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Ethics and Politics in Qualitative Research

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Getting straight on ethics in qualitative research is not an internal matter only. Putting ethics and politics together is the right move intellectually, but it engages a major agenda beyond adjustments in qualitative theory and methods. The overall issue is the Enlightenment mind and its progeny. Only when the Enlightenment's epistemology is contradicted will there be conceptual space for a moral-political order in distinctively qualitative terms. The Enlightenment's dichotomy between freedom and morality fostered a tradition of value-free social science and, out of this tradition, a means-ends utilitarianism. Qualitative research insists on starting over philosophically, without the Enlightenment dualism as its foundation. The result is an ethical-political framework that is multicultural, gender inclusive, pluralistic, and international in scope.

Enlightenment Dualisms

The Enlightenment mind clustered around an extraordinary dichotomy. Intellectual historians usually summarize this split in terms of subject/object, fact/value, or material/spiritual dualisms. All three of these are legitimate interpretations of the cosmology inherited from Galileo Galilei, René Descartes, and Isaac Newton. None of them puts the Enlightenment into its sharpest focus, however. Its deepest root was a pervasive autonomy. The cult of human person-ality prevailed in all its freedom. Human beings were declared a law unto themselves, set loose from every faith that claimed their allegiance. Proudly self-conscious

of human autonomy, the 18th-century mind saw nature as an arena of limitless possibilities in which human sovereignty is master over the natural order. Release from nature spawned autonomous individuals, who considered themselves independent of any authority. The freedom motif was the deepest driving force, first released by the Renaissance and achieving maturity during the Enlightenment.

Obviously, one can reach autonomy by starting with the subject/object dualism. In constructing the Enlightenment worldview, the prestige of natural science played a key role in setting people free. Achievements in mathematics, physics, and astronomy allowed humans to dominate nature, which formerly had dominated them. Science provided unmistakable evidence that by applying reason to nature and human beings in fairly obvious ways, people could live progressively happier lives. Crime and insanity, for example, no longer needed repressive theological explanations but were deemed capable of mundane empirical solutions.

Likewise, one can get to the autonomous self by casting the question in terms of a radical discontinuity between hard facts and subjective values. The Enlightenment pushed values to the fringe through its disjunction between knowledge of what is and what ought to be. And Enlightenment materialism in all its forms isolated reason from faith, knowledge from belief. As Robert Hooke insisted three centuries ago, when he helped found London's Royal Society: "This Society will eschew any discussion of religion, rhetoric, morals, and politics." With factuality gaining a stranglehold on the Enlightenment mind, those regions of human interest that implied oughts, constraints, and imperatives simply ceased to appear. Certainly those who see the Enlightenment as separating facts and values have identified a cardinal difficulty. Likewise, the realm of the spirit can easily dissolve into mystery and intuition. If the spiritual world contains no binding force, it is surrendered to speculation by the divines, many of whom accepted the Enlightenment belief that their pursuit was ephemeral.

But the Enlightenment's autonomy doctrine created the greatest mischief. Individual self-determination stands as the centerpiece, bequeathing to us the universal problem of integrating human freedom with moral order. In struggling with the complexities and conundrums of this relationship, the Enlightenment, in effect, refused to sacrifice personal freedom. Even though the problem had a particular urgency in the 18th century, its response was not resolution but a categorical insistence on autonomy. Given the despotic political regimes and oppressive ecclesiastical systems of the period, such an uncompromising stance for freedom at this juncture is understandable. The Enlightenment began and ended with the assumption that human liberty ought to be cut away from the moral order, never integrated meaningfully with it (cf. Taylor, 2007, Chapter 10).

Jean-Jacques Rousseau was the most outspoken advocate of this radical freedom. He gave intellectual substance to free self-determination of the human

personality as the highest good. Rousseau is a complicated figure. He refused to be co-opted by Descartes' rationalism, Newton's mechanistic cosmology, or John Locke's egoistic selves. He was not content merely to isolate and sacralize freedom either, at least not in his *Discourse on Inequality* or in the *Social Contract*, where he answers Thomas Hobbes.

Rousseau represented the romantic wing of the Enlightenment, revolting against its rationalism. He won a wide following well into the 19th century for advocating immanent and emergent values rather than transcendent and given ones. While admitting that humans were finite and limited, he nonetheless promoted a freedom of breathtaking scope—not just disengagement from God or the church, but freedom from culture and from any authority. Autonomy became the core of the human being and the center of the universe. Rousseau's understanding of equality, social systems, axiology, and language were anchored in it. He recognized the consequences more astutely than those comfortable with a shrunken negative freedom. The only solution that he found tolerable was a noble human nature that enjoyed freedom beneficently and therefore, one could presume, lived compatibly in some vague sense with a moral order.

Value-Free Experimentalism

Typically, debates over the character of the social sciences revolve around the theory and methodology of the natural sciences. However, the argument here is not how they resemble natural science, but their inscription into the dominant Enlightenment worldview. In political theory, the liberal state as it developed in 17th- and 18th-century Europe left citizens free to lead their own lives without obedience to the church or the feudal order. Psychology, sociology, and economics—known as the human or moral sciences in the 18th and 19th centuries—were conceived as “liberal arts” that opened minds and freed the imagination. As the social sciences and liberal state emerged and overlapped historically, Enlightenment thinkers in Europe advocated the “facts, skills, and techniques” of experimental reasoning to support the state and citizenry (Root, 1993, pp. 14–15).

Consistent with the presumed priority of individual liberty over the moral order, the basic institutions of society were designed to ensure “neutrality between different conceptions of the good” (Root, 1993, p. 12). The state was prohibited “from requiring or even encouraging citizens to subscribe to one religious tradition, form of family life, or manner of personal or artistic expression over another” (Root, 1993, p. 12). Given the historical circumstances in which shared conceptions of the good were no longer broad and deeply

entrenched, taking sides on moral issues and insisting on social ideals were considered counterproductive. Value neutrality appeared to be the logical alternative “for a society whose members practiced many religions, pursued many different occupations, and identified with many different customs and traditions” (Root, 1993, p. 11). The theory and practice of mainstream social science reflect liberal Enlightenment philosophy, as do education, science, and politics. Only a reintegration of autonomy and the moral order provides an alternative paradigm for the social sciences today.¹

MILL'S PHILOSOPHY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

For John Stuart Mill,

neutrality is necessary in order to promote autonomy. . . . A person cannot be forced to be good, and the state should not dictate the kind of life a citizen should lead; it would be better for citizens to choose badly than for them to be forced by the state to choose well. (Root, 1993, pp. 12–13)

Planning our lives according to our own ideas and purposes is *sine qua non* for autonomous beings in Mill's *On Liberty* (1859/1978): “The free development of individuality is one of the principal ingredients of human happiness, and quite the chief ingredient of individual and social progress” (p. 50; see also Copleston, 1966, p. 303, note 32). This neutrality, based on the supremacy of individual autonomy, is the foundational principle in Mill's *Utilitarianism* (1861/1957) and in *A System of Logic* (1843/1893) as well. For Mill, “the principle of utility demands that the individual should enjoy full liberty, except the liberty to harm others” (Copleston, 1966, p. 54). In addition to bringing classical utilitarianism to its maximum development and establishing with Locke the liberal state, Mill delineated the foundations of inductive inquiry as social scientific method. In terms of the principles of empiricism, he perfected the inductive techniques of Francis Bacon as a problem-solving methodology to replace Aristotelian deductive logic.

According to Mill, syllogisms contribute nothing new to human knowledge. If we conclude that because “all men are mortal,” the Duke of Wellington is mortal by virtue of his manhood, then the conclusion does not advance the premise (see Mill, 1843/1893, II.3.2, p. 140). The crucial issue is not reordering the conceptual world but discriminating genuine knowledge from superstition. In the pursuit of truth, generalizing and synthesizing are necessary to advance inductively from the

known to the unknown. Mill seeks to establish this function of logic as inference from the known, rather than certifying the rules for formal consistency in reasoning (Mill, 1843/1893, III). Scientific certitude can be approximated when induction is followed rigorously, with propositions empirically derived and the material of all our knowledge provided by experience.² For the physical sciences, Mill establishes four modes of experimental inquiry: agreement, disagreement, residues, and the principle of concomitant variations (1843/1893, III.8, pp. 278–288). He considers them the only possible methods of proof for experimentation, as long as one presumes the realist position that nature is structured by uniformities.³

In Book 6 of *A System of Logic*, “On the Logic of the Moral Sciences,” Mill (1843/1893) develops an inductive experimentalism as the scientific method for studying “the various phenomena which constitute social life” (VI.6.1, p. 606). Although he conceived of social science as explaining human behavior in terms of causal laws, he warned against the fatalism of full predictability. “Social laws are hypothetical, and statistically-based generalizations that by their very nature admit of exceptions” (Copleston, 1966, p. 101; see also Mill, 1843/1893, VI.5.1, p. 596). Empirically confirmed instrumental knowledge about human behavior has greater predictive power when it deals with collective masses than when it concerns individual agents.

