge the researcher to consider making a decision on how to respond to participant withdrawal by focusing on what is "good." Thus, the researcher should deliberate whether to end the study or not by comparing the probable consequences of each available option. Fundamentally, if the perceived projected benefits of completing the research (either using or not using withdrawn data) eclipse the consequences of not doing so, then the completion of the study is the course of action with the most moral worth.

To a certain extent, I asked this question after participant withdrawal in Brooklands. At this point, I had already started to induce constructs—especially cognitively, as discussed—and I could see the potential of new theory. The benefits of contributing toward knowledge as an outcome of the study were attractive, especially as I was confident that I could employ strategies to negate harm.

Deontologists would reject my decision to continue, and would instead advocate the research to cease, on the principle that even minimized harm cannot be justified ethically on the outcomes alone. In trying to determine the best course of action, deontologists may urge researchers to identify "rational truths" in what constitutes morally worthy behavior (Kant, 1785/2005). This champions a strong notion of objectivity in determining the course of action with the most moral worth, similar to consequentialism. Yet the principles of deontology demand that the researcher approaches the concept of maximizing "goodness" slightly differently. What is "good" is indistinguishable from

Table 2. Schools of Ethics Overview.

	Consequentialism	Deontology	Virtue Ethics
Subschools	Utilitarianism	Kantianism	Aristotle
Examples of key concept	The greatest good for the greatest number (Bentham)	Categorical imperative (Kant)	The disclosure role, the golden rule
Orientation of analysis	Exogenous to the person or people: the consequences of the act	Exogenous to the person or people: the means to the outcome	Endogenous to the person or people: engrained values
Approach to what is good	Underpinning principle: to achieve maximum happiness	The "right" action is also what is good	The consequence of the actions of virtuous people
Approach to what is right	The "right" actions are those that will achieve maximum happiness	Underpinning principle: to engage in ethical action, i.e., to engage moral duties	The actions of virtuous people
Approach to what is virtuous	A combination of virtues that enable maximum happiness to be sought	Traits that encourage the carrying out of ethical action	Underpinning principle: internalized value systems

what is "right," as Table 2 illustrates, and many deontologists align the latter with an obliged duty to adopt moral courses of action, as described by Kant (1785/2005) in his idea of the categorical imperative. To choose the "right" option, that is, the action with the highest moral value, the researcher must scrutinize moral questions, and supposed consequences, beyond the reductionism of a cost–benefit analysis alone and the size of population impacted, and be more holistic in their deliberations. Deontologists may argue that while the dissemination of valuable knowledge to wide audiences is important, it is not so important that the welfare and the wishes of the participants themselves can be sacrificed: The means cannot morally be justified by the predicted outcome (Schneiderman, 2012). Actions driven by desire alone must also be resisted: Deontology encourages the researcher to deliberate his or her *moral* duty and be guided by the question of "What *ought* I do?" as a precedent over "What do I *want* to do?"

As Table 2 indicates, for virtue ethicists, it is the internal, ingrained values and traits within an individual that should be the driver of ethical decision making (Ferrell, Fraedrich, & Ferrell, 2012). As such, virtue ethicists might argue that researchers should rely on their own values to determine the best course of action after withdrawal. This position best reflects my response in Brooklands. I chose to continue because I felt I could do so while minimizing the ethical problems that were raised. I was not motivated wholly by the potential knowledge generated by the study as an outcome, nor did I stop the research based on the feeling that the rights of a minority of participants superseded all other considerations.

I also considered the position of participants who had not withdrawn from the study. I did not conduct interviews after the research concluded to elicit feedback, but participants frequently commented on their positive experience. In particular, I heard several times of it being "nice" to have had the opportunity to talk to someone from outside of the community about its problems. Abandoning the study would not have negated this experience, but it might have disappointed these participants, and from a consequentialist perspective, continuing the study was the most ethical choice I could have made.

In contrast, deontologists would likely reject the wishes of the majority as a justification for ignoring the wishes of the minority, that is, the withdrawn participants. The approach may also question whether continuing the study, while not using the withdrawn data, is ethical in that such action

demands thought as to whether it is possible to not use data that researchers have been already exposed to, and which have been cognitively processed.

