Episode 169: Helen Kara

**KL:** Katie Linder

**HK**: Helen Kara

**KL:** You’re listening to “Research in Action”: episode one hundred and 169.

[intro music]

# Segment 1:

**KL:** Welcome to “Research in Action”, a weekly podcast about topics and issues related to research in higher education, featuring experts across a range of disciplines. I'm your host, Dr. Katie Linder, research director at Oregon State University Ecampus, a national leader in online education. Along with every episode, we post show notes with links to resources mentioned in the episode, a full transcript, and an instructor guide for incorporating the episode into your courses. Visit our website at Ecampus.oregonstate.edu/podcast to find all of these resources.

On this episode. I'm joined by Dr. Helen Kara, director of We Research It, Limited, who has been an independent researcher since 1999, and writes and teaches on research methods. She is the author of Creative Research Methods in the Social Sciences: A Practical Guide. She is not, however, and has never been an academic, though she has learned to speak the language. In 2015, Helen was the first fully independent researcher to be conferred as a fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences. She is also a visiting fellow of the UK's National Center for Research Methods. Her latest book is Research Ethics in the Real World: Euro Western and Indigenous Perspectives. Thanks so much for joining me on the show today, Helen.

**HK:** Oh, that's great. I'm really happy to be here.

**KL:** I am really excited to talk with you about research ethics, among other things. There are so many topics I want to dive in with you, Helen. I've followed you for quite a long time on Twitter, and there are so many interesting things that you work on, but when it comes to research ethics, I know you have a recent book on this, and so I want to dive into this topic in particular. Can you share a little bit more about your recent book on research ethics?

**HK:** Sure. I came to write it because I was frustrated with the existing books on research ethics. They're good as far as they go, but they only go so far. They tend to treat research ethics as if it somehow exists in some kind of intellectual bubble separated from everything else, and I really don't see it that way. Perhaps it's come to seem like that because of the way that our research ethics governance system works in much of the world, where IRBs or research ethics committees are set up by universities or health authorities, and people have to apply to them for formal ethical approvals, so they can end up feeling like they've done ethics before they've even done much of their research, but it's a separate thing. But for me, it's very integral. The ethics is part of our work as researchers, at every stage, from the very beginning formulation of a research question right through to the end of a research project, wherever that may be.

**KL:** I love this, Helen. I love how you're contextualizing this, and I know that you take this concept of research ethics, and kind of place it in relationship to individual ethics, social ethics, institutional ethics, professional ethics, political ethics. There's all these different kinds of ethics that we can be considering. What are some of the links that you're making between research ethics and these other kinds of ethics that maybe we need to be thinking about?

**HK:** I think that's absolutely right, Katie. I think we need to be aware of these links at the very least, and not regard research ethics as something separate somehow., How they interact is incredibly complex and changes depending on the context you're in, the situation you're in, the dynamics in that context and the situation. As far as I can see it, at the moment, there's no sort of hard and fast rules, but perhaps it will be easier to think about a specific example. If you have an individual researcher, perhaps let's say a doctoral researcher, someone, a graduate student, you would call them in the United States, someone doing a PhD or a professional doctorate, and that person has to do a piece of research for that qualification. That's very much of interest to them personally, but by the time they're doing doctoral work, they're probably part of a profession or aiming to become part of the specific profession.

The professional ethics come into play there, that they also might have to sign up to. Then there are the institutional ethics of the higher education organization that they are working with or studying with, and that institution may have specific ethics. It's certainly not the case that every university has the same ethical approach. Universities quite often have their own codes of ethics, or their own ethical stances. They may be aligned to a particular religion, or a particular political view, and again, that brings an ethical dimension to it. Then of course there are social ethics. We learn ethics as part of our society. We learn what's okay, what's not okay in our culture, and different cultures have different ideas of ethics, and those can brush up against each other when we work with other people, and meet other people in any context, but certainly in professional contexts, and then political ethics come to play, not necessarily even big P political, as in political parties, but the sort of political expediency that we all have to deal with as researchers in terms of funders politics, and institutions' politics.