Mill’s positivism is obvious throughout his work on experimental inquiry.⁴ Based on Auguste Comte’s *Cours de Philosophie Positive* (1830), he defined matter as the “permanent possibility of sensation” (Mill, 1865b, p. 198) and believed that nothing else can be said about the metaphysical.⁵ Social research is amoral, speaking to questions of means only. Ends are outside its purview. In developing precise methods of indication and verification, Mill established a theory of knowledge in empirical terms. Truth is not something in itself but “depends on the past history and habits of our own minds” (Mill, 1843/1893, II, Vol. 6, p. 181). Methods for investigating society must be rigorously limited to the risks and benefits of possible courses of action. With David Hume and Comte, Mill insisted that metaphysical substances are not real; only the facts of sense phenomena exist. There are no essences or ultimate reality behind sensations; therefore, Mill (1865/1907, 1865a, 1865b) and Comte (1848/1910) argued that social scientists should limit themselves to particular data as a factual source out of which experimentally valid laws can be derived. For both, this is the only kind of knowledge that yields practical benefits (Mill, 1865b, p. 242); in fact, society’s salvation is contingent on such scientific knowledge (p. 241).⁶

Like his consequentialist ethics, Mill’s philosophy of social science is built on a dualism of means and ends. Citizens and politicians are responsible for

articulating ends in a free society and science for providing the know-how to achieve them. Science is amoral, speaking to questions of means but with no wherewithal or authority to dictate ends. Methods in the social sciences must be disinterested regarding substance and content. Protocols for practicing liberal science “should be prescriptive, but not morally or politically prescriptive and should direct against bad science but not bad conduct” (Root, 1993, p. 129). Research cannot be judged right or wrong, only true or false. “Science is political only in its applications” (Root, 1993, p. 213). Given his democratic liberalism, Mill advocates neutrality “out of concern for the autonomy of the individuals or groups” social science seeks to serve. It should “treat them as thinking, willing, active beings who bear responsibility for their choices and are free to choose” their own conception of the good life by majority rule (Root, 1993, p. 19).

VALUE NEUTRALITY IN MAX WEBER

When 21st-century mainstream social scientists contend that ethics is not their business, they typically invoke Max Weber’s essays written between 1904 and 1917. Given Weber’s importance methodologically and theoretically for sociology and economics, his distinction between political judgments and scientific neutrality is given canonical status.

Weber distinguishes between value freedom and value relevance. He recognizes that in the discovery phase, “personal, cultural, moral, or political values cannot be eliminated; . . . what social scientists choose to investigate . . . they choose on the basis of the values” they expect their research to advance (Root, 1993, p. 33). But he insists that social science be value-free in the presentation phase. Findings ought not to express any judgments of a moral or political character. Professors should hang up their values along with their coats as they enter their lecture halls.

“An attitude of moral indifference,” Weber (1904/1949b) writes, “has no connection with scientific objectivity” (p. 60). His meaning is clear from the value-freedom/value-relevance distinction. For the social sciences to be purposeful and rational, they must serve the “values of relevance.”

The problems of the social sciences are selected by the value relevance of the phenomena treated. . . . The expression “relevance to values” refers simply to the philosophical interpretation of that specifically scientific “interest” which determines the selection of a given subject matter and problems of empirical analysis. (Weber, 1917/1949a, pp. 21–22)

In the social sciences the stimulus to the posing of scientific problems is in actuality always given by practical “questions.” Hence, the very recognition of the existence of a scientific problem coincides personally with the possession of specifically oriented motives and values. . . .

Without the investigator’s evaluative ideas, there would be no principle of selection of subject matter and no meaningful knowledge of the concrete reality. Without the investigator’s conviction regarding the significance of particular cultural facts, every attempt to analyze concrete reality is absolutely meaningless. (Weber, 1904/1949b, pp. 61, 82)

Whereas the natural sciences, in Weber’s (1904/1949b, p. 72) view, seek general laws that govern all empirical phenomena, the social sciences study those realities that our values consider significant. Whereas the natural world itself indicates what reality to investigate, the infinite possibilities of the social world are ordered in terms of “the cultural values with which we approach reality” (1904/1949b, p.78).⁷ However, even though value relevance directs the social sciences, as with the natural sciences, Weber considers the former value-free. The subject matter in natural science makes value judgments unnecessary, and social scientists by a conscious decision can exclude judgments of “desirability or undesirability” from their publications and lectures (1904/1949b, p. 52). “What is really at issue is the intrinsically simple demand that the investigator and teacher should keep unconditionally separate the establishment of empirical facts . . . and his own political evaluations” (Weber, 1917/1949a, p. 11).

Weber’s opposition to value judgments in the social sciences was driven by practical circumstances (Brunn, 2007). Academic freedom for the universities of Prussia was more likely if professors limited their professional work to scientific know-how. With university hiring controlled by political officials, only if the faculty refrained from policy commitments and criticism would officials relinquish their control.

Few of the offices in government or industry in Germany were held by people who were well trained to solve questions of means. Weber thought that the best way to increase the power and economic prosperity of Germany was to train a new managerial class learned about means and silent about ends. The mission of the university, on Weber’s view, should be to offer such training.⁸ (Root, 1993, p. 41; see also Weber, 1973, pp. 4–8)

Weber’s practical argument for value freedom and his apparent limitation of it to the reporting phase have made his version of value neutrality attractive to 21st-century social science. He is not a positivist like Comte or a thoroughgoing

empiricist in the tradition of Mill. He disavowed the positivist's overwrought disjunction between discovery and justification and developed no systematic epistemology comparable to Mill's. His nationalism was partisan compared to Mill's liberal political philosophy. Nevertheless, Weber's value neutrality reflects Enlightenment autonomy in a fundamentally similar fashion. In the process of maintaining his distinction between value relevance and value freedom, he separates facts from values and means from ends. He appeals to empirical evidence and logical reasoning rooted in human rationality. "The validity of a practical imperative as a norm," he writes, "and the truth-value of an empirical proposition are absolutely heterogeneous in character" (Weber, 1904/1949b, p. 52). "A systematically correct scientific proof in the social sciences" may not be completely attainable, but that is most likely "due to faulty data" not because it is conceptually impossible (1904/1949b, p. 58).⁹ For Weber, like Mill, empirical science deals with questions of means, and his warning against inculcating political and moral values presumes a means-ends dichotomy (see Weber, 1917/1949a, pp. 18–19; 1904/1949b, p. 52; cf. Lassman, 2004).

As Michael Root (1993) concludes, "John Stuart Mill's call for neutrality in the social sciences is based on his belief" that the language of science "takes cognizance of a phenomenon and endeavors to discover its laws." Max Weber likewise "takes it for granted that there can be a language of science—a collection of truths—that excludes all value-judgments, rules, or directions for conduct" (p. 205). In both cases, scientific knowledge exists for its own sake as morally neutral. For both, neutrality is desirable "because questions of value are not rationally resolvable" and neutrality in the social sciences is presumed to contribute "to political and personal autonomy" (p. 229). In Weber's argument for value relevance in social science, he did not contradict the larger Enlightenment ideal of scientific neutrality between competing conceptions of the good.

UTILITARIAN ETHICS

In addition to its this-worldly humanism, utilitarian ethics has been attractive for its compatibility with scientific thought. It fit the canons of rational calculation as they were nourished by the Enlightenment's intellectual culture.

In the utilitarian perspective, one validated an ethical position by hard evidence. You count the consequences for human happiness of one or another course, and you go with the one with the highest favorable total. What counts as human happiness was thought to be something conceptually

unproblematic, a scientifically establishable domain of facts. One could abandon all the metaphysical or theological factors which made ethical questions scientifically undecidable. (Taylor, 1982, p. 129)

Utilitarian ethics replaces metaphysical distinctions with the calculation of empirical quantities, reflecting the inductive processes Mill delineated in his *System of Logic*. Utilitarianism favors specific actions or policies based on evidence. It follows the procedural demand that if “the happiness of each agent counts for one . . . the right course of action should be what satisfies all, or the largest number possible” (Taylor, 1982, p. 131). Autonomous reason is the arbiter of moral disputes.

With moral reasoning equivalent to calculating consequences for human happiness, utilitarianism presumes there is “a single consistent domain of the moral, that there is one set of considerations which determines what we ought morally to do” (Taylor, 1982, p. 132). This “epistemologically-motivated reduction and homogenization of the moral” marginalizes the qualitative languages of admiration and contempt—integrity, healing, liberation, conviction, dishonesty, and self-indulgence, for example (Taylor, 1982, p. 133). In utilitarian terms, these languages designate subjective factors that “correspond to nothing in reality. . . . They express the way we feel, not the way things are” (Taylor, 1982, p. 141).¹⁰ This single-consideration theory not only demands that we maximize general happiness, but considers irrelevant other moral imperatives that conflict with it, such as equal distribution. One-factor models appeal to the “epistemological squeamishness” of value-neutral social science, which “dislikes contrastive languages.” Moreover, utilitarianism appealingly offers “the prospect of exact calculation of policy through . . . rational choice theory” (Taylor, 1982, p. 143). “It portrays all moral issues as discrete problems amenable to largely technical solutions” (Euben, 1981, p. 117). However, to its critics, this kind of exactness represents “a semblance of validity” by leaving out whatever cannot be calculated (Taylor, 1982, p. 143).¹¹

Another influential critique of utilitarianism was developed earlier by W. David Ross.¹² Ross (1930) argued against the utilitarian claim that others are morally significant to us only when our actions impact them pro or con (pp. 17–21). We usually find ourselves confronting more than one moral claim at the same time involving different ethical principles. Asking only what produces the most good is too limiting. It does not cover the ordinary range of human relationships and circumstances. People recognize promise-keeping, equal distribution, nonviolence, and prevention of injury as moral principles. In various situations, any of them might be the most stringent.

Ordinary moral sensitivities suggest that when someone fulfills a promise because he thinks he ought to do so, it seems clear that he does so with no thought of its total consequences. . . . What makes him think it's right to act in a certain way is the fact that he has promised to do so—that and, usually, nothing more. (Ross, 1930, p. 17)

For both Taylor and Ross, the domain of the good in utilitarian theory is extrinsic. Given its dualism of means and ends, all that is worth valuing is a function of the consequences. *Prima facie* duties are literally inconceivable. “The degree to which my actions and statements” truly express what is important to someone does not count. Ethical and political thinking in consequentialist terms legislate[s] intrinsic valuing out of existence” (Taylor, 1982, p. 144). The exteriority of ethics is seen to guarantee the value neutrality of experimental procedures.¹³

CODES OF ETHICS

In value-free social science, codes of ethics for professional and academic associations are the conventional format for moral principles. By the 1980s, each of the major scholarly associations had adopted its own code, with an overlapping emphasis on four guidelines for directing an inductive science of means toward majoritarian ends.

