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Does psychology need its own ethics?



By Debbie Bodinger

"I have some doubts about psychologists suddenly being intrigued by ethics when some of them can't even spell it. I wonder if so much talk about ethics isn't like that of the pub Don Juan - we spend so much time talking about it that there's no time to actually do it."

The speaker was Dr. Graham Reed, York's Dean of Graduate Studies, opening a conference on

"Ethics in Psychological Research", held last weekend at Atkinson College.

The conference reflected some widespread concerns among psychologists. What are the researcher's moral obligations? What does he owe his subjects, and his community?

Many have felt that the creation of a formal code of rules could help solve these problems, by giving researchers a set of criteria with

which they can guide their studies. Much of the conference centered on discussing what these criteria should be, and how they might be enforced. But Reed brought up a question which cuts far deeper.

What are the implications of assuming that psychological research requires moral considerations other than those normally given any human activity?

See Special ethics, page 8.