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# Practitioner-Research and the Regulation of Research Ethics: The Challenge of Individual, Organizational, and Social Interests

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**Abstract:** Graduate students who become practitioner-researchers in schools encounter ethical review regulations that highlight the contradictions among individual, organizational and social interests. This paper addresses the problem of practitioners who want to use ethical research methods within the educational organizations where they are employed. I identify how the regulation of research ethics works within networks of power/knowledge relations to restrict knowledge production, and I examine the political nature of the moral philosophical reasoning for these restrictions. In the current context, the regulatory process for the ethical review of human research provides a means for protecting organizational interests and for the self-protection of individuals. I propose that a greater emphasis on the ethical principles of individual human dignity, and justice and inclusiveness would provide moral ground for practitioner-researchers who want to explore the possibilities for social transformation in schools.

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## 1. Introduction

Practitioner-research is an emerging research tradition that is gaining recognition from both the academic and practice communities (JARVIS, 1999; WEBB, 1990; ZENI, 2001). Both the teacher research movement (COCHRAN-SMITH & LYTLE, 1999; HOLLINGSWORTH, 1999; MITCHELL, 2002), and the action research tradition (KEMMIS, 1999) are seen as appropriate for school-based practitioners.

In this article, I describe how practitioner-researchers in schools encounter a regulatory process for research ethics that places limits on their existing abilities to inquire, reflect, and engage in discourse within their schools. I identify the barriers to access that restrict knowledge production, and examine the political nature of the moral philosophical reasoning justifying these restrictions. I argue that a greater emphasis on the ethical principals of respect for individual human dignity, and justice and inclusiveness would provide moral ground for practitioner-researchers who challenge the status quo. [1]

At recent meetings of the Canadian Association for Studies in Education Administration (CASEA) at the University of Laval (in 2001), the Ontario Institute of Education (in 2002) and at Dalhousie University (in 2003), there were a number of presentations that included discussions of research ethics. These discussions revealed a general perception among academic educational researchers from across Canada that it is becoming more difficult to gain access, and to conduct human subject research within schools (for examples, see ROGERS, 2001; SMYTH, 2001). Among the concerns were questions about various interpretations of "harm" and "benefits," constraints on the procedures for obtaining free and informed consent from participants, and constraints on the types of research questions considered acceptable. Researchers from several universities described their perceptions of increasing difficulties in obtaining ethical approval for every stage of the process of gaining access to research sites and participants. [2]

The process in Canada for obtaining ethical approval to conduct human subject research involves three stages: (1) obtaining university-level consent, (2) organizational consent, and (3) individual consent. Research Ethics Boards (REBs) are locally situated in each Canadian research university. These individual REBs follow the guiding ethical principles established nationally by the Tri-Council, which consists of three publicly funded national research councils, the Medical Research Council of Canada (MRC), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). The purpose of the Tri-Council is to ensure research across Canada is conducted according to the highest ethical standards. The ethical principles established by the Tri-Council were derived from a national consultation process that identified the controls deemed necessary for ensuring the protection of people from harm. [3]

The first stage for a graduate student to obtain ethical approval is to submit an application to the sponsoring university's REB. Designated members of the REB review committees interpret and apply the TRI-COUNCIL POLICY (1998) statement as a minimum standard, plus any additional regulatory guidelines and practices developed at the individual universities. [4]

In education, the second stage for obtaining ethical approval involves the REB requirement to gain organizational consent from gatekeepers at the school district and school levels. The managers of educational organizations typically rely upon the recommendations and procedures established by academic institutions, but

may also establish additional criteria before granting approval. The responsibility for granting final organizational approval is passed from the national to the local level: from Canada's Tri-Council to the local university's REB, then to the School District Board and its managers, and finally to the principals of individual schools. At every stage of the process, peoples' interpretations of what constitutes ethical conduct by a researcher are politicized. [5]

The enrollment of full or part-time educators in post-graduate programs continues to expand across Canada, and internationally, creating an increasing number of practitioners who conduct site-based education research to fulfill degree requirements (ANDERSON & JONES, 2000). In my experience as an instructor of graduate level research methods courses, graduate students in Master's and Ph.D. programs in education commonly prefer to conduct practitioner research in the schools where they are employed. These graduate students often attend their academic classes part-time and continue to work in their schools while completing requirements for academic research projects. A desire to conduct research within their own school may be a solution to a pragmatic need for access to a research site and participants during the workday. There are, however, more important reasons for graduate students to want to conduct research within their own "*backyard*" (GLESNE & PESHKIN, quoted in CRESWELL, 1998). One of these reasons is that practicing teachers and administrators undertake post-graduate studies to grow in self-reflexivity, expand their understandings, and to become better practitioners. Practitioner-researchers have a desire to closely examine and learn from their own experiences and those of their colleagues. [6]