1. *Informed consent.* Consistent with its commitment to individual autonomy, social science in the Mill and Weber tradition insists that research subjects have the right to be informed about the nature and consequences of experiments in which they are involved. Proper respect for human freedom generally includes two necessary conditions. Subjects must agree voluntarily to participate—that is, without physical or psychological coercion. In addition, their agreement must be based on full and open information. “The Articles of the Nuremberg Tribunal and the Declaration of Helsinki both state that subjects must be told the duration, methods, possible risks, and the purpose or aim of the experiment” (Soble, 1978, p. 40).

The self-evident character of this principle is not disputed in rationalist ethics. Meaningful application, however, generates ongoing disputes. As Punch (1998) observes, “In much fieldwork there seems to be no way around the predicament that informed consent—divulging one’s identity and research purpose to all and sundry—will kill many a project stone dead” (p. 171). True

to the privileging of means in a means-ends model, Punch reflects the general conclusion that codes of ethics should serve as a guideline prior to fieldwork but not intrude directly on the research process itself. “A strict application of codes” may “restrain and restrict” a great deal of “innocuous” and “unproblematic” research (p. 171).

2. *Deception.* In emphasizing informed consent, social science codes of ethics uniformly oppose deception. Even paternalistic arguments for possible deception of criminals, children in elementary schools, or the mentally incapacitated are no longer credible. The ongoing exposé of deceptive practices since Stanley Milgram’s experiments have given this moral principle special status; that is, deliberate misrepresentation is not ethically justified. In Kai Erikson’s (1967) classic formulation:

The practice of using masks in social research compromises both the people who wear them and the people for whom they are worn, and in doing so violates the terms of a contract which the sociologist should be ready to honor in his dealings with others. (pp. 367–368)

The straightforward application of this principle suggests that researchers design experiments free of active deception. But with ethical constructions exterior to the scientific enterprise, no unambiguous application is possible. Within both psychological experimentation and medical research, some information cannot be obtained without at least deception by omission. Given that the search for knowledge is obligatory and deception is codified as morally unacceptable, in some situations, both criteria cannot be satisfied. The standard resolution for this dilemma is to permit a modicum of deception when there are explicit utilitarian reasons for doing so. Opposition to deception in the codes is *de facto* redefined in these terms: “The crux of the matter is that some deception, passive or active, enables you to get at data not obtainable by other means” (Punch, 1998, p. 172). As Bulmer (2008) contends,

As a general principle, the use of deception in research has been condemned. But there are many situations in which it is not possible to be completely open to all participants and sometimes a full explanation of one’s purposes would overwhelm the listener. (p. 154)

The general exhortations of codes are considered far removed from the interactional complexities of the field.

3. *Privacy and confidentiality.* Codes of ethics insist on safeguards to protect people's identities and those of the research locations. Confidentiality must be assured as the primary safeguard against unwanted exposure. All personal data ought to be secured or concealed and made public only behind a shield of anonymity. Professional etiquette uniformly concurs that no one deserves harm or embarrassment as a result of insensitive research practices. "The single most likely source of harm in social science inquiry" is the disclosure of private knowledge considered damaging by experimental subjects (Reiss, 1979, p. 73).

As Enlightenment autonomy was developed in philosophical anthropology, a sacred innermost self became essential to the construction of unique personhood. Already in Locke, this private domain received nonnegotiable status. Democratic life was articulated outside these atomistic units, a secondary domain of negotiated contracts and problematic communication. In the logic of social science inquiry revolving around the same understanding of autonomy, invading people's fragile but distinctive privacy is intolerable.

Despite the signature status of privacy protection, watertight confidentiality has proved to be impossible. Pseudonyms and disguised locations are often recognized by insiders. What researchers consider innocent is perceived by participants as misleading or even betrayal. What appears neutral on paper is often conflictual in practice. When government agencies or educational institutions or health organizations are studied, what private parts ought not be exposed? And who is blameworthy if aggressive media carry the research further? Encoding privacy protection is meaningless when there is no distinction between public and private that has consensus any longer (Punch, 1998, p. 175).

4. *Accuracy.* Ensuring that data are accurate is a cardinal principle in social science codes as well. Fabrications, fraudulent materials, omissions, and contrivances are both nonscientific and unethical. Data that are internally and externally valid are the coin of the realm, experimentally and morally. In an instrumentalist, value-neutral social science, the definitions entailed by the procedures themselves establish the ends by which they are evaluated as moral.

Accuracy defined in scientific terms and included in codes of ethics represents a version of Alfred North Whitehead's fallacy of misplaced concreteness. The moral domain becomes equivalent to the epistemological. The unspecifiable abstract is said to have existence in the rigorous concrete. A set of methodological operations becomes normative, and this confusion of categories is both illogical and stale.

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARDS

As a condition of funding, government agencies in various countries have insisted that review and monitoring bodies be established by institutions engaged in research involving human subjects. Institutional review boards (IRBs) embody the utilitarian agenda in terms of scope, assumptions, and procedural guidelines.

In 1978, the U.S. National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects in Biomedical and Behavioral Research was established. As a result, three principles, published in what became known as the Belmont Report, were developed as the moral standards for research involving human subjects: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice.

1. The commitment to respect for persons reiterates the codes' demands that subjects enter the research voluntarily and with adequate information about the experiment's procedures and possible consequences. On a deeper level, respect for persons incorporates two basic ethical tenets: "First, that individuals should be treated as autonomous agents, and second, that persons with diminished autonomy [the immature and incapacitated] are entitled to protection" (University of Illinois, *Investigator Handbook*, 2009).

2. Under the principle of beneficence, researchers are enjoined to secure the well-being of their subjects. Beneficent actions are understood in a double sense as avoiding harm altogether and, if risks are involved for achieving substantial benefits, minimizing as much harm as possible:

In the case of particular projects, investigators and members of their institutions are obliged to give forethought to the maximization of benefits and the reduction of risks that might occur from the research investigation. In the case of scientific research in general, members of the larger society are obliged to recognize the longer term benefits and risks that may result from the improvement of knowledge and from the development of novel medical, psychotherapeutic, and social procedures. (University of Illinois, *Investigator Handbook*, 2009)

3. The principle of justice insists on fair distribution of both the benefits and burdens of research. An injustice occurs when some groups (e.g., welfare recipients, the institutionalized, or particular ethnic minorities) are overused as research subjects because of easy manipulation or their availability. When research supported by public funds leads to "therapeutic devices and procedures, justice demands that these not provide advantages only to those who can afford them" (University of Illinois, *Investigator Handbook*, 2009).

These principles reiterate the basic themes of value-neutral experimentalism—individual autonomy, maximum benefits with minimal risks, and ethical ends exterior to scientific means. The policy procedures based on them reflect the same guidelines that dominate the codes of ethics: informed consent, protection of privacy, and nondeception. The authority of IRBs was enhanced in 1989 when Congress passed the NIH Revitalization Act and formed the Commission on Research Integrity. The emphasis at that point was on the invention, fudging, and distortion of data. Falsification, fabrication, and plagiarism continue as federal categories of misconduct, with a revised report in 1996 adding warnings against unauthorized use of confidential information, omission of important data, and interference (that is, physical damage to the materials of others).

With IRBs, the legacy of Mill, Comte, and Weber comes into its own. Value-neutral science is accountable to ethical standards through rational procedures controlled by value-neutral academic institutions in the service of an impartial government. Consistent with the way anonymous bureaucratic regimes become refined and streamlined toward greater efficiency, the regulations rooted in scientific and medical experiments now extend to humanistic inquiry. Protecting subjects from physical harm in laboratories has grown to encompass human behavior, history, and ethnography in natural settings. In Jonathon Church's (2002) metaphor, "a biomedical paradigm is used like some threshing machine with ethnographic research the resulting chaff" (p. 2). Whereas Title 45/Part 46 of the Code of Federal Regulations (45 CFR 46) designed protocols for research funded by 17 federal agencies, at present, most universities have multiple project agreements that consign all research to a campus IRB under the terms of 45 CFR 46 (cf. Shopes & Ritchie, 2004).

While this bureaucratic expansion has gone on unremittingly, most IRBs have not changed the composition of their membership. Medical and behavioral scientists under the aegis of value-free neutrality continue to dominate. And the changes in procedures have generally stayed within the biomedical model also. Expedited review under the common rule, for social research with no risk of physical or psychological harm, depends on enlightened IRB chairs and organizational flexibility. Informed consent, mandatory before medical experiments, is simply incongruent with interpretive research that does not reduce humans to subjects but sees itself as collaboration among human beings (Denzin & Giardina, 2007, pp. 20–28).¹⁴ Despite technical improvements,

Intellectual curiosity remains actively discouraged by the IRB. Research projects must ask only surface questions and must not deviate from a path approved by a remote group of people. . . . Often the review process seems

to be more about gamesmanship than anything else. A better formula for stultifying research could not be imagined. (Blanchard, 2002, p. 11)

In its conceptual structure, IRB utilitarian policy is designed to produce the best ratio of benefits to costs (McIntosh & Morse, 2009, pp. 99–100). IRBs ostensibly protect the subjects who fall under the protocols they approve. However, given the interlocking utilitarian functions of social science, the academy, and the state that Mill identified and promoted, IRBs in reality protect their own institutions rather than subject populations in society at large (see Vanderpool, 1996, Chapters 2 to 6). Only when professional associations like the American Anthropological Association create their own best practices for ethnographic research is the IRB structure pushed in the right direction. Such renovations, however, are contrary to the centralizing homogeneity of closed systems such as the IRBs.

CURRENT CRISIS

Mill and Comte, each in his own way, presumed that experimental social science benefited society by uncovering facts about the human condition. Durkheim and Weber believed that a scientific study of society could help people come to grips with the development of big-business monopolies and industrialism. The American Social Science Association was created in 1865 to link “real elements of the truth” with “the great social problems of the day” (Lazarsfeld & Reitz, 1975, p. 1). This myth of beneficence was destroyed with “the revelations at the Nuremberg trials (recounting the Nazis’ ‘medical experiments’ on concentration camp inmates) and with the role of leading scientists in the Manhattan Project” (Punch, 1998, pp. 166–167).