Again, institutions don't only have ethical stances. They also have small P political stances, and all of that interacts. It's a full [*inaudible*] of intersectionality, to use the term devised by Kimberlé Crenshaw to talk about the intersectionality of marginalized people. Clearly, that's a very different thing, where race, and gender, and social class, and sexual orientation and so on interacting in a. Individual, that's the form of intersectionality that she was defining and speaking about, but this is a form of intersectionality, a form of ethics intersectionality, where all these different kind of ethics can interact. For example, if as an individual you follow a particular religion, that's more about morals as in right and wrong, but there will be ethical decisions that you make that kind of fall out of that personal moral code that you have, or are allied to it. As a researcher, sometimes we have to navigate between all of these different kinds of ethics, our own and other people's, the way that they all intersect at the point where we need to make an ethical decision. That's part of what makes ethical work so very challenging, and why I think we need more ethical education and perhaps a little less ethical regulation.

**KL:** Okay, so one of the things that I love about this approach, Helen, is that you, like you said, ethics is not like a box that you check and then you're done, which I think some people can view it that way, because of the way IRB systems are set up, particularly here in the US. I'm curious if you can talk about some of the different ethics questions that we might be wanting to ask ourselves at the different stages of the research process, to really keep it front of mind as we're progressing throughout the research.

**HK:** Oh, I totally love this question. I could talk about this for about eight hours. I won't. Don't worry. I'll just talk about it for a little while. Right from the minute... I said this earlier, right from the minute we think up a potential research question, we need to be asking about the ethical dimensions of that question. Is it even ethical to do this research? Are there people who might misuse the results? Are there people with different political agendas, different ways of looking at the world, who might use results in the way that we might not intend? Has it been done before? If it's been done before, is it ethical to do it again? Are we overburdening potential participants by asking again and again these questions that as researchers, we think are so important, but funnily enough, most of the rest of the population of the world doesn't seem to regard as all that essential.

Right from the start, and then sometimes... I did some interviews for this book, and it was interesting because I was interviewing academics, and I would say things like, "Well, what are the ethical considerations for you when you're setting your research in context? So perhaps through doing a literature review or if it's applied research, it might be a document analysis. What are the ethical considerations for that?" So many people said to me, "Oh, I don't think there are any ethical considerations." I think they're are. I think, how do we acknowledge the other people whose work we're building on is a hugely ethical area, so we need to acknowledge other people's work. We need to cite it, and we need to cite it appropriately. We need to read it carefully, and make sure that we're citing it carefully, and in the right place, and in the right way in relation to our own work.

We need to not plagiarize. We need to... We know all that stuff, but then that's ethical. That's an ethical issue too. So is not to steal other people's work. We know a lots about the ethics around data gathering, because that's where IRBs, and research ethics committees, and research governance tend to focus their efforts, but there are other issues beyond not harming participants. Obviously that's hugely important, but what about benefiting participants? Do we think about that? Is it not time that as researchers we started to consider how we can directly benefit our actual participants as part of the research process? After all, we're generally getting paid for doing research. Our participants aren't usually getting paid, although some do, but it's pretty rare. Maybe we should start thinking about that. We ask people to participate out of the goodness of their hearts to benefit other people, imagined future people, but maybe we should get a little direct about this.

Then there's analysis. A lot of unethical... No, wait a minute. I'm saying that wrong, because I was just going to say a lot of unethical practice happens at the analytic stage, but that's not true. That would give you a misleading impression. What I really need to say is, of the unethical practice that occurs, which is a minority of practice, I believe, some of it does take place at the analytics stage, where often researchers are working alone, so it can be tempting sometimes to just massage the figures a little bit, or just change the quota a tiny bit, to make a point more how we think it should be. Because let's face it, none of us are neutral. None of us are objective, and this is why it's important to try really hard to be ethical because we have our own interests, our own passions, our own concerns.