Graduate studies coursework in leadership and education administration prepares school administrators and teachers to become more critically reflective practitioners who are able to question shared understandings of social realities. A dual role of researcher and participant is a common situation in educational research, following Donald SCHÖN's (1987) call to bridge the worlds of theory and practice. Graduate students in education are often encouraged to become more critically reflective practitioners through thoughtful examination of their own practices and by examining the values and motivations that they and others bring to their work (HODGKINSON, 1996; LEONARD, 1998; MITCHELL & KUMAR, 2001; WALLACE, 1998). Some theorists advocate for practitioner-research, as "educational research should be the province of those closest to the work, with their hearts and hands in the trenches" (GIROD, PARDALES, & CERVETTI, 2002, p.2). When conducting feminist and critical theory research on educational inequality, for example, research "should empower the people who are normally the objects of research, to develop their capacity to research their own situation and evolve their own solutions" (CONNELL et al. in KIRBY & McKENNA, 1989, p.26). [7]

When graduate students attempt to put these concepts into practice within an academic research framework, they encounter the regulatory requirements for ethical research that limit their abilities to inquire, observe, reflect, and engage in discourse within their schools. A tension is revealed, between the universal moral

frameworks used by conservative university and school board authorities to control the milieu-based research of practitioner-researchers, and the research access needed to support the personal and social transformation work of teachers and administrators. For example, Veronica's case:

> Veronica is feeling confused and frustrated. Her educational training and her everyday experience have taught her to open her ears, eyes, and mind to everything around her. As a critically reflective practitioner, Veronica listens to the ebb and flow of the discourse surrounding her; she notes the language used, the arguments made, and the positions taken by her colleagues. She reads organizational communications and observes interactions among her colleagues, noticing routine practices and idiosyncrasies. As an inquiring professional, Veronica is expected to make sense of, and to judge, the actions and statements of others. Her personal values of honesty, integrity, and respect for others, inform her belief that she needs to be open to information from her environment, and to use this information to interpret, make decisions, and act. Her organization's emphasis on teamwork and shared goals requires her to be able to "take the role of the other," and to learn from them. To be ethical as a practitioner, Veronica has developed an attitude of curiosity and habits of critical and creative reflection about the human, technical, and organizational systems in which she participates. She focuses her curiosity and reflection on individuals and groups, on organizational policies and practices, and on the extra-organizational socio-economic and political context.
>
> Veronica's confusion and frustration arises from her decision to become a graduate student. She wants to further develop the knowledge and abilities she brings to her organizational practice. She had thought that learning how to design and conduct formal research would help her to make better decisions. Now, under the ethical guidelines of academic research, she learns that to be ethical as a researcher, she is required to define and limit her knowledge seeking by spatial, temporal, relational and conceptual criteria. Her organizational sense making can no longer be open to all experiences. An academic approval process and a different set of ethical requirements are being applied to her thoughts and actions. To be seen to act ethically, she now needs prior and ongoing informed consent from the people who agree to participate, from third parties in interactions, and from the organizational gatekeepers at the research site and the academic institution. What she listens to and observes is now limited by explicitly stated criteria of where, when, who is speaking, the specific research purpose, and the approved instruments. Her analysis is limited to the specific data collected by pre-approved methods and to pre-approved concepts. [8]

The inherent contradiction is that when people like Veronica learn research skills in order to become better practitioners, they often learn that their previously developed practices of listening and observing are now labeled "forbidden territory" and their construction of meaning is "dangerous knowledge." They risk being labeled "unethical" when they practice those skills. Veronica has discovered that the ethics of practice and the ethics of research are not easily reconciled. [9]

## 2. Problems Identified with Practitioner Research

The literature on research methodologies mentions three types of problems associated with practitioner research: (1) pragmatic problems associated with a lack of skills and time, (2) epistemological problems associated with learning to understand the situated knowledges of others, and (3) political problems associated with having access to what CRESWELL (1998, p.114) refers to as "dangerous knowledge." In this section, I address each of these problems in more detail and consider the challenges they create for the ethical conduct of research. [10]