The crisis of confidence multiplied with the exposure of actual physical harm in the Tuskegee Syphilis Study and the Willowbrook Hepatitis Experiment. In the 1960s, Project Camelot, a U.S. Army attempt to use social science to measure and forecast revolutions and insurgency, was bitterly opposed around the world and had to be canceled. Milgram’s (1974) deception of unwitting subjects and Laud Humphreys’s (1970, 1972) deceptive research on homosexuals in a public toilet and later in their homes, were considered scandalous for psychologically abusing research subjects. Noam Chomsky (1969/2002) exposed the complicity of social scientists with military initiatives in Vietnam.

Vigorous concern for research ethics since the 1980s, support from foundations, and the development of ethics codes and the IRB apparatus are credited by

their advocates with curbing outrageous abuses. However, the charges of fraud, plagiarism, and misrepresentation continue on a lesser scale, with dilemmas, conundrums, and controversies unabated over the meaning and application of ethical guidelines. Entrepreneurial faculty competing for scarce research dollars are generally compliant with institutional control, but the vastness of social science activity in universities and research entities makes full supervision impossible.¹⁵

Underneath the pros and cons of administering a responsible social science, the structural deficiencies in its epistemology have become transparent (Mantzavinos, 2009). A positivistic philosophy of social inquiry insists on neutrality regarding definitions of the good, and this worldview has been discredited. The understanding of society it entails and promotes is inadequate (Winch, 2007). The dominant Enlightenment model, setting human freedom at odds with the moral order, is bankrupt. Even Weber's weaker version of contrastive languages rather than oppositional entities is not up to the task. Reworking the ethics codes so that they are more explicit and less hortatory will make no fundamental difference. Requiring ethics workshops for graduate students and strengthening government policy are desirable but of marginal significance. Refining the IRB process and exhorting IRBs to account for the pluralistic nature of academic research are insufficient.

In utilitarianism, moral thinking and experimental procedures are homogenized into a unidimensional model of rational validation. Autonomous human beings are clairvoyant about aligning means and goals, presuming that they can objectify the mechanisms for understanding themselves and the social world surrounding them (see Winch, 2007, Chapters 3 and 4).¹⁶ This restrictive definition of ethics accounts for some of the goods we seek, such as minimal harm, but those outside a utility calculus are excluded. "Emotionality and intuition" are relegated "to a secondary position" in the decision-making process, for example, and no attention is paid to an "ethics of caring" grounded in "concrete particularities" (Denzin, 1997, p. 273; see also Ryan, 1995, p. 147). The way power and ideology influence social and political institutions is largely ignored. Under a rhetorical patina of deliberate choice and the illusion of autonomous creativity, a means-ends system operates in fundamentally its own terms.

This constricted environment no longer addresses adequately the complicated issues we face in studying the social world. But failure in the War on Poverty, contradictions over welfare, ill-fated studies of urban housing, and the thinness of medical science in health care reform have dramatized the limitations of a utility calculus that occupies the entire moral domain. Certainly, levels of success and failure are open to dispute even within the social science disciplines themselves.

More unsettling and threatening to the empirical mainstream than disappointing performance is the recognition that neutrality is not pluralistic but imperialistic. Reflecting on past experience, disinterested research under presumed conditions of value freedom is increasingly seen as *de facto* reinscribing the agenda in its own terms. Empiricism is procedurally committed to equal reckoning, regardless of how research subjects may constitute the substantive ends of life. But experimentalism is not a neutral meeting ground for all ideas; rather, it is a “fighting creed” that imposes its own ideas on others while uncritically assuming the very “superiority that powers this imposition” (Taylor et al., 1994, pp. 62–63).¹⁷ In Foucault’s (1979, pp. 170–195) more decisive terms, social science is a regime of power that helps maintain social order by normalizing subjects into categories designed by political authorities. A liberalism of equality is not neutral but represents only one range of ideals and is itself incompatible with other goods.

This noncontextual, nonsituational model that assumes “a morally neutral, objective observer will get the facts right” ignores “the situatedness of power relations associated with gender, sexual orientation, class, ethnicity, race, and nationality” (Denzin, 1997, p. 272). It is hierarchical (scientist-subject) and biased toward patriarchy. “It glosses the ways in which the observer-ethnographer is implicated and embedded in the ‘ruling apparatus’ of the society and the culture” (p. 272). Scientists “carry the mantle” of university-based authority as they venture out into “local community to do research” (Denzin, 1997, p. 272; see also Ryan, 1995, pp. 144–145).¹⁸ There is no sustained questioning of expertise itself in democratic societies that belong in principle to citizens who do not share this specialized knowledge (Pacey, 1996, Chapter 3).

Feminist Communitarianism

SOCIAL ETHICS

Over the past decade, social and feminist ethics have made a radical break with the individual autonomy and rationalist presumption of canonical ethics (see Koehn, 1998). The social ethics of Agnes Heller (1988, 1990, 1996, 1999, 2009), Charles Taylor (1989, 1991, 1995, 2007; Taylor et al., 1994), Carole Pateman (1985, 1988, 1989; Pateman & Mills, 2007), Edith Wyschogrod (1985, 1990, 1998, 2002), Kwasi Wiredu (1996), and Cornel West (1989, 1991, 1993/2001) and the feminist ethics of Carol Gilligan (1982, 1983; Gilligan, Ward,

& Taylor, 1988), Nel Noddings (1984, 1989, 1990, 2002), Virginia Held (1993), and Seyla Benhabib (1992, 1994, 2002, 2008) are fundamentally reconstructing ethical theory (see Code, 1991; Steiner, 2009). Rather than searching for neutral principles to which all parties can appeal, social ethics rests on a complex view of moral judgments as integrating into an organic whole everyday experience, beliefs about the good, and feelings of approval and shame, in terms of human relations and social structures. This is a philosophical approach that situates the moral domain within the general purposes of human life that people share contextually and across cultural, racial, and historical boundaries (Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng, & White, 2009, Chapters 2 and 3). Ideally, it engenders a new occupational role and normative core for social science research (Gunzenhauser, 2006; White, 1995).

Carol Gilligan (1982, 1983; Gilligan et al., 1988) characterizes the female moral voice as an ethic of care. This dimension of moral development is rooted in the primacy of human relationships. Compassion and nurturance resolve conflicting responsibilities among people, standards totally opposite of merely avoiding harm.¹⁹ In *Caring*, Nel Noddings (1984) rejects outright the “ethics of principle as ambiguous and unstable” (p. 5), insisting that human care should play the central role in moral decision making. Feminism in Linda Steiner’s work critiques the conventions of impartiality and formality in ethics while giving precision to affection, intimacy, nurturing, egalitarian and collaborative processes, and empathy. Feminists’ ethical self-consciousness also identifies subtle forms of oppression and imbalance and teaches us to “address questions about whose interests are regarded as worthy of debate” (Steiner, 1989, p. 158; see also Steiner, 1997).

Feminist approaches to ethics challenge women’s subordination, prescribe morally justifiable ways of resisting oppressive practices, and envision morally desirable alternatives that promote emancipation. . . . Fully feminist ethics, far more than their feminine and maternal counterparts, are distinctively political. . . . A feminist approach to ethics asks questions about power even before it asks questions about good and evil, care and justice, or maternal and paternal thinking. With feminism’s persuasive critique of the disembodied ethical subject generating a healthy respect for difference, a multiculturalist feminism may yet construct a non-sexist theory that respects difference of all sorts. (Steiner, 2009, p. 377)

While sharing in the turn away from an abstract ethics of calculation, Charlene Seigfried (1996) argues against the Gilligan-Noddings tradition

(cf. Held, 2006). Linking feminism to pragmatism, in which gender is socially constructed, she contradicts “the simplistic equation of women with care and nurturance and men with justice and autonomy” (Seigfried, 1996, p. 206). Gender-based moralities de facto make one gender subservient to another. In her social ethics, gender is replaced with engendering: “To be female or male is not to instantiate an unchangeable nature but to participate in an ongoing process of negotiating cultural expectations of femininity and masculinity” (p. 206). Seigfried challenges us to a social morality in which caring values are central but contextualized in webs of relationships and constructed toward communities with “more autonomy for women and more connectedness for men” (p. 219). Heller and Wyschogrod are two promising examples of proponents of social ethics that meet Seigfried’s challenge while confronting forthrightly today’s contingency, mass murder, conceptual upheavals in ethics, and hyperreality (cf. Noddings, 2002).

Heller is a former student of Georg Lukács and a dissident in Hungary, who became the Hannah Arendt Professor of Philosophy (Emerita) at the New School for Social Research. Her trilogy developing a contemporary theory of social ethics (Heller, 1988, 1990, 1996) revolves around what she calls the one decisive question: “Good persons exist—how are they possible?” (1988, p. 7). She disavows an ethics of norms, rules, and ideals external to human beings. Only exceptional acts of responsibility under duress and predicaments, each in its own way, are “worthy of theoretical interest” (1996, p. 3). Accumulated wisdom, moral meaning from our own choices of decency, and the ongoing summons of the Other together reintroduce love, happiness, sympathy, and beauty into a modern, nonabsolutist, but principled theory of morals.

In *Saints and Postmodernism*, Edith Wyschogrod (1990) asserts that anti-authority struggles are possible without assuming that our choices are voluntary. She represents a social ethics of self and Other in the tradition of Emmanuel Levinas (see Wyschogrod, 1974).²⁰ “The other person opens the venue of ethics, the place where ethical existence occurs” (Wyschogrod, 1990, p. xxi). The Other, “the touchstone of moral existence, is not a conceptual anchorage but a living force.” Others function “as a critical solvent;” their existence carries “compelling moral weight” (p. xxi). As a professor of philosophy and religious thought at Rice University, with a commitment to moral narrative, Wyschogrod believes that one venue for Otherness is the saintly life, defined as one in “which compassion for the Other, irrespective of cost to the saint, is the primary trait.” Saints put their own “bodies and material goods at the disposal of the Other. . . . Not only do saints contest the practices and beliefs of institutions, but in a more subtle way they contest the order of narrativity itself” (1990, pp. xxii–xxiii).

