

Unde Venisti, Quo Vadis et Cui Bono?:
**Situated Ethics and Negotiated Interests in
Designing an Educational Research Ethics
Postgraduate Course at the University of
Southern Queensland, Australia**

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Part of Abstract

Ethics and politics constitute core elements of educational research, yet they *cannot be taught and learned in isolation from the conduct of that research*. Increasingly postgraduate research training has augmented what has been learned from working with supervisors to produce theses. *Coursework also has a vital role to play in facilitating an engagement with the conceptual and methodological issues framing educational research ethics and politics.*

Part of Abstract (Continued)

Two key concepts underlying these aims and strategies and informing the responses to these questions *are situated ethics and negotiated interests*. The author proposes that *recognising the sociocultural contexts and constructions of ethical moves and judgments, and attending to the interaction among often competing claims and positions, are crucial processes in explicating and evaluating the ethical and political dimensions of contemporary educational research*.

Overview of presentation

- EDU8604 Educational Research Ethics and Data Management
- Situated ethics and negotiated interests
- *Undevenisti, quovadis etcui bono?* in educational research ethics
- Focused discussion

EDU8604 Educational Research Ethics and Data Management

- Has replaced EDU8603 Research Methods and Critical Inquiry as one of the external/online Doctor of Education courses
- Written in early 2006 and offered for the first time in Semester One 2006
- *Summative assessment* (50% each):
 - ethical clearance application and commentary
 - data collection and analysis critical commentary

EDU8604 Educational Research Ethics and Data Management (Continued)

- *Topics* (25% each):
 - educational research ethics
 - educational research politics
 - data collection techniques
 - data analysis techniques.
- *Content relevant to first two topics:*
 - anonymity and confidentiality
 - informed consent
 - gatekeepers and stakeholders
 - overt and covert research
 - recording and representing participants' voices
 - situated ethics
 - research benefits and interests
 - ethical implications of and for research designs.

EDU8604 Educational Research Ethics and Data Management (Continued)

- Course aims include encouraging students to apply the questions “*Unde venisti?*” (implicitly), “*Quovadis ?*” (implicitly) and “*Cuibono ?*” (explicitly) to their aspirations and experiences as educational researchers
- Course strategies centre on interrogating the ethical approaches of other researchers as a means of generating and justifying their own applications for ethical clearance .

EDU8604 Educational Research Ethics and Data Management (Continued)

- **For example:**

Please select one of the eight articles (preferably a different one from those that you selected for Readings 1.3 and 1.7) and read it selectively in relation to the following questions:

- * How do/es the author/s respond to the question “*cui bono?*” in relation to the research project reported in the article?

- * Which specific issues and/or potential difficulties are discussed in the article in relation to ensuring that the claimed benefits and interests actually accrue to the intended beneficiaries?

- * How do you answer the question “*cui bono?*” in relation to your own research? Which issues and/or potential difficulties might arise in relation to your being able to deliver on those claimed benefits and interests? (Danaher, 2006, p. 13)

Situated Ethics

- Situated ethics is a concept that some of you might find exciting, others obvious and still others perhaps even offensive. It is the idea that, rather than timeless and universal codes of ethics being the most appropriate means of enforcing and judging ethical conduct by educational researchers, *decisions and understandings about ethics and politics are actually 'situated' – that is, located in the 'here and now' of particular research projects being conducted in specific contexts.* So, rather than *judgments* being made from 'on high' by people (or committees) with no interests (in both senses of that word) in the particular context, they *should be made on a 'case by case' basis that takes account of the multiple and often conflicting interests and perspectives of the participants – including the researcher.* (Danaher, 2006, pp. 11-12)

Situated Ethics (Continued)

- “...ethical principles are *mediated within different research practices* and these *take on different significances in relation to those practices*” (Simons & Usher, 2000, p. 1; see also Morrison, Piper & Simons, 2005)
- “A situated ethics is *local and specific to particular practices. It cannot be universalized...*” (Simons & Usher, 2000, p. 2)

Situated Ethics (Continued)

