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978-0-521-18708-4- Research Ethics: A Philosophical Guide to the Responsible Conduct of Research

Gary Comstock

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Gary Comstock

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To

Marie Pippert Comstock and Roy Louis Comstock

their lives and their love
an expanding circle

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Acknowledgments

In the second half of this century's first decade, I was privileged to participate in a wide-ranging conversation about the teaching of research ethics. The conversation or, more accurately, conversations occurred primarily among those scholars involved in a project known as the Model Curriculum for Land Grant Universities in Research Ethics (LANGURE). More than a hundred faculty and graduate students contributed to LANGURE, and their creativity and imagination inspired me to write this book. Our goal was to develop a novel curriculum in the responsible conduct of research (RCR), a curriculum that would take a philosophical approach to the topic and emphasize the centrality of senior members of the community in RCR pedagogy. I'll say more about these goals and assumptions in the Introduction. Before proceeding, however, I wish to acknowledge those who helped to shape the ideas expressed in these pages. There are many and – at the risk of forgetting someone – I venture to acknowledge them all.

Christine Grant and Brenda Alston-Mills served with me as LANGURE's co-principal investigators. It is a privilege to acknowledge their contributions. Two brilliant and creative scholars, each was an indefatigable source of critical insight and good humor. It was an honor and a delight to work alongside them. As this book is one of the “deliverables” of our project and supported by the National Science Foundation (NSF Grant 0530217), we are required to add that any opinions, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of NSF.

For fixing some of my mistaken views about moral philosophy and helping me to get right whatever is right in the overall structure of the book, four philosophical tutors deserve special credit. Gary Varner persuaded me of the virtues of R. M. Hare's two-level utilitarian ethical theory years ago and he commented extensively on many of these chapters. Doug MacLean helped me to sharpen the exposition of contractualism, argued vigorously with me about the plausibility of egoism, and registered more complaints about the pedagogical wisdom of featuring egoism – as I do – as the first ethical theory that a reader will here encounter. Rob Streiffer and Terry McConnell read almost all of the manuscript, pointing out passages where the argument needed clarification and strengthening. Both saved me from numerous errors. Rob has also helped me to appreciate the role that ethicists may play in public policy discussions. I am deeply indebted to these four exemplary scholars and honored to call them friends.

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The OpenSeminar in Research Ethics (openseminar.org/ethics) is a repository of open-source courses in responsible conduct of research. The courses are created, maintained, and updated by senior scholars. These scholars, experts in mentoring junior researchers as they prepare to become professionals, constitute a diverse, informal online community. I gratefully acknowledge the contributions of the OpenSeminar group, especially those

who serve on its Advisory Board: Brenda Alston-Mills, Chi Anyansi-Archibong, Alan Beck, Dian Dooley, Christine Grant, Douglas MacLean, Terrance McConnell, Mildred Pointer, David Preston, Rob Streiffer, and Clark Wolf. The managing editors are Anita Gordon, Carol Fedor, David Edelman, Jamaal Pitt, Jorge Ferrer, and Sadashiva Naik. Members who contributed overviews of ethical issues in their disciplines to the website include: Man-Sung Yim, Jun Li, and Tatjana Jevremovic; Tom Wentworth and Kristen Rosenfeld; Brooke Edmunds, Eric Davis and Gerald Holmes; David Wright; Emily Vollmer, Nancy Creamer and Paul Mueller; Michael Paesler; Martha Scotford and Traci Rose Rider; Abigail Cameron, Stephanie Teixeira and Michael Schulman; and David Johnston, Billy Williams, and Phil Lewis. Members who made indirect contributions to this volume include David Musick, Janet Malek, Gene Spafford, George Bodner, Mulumebet Worku, Veronica Nwosu, Robin Liles, Bruce Harmon, Michael Peters, A. G. Rud, Andrew Hirsch, Jothi Kumar, James Svava, Surya Mallapragada, and Tom Wentworth. I have benefited from conversations about research ethics with Mark Sagoff and Rachelle Hollander, but never as thoroughly as when we worked together on a grant proposal for an online research ethics center. To everyone mentioned here, thank you.

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I learned about various aspects of ethical issues in different scientific disciplines when serving on the editorial committee of the third edition of *On Being a Scientist* (2009). Thanks to the members of that group: Carolyn Bertozzi, John Ahearne, Francisco Ayala, Andrea L. Bertozzi, David Bishop, Frances Houle, Deborah G. Johnson, Michael Loui, Rebecca R. Richard-Kortum, Nick Steneck, and Michael J. Zigmond.

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in equal measure. I am glad to have the opportunity to recognize his virtues and salute his lifetime of achievement.

§§§

I dedicate the book to Mom and Dad. I suspect that they have no idea how much their support has meant to me, especially during the last few years. Children are fortunate when they believe with reason that their parents are the best parents in the world. But I am more fortunate still, because everyone I know says *my* parents are the best parents *they* know of, too.