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Abstract: Although ethics as a field and topic of human inquiry has a long history, concerns about research ethics are more recent. This editorial is intended to frame the McGINN and BOSACKI contribution on educating future researchers in research ethics that appears in this *FQS* issue. I provide a brief historical context for recent developments regarding research ethics and provide a classification of practitioners, who, in one way or another, have to deal with ethical issues in research. I end with a call for a greater salience of discussions concerning issues of research ethics, which should contribute to evolve our scientific community.

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1. Introduction

In a recently released autobiographical book concerning an ethnographical study and its aftermath, the author reports having had a homosexual relationship with one of his research participants (WOLCOTT, 2002). Far from being prude, and based on a sociological analysis of the production and reproduction of power/knowledge, I raised doubts about the ethical conduct of the author (ROTH, 2003). In fact, I know from my own experience serving as member and co-chair of a committee on research ethics that an ethnographic project, in which the researcher foresees becoming emotionally or sexually involved with his or her research participants, would not be approved. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that—at least since the publication of Bronislaw MALINOVSKI's (1986) field notebooks—that such relations do indeed take place in the field although they ordinarily remain unacknowledged in research reports. This is a problem that can be elucidated from epistemological and methodological perspectives (cf. DEVEREUX, 1988) but which has to become the topic of reflection from ethical perspectives as well. In this editorial, I am concerned with the second perspective. [1]

The efforts to establish ethical guidelines for research are rather recent—during the late 1990s, I was involved, as a co-chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Victoria, in evolving interpretations of the draft

policies evolved by the three Canadian granting councils—the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, and Canadian Institutes of Health Research (*Tri-Council*)—and in applying these evolving standards in an ongoing way. Not in the least because of this evolutionary nature of the ethical guidelines, there was a lot of frustration on the part of graduate students and full-time researchers in coming to grips with the principles to adopt. [2]

At the same time, I was not only doing research myself but also teaching courses in research design to graduate students at the masters and Ph.D. levels. It is at that time that I began to introduce ethics components into my teaching, which until then did not exist in my own teaching or in the then current textbooks on research methods. However, over the past half dozen years, not in the least because of the Tri-Council policies and local efforts to implement them, research ethics have become a more central aspect in the lives of Canadian researchers. Courses in research methods have begun to follow suit, as the contribution by Michelle K. McGINN and Sandra L. BOSACKI in this *FQS* issue shows. Their contribution is important for at least three reasons. First, there are sufficient reasons for a self-regulation of research ethics within the scientific community. Second, there is an increasing need to prepare future researchers to address ethical issues associated with conducting research. Finally, the FQS editors have discussed for some time the need to have a forum for discussing research ethics; although we have not yet come around to creating such a forum, the MCGINN and BOSACKI contribution, accompanied by this editorial introduction, constitutes something like a beginning. I hope that other researchers take this as an occasion to think about contributing to a discussion of research ethics. [3]

2. Research Ethics: A Brief Historical Context

Until recently, researchers conducted studies unthinkable today. Thus, Stanley MILGRAM (1963) conducted a study in which he was able to coax research participants into obeying orders of "punishing" other research participants for not complying with instructions by giving high-voltage electroshocks. Luckily for the second type of research participants, this part of the experiment was only faked. However, MILGRAM observed mature and initially poised smiling individuals being reduced to twitching, stuttering wrecks approaching nervous collapse. As I am writing these lines, the Canadian news media reported the compensation of veterans, who, as part of research, unknowingly had been exposed to mustard gas and other chemical warfare between the 1940s and 1970s (CBC, February 20, 2004). Other unknowing participants were exposed to high doses of radioactivity and other hazards to their physical and emotional health. Today, in a rapidly developing field of research ethics, such research has become unthinkable. [4]

Ethics has a considerable history—PLATO (SOCRATES), ARISTOTLE, and SPINOZA have widely talked and written about this aspect of human life. Later, Immanuel KANT has discussed ethics in the context of his moral philosophy and the concept of duty. He suggested that all duties belong in the realm of ethics.