- “...we emphasize the inescapable necessity for making ethical decisions and the difficulty and complexity of such decision-making *in situations where recourse cannot be had to indubitable foundations and incontrovertible principles*” (Simons & Usher, 2000, p.3)
- “...making ethical decisions, in whatever situated context, is a process of creating, maintaining and justifying an ethical integrity that is *more dependent on sensitivity to politics and people than it is on ethical principles and codes*” (Simons & Usher, 2000, p.11)

Situated Ethics (Continued)

- The major common themes of the chapters of the book on situated ethics:
 - the *challenge to universal principles and codes*
 - the *importance of being sensitive to socio-political contexts*
 - the *scope for being fair to disadvantaged groups ; and taking account of the diversity and uniqueness of different research practices* .(Simons & Usher, 2000,p. 11)

Negotiated Interests

- The concept of benefits and interests is *another useful lens for interrogating the impact of ethics and research on educational research*. The question “*Cui bono?*” – “*Whom benefits?*” or “*In whose interests?*” – is a *telling one to apply to gatekeepers, participants and stakeholders in a research project – not just to the researcher*. (Danaher, 2006, p. 13)

Negotiated Interests (Continued)

- ...we attest to the value of relationships between researchers and fairground people that are *“limited, partial and temporary”*... – and also *uncertain, risky and ambivalent*. Such an approach provides a context for being *ever ethically and politically attentive to the nuances of these relationships, reflexive about the conditions for their possibility and open to their convergences and divergences*. This is likely to be the *most significant benefit of researchers strategically mobilising special risks*. (Anteliz, Danaher & Danaher, 2004, p. 166)

Unde Venisti, Quo Vadis et Cui Bono? in Educational Research Ethics

- *Unde venisti ? Perhaps* we have come from an emphasis on regulating and universalising educational research ethics
- *Quo vadis ? Perhaps* we are going towards an emphasis on understanding educational research ethics as enacted, negotiated and situated
- *Cui bono ? Perhaps* this is the enduringly central question that helps us to move back and forth between “*unde venisti ?*” and “*quo vadis?*”

Conclusion

- Situated ethics and negotiated interests can *contribute to the repertoire of knowledge and skills required to engage transformatively in the complex and demanding field of educational research*. The author argues that *such a repertoire is mandatory if researchers are to extend that field and enable others and themselves to create new futures in educational provision*. “*Unde venisti?*”, “*Quo vadis?*” and “*Cui bono?*” *emerge as significant questions to pose about ethics and politics in the course under review, in educational research and in education at large*.

References

- Anteliz, E. A., Danaher, G. R., & Danaher, P. A. (2004). Mobilising spatial risks: Reflections on researching Venezuelan and Australian fairground people's educational experiences. In P. N. Coombes, M. J. Danaher & P. A. Danaher (Eds.), *Strategic uncertainties: Ethics, politics and risk in contemporary educational research* (pp. 155-168). Flaxton, Qld: Post Pressed.
- Danaher, P. A. (2006). *EDU8604 Educational research ethics and data management: Study guide (Semester 1 2006)*. Toowoomba, Qld: University of Southern Queensland.
- Morrison, K. (2002). Reviews of H. Simons & R. Usher (Eds.), *Situated ethics in educational research* and M. de Laine, *Fieldwork, participation and practice: Ethics and dilemmas in qualitative research*. *Evaluation and Research in Education*, 16(3), 182-184. Retrieved March 5, 2006, from <http://72.14.207.104/search?q=cache:NoXmX4Q1Q9gJ:www.multilingual-matters.net/erie/016/>

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- Simons,H., &Usher, R.(2000). Introduction: Ethicsin thepractice ofresearch. Inh. Simons &R. Usher(Eds.), *Situatedethics in educationalresearch* (pp.1 -11).London: Routledge/Falmer.

Thankyou forparticipating!



Focused Discussion

- What do you think of the concept of situated ethics? Do you find it exciting, obvious, offensive and/or something else?
- What are your and others' interests in your educational research? How do you know?
- Which of those interests are negotiable and how? Are there any non-negotiable interests?
- What implications (if any) might this discussion have for issues in and strategies for publishing about our teaching?