Week 2: Challenges within Constructive Research

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# Challenges within Constructive Research

Constructive design is one of the most common research methods for information systems and technology (Silvestrini & Sammito, 2012). The methodology revolves around building artifacts, studying outcomes, and then deriving novel observations. During this process, the researcher needs to be cognizant of ethical and quality challenges. When the authors fail to address those risks, their efforts conclude with unacceptable and unused results.

# Ethical Challenges

Ethics are a system of moral principles that dictate the norms of a group. Societies implement these systems through social constructivism, enabling and constraining the group’s actions (Burr, 2015). Communities leverage this mechanism to assign truths and then infer a concept’s value (Gergen, 2010). Consider a project that seeks to prove that men are superior to women. Within a chauvinistic cohort, these results align with their world views and are ethical. However, a diverse group would chastise the very idea, regardless of methodology. Further complicating the matter, ethical identities are dynamic and evolve (or regress) over time.

Researchers need to understand their internal biases, in addition to the audience’s norms. Everyone has historical and cultural defaults that lead to prejudices. These subtle classification differences influence our language, which constructs reality (Owen, 2017). Picture two people, one fat another thin. Then change those definitions to obese and anorexic. Did all four imagined people have the same gender and race? Words matter and one needs to choose them carefully.

Numerous professional, regulatory, and advisory groups create frameworks that outline strategies for approaching ethical designs. The Belmont Report (1979) famously defines three core principles: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. These tenants ask researchers to treat everyone fairly and avoid harm. However, even this simple statement has ambiguity. Adashi et al. (2018) argue that the Belmont Report’s “distinction between research and practice is disappearing within the commercialization of present-day research (pg. 1347).” After fourth years, the ethical code requires modernization to align with the evolving worldviews. Roberts (2021) proposes that ethical behavior focus further examine discrepancies of “harm versus setback.”