



**GHENT
UNIVERSITY**

ETHICS AND DOING FIELDWORK IN AFRICA

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The Belmont Report

Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research

The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research

EU GDPR



Nuremberg Code

1. Voluntary human consent is essential
2. Experimental results should results in good for society
3. Anticipated results should justify the experiment
4. Avoid all unnecessary physical and mental suffering
5. No experiment if there is a chance of death/disability
6. Minimize risk of subjects
7. Proper preparations and facilities to protect subjects
8. Experiments conducted only by qualified persons
9. Subjects can withdraw at anytime
10. Terminate experiment if results are known or with best judgement

Respect for Persons

Beneficence



Justice

THE “PROBLEM” OF ETHICS?

- Paperwork versus trust?
- Risk-averse universities
- Methods and ethics
- The ‘engaged’ researcher?



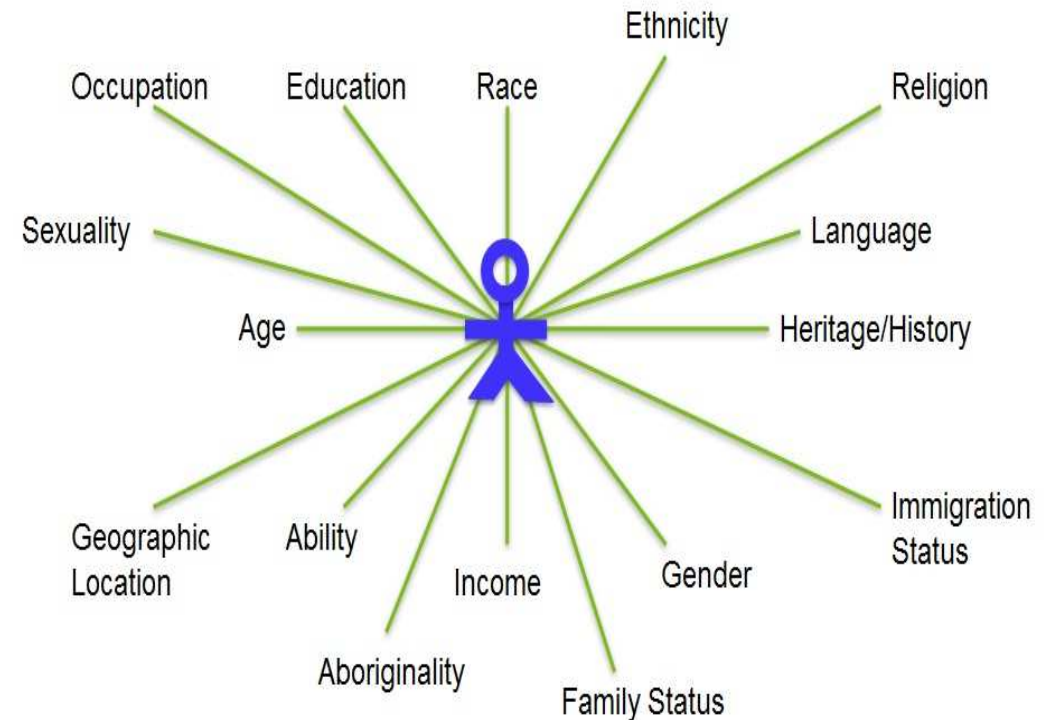
THE “PROBLEM” OF ETHICS? (2)

- Disjunction between procedural imperatives and the concrete implementation of ethical decision making in the field.
- Ethical dilemmas



ETHICAL REFLECTIONS

1. Positionality of researchers - distance and/or proximity to the field
2. Insecurities and risks
3. identity of the researcher
4. conflicting demands of ethical research and doing research in and/or on authoritarianism and violent conflict.



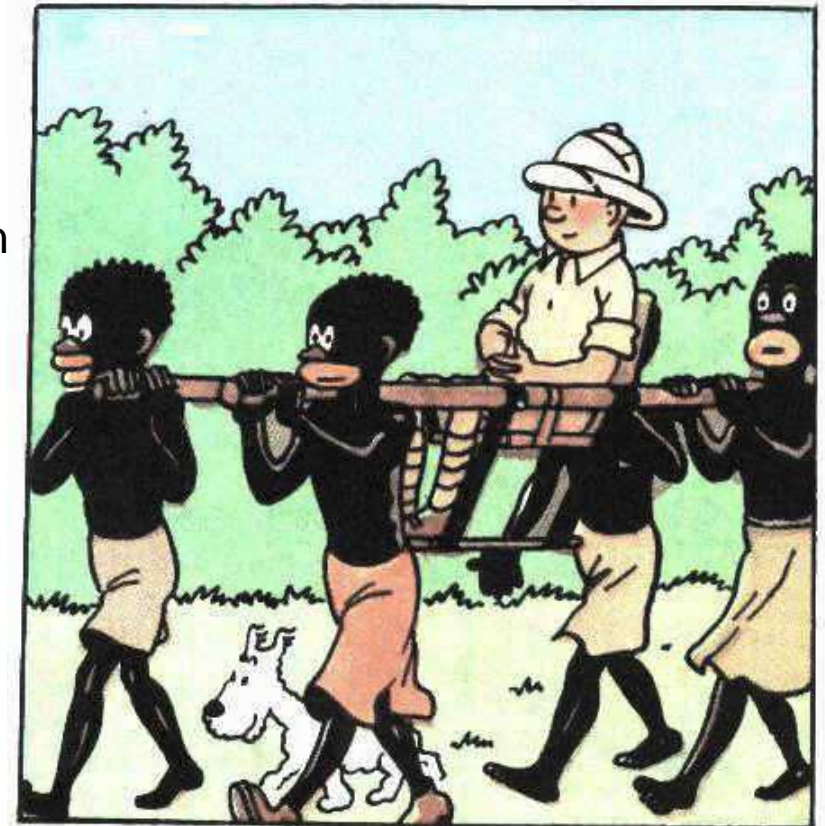
AUTHORITARIAN CONTEXTS & VIOLENCE

Obligations and ethical concerns to ensure transparency might hollow out another ethical imperative namely the protection of research respondents or participants.



TOWARDS SOME RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Address ethical requirements, the terms on which we enter the field and assess as much as possible the particularities and risks involved in doing research in difficult contexts.
2. Reflect on the type of research questions we address in relationship to the epistemology of our work but also in relation to the physical integrity and security of our research participants.
3. Collaborative reflection on how to best behave in the field (especially in sensitive contexts)
4. What after the field? ... what exactly are we giving back?
5. Rethink our relations towards our local research assistants, translators, fixers or facilitators.
6. Mental approach to fieldwork in our institutions.



TOWARDS SOME RECOMMENDATIONS (2)

– Empowerment



Respect & Honesty



Justice & Fairness

Care



Process

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