### 2.1 Pragmatic challenges

The authors who discuss how to conduct critically reflective research do not often view practitioners as contributing to greater understanding, but instead focus for the most part, on the pragmatic problems of insufficient time (WOLCOTT, 1988) and inadequate skills (EISENHART & BORKO, 1993). A common assumption underlying practitioner-research is that it is for the purpose of credentialing, not for enhancing understanding. The research projects conducted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for academic degrees qualify student researchers for increased salary levels and particular job classifications, which reinforces attitudes of conducting research for career enhancement. Instrumental purposes and inadequately prepared researchers can compromise the ethics of respectful research through poor design and conduct. [11]

Pragmatic purposes are not inherently problematic. There are increasing public and governmental pressures on educators to demonstrate accountability by producing evidence of their instructional effectiveness, such as the trend toward large-scale achievement tests and client satisfaction surveys (ALBERTA LEARNING, 2002; BRITISH COLUMBIA MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, 2004; ONTARIO MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, 2003). Schools are viewed as "open systems" and educators as needing to be responsive to environmental circumstances, including changing economic, legal, social, and cultural contexts. To do this, educators use methods of scanning both the internal and external environments of schools to identify problems requiring an organizational response. The data collected in these environmental scans supports evidence-based decision-making processes for school improvement. Educators wanting to learn research principles and techniques are often interested because it has direct application for school improvement processes. They have a legitimate pragmatic and theoretical interest in learning how to conduct site-based research. [12]

The increasing interest in site-based research has taken on movement-like proportions, with many school districts adopting the concept of "learning communities" and funding "teacher as researcher" as a staff or professional development activity (ZENI, 2001). The teacher-as-researcher movement can be viewed as a possible co-optation of action research for managerial purposes (ANDERSON & JONES, 2000) or as empowering new ways for teachers to contribute to knowledge production and organizational sense making (EBEST,

2001; HAJJ, 2001). The effects of this movement are an increasing interest in conducting practitioner research and in the ethical dilemmas encountered when practitioners conduct site-based research. [13]

### 2.2 Epistemological concerns

Epistemological concerns centre on the problem of how practitioners can overcome their preconceptions of a situation (SPINDLER & SPINDLER, 1982). Because of this difficulty, CRESWELL (1998) advises against studying the backyard, "especially in ethnographic research, the investigator tracks norms and values of which participants in the culture may not be aware; being an insider may not yield this information" (p.114). This problem is not unique to practitioner-researchers. GREENFIELD wrote about his struggles to understand the hegemonic grip of systems theory in educational administration "Systems theory —or at least a well-ordered organizational world—floated comfortably around me. I didn't question it, any more than the goldfish does his bowl. There was no alternative" (1978, p.10). One of the educational goals of post-secondary educators is to help practitioners become more reflective about their practices, to step outside the goldfish bowl and view a situation from multiple perspectives. [14]

There are, however, ethical concerns that arise when commonly accepted understandings are examined and different perspectives are revealed. One of those concerns is the possible imposition on research participants of a project of social transformation (ELLSWORTH, 1989; LATHER, 1990). Introducing new perspectives or bringing marginalized perspectives into the discourse of an organization, such as critiques of the inner workings of secondary schools from the "standpoint of women" (HARDING, 1991; HARTSOCK, 1987; SMITH, 1987) can create unexpected challenges to the status quo, both for individuals and the organization. Patti LATHER's definition of discourse is "a word used to signify the system of relations between parties engaged in communicative activity and a concept that is, hence, meant to signal the inescapably political contexts in which we speak and work" (1991, p.vii). The process of conducting research is political, it changes the discourse within an organization and changes in discourse can be encouraged and integrated into the process of school improvement, or conceived as dangerous knowledge and marginalized. [15]

Being a practitioner and participant observer can be both a highly advantageous position, and a problematic one. MCMILLAN and SCHUMACHER emphasize the advantages, "some studies on highly sensitive problems probably could not be done by an outside investigator" (1993, p.416). A researcher who has "residence in the field" and performs a role within the community being researched can develop a greater understanding of the experiences and social realities of the members of that community, as they occupy the same physical spaces, engage each other in shared activities and discourses, and encounter the same rules and regulations. These shared experiences can result in greater levels of trust and more opportunities for joint construction of meaning, while still respecting differences. Being an insider enhances ethnographic methods (HOOKS, 1994; JARVIS, 1999). When the researcher is an actual participant, fully engaged as a

member of an organization prior to researching that organization and is concerned with changing aspects within the organization, he or she is uniquely positioned to pursue more sensitive, yet important, research questions such as "what do relationships of power feel like from the inside, where are the possibilities for resistance, and what personal and collective processes will take us there?" (DEVEAUX, 1999, p.253). [16]