In addition to the Other, directed across a broad spectrum of belief systems who have “lived, suffered, and worked in actuality,” Wyschogrod (1990, p. 7) examines historical narratives for illustrations of how the Other’s self-manifestation is depicted. Her primary concern is the way communities shape shared experience in the face of cataclysms and calamities, arguing for historians who situate themselves “in dynamic relationship to them” (1998, p. 218). The overriding challenge for ethics, in Wyschogrod’s view, is how researchers enter into communities that create and sustain hope in terms of immediacy—“a presence here and now” but “a presence that must be deferred” to the future (1998, p. 248). Unless it is tangible and actionable, hope serves those in control. Hope that merely projects a future redemption obscures abuses of power and human need in the present.

Martin Buber (1958) calls the human relation a primal notion in his famous lines, “in the beginning is the relation” and “the relation is the cradle of life” (pp. 69, 60). Social relationships are preeminent. “The one primary word is the combination I-Thou” (p. 3). This irreducible phenomenon—the relational reality, the in-between, the reciprocal bond, the interpersonal—cannot be decomposed into simpler elements without destroying it.²¹ Given the primacy of relationships, unless we use our freedom to help others flourish, we deny our own well-being (cf. Verlinden, 2008, pp. 201–210).

Rather than privileging an abstract rationalism, the moral order is positioned close to the bone, in the creaturely and corporeal rather than the conceptual. “In this way, ethics . . . is as old as creation. Being ethical is a primordial movement in the beckoning force of life itself” (Olthuis, 1997, p. 141). The ethics of Levinas is one example:

The human face is the epiphany of the nakedness of the Other, a visitation, a meeting, a saying which comes in the passivity of the face, not threatening, but obligating. My world is ruptured, my contentment interrupted. I am already obligated. Here is an appeal from which there is no escape, a responsibility, a state of being hostage. It is looking into the face of the Other that reveals the call to a responsibility that is before any beginning, decision or initiative on my part. (Olthuis, 1997, p. 139)

Humans are defined as communicative beings within the fabric of everyday life. Through dialogic encounter, subjects create life together and nurture one another’s moral obligation to it. Levinas’s ethics presumes and articulates a radical ontology of social beings in relation (see, e.g., Levinas, 1985, 1991).

Moreover, in Levinasian terms, when I turn to the face of the Other, I not only see flesh and blood, but a third party arrives—the whole of humanity. In

responding to the Other's need, a baseline is established across the human race. For Benhabib (1992, cf. 1994), this is interactive universalism.²² Our universal solidarity is rooted in the principle that "we have inescapable claims on one another which cannot be renounced except at the cost of our humanity" (Peukert, 1981, p. 11).

A FEMINIST COMMUNITARIAN MODEL

Feminist communitarianism is Norman Denzin's (1997, pp. 274–287; 2003, pp. 242–258; 2009, pp. 155–162) label for the ethical theory to lead us forward at this juncture (Christians, 2002b).²³ This is a normative model that serves as an antidote to individualist utilitarianism. It presumes that the community is ontologically and axiologically prior to people. Human identity is constituted through the social realm, and human bonding is the epicenter of social formation. We are born into a sociocultural universe where values, moral commitments, and existential meanings are negotiated dialogically. Feminist communitarianism "embodies a sacred, existential epistemology that locates persons in a noncompetitive, nonhierarchical relationship to the larger moral universe" (Denzin, 2009, p. 158). Moral reasoning does not depend on formal consensus but goes forward because reciprocal care and understanding make moral discourse possible. Every communal act is measured against the ideals of a universal respect for the dignity of all human beings, regardless of gender, age, race, or religion (see Benhabib, 1992, Chapter 1).

For communitarians, the liberalism of Locke and Mill confuses an aggregate of individual pursuits with the common good (Christians, Ferre, & Fackler, 1993, Chapter 1). Moral agents need a context of social commitments and community ties for assessing what is valuable. What is worth preserving as a good cannot be self-determined in isolation; it can be ascertained only within specific social situations where human identity is nurtured. The public sphere is conceived as a mosaic of particular communities, a pluralism of ethnic identities and world-views intersecting to form a social bond but each seriously held and competitive as well. Rather than pay lip service to the social nature of the self while presuming a dualism of two orders, communitarianism interlocks personal autonomy with communal well-being. Morally appropriate action intends community. Common moral values are intrinsic to a community's ongoing existence and identity.

Therefore, the mission of social science research is enabling community life to prosper—equipping people to come to mutually held conclusions. The aim is

not fulsome data per se, but community transformation. The received view assumes that research advances society's interests by feeding our individual capacity to reason and make calculated decisions. Instead of moving forward with IRB approval of human subjects, research is intended to be collaborative in its design and participatory in its execution. Rather than having their concerns defined by ethics codes in the files of academic offices and distributed in research reports prepared for clients, the participants themselves are given a forum to activate the polis mutually. In contrast to utilitarian experimentalism, the substantive conceptions of the good that drive the problems reflect the conceptions of the community rather than the expertise of researchers or funding agencies.

In the feminist communitarian model, participants have a say in how the research should be conducted and are involved in actually conducting it. Participants offer "a voice or hand in deciding which problems should be studied, what methods should be used to study them, whether the findings are valid or acceptable, and how the findings are to be used or implemented" (Root, 1993, p. 245). This research is rooted in "community, shared governance . . . and neighborliness." Given its cooperative mutuality, it serves "the community in which it is carried out, rather than the community of knowledge producers and policymakers" (Lincoln, 1995, pp. 280, 287). It finds its genius in the maxim that "persons are arbitrators of their own presence in the world" (Denzin, 1989, p. 81).

For feminist communitarians, research becomes "a civic, participatory, collaborative project. It uses democratically arrived at, participant-driven criteria of evaluation" (Denzin, 2009, p. 158). Researchers and subjects become "coparticipants in a common moral project." Ethnographic inquiry is "characterized by shared ownership of the research project, community-based analyses, an emancipatory, dialectical, and transformative commitment" to social action (Denzin, 2009, p. 158; see also Denzin, 1984, p. 145; Reinharz, 1993). This collaborative research model "makes the researcher responsible not to a removed discipline (or institution), but to those he or she studies." It aligns the ethics of research "with a politics of resistance, hope and freedom" (Denzin, 2003, p. 258).

Interpretive Sufficiency

Within a feminist communitarian model, the mission of social science research is interpretive sufficiency. In contrast to an experimentalism of instrumental efficiency, this paradigm seeks to open up the social world in all its dynamic dimensions. The thick notion of sufficiency supplants the thinness of the technical,

exterior, and statistically precise received view. Rather than reducing social issues to financial and administrative problems for politicians, social science research enables people to come to terms with their everyday experience themselves.

Interpretive sufficiency means taking seriously lives that are loaded with multiple interpretations and grounded in cultural complexity. Ethnographic accounts should, therefore, “possess that amount of depth, detail, emotionality, nuance, and coherence that will permit a critical consciousness to be formed by the reader. Such texts should also exhibit representational adequacy, including the absence of racial, class, and gender stereotyping” (Denzin, 1997, p. 283; see 1989, pp. 77–81).

From the perspective of a feminist communitarian ethics, interpretive discourse is authentically sufficient when it fulfills three conditions: represents multiple voices, enhances moral discernment, and promotes social transformation. Consistent with the community-based norms advocated here, the focus is not on professional ethics per se but on the general morality. When feminist communitarianism is integrated with non-Enlightenment communal concepts such as *ubuntu* (from the Zulu maxim *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, “a person is a person through other persons” or “I am because of others”), a dialogic ethics is formed that expands the general morality to the human race as a whole (Christians, 2004).

MULTIVOCAL AND CROSS-CULTURAL REPRESENTATION

Within social and political entities are multiple spaces that exist as ongoing constructions of everyday life. The dialogical self is situated and articulated within these decisive contexts of gender, race, class, and religion. In contrast to contractarianism, where tacit consent or obligation is given to the state, promises are made and sustained to one another. Research narratives reflect a community’s multiple voices through which promise-keeping takes place.

In Carole Pateman’s communitarian philosophy, sociopolitical entities are not to be understood first of all in terms of contracts. Making promises is one of the basic ways in which consenting human beings “freely create their own social relationships” (Pateman, 1989, p. 61; see also Pateman, 1985, pp. 26–29). We assume an obligation by making a promise. When individuals promise, they are obliged to act accordingly. But promises are primarily made not to authorities through political contracts, but to fellow citizens. If obligations are rooted in promises, obligations are owed to other colleagues in institutions and to participants in community practices. Therefore, only under conditions of participatory democracy can there be self-assumed moral obligation.

Pateman understands the nature of moral agency. We know ourselves primarily in relation and derivatively as thinkers withdrawn from action. Only by overcoming the traditional dualisms between thinker and agent, mind and body, reason and will, can we conceive of being as “the mutuality of personal relationships” (MacMurray, 1961a, p. 38). Moral commitments arise out of action and return to action for their incarnation and verification. From a dialogical perspective, promise-keeping through action and everyday language is not a supercilious pursuit because our way of being is not inwardly generated but socially derived.

We become full human agents, capable of understanding ourselves, and hence of defining our identity, through . . . rich modes of expression we learn through exchange with others. . . .

My discovering my own identity doesn't mean that I work it out in isolation, but that I negotiate it through dialogue, partly overt, partly internal, with others. My own identity crucially depends on my dialogical relations with others. . . .