Theoretically, the option of continuing the study by trying to convince participants not to withdraw was an option. In the close-knit community of Brooklands, I felt that even to approach participants after they had taken part, and subsequently withdrawn, might have compromised their anonymity. This could potentially be an option for other researchers if they can resolve the ethical issues that this course of action might present. As an option, its strength is that the ethical dilemma of continuing a study in the wake of withdrawal is negated. Simultaneously though, it also presents as a weakness in that it provokes slightly differing debates of ethical conduct. Despite Tyldum (2012) arguing that placing pressure on participants is common practice, from the perspectives of virtue ethics, and deontology, it is not ethical, especially within the environment that I was exploring. As Harding et al. (2012) state, I needed to be mindful of any repercussions for the community. Conversely, consequentialists may take a differing view, again urging a shift in focus to the value of the predicted outcome. Like many of the ethical dilemmas I raise, the resolutions are often subjective in their "rightness," but for me, and, again, reflecting the particular field and circumstances, this was not an option.

In the previous section I described methodological issues of withdrawal. However, my discussion here emphasizes a three-way relationship among methodology, ethics, and "practical" research issues such as participant withdrawal, informed consent, and so on: If, and how, practical issues raise ethical dilemmas, for example, will depend on the methodological stance of the study.

Data Integrity. My choice to continue the study without the withdrawn data stemmed from several observations: The ease of isolating the data, and the likelihood of the generation of an immense data set to enable the replacement of withdrawn data, for example. There are parallels here with deductive principles: When participants withdraw during a study, they are replaced with others who match on the particular variable(s) under investigation. The ethical dilemma of whether to publish research on incomplete data sets did not arise for me at the time. However, a different scenario might easily have presented, with withdrawn data more extensively affecting the representation and accuracy of the induced theory. In particular, I draw on my previous argument of each participant having a unique position, viewpoint, and experience of the field (Husserl, 1982; Merleau-Ponty, 1945; Selvi, 2011). Contextualizing this as an ethical issue further demonstrates the interplay between ethics and methodology. The researcher must deliberate the extent to which presenting an incomplete data set undermines the integrity of the conclusions and/or theory that it generates.

Expounding data, first, as representative of a population and, second, as the foundations of new knowledge is again something on which theoretical ethics imply differing opinions. As discussed, for consequentialists, the most ethical response equates with the option that maximizes the benefits for the greatest number of people. But data integrity complicates a strategy based on majority benefits alone. Under these conditions, although the wishes of the (minority) participants are ignored to ostensibly justify the perceived benefits for the wider (majority) population, the extent to which the latter now profits is questionable. Whether continuing the study is an option of high moral worth depends on whether data integrity diminishes the research's value, and whether the value can be manipulated. In publicizing their work, authors could include a caveat, for instance, that objectively describes the participant withdrawal in their study, and the potential validity issues that ensue. This would not negate the issue of diminished value, but the increased transparency in the data theory chain would allow the reader to make his or her own judgment on the research's value. Deontologists are likely to accept a caveat as a means of enhancing transparent research. However, in addressing remedies that specifically seek to increase data integrity, whether these are deemed ethical or not pivots on the enduring issue of whether participant wishes are ignored, that is, whether withdrawn data are used or not.

Conversely, virtue ethicists may ask researchers in this situation to apply the ''disclosure rule'' and/or the ''golden rule'' (for a discussion on their historical ambiguity, see, e.g., Blackburn, 2001; Kidder, 1994). The former implies that scholars should question whether they would be willing to openly describe their data set as incomplete—or, if using withdrawn data, explicitly state they are doing so against participants' wishes. The ''golden rule'' implies the need for researchers to empathize with the participants wanting to withdraw: If the researcher can say he or she would be content to have his or her wishes rejected, as an imagined participant, then virtue ethicists may see this as morally worthy. Fundamentally, in the context of data integrity, the researcher is asked to conceptually adopt the position of a member of the wider population to where the study is likely to be disseminated, and to reflect on his or her own expectations and acceptances of the basis of knowledge presentation. The researcher would be urged to ask himself or herself if he or she would feel misled or deceived, for instance, if it subsequently came to light that the research was built on incomplete and possibly biased samples.

As before, pursuing the study and refusing withdrawal was an option in Brooklands, and in the context of data and theory integrity, it has the strength of absolving the problem. I rejected this strategy on the basis of my empathy with my withdrawn participants, where essentially I was guided by a ''feel'' of what constituted the most moral course of action. In addition, I would not have been comfortable with sharing a refusal strategy with colleagues or in published work.

