Ethics of research in social sciences

I. Context

II. Applications

III. Debates, evolutions, tensions

Cornelia Hummel

June 2022

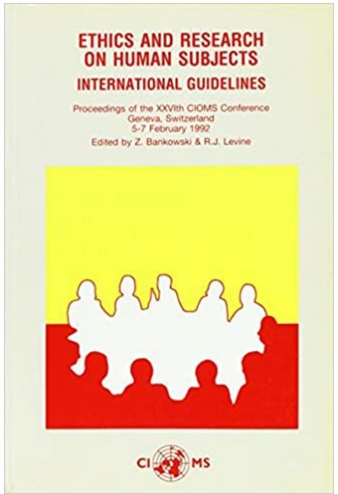
Ethics of research in social sciences

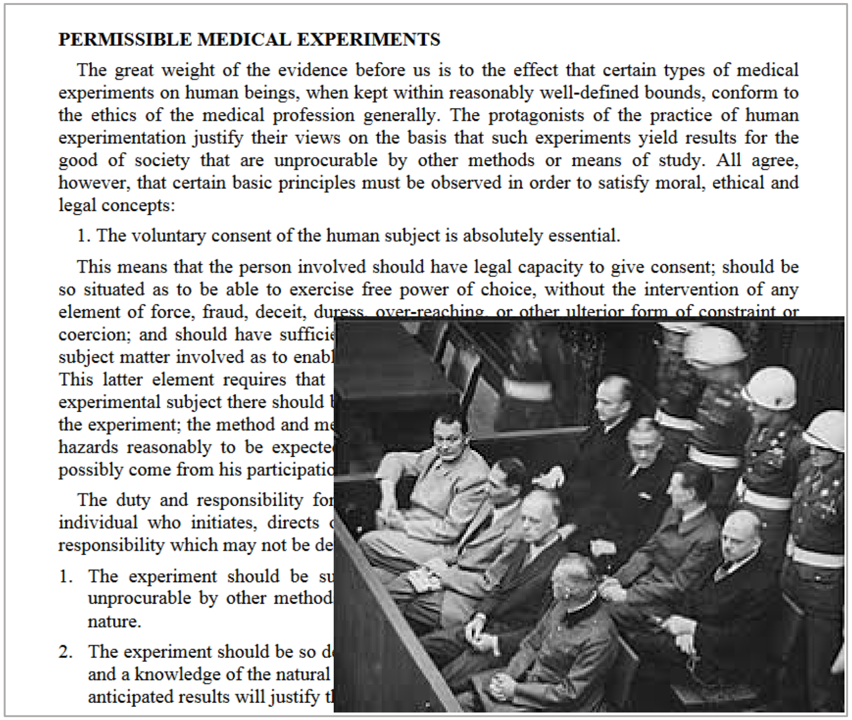
II. Applications

- Formalization
- Regulation
- Ethics of research at the University of Geneva

1. Formalization: codes, guidelines & charters, introduction of Institutional Review Boards

- Nuremberg Code (1947)
- Helsinki Declaration(1964)
- International ethical guidelines for biomedical research involving human subjects (1993)





PERMISSIBLE MEDICAL EXPERIMENTS

The great weight of the evidence before us is to the effect that certain types of medical experiments on human beings, when kept within reasonably well-defined bounds, conform to the ethics of the medical profession generally. The protagonists of the practice of human experimentation justify their views on the basis that such experiments yield results for the good of society that are unprocurable by other methods or means of study. All agree, however, that certain basic principles must be observed in order to satisfy moral, ethical and legal concepts:

1. The voluntary consent of the human subject is absolutely essential.

This means that the person involved should have legal capacity to give consent; should be so situated as to be able to exercise free power of choice, without the intervention of any element of force, fraud, deceit, duress, over-reaching, or other ulterior form of constraint or coercion; and should have sufficie
subject matter involved as to enabl
This latter element requires that
experimental subject there should b
the experiment; the method and me
hazards reasonably to be expecte
possibly come from his participatio

The duty and responsibility for
individual who initiates, directs o
responsibility which may not be de

1. The experiment should be su
unprocurable by other method
nature.

2. The experiment should be so d
and a knowledge of the natural
anticipated results will justify t

https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proc%C3%A8s_de_Nuremberg
https://www.inserm.fr/wp-content/uploads/2017-11/inserm-codenuremberg-tradamiel.pdf

RHODES UNIVERSITY
Where leaders learn

eras Ethical Review Application System

Ethics in Social Science and Humanities

Québec Commission de l'éthique en science et en technologie

Università della Svizzera italiana

Home / University / Organisation / Organisational structu

Ethics Committee

Charte française de déontologie des
métiers de la recherche

Janvier 2015 (ratifications au 13 juin 2019)

Australian Government
National Health and Medical Research Council
Australian Research Council
UNIVERSITIES AUSTRALIA

National Statement on Ethical
Conduct in Human Research

2007 (Updated 2018)