In the culture of authenticity, relationships are seen as the key loci of self-discovery and self-affirmation. (Taylor et al., 1994, pp. 32, 34, 36)

If moral bondedness flows horizontally and obligation is reciprocal in character, the affirming and sustaining of promises occurs cross-culturally. But the contemporary challenge of cultural diversity has raised the stakes and made easy solutions impossible. One of the most urgent and vexing issues on the democratic agenda at present is not just how to meet the moral obligation to treat ethnic differences with fairness but how to recognize explicit cultural groups politically (Benhabib, 2002, 2008).

Communitarianism as the basis for ethnic plurality rejects melting pot homogeneity and replaces it with the politics of recognition. The basic issue is whether democracies are discriminating against their citizens in an unethical manner when major institutions fail to account for the identities of their members (Taylor et al., 1994, p. 3). In what sense should the specific cultural and social features of African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, Buddhists, Jews, the physically disabled, or children matter publicly? Should not public institutions ensure only that democratic citizens share an equal right to political liberties and due process without regard to race, gender, or religion? Beneath the rhetoric is a fundamental philosophical dispute that Taylor calls the “politics of recognition.” As he puts it, “Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being. Due recognition is not just a courtesy we owe people. It

is a vital human need” (Taylor et al., 1994, p. 26). This foundational issue regarding the character of cultural identity needs to be resolved for cultural pluralism to come into its own. Feminist communitarianism is a nonassimilationist framework in which such resolution can occur.

However, liberal proceduralism cannot meet this vital human need. Emphasizing equal rights with no particular substantive view of the good life “gives only a very restricted acknowledgement of distinct cultural identities” (Taylor et al., 1994, p. 52). Insisting on neutrality, and without collective goals, produces at best personal freedom, safety, and economic security understood homogeneously. As Bunge (1996) puts it, “Contractualism is a code of behavior for the powerful and the hard—those who write contracts, not those who sign on the dotted line” (p. 230). However, in promise-based communal formation the flourishing of particular cultures, religions, and ethnic groups is the substantive goal to which we are morally committed as human beings.

Denzin (2002) demonstrates how multicultural representation ought to operate in the media’s construction of the American racial order. An ethnic cinema that honors racial difference is not assimilationist, nor does it “celebrate exceptional blackness” supporting white values; and it refuses to pit “the ethnic other against a mainstream white America” as well as “dark skin against dark skin” (p. 6). Rather than “a didactic film aesthetic based on social problems realism”—one that is “trapped by the modernist agenda”—Denzin follows Hal Foster and bell hooks in arguing for an anti-aesthetic or postmodern aesthetic that is cross-disciplinary, is oriented to the vernacular, and denies “the idea of a privileged aesthetic realm” (pp. 11, 180). A “feminist, Chicana/o and black performance-based aesthetic” creates “a critical counter-hegemonic race consciousness” and implements critical race theory (p. 180).

In feminist communitarian terms, this aesthetic is simultaneously political and ethical. Racial difference is imbricated in social theories and in conceptions of the human being, of justice, and the common good. It requires an aesthetic that “in generating social criticism . . . also engenders resistance” (p. 181). It is not a “protest or integrationist initiative” aimed at “informing a white audience of racial injustice,” but instead “offers new forms of representation that create the space for new forms of critical race consciousness” (p. 182). The overarching standard made possible by this aesthetic is enhancing moral agency, that is, serving as a catalyst for moral discernment (Christians, 2002a, p. 409).

With the starting hypothesis that all human cultures have something important to say, social science research recognizes particular cultural values consistent with universal human dignity (Christians, 1997, pp. 11–14; 2008, pp. 16–17). Interpretive sufficiency in its multicultural dimension helps people in their

home territory see how life could be different. This framework “imagines new forms of human transformation and emancipation” (Denzin, 2009, p. 158). These transformations are enacted “through dialogue. If necessary, it sanctions nonviolent forms of civil disobedience.” In its “asking that interpretive work provide the foundations for social criticism and social action, this ethic represents a call to action” (Denzin, 2009, p. 158).

MORAL DISCERNMENT

Societies are embodiments of institutions, practices, and structures recognized internally as legitimate. Without allegiance to a web of ordering relations, society becomes, as a matter of fact, inconceivable. Communities not only constitute linguistic entities but also require at least a minimal moral commitment to the common good. Because social entities are moral orders and not merely functional arrangements, moral commitment constitutes the self-in-relation. Our identity is defined by what we consider good or worth opposing. Only through the moral dimension can we make sense of human agency. As Stephen Mulhall and Adam Swift (1996) write:

Developing, maintaining and articulating [our moral intuitions and reactions] is not something humans could easily or even conceivably dispense with. . . . We can no more imagine a human life that fails to address the matter of its bearings in moral space than we can imagine one in which developing a sense of up and down, right and left is regarded as an optional human task. . . . A moral orientation is inescapable because the questions to which the framework provides answers are themselves inescapable. (pp. 106–108; see also Taylor, 1989, pp. 27–29)

A self exists only within “webs of interlocution,” and all self-interpretation implicitly or explicitly “acknowledges the necessarily social origin of any and all their conceptions of the good and so of themselves” (Mulhall & Swift, 1996). Moral frameworks are as fundamental for orienting us in social space as the need to establish ourselves in physical space. The moral dimension must, therefore, be considered intrinsic to human beings, not a system of rules, norms, and ideals external to society. Moral duty is nurtured by the demands of social linkage and not produced by abstract theory.

The core of a society’s common morality is pretheoretical agreement. However, “what counts as common morality is not only imprecise but variable . . . and a

difficult practical problem” (Bok, 1995, p. 99). Moral obligation must be articulated within the fallible and irresolute voices of everyday life. Among disagreements and uncertainty, we look for criteria and wisdom in settling disputes and clarifying confusions; and normative theories of an interactive sort can invigorate our common moral discourse. But generally accepted theories are not necessary for the common good to prosper. The common good is not “the complete morality of every participant . . . but a set of agreements among people who typically hold other, less widely shared ethical beliefs” (Bok, 1995, p. 99). Instead of expecting more theoretical coherence than history warrants, Reinhold Niebuhr inspires us to work through inevitable social conflicts while maintaining “an untheoretical jumble of agreements” called here the common good (Barry, 1967, pp.190–191). Through a common morality, we can approximate consensus on issues and settle disputes interactively. In Jürgen Habermas’s (1993) terms, discourse in the public sphere must be oriented “toward mutual understanding” while allowing participants “the communicative freedom to take positions” on claims to final validity (p. 66; see also Habermas, 1990).

Communitarians challenge researchers to participate in a community’s ongoing process of moral articulation. Conceptions of the good are shared by researchers and subjects, both of them self-reflexive and collaborating to bring moral issues to clarity. In fact, culture’s continued existence depends on this type of identification and defense of its normative base (Fackler, 2009, pp. 312–315). Therefore, ethnographic texts must enable us “to discover moral truths about ourselves”; narratives ought to “bring a moral compass into readers’ lives” by accounting for things that matter to them (Denzin, 1997, p. 284). Feminist communitarianism seeks to engender moral reasoning internally. Communities are woven together by narratives that invigorate their common understanding of good and evil, happiness and reward, the meaning of life and death. Recovering and refashioning moral vocabulary helps to amplify our deepest humanness. Researchers are not constituted as ethical selves antecedently, but moral discernment unfolds dialectically between researchers and the researched who collaborate with them.

Our widely shared moral convictions are developed through discourse within a community. These communities, where moral discourse is nurtured and shared, are a radical alternative to the utilitarian individualism of modernity. But in feminist communitarianism, communities are entered from the universal. The total opposite of an ethics of individual autonomy is universal human solidarity. Our obligation to sustain one another defines our existence. The primal sacredness of all without exception is the heart of the moral order and the new starting point for our theorizing (Christians, 1998, 2008).

The rationale for human action is reverence for life on earth. Living nature reproduces itself as its very character. Embedded in the animate world is the purposiveness of bringing forth life. Therefore, within the natural order is a moral claim on us for its own sake and in its own right. Nurturing life has a taken-for-granted character outside subjective preferences. Reverence for life on earth is a pretheoretical given that makes the moral order possible. The sacredness of life is not an abstract imperative but the ground of human action.²⁴ It is a primordial generality that underlies reification into ethical principles, an organic bond that everyone shares inescapably. In our systematic reflection on this protonorm, we recognize that it entails such basic ethical principles as human dignity and nonviolence (Christians, Rao, Ward, & Wasserman, 2009, pp. 143–145).

Reverence for life on earth establishes a level playing floor for cross-cultural collaboration in ethics. It represents a universalism from the ground up. Various societies articulate this protonorm in different terms and illustrate it locally, but every culture can bring to the table this fundamental norm for ordering political relationships and social institutions. We live out our values in a community setting where the moral life is experienced and a moral vocabulary articulated. Such protonorms as reverence for life can be recovered only locally. Language situates them in history. The sacredness of life reflects our common condition as a species, but we act on it through the immediate reality of geography, ethnicity, and ideology (Fackler, 2003). But according to feminist communitarianism, if we enter this communal arena not from individual decision making but from a universal commonness, we have the basis for believing that researchers and the researched can collaborate on the moral domain. Researchers do not bring a set of prescriptions into which they school their subjects. Instead they find ways interactively to bring the sacredness of life into its own—each culture and all circumstances providing an abundance of meaning and application.

How the moral order works itself out in community formation is the issue, not, first of all, what researchers consider virtuous. The challenge for those writing culture is not to limit their moral perspectives to their own generic and neutral principles but to engage the same moral space as the people they study. In this perspective, research strategies are not assessed, first of all, in terms of statistical sophistication, but for their vigor in illuminating how communities can flourish.

POLITICS OF RESISTANCE

Ethics in the feminist communitarian mode generates social criticism, leads to resistance, and empowers to action those who are interacting (see Habermas,

1971, pp. 301–317). Thus a basic norm for interpretive research is enabling the humane transformation of the multiple spheres of community life, such as religion, politics, ethnicity, and gender.