### 2.3 Political concerns

The French poststructuralist historian and philosopher, Michel FOUCAULT, focused attention on the ways in which the interweaving effects of power and knowledge shape our understandings of what and who's knowledge is valued (1977/1980). According to FOUCAULDian thinking, the ability of practitioner-researchers to derive alternative meanings from situations in which they are immersed cannot be addressed without also considering the effects of power. Research is a political act and the choice of research purposes and methods is tied to both power and knowledge relations. JARVIS (1999) comments:

> "This can become a problem for practitioner-researchers because so much of the outcomes of their research is open to management to read. If management's spin on official documents is exposed and deconstructed, management might not treat the practitioner-researchers with sympathy and might seek to curtail their research." (p.115) [17]

Research that produces knowledge from a managerial or technological perspective can marginalize the knowledge of teachers and students. Practitioner-researchers must make choices about whether they value and want to learn from both the standpoint of the organization and from the standpoint of students', teachers' and administrators' lived experience. To adopt a research perspective from the margins and explore the social, political, and economic relations in which people live, is to attempt to trace the manifestations of power/knowledge and raise them into consciousness (SMITH, 1987). In all organizations there is a plurality of values and interests that create conflicts between the views of individual organizational members and those of the organization. It requires virtues of courage and honesty for organization members to be willing to raise value conflicts into consciousness. It also requires a virtue of generosity for organizational authorities to allow their examination. Practitioner-researchers, as "insiders" within an organization, are embedded in the power/knowledge relations constituting that organization. As they engage in the process of collecting and producing knowledge to represent the voices of organizational members, they are repositioning themselves and others within the power networks of the school. This repositioning threatens existing organizational functioning and individuals within the organizations. [18]

This is the area of greatest ethical challenge for practitioner-researchers. When knowledge production is viewed as a neutral practice, using ethical guidelines for a fair and balanced representation of the views of participants is workable. When the political ramifications of power/knowledge relations are considered, the

limitations of the regulatory standards for ethical research behavior are revealed. The interests of individuals are different from those of an organization (HODGKINSON, 1996). Who is responsible for providing consents to conduct research, and who has the authority to control the research agenda? What are the responsibilities of practitioner-researchers when they are positioned between the interests of the organization and extra-organizational interests of public accountability? The restrictions that Veronica encountered in the name of ethics, take on a different face when considered within a politicized regulatory process. Veronica experiences the need for organizational approval as a protection of organizational interests over the needs of individual and social interests. Her colleagues and students who have expressed a desire to participate in the research process can be denied that opportunity by the relevant organizational gatekeepers. [19]

## 3. The Moral Imperative for Ethical Conduct in Human Research

### 3.1 The protection of individual and organizational interests

The guiding ethical principles of Canada's Tri-Council are: respect for human dignity, respect for free and informed consent, respect for vulnerable persons, respect for privacy and confidentiality, respect for justice and inclusiveness, balancing of harms and benefits, minimizing harm, and maximizing benefit. The TRI-COUNCIL POLICY emphasizes, "the welfare and integrity of the individual remain paramount in human research" (1998, p.i.5). It is a KANTian moral prohibition against manipulating people to achieve our purposes, no matter how good those purposes. It underlies the ethical requirement to obtain the fully informed and freely given consent of participants before conducting research. [20]

A second form of moral philosophy evident in the Tri-Council's ethical principles and their applications is the fundamental moral rule of utilitarianism to "Act always to promote the greatest happiness for the greatest number" (LAWHEAD, 1996, p.457). This ethical theory requires an analysis of the anticipated consequences of actions and an assessment of the possible harms and benefits. The requirement of REB members that researchers obtain the consent of organizational authorities prior to obtaining the consent of individuals within an organization can be seen as conforming to this moral rule. REB members act (a) as agents for a research institution in need to protect itself from potential legal liabilities and (b) to maintain good working relationships with school district officials. Requiring that the superintendent of a school district and the principal of a school grant prior consent for practitioner-research projects is a means of maintaining the security of educational organizations. [21]