> "Hieraus ist zu ersehen, daß alle Pflichten bloß darum, weil sie Pflichten sind, mit zur Ethik gehören; aber ihre Gesetzgebung ist darum nicht allemal in der Ethik enthalten, sondern von vielen derselben außerhalb derselben ... Es ist keine Tugendpflicht, sein Versprechen zu halten, sondern eine Rechtspflicht, zu deren Leistung man gezwungen werden kann. Aber es ist doch eine tugendhafte Handlung (Beweis der Tugend), es auch da zu tun, wo kein Zwang besorgt werden kann."[1] (KANT, 1956b, p.325) [5]

Because curiosity may lead scientists into practices that raise ethical issues, states could be tempted to adopt legislation on the ethical conduct of scientists—a number of societies appear to have done this already (BERNARD, 1999). Such solutions, however, appear cumbersome with respect to enforcement and continuous adaptation of law to the ever-evolving nature of scientific activities. Not in the least for this reason, the three federal granting councils in Canada have moved to adopt a common (Tri-Council) policy that allows the self-regulation of the scientific community. [6]

The self-regulation of the scientific community requires its members to be aware of current sensibilities. Ethical self-regulation could be instantiated through adherence to the categorical imperative: "handle nur nach derjenigen Maxime, durch die du zugleich wollen kannst, daß sie ein allgemeines Gesetz werde" [only act in accordance with those maxims by means of which you can also implement them as a general law] (KANT, 1956a, p.51). As a basic transformation into a basic premise for research involving human beings, one can find reference to one particular formulation of the issues: "No experiment ought to be thought of, proposed, or conducted in which a researcher would not also involve his kin, closest friends, and himself" (PAPPWORTH, 1968, p.191). History has shown (e.g. the criminal experiments involving humans conducted by doctors in Germany during the so-called "Third Reich") that researchers individually and collectively violated the principles of KANT's imperative. Therefore, self-regulation will also require bodies constituted by members of the community, who have greater range of knowledge and experience with the issues at hand. These bodies, such as the Canadian National Council on Ethics in Human Research (NCEHR), create policies and work with the practitioners in the field to allow a continuous updating of understanding and enactment of ethics principles. At the local level, each university and college already has its own Research Ethics Board (REB) or some mechanisms to have all of its research involving human beings adjudicated by the REB of another university. Every research study is evaluated by an REB or receives a waver such as when a project deals solely with data available in the public domain. These REBs, at least in Canada, also involve a person with legal expertise—either from the law faculty or a person external to the university—and a person representing the community at large. Inherently, some practitioners consider such boards to be bodies of control because they are not inclined to approve studies that, for example, include the

1 My transliteration of this quote: "From this we can see that all duties belong to the domain of ethics just because they are duties. But this does not incorporate their legal status within ethics but for many is outside of them ... It is not a virtue to hold one's promise, but a legal duty that one can be held to legally. But it is a virtuous deed (proof of virtue) to do it even then when enforcement is not guaranteed."

earlier reported sexual relation between a researcher and his research participant. Other researchers may greet the creation of policies, because they can use them to guide their interactions with research participants. In general, therefore, there will be different kinds of research practitioners that REBs will be facing. [7]

3. Classification of Practitioners

The study by MCGINN and BOSACKI is important because they report on the responses of future researchers to a course in which they come face to face with a range of problematic issues involving ethics. These issues are not only present in education, the discipline of these authors, but also in other disciplines where researchers conduct studies involving human beings. That is, the study is important because it deals with the teaching of ethical issues before the individuals have begun their own research careers. This will possibly avert some of the kind of problems that could surface when researchers develop research practices without having had the opportunity to become aware of research ethics. [8]

