

Ethics of research in social sciences

I. Context

II. Applications

III. Debates, evolutions, tensions

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III. Debates, evolutions, tensions

1. Standardization
2. Increased bureaucracy
3. Legal requirements/litigation
4. Practical problems

1. Standardization

- “Universal” ethical principles vs diverse, locally and culturally-based systems of values and norms
- Imposition of Western/Eurocentric notions of research ethics: the risks of “unethical ethics”
- The need for dialogical approaches of ethics



<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/236227942924352590/>

Agder, Ryen, Anne. 2007. « Do western research ethics work in Africa? A discussion about not taking 'the taken-for-granted' for granted ». *Mosenodi* 15 (1) : 31-45

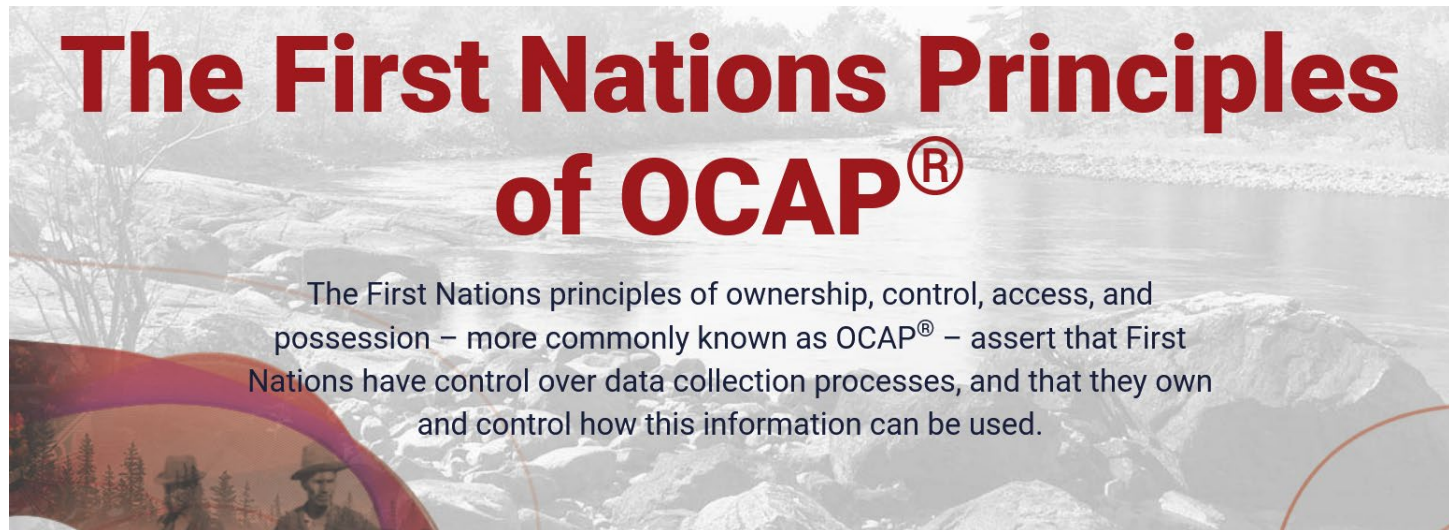
Wall, Caleb, Overton, John. 2006. « Unethical ethics?: applying research ethics in Uzbekistan ». *Development in Practice* 16 (1) : 62-67.

Tikly, Leon, Bond, Tim. 2013. « Towards a postcolonial research ethics in comparative and international education ». *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 43 (4) : 422-42.

Some communities are setting up their own review procedures

Example

CANADA: **First Nations in Quebec and Labrador's Research Protocol, 2014** Assembly of First Nations Quebec- Labrador (AFNQL), https://achh.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Protocol_FN-Research-Protocol-in-Labrador-and-Quebec.pdf



<https://fnigc.ca/ocap-training/>

2. Increased bureaucracy

Procedural ethics

“[...] administrative actions based on legal requirements and aiming to protect participants in advance by means of the application of standardized ethical protocols [...]”

Processual ethics

“[...] approaches which refer to a comprehensive, relational and positional understanding of research ethics and which adapt their principles to the specifics of each research site”

Perrin, Julie, Nolwenn Bühler, Marc-Antoine Berthod, Jeremy Forney, Sabine Kradolfer, et Laurence Ossipow. 2018. « Searching for ethics: legal requirements and empirical issues for anthropology ». *Tsantsa. Revue de la Société Suisse d'Ethnologie* 23: 138-153.