Both a KANTian ethics of individual human dignity, and a utilitarian moral rule produce ethical contradictions in their applications. The former is intended to protect individual rights, but can be questioned in terms of "Who's dignity?" while the later protects organizational rights and can be questioned in terms of "Who benefits?" The requirements for individual and organizational consent override

the interests of social groups, such as feminist and anti-racist concerns. Returning to Veronica as our example:

> Veronica's ethical review application to collect data and include an analysis of race-related influences was denied by the organization on the grounds that "it might cause difficulties in the school." Race-relations research within a publicly funded school system was not permitted.
>
> The organizational gatekeepers did grant permission for Veronica to produce a gender-based analysis. When Veronica observed an incidence of sexual harassment, however, the individual consent originally granted by the perpetrator was withdrawn. She was denied permission to include a description of the observed incident in her research report, and could not make inquiries about the harassment incident. [22]

In Veronica's case, the ethical approval regulatory process became a convenient mechanism for protecting organizational and individual interests that were politically rather than morally motivated. [23]

### 3.2 The need to extend protections to group interests

The purposes for which research is being conducted must be considered (SMYTH, 2001). In Canada, the TRI-COUNCIL POLICY (1998) recognizes this need and includes the ethical principles of justice and inclusiveness to extend benefits to individuals and groups, as "distributive justice also imposes duties neither to neglect nor discriminate against individuals and groups who may benefit from advances in research" (p.i.6). The TRI-COUNCIL POLICY (1998) states:

> "Researchers and REB should also be aware that some research may be deliberately and legitimately opposed to the interests of the research subjects. This is particularly true of research in the social sciences and the humanities that may be critical of public personalities or organizations. Such research should, of course, be carried out according to professional standards, but it should not be blocked through the use of harms/benefits analysis or because it may not involve collaboration with the research subjects." (p.i.7) [24]

The position of practitioner-researchers inside the research site creates an additional challenge when requesting research access. The questions of who benefits, of who controls the culture and discourse within a school, and what research can be conducted for what purposes, needs to be negotiated (SMYTH, 2001). Power/knowledge relations influence our understandings of what is considered to be ethical practices. Is it ethical to require prior organizational consent when there are what HODGKINSON (1996) refers to as "irreconcilable interest conflicts" between the level of organizational interests, and the level of researchers who are operating on extra-organizational interests, such as feminism and social justice? [25]

An additional moral imperative becomes evident: "to place ourselves and our work squarely within the political context, constantly scrutinizing our perspectives for evidence of privilege, constantly working towards challenging privilege when appropriate" (CODE, FORD, MARTINDALE, SHERWIN & SHOGAN, 1991, p.23). This political project of challenging privilege is a necessary part of the negotiation of research ethics and requires a greater application of the Tri-Council's ethical principles of justice and inclusiveness. [26]

## 4. Seeking Solutions for the Ethical Dilemmas of Practitioner-research

### 4.1 Data collection methods

The standard processes for ethical approval are based on assumptions that researchers' data collection can be time and space limited, and method and activity specific. These ethical review processes for obtaining fully informed consent do not acknowledge that when a practitioner-researcher is the research instrument, he or she has already collected knowledge and constructed understandings about the research site, the participants and the research question under investigation. Placing artificial constraints on what a practitioner sees and hears cannot effectively restrict data collection and analysis. A test of an ethical principle is that it is humanly possible, "a sound morality must be based on a realistic conception of what is possible for human beings" (RACHELS, 1999, p.70). In the case of practitioner-researchers, the principle of fully informing participants of data collection methods would fail RACHELS' test. [27]

Practitioners, and expert researchers, bring their entire lived experience to the research problem. They are always already knowledgeable agents. One difference between a practitioner observer and an outside expert observer is that the practitioner's knowledge, while still partial knowledge, always already includes particulars about the past and the present, material conditions, and interactions within the research site. Individual and organizational interests can be better served by supporting practitioner-researchers' efforts to increase their interpersonal and organizational awareness, and self-reflexivity. By becoming more aware of both organizational values and interests, and those of other individuals, practitioner-researchers are better able to engage in organizational sense making. [28]