Most of us are not doing the research we do because we don't care about it. We're doing it because we do care, and we care a lot, so we need to guard ourselves really carefully at the analysis stage. If you look at the work of Retraction Watch online, they check journal article retractions mostly for reasons of ethical misdemeanor, a lot of the problems are at the analysis stage, either misrepresentation of data, or manipulation of data, or outright fraud, making up data, the fabrication of data. These things are a real problem in the research community, and they reduce trust in research. We need to try to guard against this. Then there are ethical issues, as you report on research, present research, disseminate research, but also aftercare. This is something we hardly ever talk about, but aftercare, I think is really important, and I've really learned this from reading the work of indigenous research methods, people who are experts in that field from around the world, who talk about the need for aftercare, the need for aftercare for participants, aftercare for data, aftercare for findings, for us all to really have responsibility for our projects, for the whole of the project's lifetime, not just our lifetime, not the lifetime of our budget, not the lifetime of some temporary post when we do this work, but for the lifetime of our research, and certainly of our own participants, as far as we possibly can.

**KL:** Okay, so this concept of aftercare, we could do an entire different episode on it, cause I find that really fascinating, and you're right. We don't really talk about it, and I think especially in a world where we throw something out on Twitter, and then it's gone. It goes into like this black hole of the internet, and we're moving onto the next thing, there is this kind of interesting component of what do we do with these projects that maybe have been around for a decade, and may need to be updated, or there's still questions around that topic? Can you talk a little bit more about this concept of aftercare, and what are some possible kind of strategies for doing it ethically with that ethics in mind?

**HK:** Yeah, I think your point about the sort of long tail of the internet is a really valid one, because we didn't think that through in the early days. I think 10 15 years ago, when we were first putting research online, and maybe doing research with quite marginalized groups, perhaps teenage moms with mental health problems, who at the time were very proud, and felt very validated by being part of a research project, and very happy that it was online with their photos, and their names, and their experiences. But maybe now 10, 15 years later, they're looking for employment, and they don't want prospective employers finding out that they were a teenage mum who had mental health problems, so they want not taken down, but can they find the researcher now? Can they track down that person? What if that person hasn't got a big online profile?

I know many of us do, but there are many who do not, and so it's a real issue, and we didn't think it through. I think we don't have the answers to a lot of these things, but at least we're starting to have some of the right questions. Certainly in terms of aftercare, I think maintaining a public profile so that people can contact us as a big part of that,, and maintaining our responsibility and passing on that responsibility, having succession planning for when we die because we all going to die. I don't wish to bring everyone down on this podcast, but it is simply a fact of life, and so I don't know when that will be for me. I don't know if it will be today ,or tomorrow, or next week, or next year, or next decade. I hope not for a long time, but it would be responsible of me to make plans for who would be able to be contacted after I'm not here anymore, should somebody need to do something with some research that I've conducted, after my death.

I don't think we have plans in place for any of that. I don't think we have plans for participants, but also for data, aftercare for data, because data is often kept in electronic form, and do we preserve it? Do we make provision for other people to be able to use that data? Do we make the most of the gift that our participants have given us? If we've done primary data collection and the data that they've provided, whatever form that may be in, and make that available for other people to use. There are now some repositories for qualitative data. There are measures being taken to preserve data in electronic form to make it more usable, more reusable, to publish data along with findings. Because again, that helps people to judge our research more fully than just through our own reporting of that research. That's again, a form of aftercare and I'm sure there are other forms of aftercare, but the, I haven't thought of that, the literature hasn't thought of, we're just at the start of this journey in Euro Western research.

We can certainly learn, I think, from the way that indigenous researchers operate in this respect as in a number of others, but we have got a long way to go, I think.