It has been suggested that research ethics boards will likely be confronted with a range of individuals, including cheating, reluctant/minimalist, vengeful, unaware, unsophisticated, ignorant, uninformed, obstructionist, zealot, privacy activist, uneasily allied, and politically activist researchers (BERNARD, 1999). Cheaters are researchers who knowingly violate ethical norms established by the scientific community as a whole. Reluctant/minimalist researchers will abide by current rules in a legalistic sense, but will be less likely to attend to continuously emerging and subtler issues. Any guidelines would be considered as a sort of code with very delimited fields of application. The vengeful researcher is involved in a conflict of interest, because he or she uses the REB as a platform for curbing or undermining a colleague's research. [9]

Whereas the first three types of researchers concerned ethics itself, the next four types involve competence with respect to ethics or research. Thus, the unaware researcher does not take into account or neglect aspects of established ethics policies. The unsophisticated is a variant on the previous type, who had some exposure to salient issues but who does not sufficiently reflect on the various issues in their own work. The ignorant and uninformed are further variants of the previous categories—their problem can generally be addressed through sensitization as long as the individuals are able and willing to learn. [10]

Zealots attempt to adhere to ethical guidelines with religious fervor, whereas privacy activists who, seeing research as a privilege, "fail to see it as a legitimate activity whose requirements have to be balanced against the needs for privacy" (BERNARD, 1999, p.13). Uneasy allies are members of REBs who deem any policy as falling short and as insufficiently sophisticated, always working towards greater reflection and elaboration of existing policies. They are uneasy allies, because their goal for greater elaboration actually competes with practical constraints in evolving and implementing any policy. Finally, political activists

approach ethical questions in the light of their possible impact on the political causes that they have espoused. [11]

This brief exposé of the types of researchers in the field, both applying to and adjudicating research as a member of an REB, exemplifies the complexity of the issues, in part because researchers may actually be present in a number of these possibly overlapping categories. They may actually find themselves in the dual roles of making judgments and being judged. Work such as that described by McGINN and BOSACKI goes some way in sensitizing and educating future researchers and members of REBs. It will contribute to making research communities as a whole more reflective practitioners, and therefore in evolving scientific research cultures that are current with the evolving sensitivities of society as a whole concerning ethical questions. [12]

4. Evolving a Community of Ethical Research Practitioners

Individuals and the communities of which they are constitutive parts stand in a dialectical relationship (HOLZKAMP, 1991). Culture, a collective phenomenon, exists in the practices (patterned and recurrent actions) of its members; that is, culture is concretely realized in practical action. On the other hand, all practical actions do not exhaust cultural possibilities. Furthermore, culture not only constitutes a range of possibilities for actions, but also each action produces resources for further actions and therefore evolves culture, so that actions never exactly reproduce previous actions. Culture continuously undergoes change with each practical action that concretely realizes it. [13]

Because of the inherently ethical nature of each act (BAKHTIN, 1993), such a dialectical perspective has consequences for the ethical issues raised in this editorial. In each act that constitutes a project, a researcher not only reproduces a culture of ethics but also produces new forms of it. Our research ethics is therefore continuously evolving. We can further contribute to the evolution of a practice by actively reflecting on it (e.g., SCHÖN, 1987), inherently affecting ethical issues associated with our practices. To this date, we, editors of and contributors to *FQS*, have not engaged in a lot of public reflection on the ethical dimensions related to our daily research-related work. I therefore not only welcome the contribution made by McGINN and BOSACKI but also call for greater salience of relevant discussions. Because we constitute the community, our collective reflection not only will make ethical concerns more prominent but also move them along to make them more appropriate. [14]

5. Coda

The time has come for us to reflect on the ethical issues arising from our engagement with participants in the research we conduct. Given the global nature of our community, it will be of particular interest how different ethical issues are dealt with and evolve in the countries represented by our readership and contributors. I sincerely hope that the McGINN and BOSACKI contribution together with my reflections here will constitute the beginning of such a debate. [15]

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