### 4.2 Voluntary participation

An assumption underlying the ethical concept of voluntariness is that people can and do make free choices. This notion denies the different circumstances of people's lives and privileges some on the basis of material conditions, and understandings. Not all potential participants value their own experience sufficiently to volunteer their contributions. The effect of requiring that people make free choices to participate in research projects is the self-selection of participants and the elimination of the contributions of people who, due to circumstances not of their making, cannot contribute. It also protects those who

wish to prevent their thoughts and actions from becoming the subject of scrutiny. When engaged in the research process, it is apparent that the discourses and practices of all actors within an institution combine to create that institution's culture. Describing the institutional context is essential for developing an understanding of how people make choices within a pattern of rules. If actions occur within group settings and become part of the experience of other people, including the practitioner-researcher, how can they be discussed, analyzed, and described? The essential question is "Who owns an experience?" A strict interpretation of the ethical principle of voluntariness creates a claim that the generator of an event owns that event and must willingly consent to its being described; the person who experiences it as the subject does not have the right to describe her experience. [29]

Requiring individual informed consent may seem like the only ethical option; you cannot force people to become subjects of your research. One possibility is to place the same trust in practitioner-researchers that is placed daily in teachers and administrators. Teachers are trusted to serve the best interests of the students in their care and to abide by a professional code of ethics with their colleagues. Why is that trust withdrawn when a teacher is also conducting academic research? [30]

### 4.3 Obtaining informed consent

A common practice of university REBs is to grant individual school administrators the authority to approve or block a researcher's access to staff members and students within a school. There are moral arguments in favor of organizational control of research practices. One argument is based on pragmatic consequentialism; to ensure the greatest amount of benefit for the most students, universities may perceive a need to maintain positive working relationships with school district officials. A second supportive argument is derived from the KANTian ethical principle of respect for human dignity; school administrators may not wish to allow a public examination and discussion of organizational practices, and may decide to act on behalf of organizational members to protect them from the possibility of harm. [31]

Granting ethical approval authority to organizational gatekeepers contradicts the ethical principle that individuals have a right to exercise their own moral agency. The rights and desires of individuals within schools are not extinguishable by their membership in an organization, and university REBs should not act in concert with those who hold positions at the top of the power hierarchies to suppress individual rights. An alternative ethical review process would evaluate the ethics of research practices by assessing whether or not individual members of an organization have been fully informed of the research purposes and methods, and if they are willing to freely grant their consent to participate in a research project. Organizational approval processes should not counteract the rights and desires of individuals to participate in research. The rights of individuals to exercise their moral agency, and the distribution of justice to include research that alleviates the historical disadvantages of particular groups, such as females, are

both intended to supersede the rights of organizational gatekeepers to protect their own interests. [32]

### 4.4 Legal positions

When considering the legal aspects of educational research, it is important to remember that the law is a servant of public consciousness. The law at one time stated that women could not vote, could not own property, were not persons, could not have control over their reproductive systems; the law has protected the status quo and the dominant for centuries, it can and should be challenged and changed when it is used to suppress knowledge and oppress people. John Stuart MILL was an early champion of the need to question the social and legal conventions "that place right on the side of might" (1869/1988, p.7). This thinking was extended to include knowledge production by FOUCAULT'S proposition that "truth is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it. ... A 'régime' of truth" (1977/1980, p.133). We need to be vigilant that the regimes of truth in education do not create a one-dimensional construction of knowledge by suppressing attempts to publicly question, critique, and research. The rights of teachers to self-expression and the public to be informed about the inner workings of publicly accountable institutions are well established in law. But these rights have to exist in our practices. Using the criteria suggested by BOK (1989), we can test ethical justifications by (1) having recourse to one's own conscience, (2) asking friends and colleagues for advice, and (3) having an open public discussion about the practice in general rather than specific cases (pp.100-102). In Canada, public discussions about the ethics of research are already occurring through the Tri-Council. The individual right of research participants to grant consent, however, is being eroded by REB members who reassign that right to organizational gatekeepers, and let individuals claim ownership of shared experiences. [33]

## 5. Closing Thoughts

I hope that by raising these issues, I will encourage the public debate recommended by BOK (1989) to continue. Practitioner-research is becoming more difficult within a politicised context of conflicting interests. To have knowledge production that includes multiple perspectives, we need to find ways for the regulatory controls of research ethics to be better aligned with the principles of individual human dignity, justice, and inclusiveness as outlined in the TRI-COUNCIL POLICY (1998). To generate school cultures where knowledge production can include multiple perspectives, REB members need to give precedence to a respect for individual human dignity over the desires of organizational gatekeepers, and to respect an individual's right to describe shared experiences. [34]

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