3. Legal requirements/litigation

- « Ethics creep »: the regulation through research ethics boards is expanding towards aspects broader than ethics *per se*
- Protecting institutions vs avoid harm to participants?



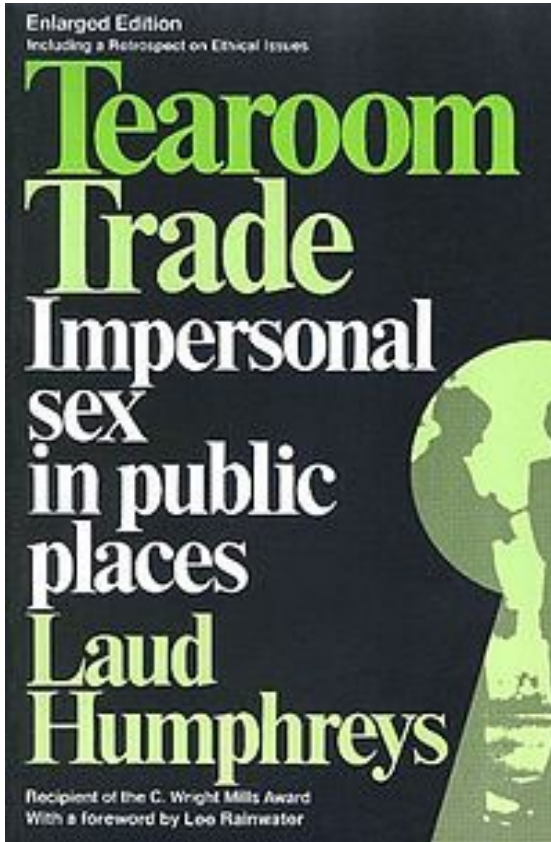
<https://ahrecs.vip/beware-the-ethics-creep-cartoon-human-research-ethics-character/>

Haggerty, Kevin D. 2004. « Ethics Creep: Governing Social Science Research in the Name of Ethics ». *Qualitative Sociology* 27 (4) : 391-414.

4. Practical problems

- a. Restriction of academic freedom
- b. Research on specific issues or in particular research sites is discouraged
- c. Challenges in the application of "free and informed consent"
- d. Absence of legal protection for researchers

a. Restriction of academic freedom



Some research strategies are no longer possible according to research ethics boards' standards

Cf. Humphreys, Laud. 1975. *Tearoom trade: Impersonal sex in public places*. Enl. ed. with a retrospect on ethical issues. Chicago, Ill.: Aldine Pr.

b. Research on specific issues or in particular research sites is discouraged

- Less social science fieldwork, especially among students
- Impoverishment of methods and avoidance of certain research topics, for instance those involving 'sensitive' issues or data

Larouche, Jean-Marc. 2019. « Les sciences sociales et l'éthique en recherche en contexte canadien ». *Revue d'anthropologie des connaissances* 13 (2). <https://journals.openedition.org/rac/1203>.

c. Free, informed and ongoing consent?

- Written consent ? Oral consent ?
(see video no 2)
- How much information should research participants receive ? Is information associated with free will?
- What does consent mean in societies with social practices and notions of consent different from those of the researcher?
- How to implement free and informed consent when using ethnographic methods?



<https://socio-bd.blogspot.com/2016/05/convergence-des-luttes-convergence-des.html>

d. Absence of legal protection for researchers

- Tensions between the right to conduct research and the rights of research participants (Laurens, Neyrat 2010)
- What happens when a researcher is asked to breach confidentiality, e.g. during a police investigation?
- Cf. research on illegal social practices
- Towards a professional secrecy for researchers?

Laurens, Sylvain, Frédéric Neyrat, dir. 2010. *Enquêter, de quel droit: menaces sur l'enquête en sciences sociales*. Bellecombe-en-Bauges : Éditions du Croquant.

More coming soon....



“I HAVE SO MUCH TO TELL YOU...”

<https://www.rtbf.be/article/art-et-cartes-postales-prenez-donc-un-peu-de-chat-pour-bien-commencer-l-annee-9496568?id=9496568>

Références

- Agder, Ryen, Anne. 2007. « Do western research ethics work in Africa? A discussion about not taking 'the taken-for-granted' for granted ». *Mosenodi* 15 (1) : 31-45.
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