From his own dialogic perspective, Paulo Freire speaks of the need to reinvent the meaning of power:

For me the principal, real transformation, the radical transformation of society in this part of the century demands not getting power from those who have it today, or merely to make some reforms, some changes in it. . . . The question, from my point of view, is not just to take power but to reinvent it. That is, to create a different kind of power, to deny the need power has as if it were metaphysics, bureaucratized, and anti-democratic. (quoted in Evans, Evans, & Kennedy, 1987, p. 229)

Certainly, oppressive power blocs and monopolies—economic, technological, and political—need the scrutiny of researchers and their collaborators. Given Freire’s political-institutional bearing, power for him is a central notion in social analysis. But, in concert with him, feminist communitarian research refuses to deal with power in cognitive terms only. The issue is how people can empower themselves instead.

The dominant understanding of power is grounded in nonmutuality; it is interventionist power, exercised competitively and seeking control. In the communitarian alternative, power is relational, characterized by mutuality rather than sovereignty. Power from this perspective is reciprocity between two subjects, a relationship not of domination but of intimacy and vulnerability—power akin to that of Alcoholics Anonymous, in which surrender to the community enables the individual to gain mastery. In these terms, Cannella and Lincoln (2009) challenge us to “construct critical research that does not simultaneously create new forms of oppressive power for itself or for its practitioners” (p. 54). The indigenous Kaupapa Maori approach to research meets this standard: “The researcher is led by the members of the community and does not presume to be a leader, or to have any power that he or she can relinquish” (Denzin, 2003, p. 243).

Dialogue is the key element in an emancipatory strategy that liberates rather than imprisons us in manipulation or antagonistic relationships. Although the control version of power considers mutuality weakness, the empowerment mode maximizes our humanity and thereby banishes powerlessness. In the research process, power is unmasked and engaged through solidarity as a researched-researcher team. There is certainly no monologic “assumption that the researcher

is giving the group power” (Denzin, 2003, p. 243). Rather than play semantic games with power, researchers themselves are willing to march against the barricades. As Freire insists, only with everyone filling his or her own political space, to the point of civil disobedience as necessary, will empowerment mean anything revolutionary (in McLaren & Leonard, 1993, Chapters 8, 10).

What is nonnegotiable in Freire’s theory of power is participation of the oppressed in directing cultural formation (Stefanos, 1997). If an important social issue needs resolution, the most vulnerable will have to lead the way: “Revolutionary praxis cannot tolerate an absurd dichotomy in which the praxis of the people is merely that of following the [dominant elite’s] decisions” (Freire, 1970a, p.120; see also Freire, 1978, pp. 17ff.).²⁵ Arrogant politicians—supported by a bevy of accountants, lawyers, economists, and social science researchers—trivialize the nonexpert’s voice as irrelevant to the problem or its solution. On the contrary, transformative action from the inside out is impossible unless the oppressed are active participants rather than a leader’s object. “Only power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both” (Freire, 1970b, p. 28).²⁶

In Freire’s (1973) terms, the goal is conscientization, that is, a critical consciousness that directs the ongoing flow of praxis and reflection in everyday life. In a culture of silence, the oppressor’s language and way of being are fatalistically accepted without contradiction. But a critical consciousness enables us to exercise the uniquely human capacity of “speaking a true word” (Freire, 1970b, p. 75). Under conditions of sociopolitical control, “the vanquished are dispossessed of their word, their expressiveness, their culture” (1970b, p. 134). Through conscientization, the oppressed gain their own voice and collaborate in transforming their culture (1970a, pp. 212–213). Therefore, research is not the transmission of specialized data but, in style and content, a catalyst for critical consciousness. Without what Freire (1970b, p. 47) calls “a critical comprehension of reality” (that is, the oppressed “grasping with their minds the truth of their reality”), there is only acquiescence in the status quo.

The resistance of the empowered is more productive at the interstices—at the fissures in social institutions where authentic action is possible. Effective resistance is nurtured in the backyards, the open spaces, and voluntary associations, among neighborhoods, schools, and interactive settings of mutual struggle without elites. Since only nonviolence is morally acceptable for sociopolitical change, there is no other option except an educational one—having people movements gain their own voice and nurturing a critical conscience through dialogic means. People-based development from below is not merely an end in itself, but a fundamental condition of social transformation. “We are no longer called to just

interpret the world”; rather than be limited to this mandate of traditional ethnography, “we are called to change the world and to change it in ways that resist injustice” (Denzin & Giardina, 2009, p. 23). In seeking research strategies of this kind, Guba (1990) insists correctly on a dialogic framework, a conversation of peace and hope “that will move us to new, more informed, and more sophisticated empowerment paradigms” (p. 27).

Conclusion

As Guba and Lincoln (1994) argue, the issues in social science ultimately must be engaged at the worldview level. “Questions of method are secondary to questions of paradigm, which we define as the basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways” (p. 105). The conventional view, with its extrinsic ethics, gives us a truncated and unsophisticated paradigm that needs to be ontologically transformed. This historical overview of theory and practice points to the need for an entirely new model of research ethics in which human action and conceptions of the good are interactive.

“Since the relation of persons constitutes their existence as persons, . . . morally right action is [one] which intends community” (MacMurray, 1961b, p. 119). In feminist communitarianism, personal being is cut into the very heart of the social universe. The common good is accessible to us only in personal form; it has its ground and inspiration in a social ontology of the human.²⁷ “Ontology must be rescued from submersion in things by being thought out entirely from the viewpoint of person and thus of Being” (Lotz, 1963, p. 294). “Ontology is truly itself only when it is personal, and persons are truly themselves only as ontological” (Lotz, 1963, p. 297).

When rooted in a positivist or postpositivist worldview, explanations of social life are considered incompatible with the renderings offered by the participants themselves. In problematics, lingual form, and content, research production presumes greater mastery and clearer illumination than the nonexperts who are the targeted beneficiaries. Protecting and promoting individual autonomy has been the philosophical rationale for value neutrality since its origins in Mill. But the incoherence in that view of social science is now transparent. By limiting the active involvement of rational beings or judging their self-understanding to be false, empiricist models contradict the ideal of rational beings who “choose between competing conceptions of the good” and make choices “deserving of

respect” (Root, 1993, p. 198). The verification standards of an instrumentalist system “take away what neutrality aims to protect: a community of free and equal rational beings legislating their own principles of conduct” (Root, 1993, p. 198). The social ontology of feminist communitarianism escapes this contradiction by reintegrating human life with the moral order.

Freed from neutrality and a superficial instrumentalism, the ethics of feminist communitarianism participates in the revolutionary social science advocated by Cannella and Lincoln (2009):

Research conceptualizations, purposes, and practices would be grounded in critical ethical challenges to social (therefore science) systems, supports for egalitarian struggle, and revolutionary ethical awareness and activism from within the context of community. Research would be relational (often as related to community) and grounded within critique of systems, egalitarian struggle, and revolutionary ethics. (p. 68)

In this form, the positivist paradigm is turned upside down intellectually, and qualitative research advances social justice and is grounded in hope (Denzin & Giardina, 2009, pp. 41–42). Denzin, Yvonna Lincoln, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2008) correctly locate the politics and ethics of this chapter in global terms. For them, Occidental social scientists advocating alternative interpretive research “and indigenous communities alike have been moving toward the same goals.” They both “seek a set of ethical principles that are feminist, caring, communitarian, holistic, respectful, mutual (rather than power imbalanced), sacred, and ecologically sound” (p. 569).

Notes

1. Michael Root (1993) is unique among philosophers of the social sciences in linking social science to the ideals and practices of the liberal state on the grounds that both institutions “attempt to be neutral between competing conceptions of the good” (p. xv). As he elaborates: “Though liberalism is primarily a theory of the state, its principles can be applied to any of the basic institutions of a society; for one can argue that the role of the clinic, the corporation, the scholarly associations, or professions is not to dictate or even recommend the kind of life a person should aim at. Neutrality can serve as an ideal for the operations of these institutions as much as it can for the state. Their role, one can argue, should be to facilitate whatever kind of life a student, patient, client, customer, or member is aiming at and not promote one kind of life over another” (p. 13). Root’s interpretations of Mill and Weber are crucial to my own formulation.

2. Although committed to what he called “the logic of the moral sciences” in delineating the canons or methods for induction, Mill shared with natural science a belief in the uniformity of nature and the presumption that all phenomena are subject to cause-and-effect relationships. His five principles of induction reflect a Newtonian cosmology.

3. Utilitarianism in John Stuart Mill was essentially an amalgamation of Jeremy Bentham’s greatest happiness principle, David Hume’s empirical philosophy and concept of utility as a moral good, and Comte’s positivist tenets that things-in-themselves cannot be known and knowledge is restricted to sensations. In his influential *A System of Logic*, Mill (1843/1893) is typically characterized as combining the principles of French positivism (as developed by Comte) and British empiricism into a single system.

4. For an elaboration of the complexities in positivism—including reference to its Millian connections—see Lincoln and Guba (1985, pp. 19–28).

5. Mill’s realism is most explicitly developed in his *Examination of Sir William Hamilton’s Philosophy* (1865b). Our belief in a common external world, in his view, is rooted in the fact that our sensations of physical reality “belong as much to other human or sentient beings as to ourselves” (p. 196; see also Copleston, 1966, p. 306, note 97).

6. Mill (1873/1969) specifically credits Comte for his use of the inverse deductive or historical method: “This was an idea entirely new to me when I found it in Comte; and but for him I might not soon (if ever) have arrived at it” (p. 126). Mill explicitly follows Comte in distinguishing social statics and social dynamics. He published two essays on Comte’s influence in the *Westminster Review*, which were reprinted as *Auguste Comte and Positivism* (Mill, 1865a; see also Mill, 1873/1969, p. 165).

7. Emile Durkheim is more explicit and direct about causality in both the natural and the social worlds. While he argues for sociological over psychological causes of behavior and did not believe intention could cause action, he unequivocally sees the task of social science as discovering the causal links between social facts and personal behavior (see, e.g., Durkheim, 1966, pp. 44, 297–306).

