

Research & Writing

“Don’t be a jerk.”

Ethics in Art, Research and Education

IMAE 2017/18

Falk Hübner

What's up?

- Get an idea of ethical issues that may become relevant in the kind of work you are doing.
- Get a sense of the different angles on ethics in our interdisciplinary & hybrid field of art making, education and research.
- Develop an idea of the various steps in work and research from the angle of ethics.
- Be ready to break down general ethical principles into concrete step by step decisions.

Ethics?

- Ethical behavior plays a role as soon as we work with other people, be it artists, professionals from other disciplines, participants in projects, interviews or surveys, etc.
- How are we behaving in the light of a relation to others, in an ethical way?
- Ethical is different from lawful!

A few quotes

“Making work that looks like some else’s is unethical.”

(Atkinson 2017)

A few quotes

“With a few standard rules to be followed, much is left to the judgment of the researcher.”

(Brinkmann and Kvale 2018: 37)

A few quotes

“Debriefing participants at the end of a [...] session is the responsibility of the moderator and *should never be rushed.*”

(Barbour 2018: 109, my italics)

A few quotes

“awareness that language, culture and religion are not synonymous, and an appreciation of interpretation and translation as being far from straightforward processes.”

(Barbour 2018: 120)

A few quotes

“[...] an ethical decision is one that prioritizes collective obligation over individual circumstances, meaning that an ethical decision is not one made based on the desirable outcome but the one that will create the greatest good.”

(Maloney and Smith 2015)

Karen Atkinson

- Treat colleagues (including curators, galleries & funders) with respect.
- Don't keep information to yourself, share it.
- Leave a collaboration with respect and integrity.
- Consider carefully to go into production as a commercial artist, as it may “decrease the value of important work. [...] Be true to your own vision.” (Atkinson 2017)
- Follow the agreements you made. ALL of them.
- While very interesting as an area for work, always respect public property.
- Be thankful to those you support you, regardless of the nature of their support.
- Be conscious and thoughtful when you ask others for recommendation letters.

Maloney & Smith

- “[A]n ethical decision is one that prioritizes collective obligation over individual circumstances, meaning that an ethical decision is not one made made on the desirable outcome, but the one that will create the greatest good. [...] Additionally, ethical positions acknowledge when imbalances of power exist and seek to correct them.” (Maloney and Smith 2015)
- [W]e can think of a code of ethics as a form of collective bargaining that puts demands on art administrators, institutions and funders to be accountable to fair labor practices.” (Maloney and Smith 2015)
- equitable (just, fair) pay, certified minimum payment standard
- transparency in decision-making, acquisitions and financials
- speaking out against work that is sexist or insensitive

Preparatory matters

- “Just do it!” - REALLY???

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Do you really know what you are doing, and how to do it?

Do you know which people will be affected by you and your work, and in which way?

Are you really prepared for all kinds of people or events you might encounter in the field, and how to deal with them?

Be careful about taking a position that is too naïve!

As both artists, educators and researchers, it is very important to gain a position in “which researchers see what members in the field do not see anymore” (Flick 2018: 86)

Preparatory matters

- “Just do it!” - REALLY???
- Ethical considerations have to be made throughout an entire project, starting in the preparatory and planning phase.
- Includes preparation, writing proposals, choice of collaborators, clear approach to acting in the field, guiding participants, using & interpreting information, etc.
- Think about necessary professional knowledge needed, possibly ask other professional to join and support. (also possible just for preparation, not to overlook anything!)
- Important to know enough about the background and context of the field and groups in which you will be working.

Five behaviors - for better or worse...

- Being pushy
- Being ignorant
- Being accurate
- Being fair
- Being confidential

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- Art, education and research are all three dialogues, consisting of asking people for *access* (to spaces, information, observable processes).
- We are not always happy with the answers - and continue to ask questions.
- “important to develop a feeling for the limits of our participants, [...] when we should stop insisting.” (Flick 2018: 90)
- Respect borders of privacy and intimacy. Integrity also means to stay in the areas of the other person’s life to which you are invited!

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- Being confidential
- Sometimes we get unforeseen information by participants or students/pupils.
- We should not be ignorant to this, but rather react with integrity.
- “In this context it is again the balance between working with the participant in a very focused way and taking him or her seriously in what they reflect about the issue beyond what we expected.” (Flick 2018: 90)
- Goes for interviews, reflective talks with participants, audience talks after an event & more.

Five behaviors - for better or worse...

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- Being ignorant
- **Being accurate**
- Being fair
- Being confidential
- Should speak for itself?
- Accuracy and integrity
- Different in artistic practice than in education or research?
- Beware of our context here: working with information and material we are offered from others.
- Read and reread your material continuously!

Five behaviors - for better or worse...

- Being pushy
- Being ignorant
- Being accurate
- **Being fair**
- Being confidential
- Avoid interpretation of data that come along with a devaluation of people (happens faster than you think!).
- Respect people's intentions and agencies while interpreting their practices or statements.
- Be as neutral as possible in the case of conflicts of data.
- Beware for over-generalizations, and be careful and awake when you develop patterns or types.
- Be as non-judgmental as possible.

Five behaviors - for better or worse...

- Being pushy
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- Being confidential
- In short, confidentiality implies that private data will not be reported.
- Take anonymity and privacy serious.
- Anonymize information immediately, so that there is no risk of making people or places recognizable.
- Might be difficult in artistic or other contexts see the IYANTWAY project. Sometimes participants *want* to be credited.

Training

Think about your own work, or the different kinds of work you are doing, or your work in the field / at placement at this moment.

Try to identify the various areas of your work in which ethical considerations have to be made, and why. Concerning other people, material from others, your colleagues, and your own behavior.

Think about possible adjustments in your own professional behavior or preparation. What might change through ethical consideration?

Informed consent

- “Informed consent entails informing the research subjects about the overall purpose of the investigation and the main features of the design, as well as of possible risks and benefits from participation in the research project.” (Brinkmann & Kvale 2018: 32)
- Could become problematic in more exploratory interviews in which not all questions or decisions are predetermined, and often made on the spot.
- Information about who will have access to the interview.
- Sometimes a letter of agreement makes sense.
- Grey area: balance between over-information and leaving out information.

Final thoughts

- Important also to consider the impact of the work on yourself as artist-educator-researcher. One possibility of doing this might be a supervisor or a colleague, preferably more experienced.
- General rules are just general rules. Much is left to your own judgment, behavior and integrity!

References

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More sources & further reading:

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