Codes of Conduct

The decisions I made after participant withdrawal in Brooklands were not dictated by tangible codes of conduct. And yet their prevalent existence throughout universities, professional organizations, journal publications, and so on implies an important role. Their detail and scope have not always been a given, however. Historical incidents have propelled their advancement, and, in particular, medically orientated projects carried out in the Second World War, and up until the 1970s, such as the Tuskegee syphilis project (Jones, 1981), invigorated the ethics debate within science (Beecher, 1966; Rothman, 1987). As a result, ethical codes of conduct were developed, including the Nuremberg Code (1949), and the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2011), which, among others, form the basis of the current Code of Federal Regulations (2006) for funded research in the United States.

But two problems are apparent in seeking guidance from the hard sciences to develop codes for business management. First, biomedical codes of conduct have not eliminated exploitation. Deficient global jurisdiction (Benatar, 2002; Nicoll, 1999) creates loopholes (Angell, 1997; Nuffield Council on Bioethics, 1999, 2002), especially in developing countries: Informed consent, for instance, has not been deemed necessary in countries that have an absence of codes (Aaby et al., 1997; Connor et al., 1994; Lurie & Wolfe, 1997).

Second, the applicability of biomedical frameworks to behavioral and social science fields is questionable. The argument in favor of appropriateness cites the relevancy to all research involving human participation (Michelfelder, 2001; Reidenberg, 2000), and a skepticism toward the need for different guidelines for business management research. The rationale here is that social science codes intrinsically reflect the biomedical guidelines from which they were first developed (Burgess, 2007; Crib, 2004; Israel, 2004; Schrag, 2009; Wax & Cassell, 1981). In contrast is the perspective that emphasizes the differences between science and social science as so fundamental to warrant differing codes (Redwood & Todres, 2006). In practice, we can see examples in the frameworks devised by the Academy of Management (2003) and the American Psychological Association (APA, 2010), homogenous to business management as a discipline, but which also, in part, reflect biomedical guidelines.

Irrespective of fit, a clear goal in developing ethical research codes is to provide objective "rules" on acceptable practice—an aim that mirrors consequentialism, deontology, and ethical universalism, and rejected by principles of virtue ethics and relativism. But, as in bioethics, the growth in the development of social science codes has not been comprehensive and uniform across all geographical regions. Kenyan guidelines developed in 1979 for scientific work in public organizations, for example, represent an extensive framework with details on scientific validity, and informed consent, for instance (National Council for Science and Technology, 2005). But although Cleaton-Jones (2007) emphasizes the trend of many African social science journals demanding evidence of adequately administered ethics as a requisite for publication, no guidelines exist specifically for business management research at a wider level.

Institutional review boards (IRBs) may be an alternative source of policing ethics internationally, and one that may be attractive to inductive researchers as they potentially allow for a greater degree of individuality in how the relationship between methodology and ethics is assessed (Hedgecoe, 2008). Their role is becoming increasingly central. In the United States, for instance, researchers and institutions are bound by the U.S. Common Rule, requiring that overseas research is reviewed by an IRB at home as well as in the host country (Kass, Dawson, & Loyo-Berrios, 2003). IRBs also present an opportunity for external funding agencies—the Tri-Council in Canada, and the U.K.-based European Council for Social Research (ESRC), for example—to ensure that they support and fund only ethically robust research.

Yet IRBs are not a panacea. Some countries may lack formalized boards, skill sets, motivation, or interest, and examples abound. Hyder et al. (2004) surveyed 670 researchers in developing countries, and found only 56% of studies had been reviewed by local IRBs, for instance. Just 10% of Chinese studies are examined by IRBs, and only 1.8% gained informed consent to the same extent demanded by many Western research facilities (Zhang et al., 2008). At Karachi University, 82% of faculty were aware of the existence of their institution's IRB, but only 21% saw it necessary to gain informed consent, and 43% saw it as acceptable to not fully explain the study to their participants (Shaikh et al., 2012). Furthermore, some IRBs within the United States have been criticized on their lack of motivation, their ability to provide guidance, and their focus on the superficial aspects of an ethics review process, such as completing forms (Kass et al., 2003). Some have argued that this is detrimental to the policing of inductive and qualitative research in particular, which, as a more nuanced approach, often requires an individualized response (Hessler, Donnell-Watson, & Galliher, 2011).