8. As one example of the abuse Weber resisted, Root (1993, pp. 41–42) refers to the appointment of Ludwig Bernhard to a professorship of economics at the University of Berlin. Although he had no academic credentials, the Ministry of Education gave Bernhard this position without a faculty vote (see Weber, 1973, pp. 4–30). In Shils’s (1949) terms, “A mass of particular, concrete concerns underlies [his 1917] essay—his recurrent effort to penetrate to the postulates of economic theory, his ethical passion for academic freedom, his fervent nationalist political convictions, and his own perpetual demand for intellectual integrity” (p. v).

9. The rationale for the Social Science Research Council in 1923 is multilayered, but in its attempt to link academic expertise with policy research, and in its preference for rigorous social scientific methodology, the SSRC reflects and implements Weber.

10. In *Utilitarianism*, Chapter 4, Mill (1861/1957) drew an analogy between visibility and desirability to prove the utilitarian moral standard. He argued that the proof an object is visible is the fact that people in real life actually see it. By analogy, the proof that something is desirable is people actually desiring it. Therefore, since people do in fact desire happiness, happiness must be desirable or good. As Harris (2006, p. 142) and others

have argued, although visibility/desirability illustrates Mill's empiricism, his intended proof is not convincing. Insisting that something is actually desired by people does not mean it should be desired. People often desire what they should not. My desiring happiness does not itself make the promotion of happiness a moral obligation for me or in general.

11. Often in professional ethics at present, we isolate consequentialism from a full-scale utilitarianism. We give up on the idea of maximizing happiness, but "still try to evaluate different courses of action purely in terms of their consequences, hoping to state everything worth considering in our consequence-descriptions" (Taylor, 1982, p. 144). However, even this broad version of utilitarianism, in Taylor's terms, "still legislates certain goods out of existence" (p. 144). It is likewise a restrictive definition of the good that favors the mode of reasoned calculation and prevents us from taking seriously all facets of moral and normative political thinking (p. 144). As Lincoln observes, utilitarianism's inescapable problem is that "in advocating the greatest good for the greatest number, small groups of people (all minority groups, for example) experience the political regime of the 'tyranny of the majority.'" She refers correctly to "liberalism's tendency to reinscribe oppression by virtue of the utilitarian principle" (personal communication, February 16, 1999).

12. John Rawls's (1971) justice-based moral theory is also a compelling critique of utilitarianism. Utilitarianism is a teleological theory and Rawls's justice-as-fairness is deontological. Rawls needs to be elaborated in debates over moral theory itself. Taylor and Ross are included here since they are more explicitly epistemological, interlacing Mill's empiricism and utilitarianism.

13. Given the nature of positivist inquiry, Jennings and Callahan (1983) conclude that only a short list of ethical questions are considered, and they "tend to merge with the canons of professional scientific methodology. . . . Intellectual honesty, the suppression of personal bias, careful collection and accurate reporting of data, and candid admission of the limits of the scientific reliability of empirical studies—these were essentially the only questions that could arise. And, since these ethical responsibilities are not particularly controversial (at least in principle), it is not surprising that during this period [the 1960s] neither those concerned with ethics nor social scientists devoted much time to analyzing or discussing them" (p. 6).

14. Most biomedical research occurs in a laboratory. Researchers are obliged to inform participants of potential risk and obtain consent before the research takes place. Ethnographic research occurs in settings where subjects live, and informed consent is a process of "ongoing interaction between the researcher and the members of the community being studied. . . . One must establish bonds of trust and negotiate consent . . . taking place over weeks or months—not prior to a structured interview" (Church, 2002, p. 3).

15. As Taylor (1982) puts it, "The modern dispute about utilitarianism is not about whether it occupies some of the space of moral reason, but whether it fills the whole space." "Comfort the dying" is a moral imperative in contemporary Calcutta, even

though “the dying are in an extremity that makes [utilitarian] calculation irrelevant” (p. 134).

16. While rejecting this utilitarian articulation of means to ends, a philosophical critique of the means-ends trajectory is necessary for this rejection to have long-term credibility. Drescher (2006, pp. 183–188) represents a recent review of the means-ends relation, establishing criteria in rationalist terms.

17. This restates the well-known objection to a democratic liberalism of individual rights: “Liberalism is not a possible meeting ground for all cultures, but is the political expression of one range of cultures, and quite incompatible with other ranges. Liberalism can’t and shouldn’t claim complete cultural neutrality. Liberalism is also a fighting creed. Multiculturalism as it is often debated today has a lot to do with the imposition of some cultures on others, and with the assumed superiority that powers this imposition. Western liberal societies are thought to be supremely guilty in this regard, partly because of their colonial past, and partly because of their marginalization of segments of their populations that stem from other cultures” (Taylor et al., 1994, pp. 62–63).

18. Denzin in this passage credits Smith (1987, p. 107) with the concept of a “ruling apparatus.”

19. Gilligan’s research methods and conclusions have been debated by a diverse range of scholars. For this debate and related issues, see Brabeck (1990), Card (1991), Tong (1989, pp. 161–168; 1993, pp. 80–157), Seigfried (1996), and Wood (1994).

20. Levinas (b. 1905) was a professor of philosophy at the University of Paris (Nanterre) and head of the Israelite Normal School in Paris. In Wyschogrod’s (1974) terms, “He continues the tradition of Martin Buber and Franz Rosenweig” and was “the first to introduce Husserl’s work into . . . the French phenomenological school” (pp. vii–viii). Although Wyschogrod is a student of Martin Heidegger, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and Edmund Husserl (see, e.g., Wyschogrod, 1985)—and engages Jacques Derrida, Jean-François Lyotard, Michel Foucault, and Gilles Deleuze—her work on ethics appeals not to traditional philosophical discourse but to concrete expressions of self-Other transactions in the visual arts, literary narrative, historiography, and the normalization of death in the news.

21. Levinas sees the irreducibility of the I-Thou relation as a critical contribution to the history of ideas: “The dialogical relation and its phenomenological irreducibility . . . will remain the unforgettable contribution of Martin Buber’s philosophical labours. . . . Any reflection of the alterity of the others in his or her irreducibility to the objectivity of objects and the being of beings must recognize the new perspective Buber opened” (Levinas, as cited in Friedman, 2002, p. 338).

22. Martha Nussbaum (1993) argues for a version of virtue ethics in these terms, contending for a model rooted in Aristotle that has cross-cultural application without being detached from particular forms of social life. In her model, various spheres of human experience that are found in all cultures represent questions to answer and choices to make—attitudes toward the ill or good fortune of others, how to treat strangers, management of property, control over bodily appetites, and so forth. Our experiences in

these areas “fix a subject for further inquiry” (p. 247), and our reflection on each sphere will give us a “thin or nominal definition” of a virtue relevant to this sphere. On this basis, we can talk across cultures about behavior appropriate in each sphere (see Nussbaum, 1999).

23. Root (1993, Chapter 10) also chooses a communitarian alternative to the dominant paradigm. In his version, critical theory, participatory research, and feminist social science are three examples of the communitarian approach. This chapter offers a more complex view of communitarianism developed in political philosophy and intellectual history, rather than limiting it to social theory and practical politics. Among the philosophical communitarians (Sandel, 1982/1998; Taylor, 1989; Walzer, 1983, 1987), Pateman (1985, 1989) is explicitly feminist, and her promise motif forms the axis for the principle of multivocal representation outlined below. In this chapter’s feminist communitarian model, critical theory is integrated into the third ethical imperative—empowerment and resistance. In spite of that difference in emphasis, I agree with Root’s (1993) conclusion: “Critical theories are always critical for a particular community, and the values they seek to advance are the values of that community. In that respect, critical theories are communitarian. . . . For critical theorists, the standard for choosing or accepting a social theory is the reflective acceptability of the theory by members of the community for whom the theory is critical” (pp. 233–234). For a review of communitarian motifs in terms of Foucault, see Olssen (2002).

24. The sacredness of life as a protonorm differs fundamentally from the Enlightenment’s monocultural ethical rationalism in which universal imperatives were considered obligatory for all nations and epochs. Cartesian foundationalism and Immanuel Kant’s formalism presumed noncontingent starting points. Universal human solidarity does not. Nor does it flow from Platonism, that is, the finite participating in the infinite and receiving its essence from it (see Christians, 2008, pp. 10–12). In addition to the sacredness of life as a protonorm, there are other appeals to universals that are not Western or do not presume a Newtonian cosmology; for a summary, see Cooper & Christians (2008, pp. 296–300).

25. Mutuality is a cardinal feature of the feminist communitarian model generally and therefore crucial to the principle of empowerment. For this reason, critical theory is inscribed into the third principle here, rather than following Root (see note 18, above), allowing it to stand by itself as an illustration of communitarianism. Root (1993, p. 238) himself observes that critical theorists often fail to transfer the “ideals of expertise” to their research subjects or give them little say in the research design and interpretation. Without a fundamental shift to communitarian interactivity, research in all modes is prone to the distributive fallacy.

26. Because of his fundamental commitment to dialogue, empowering for Freire avoids the weaknesses of monologic concepts of empowerment in which researchers are seen to free up the weak and unfortunate (summarized by Denzin, 2003, pp. 242–245, citing Bishop, 1998). While Freire represents a radical perspective, he does not claim, “as more radical theorists” do, that “only they and their theories can lead” the researched into freedom (Denzin, 2003, p. 246; citing Bishop, 1998).

27. Michael Theunissen (1984) argues that Buber's relational self (and therefore its legacy in Levinas, Freire, Heller, Wyschogrod, and Taylor) is distinct from the subjectivity of continental existentialism. The subjective sphere of Husserl and Jean-Paul Sartre, for example, "stands in no relation to a Thou and is not a member of a We" (p. 20; see also p. 276). "According to Heidegger the self can only come to itself in a voluntary separation from other selves; according to Buber, it has its being solely in the relation" (p. 284).

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