Interest in ethical issues in social science has increased greatly in recent years. However, no comprehensive framework for the prediction and elimination of ethical dilemmas has been presented in the literature. This paper first analyzes reasons for increased interest in ethical issues, and then presents a broad framework for prediction and analysis of ethical problems. This framework is based on exchange theory, and shows the interdependencies between five "publics" in the research process: sponsors, researchers, subjects, the media, and the general public. The model also utilizes the sociological concepts of role of each public, the configuration of ascribed and achieved status, and norm abeyance. The primary exchange concepts used are cost, benefit, and trust. The model is illustrated with four actual research projects where ethical dilemmas occurred, and is found to be predictive of ethical problems if there are great disparities in cost/benefit ratios between subjects and researchers or sponsors, if there is great discrepancy between the status of the subjects and the researchers or sponsors, and if the researchers engage in norm abeyance.

Attention to ethics developed during the 1960s, mushroomed during the 1970s, and is continuing in the 1980s. For example the code of ethics for the American Association of Public Opinion Research was first published in 1960, and the code of the American Sociological Association was first published in 1968 (and drastically expanded in 1980). The American Statistical Association has yet to fully ratify its code, although attempts to draft a code have been underway for over 30 years, and an "interim code" was published in 1983. Sustained discussion of ethical issues also dates primarily from the 1960s, and early 1970s, when a substantial portion of the discussion was stimulated by Project Camelot (Galliher 1973; Horowitz 1965, 1971; Kelman 1967; Sjoberg 1967). For more recent analyses of social ethics see Reynolds (1979), Bolmer (1982), Capron (1982), Beauchamp et al. (1982), Sieber (1982), Hamnett et al. (1984), Bulmer (1979), Nejelski (1976), Friedrich (1983), Cassell and Wax (1980), Wax and Cassell (1981), and Long and Dorn (1982).
The development of formal codes of ethics is clearly a manifestation of increased concern with ethical issues in social research. How can we explain this increased concern? Were ethical issues wrongfully neglected in the past, or is there an increasing danger of ethical problems, and thus an increasing need for concern with ethics? Doubtlessly we can answer "yes" to both of these questions. Ethical concerns have certainly been neglected in social research, but also, potential ethical pitfalls seem to be increasing, so that there is more need than ever before for systematic concern with ethics. There are at least five reasons why concern with ethics has recently increased.

1. A recent increase, fueled by computerization and other technological advances, in both the number of research studies undertaken, and the size of each study. Such increases have occurred across the board—in terms of the sample size, number of variables, and complexity of design. Thus, more people are affected than ever before, and in a more obtrusive manner.

2. The establishment of computerized data banks of various sorts, giving rise to speculation about the establishment of a national data bank (see Smith 1981, p. 11-13), and raising the specter of "Big Brother" for some people.

3. A transmission of concern with ethics into social research from other fields, primarily medicine. This trend is exacerbated by bureaucratization (e.g., Human Subject Committees, which are bureaucratically mandated to deal with all disciplines studying human subjects).

4. A growing concern among some persons (perhaps a social movement) with the rights of privacy of all persons, and with the rights of victims in particular. This trend is evidenced in a number of manifestations. For example, increased concern with animal rights and the ethics of animal experimentation, victim compensation programs, and larger court settlements for victims.

5. Changes in the nature of research subjects. Many social research studies and social problems have traditionally sought to understand and ameliorate various social problems, and often chose the poor and minorities as research subjects (e.g., the study of poverty, crime, drug addiction and delinquency). Thus, there was often a distinct status gap between the upper-middle class researcher and the lower class, relatively powerless research subject.

In such a milieu, it is probable that subjects were not always aware of their rights or were able to seek redress for ethical violations. Recently, subjects have more avenues for redress because of increased emphasis on civil rights, legal assistance programs for the poor, etc. Further, the increase in research studies has broadened the research areas of interest, and thus the subject population.

The nonpoor are increasingly being studied, both because of a saturation of lower class areas by researchers, causing them to turn to unsaturated populations, and because of increased theoretical or substantive interest in areas other than social problems of the poor. Now it is often the highly educated who are saturated by mail surveys and telephone interviews. Survey researchers are increasingly using both of these techniques partly because of technical advances such as