**KL:** One of the things that I think is really interesting about your work on research ethics, Helen, is that you have set indigenous and Euro Western research methods and ethics side by side in this book, and really started to look at them not necessarily in a comparative way, but as, how can they inform each other? What can we learn from looking at these things side by side< can you talk a little bit about that, about the choice to do that in this book, and some of the things that you're learning from that?

**HK:** Yes, I can. I was well underway with this book. I'd had a proposal accepted. I'd figured out what I wanted to do. I wanted the first part to talk about the links between research ethics and other kinds of ethics, and then I wanted the second part to talk about ethical issues at each stage of the research process. I was underway with that piece of work, and then I went to a seminar. I was at a conference in Bath, in England, and this was July 2016, so nearly three years ago now, and there was a seminar on post-colonial and indigenous research methods. I thought, well, that sounds interesting. I'll go to that, and it was presented by three pretty amazing women. There was Bagele Chilisa from Botswana, Helen Moewaka Barnes from New Zealand, and Debra McGregor from Canada, all academics, all very experienced, and all indigenous researchers.

They opened my eyes to what indigenous research was. I really had not much idea. I'd read Linda Smith's book on decolonizing methodologies, and I'd read some other things on decolonizing methodologies, but that hadn't let me understand really, in any way, what indigenous research was. I've seen it as part of a kind of a transformative research framework, sort of akin to feminist research, or activist research, or participatory research, and actually it's not. It's a whole separate paradigm, and it's been in existence for tens of thousands of years. It predates Euro Western research by quite a long way, which of course doesn't necessarily mean it's better or more advanced, but it's just different, and it's interesting for me and it's different. Having been to that seminar, I went away and read everything I could find on indigenous research methods, because it's methods I' particularly interested in, and I read literature from around the world on qualitative and quantitative research, on community based research, on activist research, on all sorts of research that indigenous people carry out.

I learned a bit about methods. I'm no expert on indigenous research methods. I was concentrating more on the ethics side, and I wouldn't say I'm an expert on ethics, either. I think I'm a student of indigenous research methods and ethics, but I learnt a lot from the literature, enough to write about, and enough to recognize that Euro Western researchers could learn, potentially could learn quite a lot from the way that indigenous researchers look at research ethics. It's been very interesting. It's been a very interesting, a very difficult exercise. I think if I had known how hard it was, I never would have started, but I'm glad I did start, because now I finished, and a fascinating exercise to set the two paradigms side by side and see what I thought from my Euro Western perspective could be learned. Indigenous people have had to do this, because they live in a Euro Western dominated world and if they've wanted to become scholars, they've had to go to Euro Western dominated universities, and engage with Euro Western ways of doing research, so they have had no choice.

Even though research has been used as a real instrument of colonization, and as a way of justifying things like land grabs, and taking children away from families, and trying to wipe out languages, and some of these, and genocides, some of these just almost unimaginable atrocities that have gone on through history, and still go on today to a lesser or greater extent in different countries. But even though research has been part of that, I think from what I've understood from the literature, indigenous people have a lot of respect for research as they conduct it, as they see it, and for using systematic ways to find out about things we don't know enough about, or don't understand. It's been really, really interesting to, for me, to find out more. I wish I had the opportunity to study with indigenous researchers.

Maybe one day that will happen for me, but from here in the UK, people sometimes ask me, "But why is this important to you? Because you don't live in a settled, colonized country," but I'm from a colonizing nation, so I have a part to play here, I think in helping to dismantle as much as I come the aftereffects, the impacts of colonizing practices, rather than helping to perpetuate those colonizing practices. There are ethical issues within this, too. I had to consider, am I being extractive? Am I just taking from indigenous literature, and giving nothing back? Am I just doing it to further my own career? That is a challenge that could be laid at my door. On the other hand, within the indigenous research methods literature, some of the writers call for Euro, Western researchers to cite their work, to set it side by side to give it the respect that we give our Euro Western research methods colleagues, so that's the call I'm responding to, because it seems to me that it's no longer even in any sense justifiable to ignore this body of literature, and it amazes me that the indigenous research methods writers are very generous about Euro Western research methods, and techniques, and the benefits they can gain from learning about and using Euro Western methods.

