

individuals' psyches. I myself depicted this as the conflict of the *miserable* and the *prideful* (*Japan's Underclass: Day Laborers and the Homeless* [Trans Pacific Press, 2006]). I interpreted this conflict as a collision of an *actual* self-perception with an *ideal* one. Last, the homeless have ideas on death as well as on life. Many homeless waver on the brink of committing suicide, and some of them indeed die by their own hand. The bigger the gap between actual self-perception and ideal perception comes, the more likely the homeless person is to commit suicide. This could be another important topic for interpreting the self-perception of the homeless.

Höjdestrand analyzes the characteristics of Russian homelessness by comparing it with the European situation. The Russian homeless are people whose values are framed by three cultures: the original Russian, the socialistic, and the capitalistic. Therefore, their ideas on life and their attitudes toward others may be refracted threefold. Certainly, the homeless are an important group for social study. The model of the society can be depicted symbolically from the study of the homeless, as this book suggests.

*Ethical Imperialism: Institutional Review Boards and the Social Sciences, 1965–2009.* By Zachary M. Schrag. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010. Pp. xvi+245. \$45.00.

Laura Stark  
Wesleyan University

Since the 1970s, most social scientists working at universities in the United States have had to get prior approval from human subjects review boards (also called institutional review boards) if they wanted to do research on people. Zachary M. Schrag's *Ethical Imperialism* describes how the work of researchers in several disciplines, including sociology, became subject to federal human subjects regulations and how these policies have shifted over the past 50 years. The author is a historian, blogger, and unhappy veteran of the review process at George Mason University. His book was born, first, of "outrage" with the current IRB review process and, second, out of "curiosity."

Schrag's concern is to justify the view that most social scientists' research should not be subject to the federal regulations. His historical interpretations tend to be character assessments of individuals rather than reflections on how IRBs connected to broader social processes or how IRB debates fit into a wider political context. Readers may turn to *Ethical Imperialism* for an explanation of why social scientists are regulated that extends beyond the heroes and villains. The most compelling explanation is tucked into a chapter where Schrag writes that, from the 1960s through the present day, "social scientists found themselves swept along, not be-

cause of anything they had done, but because regulators preferred to control whole universities rather than make careful distinctions among disciplines” (p. 142). This keen observation, however, is not harnessed to a broader analytic framework or explanatory apparatus.

*Ethical Imperialism* describes how policy makers and researchers developed rules for the treatment of human subjects with special attention to academic disciplines that Schrag defines as the social sciences history, sociology, anthropology, political science, and others (but not psychology). Chapter 1 describes how professional associations, such as the American Sociological Association, developed or revised their codes of ethics for research in the late 1960s because of contemporary political concerns. Schrag sets up the key semantic assumption on which the book turns: that there has been a shared, systematic distinction between the disciplines called “the social sciences” and “the behavioral sciences” since the 1960s. For Schrag the distinction is important because it is the foundation of his belief that it is appropriate to regulate medicine and the behavioral sciences, but not the social sciences. At times, however, Schrag’s evidence suggests that policy makers organized their own thinking around research methods rather than along strict disciplinary lines.

Schrag continues trying to bring into focus the dividing line between the social and behavioral sciences in chapter 2, which covers the period from 1966 to 1976, when federal laws for human subject oversight were enacted (in the 1974 National Research Act). As Schrag shows, research methods commonly used in the social sciences were included in the regulations because of contemporary concerns about social, legal, and financial risks—not only the (nonexistent) physical risks of sharing information with a social researcher. To understand how worries about nonphysical risks might have seemed legitimate to historical actors, readers should bring to the book a sense of broader political conversations at the time about civil rights, “privacy,” and expert authority.

Chapters 3 and 4 move on to the NIH’s commission charged with reviewing human subjects regulations during the 1970s and to its most well-remembered publication, *The Belmont Report* (1979). These chapters extend a point that Schrag nicely develops in the earlier sections: that policy makers, commissioners, and social scientists disagreed even among themselves about which disciplines (or research methods) should be regulated and about how much flexibility should be built into the regulations. Some of the contradictory views that Schrag presents might be attributed to his evidence (both archival records of the commission and recent oral history interviews). Nonetheless, Schrag convincingly shows that many contemporary social scientists did not want to be regulated—a view shared by most researchers in other fields as well.

Chapters 5 and 6 show how policy makers introduced this flexibility in 1981 at the urging of colleagues and of academic activists, and how regulators gradually withdrew some of these concessions for the following decade. Readers will again have to rely on a sense of the broader political

valences of IRB debates to understand the stakes of research by academics who “just watched and talked to adults” (p. 98). Without this sense, contemporary concerns about interview, questionnaire, survey, and observational research would indeed sound bizarre, rather than legitimate, in light of public concerns—for example, about how sharing health information in an interview could jeopardize one’s prospects for getting a job and health insurance in the American market.

The final two chapters (7 and 8) chronicle how social scientists have remained unhappy with IRBs, but have grown accustomed to the review process since the 1990s. Schrag finds it worrisome that some social scientists, including leaders of the ASA, have even accommodated and at times defended regulation.

The punchline of the book is a policy recommendation: the U.S. Congress should amend the National Research Act so that in most cases social science researchers who study legally competent adults do not need prior review by an institutional review board. Schrag concedes that the review system would still be hard to change because “still in place would be state laws governing human subjects research, laws in other nations based on the U.S. example, and, most importantly, a whole industry of university administrators and consultants who believe that IRB review of the social sciences is necessary. But cut that root,” namely, the federal law empowering IRBs, “and the tangled branches may yet wither” (p. 192). Readers can ask how this policy recommendation might have been different if the chronicle of events were in conversation with a broader explanatory apparatus—for example, if it connected to any scholarly literatures on how state bureaucracies shape scientific practices, manage collegiate organizations, and attempt to tame risk through regulation. *Ethical Imperialism* allows readers to develop their own explanations of why our problems with IRBs are less personal and more patterned—and thus harder to alleviate.