These are valid concerns, but the subtleties in research design have also been a source of debate on the policing of ethics. Covert observation has potential problems with privacy invasion, deception, and researcher vulnerability, for example (Calvey, 2008; Homan, 1980; Oliver & Eales, 2008). And these concerns are reflected in the careful and somewhat discouraging wording within some funding agencies' guidelines—those pertaining to the Canadian Tri-Council, for instance.

My experience in Brooklands prompted reflection on these issues: I had used my own institution's IRB, and I was extensively transparent with my participants. While some researchers advocate seeking informed consent on a continuous basis throughout the study as optimum, especially in ethnographic research (Harding et al., 2012; Plankey-Videla, 2012), my processes of gaining informed consent were thorough, as described. Thus, I ask whether participants have an absolute right to withdraw after giving informed consent, and relating to this, where the ownership of data lies, that is, with participants or with the researcher. These questions transcend the differences between inductive and deductive approaches: The principle could arise in both, although, as I discuss later, methodology does have a bearing on questions raised for the researcher's consideration.

In Brooklands, I took the ownership of data lying with participants as a given. Many current guidelines imply that participants own the data throughout the research process. The ESRC, for instance, states that participants can "withdraw from the investigation whenever and for whatever

reason they wish" (ESRC, 2005, p. 29). I challenge this, especially from the context of inductive research, which, by design, encourages uncertainty to induce rich and valid outcomes. Cassell (1982) suggests that the rights of participants to withdraw, and the extent to which they own the data is ambiguous in an inductive approach, and this changes over the duration of a study. The ESRC suggests that "all research should indicate the point at which data will have been anonymised and amalgamated and cannot then be excluded." Yet this is stated in the context of how research proposals should be presented to an IRB. The Canadian Tri-Council also presents advice, stating, "The researcher may give the subject the option of removing his or her data from the project," but then "this approach should only be used when the elimination of the subject's data will not compromise the validity of the research design and hence diminish the ethical value of the participation by other subjects" (Tri-Council, 2005). This seems more robust, and implies a limit to participants' rights: They do not have the right to prevent publication, or withdraw their data after publication; nor do they have the right to veto interpretive constructs to which their data have contributed, but of which they may disapprove.

As I experienced in Brooklands, the subtleties of the field might demand a more individualized response, rather than the objective absolutes in many current guidelines. Speculatively, I think that denying my participants the right to withdraw would have jeopardized my overall project. Maurice Punch's work into alternative education in the United Kingdom during the 1960s illustrates the dilemma in practice (Punch & Naylor, 2012). Punch details the frequent but erratic hostility by participants (and sponsors) in his longitudinal study, and the vociferous resistance the sponsors launched to prevent publication, on the basis of rejecting conclusions, including an attempt at legal enforcement. As Punch and Naylor state,

> The Trustees [and the study sponsors], for instance, seemed to be saying when my findings did not suit them, "we're financing this research and you can come to any colour of conclusions you like providing they are black, and furthermore a shade of black of which we approve." (Punch & Naylor, 2012, p. 14)

Punch's experience is an extreme example, with publication achieved only a decade after the research began. But his experience illustrates the potential problems associated with the right to withdraw from an inductive study, and the implications of the participants' (and, in this case, the sponsors') disapproval of the study's findings. Most profoundly, it demonstrates the need for clarity in defining where data ownership lies (Parry & Mauthner, 2004) before the study begins—something that I failed to do in Brooklands.

These issues are less likely to arise in deductive research, especially as data and participants are conceptually easier to separate (Amdur & Bankert, 2007; Gephart, 2004). Milgram's experiments on obedience to authority (Milgram, 1963) illustrate this: When some participants withdrew, their data were still used, much in the same way as when partially completed questionnaires are often still used. Although ethically controversial, contention has focused on hypothesized harm to Milgram's participants, not on the use of withdrawn data (see, e.g., Blass, 1999; Slater et al., 2006; Smith & Richardson, 1983). Furthermore, as supported by Cassell (1982), and simulations by Ring, Wallston, and Corey (1970), Milgram's withdrawn participants regarded their taking part as positive and enlightening, in contrast to Punch's experience.

My experience in Brooklands emphasizes the need for individualized treatment of ethics in response to individual fields, as argued by ethical particularists, who question the value of ethical codes, and informed consent per se, on a range of points (Chih, 2005). Hill, Tawiah-Agyemang, Odei-Danso, and Kirkwood (2008), for example, indicated extensive misunderstanding among research participants in Ghana, in what they were partaking. Informed consent was pursued, but Hill et al. found that researchers manipulated participants to purposefully create confusion. Hansson (2006) argues for their irrelevance for large group samples, especially in public arenas. And Wing (2009)

suggests that informed consent, even when gained via transparent means, can procure negative effects—a reduction in the frequency of vulnerable participants seeking HIV testing, for example.