If they can have that much generosity in the face of the way research has been used to help abuse their people, and wipe out their people over centuries, then I think we can extend a little generosity, and recognize how we can learn from indigenous research methods and ethics.

**KL:** Helen, you have given us so many things to think about. Thank you so much. We are going to link to Holden's book, Research Ethics in the Real World, in the show notes, in case you want to check out that a little bit more. We're going to take a brief break. When we come back, we're going to hear a little bit more from Helen about her role as an independent researcher back in a moment.

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# Segment 2:

**KL:** Helen, one of the things that I've always kind of appreciated when I look at your work is that you are an independent researcher. Can you talk a little bit about your choice to be an independent researcher, and what does that mean to be an independent researcher?

**HK:** What it means is that I'm not affiliated to any organization, such as a university, or a health authority, or research company. I work on my own, in an office in my garden. I do actually run a limited company, which I work through. It's a legal structure that operates here in the UK, but it only employs me, and it's 100% owned by me, so that's the sense in which I'm independent. I've never been an academic. I've never been a researcher in an organization like working for the government, or a nonprofit, or anything like that. I've only ever done this independently, and it wasn't really a choice. I became one kind of by accident, actually. My first degree was research-based. I studied psychology, and then I worked for about 12, 14 years in various fields, just kind of following my interests, and earning money, and living my life.

Then some people who I had met through work tried to commission a piece of research, and they were struggling a bit. They'd only had one application, and they needed more than one, because they were working with a local authority who, local government wanted it to be a competitive process, so they said to me, would I apply for this piece of work? They said, "You won't get it. The other people get it, but we need the make it look like a competition," so I said, "Yeah, sure. I'll do that. Sounds like fun." I applied. I had an interview. I didn't get it. They were happy. They bought me drinks in the pub. That was all good, and then a few weeks later I got a call from one of the people who'd been on the interview panel who said they had another piece of work that they did want me to do, so that was a surprise.

I said, "Okay." I was mostly self-employed at the time anyway, so it was easy to fit it in, and I thought it would be a one-off. I enjoyed doing it. It was interesting. It was fun. The people who commissioned it from me liked what I did, and word kind of got around, and then I just got asked to do more, and then I thought I'd better go and kind of upgrade my skills. Cause my first degree had been purely quantitative research, and now people are wanting mixed methods research, with a more qualitative dimension as well, so I felt like I really needed to upskill, to be able to meet those requirements, not just keep one step ahead of people all the time, but actually know what I was doing properly. I did a master's degree in social research methods, which I loved doing more than I've ever loved studying when I was younger.

I then went on and did a PhD, and the whole time really, for the first sort of 10 years or so, 10, 12 years, I was working for local government, central government, nonprofits, partnerships, not really any private sector work or industry-based work, and very little with academia. But then we had a big recession here in the UK. In 2010, we had a change of government and we went into austerity measures. There've been massive cuts to local government and nonprofit funding, so I kind of reinvented myself at that point, started writing books, and started working with academia, and that seems to have been successful. I'm glad to say I'm now back on a reasonably level, as level as you can ever be when you're self-employed, but now I've been an independent researcher for 20 years. It's been quite an interesting journey.

**KL:** Okay, so I'm sure our listeners are thinking, okay, we need to know more. How does this work? A question I think, kind of based on our last segment is, how do you handle things like IRB, and maybe some other logistics of research? As an independent researcher, how do those things work for you?

**HK:** I rarely have to fill in a formal ethics application thing for approval. I have had to, and I have done it when I've done that, but most of my work takes place outside of the purview of universities and health authorities, and there's an awful lot of the world that does research quite happily, ,and does very ethical research without having ethical approval from a formal committee. In terms of the other kinds of practicalities, collaboration can be a little tricky because I work on my own, so if I want to find someone to collaborate with on a piece of work, luckily I now have quite good networks, but it's more difficult, I think, than being in a department with several other people with similar interests. I'm going to international conferences several times a year, where you meet people with similar interests.

