The ethical issues around recording at first appear to be quite simple—kinds of equipment to use, necessity to gather a varied and rich corpus, obligation to archive following best practices. These are part of ethical conduct with respect to scholarship in the field. Yet these technological issues cannot be viewed in isolation from the individuals and communities involved, and what might appear to be straightforward is actually part of the process of working together and building respect.

What if people do not want recordings archived at all? As discussed earlier, it is up to an individual and a community to decide what they want done with recordings that are made of them. While from the perspective of linguistics as a science there is a mandate to record and archive, this may well not be the goal of the community.

What about ownership of the research findings? Questions of intellectual property can loom large in fieldwork; see Dwyer (2006) and Austin (2010a) for some discussion, as well as Newman (2007, and in Chapter 19 below) on copyright. Who owns the data, the recordings, the content? In some cases individuals and communities might freely allow you to use any data; in other communities they might ask that you get permission for each sentence that you would like to use in an article that you write. You also need to consider authorship on articles—when you have worked extensively with someone, should they be a co-author on work where you have done the analysis? Independent of such questions, best practice in linguistic research is to acknowledge the contributions of speakers if they desire it.

p. 425

18.5.2 Ethics and knowledge systems

Many of the languages that are endangered today are spoken by peoples who have been deeply affected by colonization. Recent years have seen the development of indigenous research, with an attempt to shift the focus of research paradigms involving indigenous peoples towards areas such as traditional knowledge and ways of knowing, recognizing different epistemological traditions and systems and, as discussed earlier, developing ethical standards for research (for work in this area, see e.g. Bach 2003; Battiste and Henderson 2000; Brown and Strega 2005; Cyr 1999; Gil 2001; Manatowa-Bailey 2007; Nevins 2004; Smith 1999; Wilson 2008). There is a focus on respect and responsibility in research, and on reciprocity, as outlined in the earlier discussion of the Canadian Institutes for Health Research ethics guidelines for work with Aboriginal peoples.

As the value of different knowledge systems has come to be recognized, it has also become evident that different knowledge systems may make different demands. Thus, what is considered to be scientific, what is considered to be important to study, what is recognized as interesting or important, may well differ between you and members of a community in which you are working when you are raised in different systems of knowledge. The purposes of serving scholarship narrowly defined as university-driven, western-tradition scholarship, and those of the community are not necessarily one and the same. Two distinct worldviews can be in conflict with one another, with different types of knowledge valued or privileged by different intellectual traditions. For instance, the linguist might feel that recording as large a corpus as possible is important not only for science, but for the community itself down the road, if it ever wants to work to revitalize its language. That language revitalization projects depend on having excellent documentation of a language is clear: the well-known revitalization projects with the Wampanoag (Ash, Fermino, and Hale 2001) and Myaamia (Leonard 2007) communities in the United States of America and the Kaurna community (Amery 2000) in Australia, for instance, depend on the quality of materials available. However, a community might feel that the time for the language is past, and it is not interested in participating in this endeavor—or is perhaps even actively opposed to this (e.g. Manatowa-Bailey 2007), while others might view languages as sleeping, to be awakened at the appropriate moment (e.g. Leonard 2008). As a less radical example, a linguist may feel that the highest priority in creating a dictionary is to produce the most comprehensive, detailed dictionary possible. A community might want to have a more