The utility of informed consent can be debated further on the basis of the tension between respecting participant wishes, and the need to generate holistic and unbiased knowledge. The latter must include representative samples. Applying pressure to reluctant participants to generate knowledge on marginalized groups might be justified (Tyldum, 2012). Groups could include immigrant labor (Huijsmans & Baker, 2012), gender issues in male or female dominated industries (Yodanis, 2000), and sweatshops (Zwolinski, 2007). I adopted a strategy that revolved around rapport building (Dundon & Ryan, 2010). But at least from a consequentialist approach, pressurizing participants could be justified in some research scenarios.

Discussion

My experience of participant withdrawal in Brooklands, and my wider discussion of methodology and ethics, motivates two outcomes. First, I debate implications for inductive research in the context of formalized ethical codes. Second, I frame participant withdrawal in a practical sense that includes methodological implications: I identify three possible courses of action and suggest questions and points of reflection that I hope might support researchers in deciding how to respond to withdrawal.

Implications for Codes of Conduct

The abundance of ethical codes of conduct reflects both consequentialism and deontology in their championing of objective rules to address ethical issues in research. I have discussed how an overall comparison of frameworks reveals, for instance, an inability to provide homogenized and global protection, suggesting a shortfall in their purpose. Under the proviso of accepting the established value in developing codes, I suggest items related to my experience of withdrawal in Brooklands, to stimulate debate on areas that I argue to be problematic.

First, I question the application of current codes of conduct—originating from biomedical fields—to business management and social science research. I note that, in principle, codes seek to ultimately protect participants, and that protection per se is a concept that spans varied disciplines. Yet, my study of Brooklands indicates that the ethical issues arising after withdrawal, including those pertaining to participant protection, are intrinsically distinct in inductive research. Hard sciences are methodologically homogenized in a deductive approach, where many of the issues that I have raised throughout this article either do not occur or are addressed adequately without ethical implications or methodological disruption. In contrast, social science research utilizes both inductive and deductive methodologies. In addition, even within an inductive approach, studies are frequently and extensively nuanced, and this creates particular problems when investigators, faced with withdrawal, seek guidance from current guidelines. How participant withdrawal affects the process of inducing constructs is not accommodated in current codes. Several codes make reference to participants having the right to withdraw "during the data gathering phase" (British Psychological Society [BPS], 2010, p. 15) or "once the research has begun" (APA, 2010) or even "whenever and for whatever reason the wish" (British Sociological Association [BSA], 2002, p. 21). Researchers are also reminded that participants can also "ask for the destruction of all or part of the data that they have contributed" (BPS, 2010, p. 15). But this does not negate the ethical and methodological implications that are specific to inductive research, and, in particular, for how the processes of construct and knowledge development unfurl.

I note that some ethical codes make reference to qualitative methods—the BSA (2002) and the International Sociological Association (2001), for example. These are vague, but their lack of detail can be helpful in allowing subjective interpretation. Yet we also see a growing number of new codes

that are specialized according to discipline or subdiscipline, or even for specific journals, as I discussed in the context of Africa (Cleaton-Jones, 2007).

I suggest an alternative strategy for development: To slice ethics not according to discipline, but along lines of methodological difference. In particular, my Brooklands experience motivates my proposal for the development of a set of codes for inductive studies that could guide and inform the researcher on how to ethically navigate the methodological problems arising from participant withdrawal. Brooklands represented an idiosyncratic field, and my decision making was motivated by the specific context and situation that arose. Yet, the crux of the problem—how withdrawal disrupted the process of induction—is of central relevance to inductive methodologies collectively. It is beyond the scope of this article to suggest how those guidelines might look, but I hope that my discussions here may motivate dialogue on possible formats.