I go to conferences now and again, when I can find affordable ones that I can get to, but my budget for such things is pretty limited, as you can imagine. I haven't yet found myself able to get to a conference beyond the UK, or at least, not in the hard self. Often I can take part virtually through Twitter hashtags, or through other means, so the internet is hugely helpful for these sorts of logistics. I think without the internet, without email, without Skype or Google Hangouts, without documents sharing, without all of the things that the internet enables, it would be much, much harder for me to do this work. I remember when I first started, I went to the library. I physically went to the, and I didn't just go to my local library.

I went to the county library, the big library, 16 miles away, to see what they had about research methods, that I could look at, and read, and that was helpful for me then. I did have email at that time, but I looked back at that project recently, that first project. Some people had emailed who I was working with, but some did not at that time, so everything we wrote, we could email it to some people, but we had to post it to other people. We had to print it out on paper, and put it in an envelope with a stamp on, and take it to the post office, and put it in the little box, and wait days to get a reply, which now only 20 years later, it seems bizarre, but then it was absolutely normal. I've seen a lot of change, and a lot of changes in terms of the statistics too, but certainly the internet makes a massive difference.

**KL:** Helen, I'm wondering if you can talk a little bit about what a typical day looks like for you. I'm sure you're juggling multiple projects. You're also writing books, you're taking on client work. Can you give us a sense of just what that looks like?

**HK:** Really what it looks like is there is no typical day. Every day is different. I may be in the UK, I may be overseas, I may be in my office writing, wearing sweatpants. I may be nicely dressed and speaking, giving a keynote speech at a conference somewhere. I'm may well be traveling. I will probably be checking emails on my phone. It's a very mobile existence, and I kind of like that. I do like the days when I'm home-based, when I can work in my own office. I really liked the flexibility of being based at home, and I don't have a problem with motivational self-discipline. I like the fact that I can be working here in my office, and I can pop home, which is all of 20 yards away, and maybe hung up some laundry, or get myself a sandwich, and then be back at work 10 minutes later cracking on.

But I also enjoy the traveling and the meeting people, so this... On Sunday night I'll be traveling down to Bournemouth. I'm based in the Midlands of England. Bournemouth is on the south coast, be traveling down there, I'm teaching there on Monday and Tuesday, teaching creative research methods, and teaching ethical thinking, and decision making, and practice ,and then on Tuesday night I'll be up to London. I'm teaching in London. I'm teaching creative methods for evaluation on an open course for the Social Research Association. On Thursday, I'm at the Academy of Social Sciences for their summer event and annual general meeting. Then I'll be back up here Thursday night. Friday, I'm in my office again, so it's all about the traveling and again, the collaboration. I love the fact that I can collaborate with such a wide range of people, so right now, I'm collaborating with everyone from... Literally from forensic scientists to comics professors, where there's such a wide range in between different kinds of social scientists and arts people.

I find that absolutely fascinating. I learn so much from my collaborators, and I love not being constrained in the way that I know some of my academic colleagues are constrained, to stick within a much more narrow area. In fact, with my research ethics books, a fairly eminent professor said to me quite recently that if I'd been employed in academia, I would not have been able to write that book, because it's so wide ranging, that I would've been constrained to write something much narrower, and more closely focused, which would have been a shame. It's freeing. I don't as much as employed academics who would perhaps regard themselves as my peers, but I don't mind that, because I think I have a much nicer life. I don't have to go to so many meetings. That has to be a plus.

**KL**: Okay, so I think some people are probably listening to this going, that sounds pretty good. They're maybe interested in pursuing independent research. Can you talk about what are maybe helpful things for others to know about researching independently, or getting started on this pathway?