My suggestion is not a panacea. As a weakness, codes of conduct based on methodology might still curtail the freedom to respond ethically. Inductive research emphasizes the process of themes, narratives, and relationships unfolding over a period. The unexpected can, and frequently does, occur, and often stimulates new ethical dilemmas along the way. We can see negative outcomes of exploitation where IRBs are absent or ineffectual (Hyder et al., 2004; Shaikh et al., 2012; Zhang et al., 2008). But sometimes an increased presence, as argued by the ESRC (2005) and others, is also unhelpful, especially in the context of the unpredictability of inductive research. And the same principle applies to codes of conduct. While both IRBs and codes of conduct can be useful, the researcher must be at liberty to respond to unexpected events—such as participant withdrawal—on the basis of field insight gained from experience. I argue from my Brooklands experience that this must be the primary motivator in deciding an appropriate response to the scenario in question, rather than seeking answers in potentially ill-fitting codes or poorly utilized IRBs.

I suggest the crux of the problem is the dissonance between objective codes of conduct—as stipulated by consequentialism and deontology—and the nuanced individuality of field contexts. This is intensified within inductive research, where idiosyncratic responses are demanded, to procure the most ethical outcome to participant withdrawal. Some codes acknowledge the individuality of research situations, points in time, and so on. The Tri-Council in Canada, for example, stipulates that the "principles serve as short-hand reminders of more complex and context-specific moral reflection" (Tri-Council, 2005). Nevertheless, ethical relativism is not forthcoming in codes overall.

Implications for Practice

As Gephart (2004) describes, qualitative inductive methodologies have much to offer the overall advancement of knowledge. In light of my discussions, and experiences, I emphasize the value of a subjective approach to the methodological factors involved in decision making within research, especially in the context of participant withdrawal. Sometimes these decisions have an ethical dimension to them, as Table 3 indicates, but others stand alone as issues of methodology. I now turn to possible questions and recommendations to encourage reflection and decision-making in response to individual project circumstances. I have structured these within three broad based options facing the researcher after participants express the desire to withdraw: Continuing the study with partial data, continuing the study with all data collected, and discontinuing the study.

Continuing the Study With Partial Data. I pursued this option in Brooklands after reflecting on the distinct circumstances of withdrawal and the field itself. As I outlined, the withdrawn data pivoted on one particular construct—the historical misuse of power within the community—and its tangible manifestation in notes, diagrams, and so on. This made it easily extractable with minimal impact on other constructs. But the alignment of data, constructs, and sources in other inductive research may involve more complex and interwoven dynamics. Thus, in considering continuing with partial

Table 3. Summary of Future Research Considerations Pertaining to Participant Withdrawal.

Considered Question	Ethical Dimension?	Relevancy for Inductive Research?	Relevancy for Deductive Research?
In what way(s) would the removal of data affect the formation of constructs overall?	None.	Requires the researcher to consider how the data are distributed across constructs, and how "cleanly" they can be isolated.	Less problematic for theory testing.
Does the use of data transcend their tangible manifestation to include a cognitive theme?	Possibly in addressing the problem in inductive research.	Requires the researcher to reflect on the centrality of the principle to their individual approach.	None.
Would the transference of the data set to alternative researchers diminish the value of the data?	Not if confidentiality is not compromised.	Researchers must assess the specific field circumstances.	Researchers to assess this as a high value option as tacit knowledge is irrelevant as a form of data.
How might continuing the study with a partial data set impact our strategy for publicizing our work?	Researchers should assess transparency issues in methodology write-up.	Researchers to assess if the value of overall knowledge is diminished.	Researchers to consider replacing withdrawn participants as an alternative solution.
Should we clarify data ownership with participants before the study begins?	Researchers should also consider a distinction, and its implications, on participant rights and wishes.	Researchers to ask whether this could be an optimal preventative solution.	Researchers to ask whether this might prevent participant withdrawal after imparting data.
Would rejecting participants' wishes to withdraw have negative consequences for the community as a whole?	Researchers to refer to ethical debate on "the greatest good," etc. if harm is deemed likely.	Researchers to assess the sensitivity of the field.	Unlikely to be a problem, but researchers could still assess sensitivity is appropriate.
Would rejecting participants' wishes to withdraw have negative consequences for the individual?	If likely to harm, researchers to deliberate on "the greatest good," etc.	Researchers to assess the sensitivity of the field.	Researchers to assess sensitivity.
Would trying to persuade participants to continue, equate to placing them under pressure and harm?	Researchers to debate ethical positions.	Mainly an ethical question, but researchers should ask whether data would be diminished.	Mainly an ethical question, but researchers should ask whether data would be diminished.
How could participants' qualitative data be affected if they were to continue?	Researchers to deliberate transparency issues in the dissemination of the study.	Researchers to assess the value of the data.	None.
What are the types of stakeholder investment in the project?		Researchers to assess the centrality and "weight" of each stakeholder.	Researchers to assess the centrality and "weight" of each stakeholder.
As stakeholders, how might we feel in the event of abandoning the study?	Yes. Requires virtue ethical reasoning, but researchers may also refer to other ethical perspectives.	Mainly an ethical question.	Mainly an ethical question.

data, I urge researchers to ask, "In what way(s) would the removal of data affect the formation of constructs overall?" This involves making an assessment as to how "cleanly" the withdrawn data can be disassociated with constructs across the data set as a whole.

Yet I also acknowledge that for researchers working from an inductive approach, the extraction and destruction of notes reflects only the tangible aspects of the data–construct relationship. I made the decision that I could proceed in Brooklands, but with some reflective self-criticism: From one perspective my inability to "unthink" about the withdrawn data, and the contributions they had made to my decisions on sampling, for instance, still constitutes "using" data. While consciously its use to make decisions in the field can be easily avoided, not thinking about the data that contribute subconsciously to constructs, directions, ideas, and so on is more difficult to avoid. For some, this may be a nonissue, but for many inductive approaches, the cognitive element of construct and idea formulation via active deliberation is a factor. Thus, I urge researchers to ask, "Does the use of data transcend their tangible manifestation to include a cognitive dimension?" If affirmative, I encourage researchers to reflect on the ethics of continuing the study. In particular, I urge researchers to apply the golden rule from a virtue ethics position, and ask, "If I were a participant would I accept that my data, although not used formally and explicitly, would still contribute to the formation of ideas and constructs at a cognitive level?"

If the answer to this last question is negative, researchers might consider transferring the data—minus the withdrawn data—to another set of researchers for analysis. Circumstances may prevent or discourage this, and I encourage researchers to reflect on this "solution" from a methodological perspective too. Specifically I urge researchers to ask, "Would the transference of the data set to alternative researchers (not exposed to the field) diminish the value of the data, by excluding the tacit, a posteriori knowledge gained from being in the field itself?" This involves the researchers assessing how much emphasis and importance they want to place on the cognitive elements of inducing constructs, as opposed to the more tangible and explicit processes of data analysis—coding, for example. To an extent this will be influenced by the researchers' implemented methodology, but I argue that the individual values on what is important are also of relevance.

As a weakness of continuing the study minus the withdrawn data, there is the potential for building theory from incomplete data sets. This is an ethical issue, in addition to being methodologically problematic, especially in the context of the dissemination of findings to wider audiences. This predicament arose in Brooklands, and is implied in Punch's work (Punch & Naylor, 2012). In wanting to ensure that participants were not "harmed," Punch was under pressure to compromise his control over his study by allowing participants to dictate what could and could not be used as data. His research gave rise to profound insights into alternative education. But by allowing participants to prevent the use of already gathered data, he was left with an incomplete data set. Punch has been transparent in his description of the problems he faced in publicizing his work. But clearly there is the potential to be much less transparent. I argue that ignoring the event of withdrawal when publicizing a study misleads the audience, and denies them the opportunity to assess the rigor of the resulting theory for themselves. Consequently I urge researchers to ask, "How might continuing the study with a partial data set impact upon our strategy for publicizing our work?" Researchers may also wish to consider whether including a caveat in their published work overcomes ethical issues of presenting theory built on incomplete data sets, as I discussed previously.

Continuing With All Data. Clearly continuing the study with all data collected involves participants being denied the opportunity to withdraw. The advantage of this option includes the elimination of the problems associated with building theory on incomplete data sets. But the main rationale of the strategy pivots on the debate of data ownership, and how this might change within a study's trajectory. This falls in both arenas of ethics and methodology. In terms of the latter, deciding to whom the data belong concerns a question that revolves around participant rights. This is something

on which ethical codes are particularly ambiguous (Cassell, 1982), and the experiences of Punch (Punch & Naylor, 2012) suggest that this ambiguity is not especially methodologically helpful either. Like Punch, I failed to inform participants at what point in the study data would be transferred from their ownership to mine. This would have provided a clear unambiguous point of reference that would have partially guided me in determining whether I would have permitted participant withdrawal. I urge researchers to consider clarifying data ownership with participants before studies begin. For some researchers, this elucidation would be enough: After a specified point in time, ownership transfers to the researcher, leaving the participants without the right to withdraw their data.