**HK:** You have to be willing to network, network, network, network, offline, online, any which way you can. If you're not really interested in networking, if you don't really like people very much, this probably isn't going to work for you. Networking is so, so key, and then being highly organized is also really key, and self-motivated. Some people don't suit the independent life because they need the structure of an employed position, where they're expected to be somewhere at a certain time, and to do specific things, and they have that structure to work with within. If you need that kind of a structure, it's hard to make it for yourself as an independent person. But if you are able to work very flexibly, and motivate yourself to get up in the morning when there's nobody pushing you ,or yelling at you for staff, or expecting you to be somewhere, then those are good qualities for an independent researcher. When it comes to getting started, anyone can do it. Anyone can get started.

Anyone can set themselves up and say, "Hey, world. I'm an independent researcher," but you need to go out looking for the work. It's not going to come to your door, so maybe network with people who might sub-contract work to you. Look for opportunities online. Certainly make yourself a decent website, so that you're putting yourself out there. Make the most use you kind of social media, LinkedIn. Facebook groups are really useful ways to get to know people. Twitter, no doubt. Other platforms. I think there are so many social media platforms now. I'm sure some people do well as independent researchers, for example, on Tumblr, which I think is a great platform, but I've just never engaged with it myself that much, and Reddit too is probably somewhere where people make good contacts. But again, that's not a platform I've particularly used myself.

Networking, organization, being self-motivated, and being willing to work hard. I guess, I do work hard. I love my work, so it doesn't always feel so hard, but I do a lot of it, so... When I say I do a lot of it, I don't mean I work 12 hours a day, seven days a week. I'm much more inclined to work in a focused way, for eight or nine hours and then stop and do something else. I don't often work in the evenings, and I try not to work weekends, or certainly not both days, but another thing I love about the independent lifestyle is that I can take time off when I choose, and I don't have to ask anyone's permission for that, so I'm not tied to public holidays. I mostly choose to work on public holidays because it's quiet.

The phone doesn't ring, the emails don't ping in so much. I can get a lot done, and I'd rather take my days off when everyone else is in work or in school, and so there are not huge queues, and the transport's not too busy, and the roads are quiet, and so on and so forth. It's all about flexibility. If you like flexibility and you can be flexible, but it's a great lifestyle. Also, if you don't mind not earning so much, because you probably are not going to earn so much as you would if you were employed, so if you have expensive tastes, or if you're going for expensive luxuries, like maybe having children, because that is quite expensive, then you might want to think twice about going the independent route, unless perhaps you have a supportive partner who's in employment and supports you being independent. That can be a good method for some couples, I know who, where one person really does want to have a fixed job that somebody else provides, and the other likes to be independent in that can provide good flexibility for child rearing and so on.

There are lots of ways you can cut into this cake, but particularly with the increasing sort of pressure and casualization in academia, more and more people are going independent. I'm seeing a big rise in academic coaching and academic help. People who've had experience of academia didn't like it, get out, think they're going to help other people through. Some are very good at it, but I think that market's getting a little flooded right now. I'm not saying don't give it a try if that's the way you want to go. I am seeing a lot of that going on, and that's not really where I'm at. I'm really a researcher as a writer, so I'm watching that and not feeling like it's threatening my own position in any sense. But I think it is becoming a real growth area, and I'm not quite sure how much of a market there will be for that kind of work.

**KL:** Helen, I want to thank you so much for giving us your thoughts on what it is to be an independent researcher right now, and also your incredible experience and knowledge with research ethics. Thanks so much for coming on the show.

**HK:** Great pleasure. Thank you for having me.

**KL:** Thanks also to our listeners for joining us for this week's episode of “Research in Action”. I'm Katie Linder, and we'll be back next week with a new episode.

Show notes with links to resources mentioned in the episode, a full transcript, and an instructor guide for incorporating the episode into your courses, can be found at the show’s website at [ecampus.oregonstate.edu/podcast](http://www.ecampus.oregonstate.edu/podcast).

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