I suggest that modifying the informed consent process to reflect the characteristics of inductive research would also make the justification for continuing a study with all data more robust. In particular, I emphasize the unpredictability in how inductive studies unfurl, and the need of the researcher to stay flexible to respond to the most interesting themes that are revealed while in the field, as I previously illustrated in, for example, Boellstorff's work in Second Life, and other research (Boellstorff, 2010; Boellstorff et al., 2012). I propose that researchers inform their participants that data could be used for unplanned topic areas that could be identified only after data collection has begun. This would allow participants to understand further the implications of taking part (Hill et al., 2008), but would also crucially enable greater flexibility for the researcher.

I also emphasize the relevance in the distinction between participant *rights*, and participant *wishes*. In Brooklands, clarifying data ownership, and making the right to withdraw less ambiguous, would not have invalidated the ethical significance of participants still wanting to withdraw—even if data were unambiguously in my ownership. My perspective is partially motivated by my subjective beliefs, but also in part by the sensitive environment of Brooklands itself. I encourage researchers to ask: "Would rejecting participants' wishes to withdraw have negative consequences for the community as a whole?" And related to this, "Would rejecting participants' wishes to withdraw have negative consequences for the individual?" Both these questions involve the researcher suspending the notion of participant rights and instead assess the risk associated with refusal, from a perspective of ethics, but also as purely methodological questions.

A final strategy within this option is to try to convince participants not to withdraw. This is also fraught with methodological and ethical problems (Dundon & Ryan, 2010; Tyldum, 2012), that I previously discussed, and which the researcher must navigate. It is beyond the scope of this article to make suggestions of how this could be done with minimal impact: Tactics must be planned according to each individual field and circumstance of withdrawal. But prior to attempting to convince participants, I suggest researchers first ask, "Would trying to persuade participants to continue, equate to placing them under pressure and harm?" And then, from a methodological perspective, "How could participants' qualitative data be affected if they were to continue?"

Discontinuing the Study. A third option would negate many of the issues arising from continuing the study—with or without the withdrawn data. Abandoning the study would negate the problem of building theory from incomplete data sets much more robustly that a caveat written into published work is able to do, for example. But this option raises its own ethical issues, especially in terms of stakeholder investment. If the study has attracted funding, the benefactors will not see a return on their investment, for instance. And participants not withdrawing may have taken part with some potential risk to themselves. Thus, I urge researchers to be empathetic with stakeholders, and first ask, "What are the types and extents of stakeholder investment in the project?" And then related to this, "As stakeholders, how might we feel in the event of abandoning the study?" Clearly, it is likely that each stakeholder will hold a very different viewpoint, and empathy is subjective and speculative. But I argue that embracing Plato's golden rule in this context may offer valuable insight for the researcher in pursuing the best course of action.

From a methodological perspective it may be that some of the more in-depth participatory elements of inductive research makes discontinuance of the study more problematic for inductive research: Exiting the field may have unforeseen repercussions. This may be less of a problem for deductive research in that, owing to common physical and psychological distance between researcher and participants, discontinuing the study can be "cleanly" achieved. Thus, I encourage researchers to ask, "In the context of methodological approach, what are the foreseeable impacts and difficulties for participants in the event of discontinuing the study?"

Conclusion

In Brooklands, the crux of the problem centered on the disruptive impact that participant withdrawal had on knowledge induction. My study used grounded theory, but I maintain that the processes—via both tangible and more cognitive-based means—of how constructs, ideas, relationships, and so on are derived are pivotal to a range of inductive approaches. My Brooklands experience motivated me to delve more deeply into the ethical and methodological issues that arose, and this encouraged me to propose ways forward in the development of how ethics are policed, especially in formal, objective frameworks. However, I also strongly emphasize the idiosyncrasies of my field and the circumstances of withdrawal, and I argue this is typical of inductive research as a whole. This motivated me to present a series of questions and recommendations that researchers may wish to reflect on, in the context of their individual projects. The purpose is not to dictate, and their scope is not exhaustive, but I hope that the points I raise stimulate debate. More so, I hope that researchers may find them as useful reference points in their future endeavors.

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Author Biography

Andrea Stevenson Thorpe holds a PhD and MBA from Aston University. She alternates between consultancy and academic activity within enterprise and entrepreneurship realms, with particular research interests in entrepreneurship, enterprise growth and non-growth, and the interplay between the natural world and business activity.