The American Geographica

Guidelines for Ethical Co
Foreign Field Resear

Ethical Guidelines

Statement of the Ethical Guidelines of the European Sociological Associatio

ASA
AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

Code of Ethic

June 2018

CODE OF PRACTICE
FOR RESEARCH
Promoting good practice
and preventing misconduct
September 2009

UK Research Integrity Offic
UKRIO

uni.lu
UNIVERSITÉ DU
LUXEMBOURG

University of Luxembourg Policy on Ethics in Research

CHARTE D'ÉTHIQUE
ET DE DÉONTOLOGIE
DES HAUTES ÉCOLES
UNIVERSITAIRE
ET SPÉCIALISÉE
DE GENÈVE

Hes·so GENÈVE
UNIVERSITÉ DE GENÈVE

académies suisses des sciences

Code
s

Charte d'éthique
des sciences
et des technologies
dans la région arabe

cs Guidelines and
ated Resources
for Digital Research

Statement of Ethical Practice Annexe

www.britsoc.co.uk

BRITISH
SOCIOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

2. Regulation: ethical framing of research in social sciences

Scientific organizations (associations)
> Codes, guidelines, charters...

Institutions (universities)
> Institutional Review Boards (IRBs).

Laws
> Legal framework of bio-medical research

Funding agencies
> Public and private, national and international (Swiss National Science Foundation, European Research Council, ...).

Scientific publishers
> Checking for an IRB ethical assessment

In Switzerland:

Swiss Academies of sciences

Art. 4.7 " Research process"

Researchers should treat people, animals and research subjects with respect and care and in keeping with legal, ethical, and discipline-specific rules.

But...

swiss academies of arts and sciences

Code of conduct for scientific integrity

swiss-academies.ch

FNSNF Swiss National Science Foundation

swissuniversities

Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

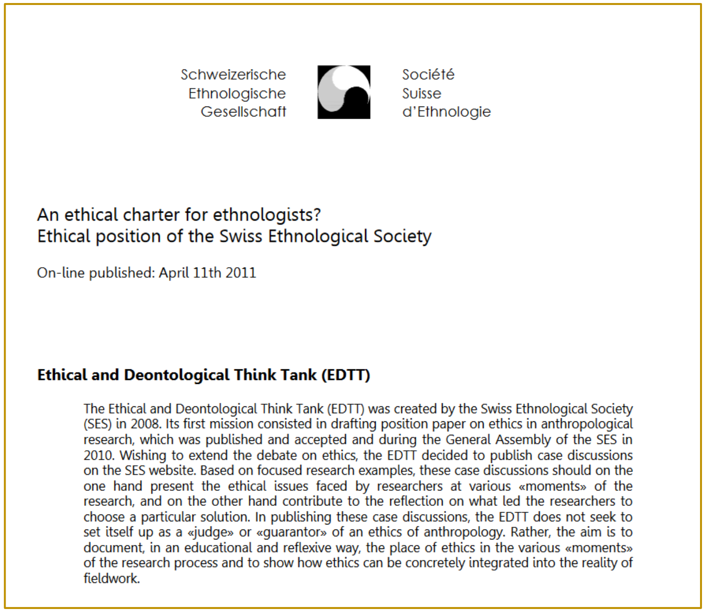
Innosuisse – Swiss Innovation Agency

It is sometimes difficult to build consensus within disciplines.

Long process of reflection-discussion.

Example: Swiss Anthropological Association

- Position paper: “Une charte éthique pour les ethnologues?” (2011).
- Article “Searching for ethics” (Tsanta – journal of the Swiss Anthropological Association SAA, 2018).
- Position paper: “Open Science and Data Management in Anthropological Research” (2021).



Schweizerische
Ethnologische
Gesellschaft

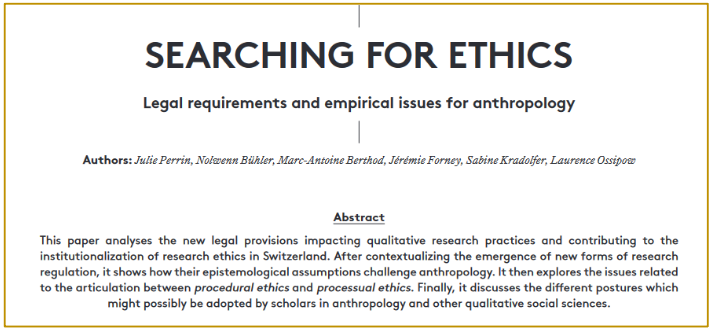
Société
Suisse
d’Ethnologie

An ethical charter for ethnologists?
Ethical position of the Swiss Ethnological Society

On-line published: April 11th 2011

Ethical and Deontological Think Tank (EDTT)

The Ethical and Deontological Think Tank (EDTT) was created by the Swiss Ethnological Society (SES) in 2008. Its first mission consisted in drafting position paper on ethics in anthropological research, which was published and accepted and during the General Assembly of the SES in 2010. Wishing to extend the debate on ethics, the EDTT decided to publish case discussions on the SES website. Based on focused research examples, these case discussions should on the one hand present the ethical issues faced by researchers at various «moments» of the research, and on the other hand contribute to the reflection on what led the researchers to choose a particular solution. In publishing these case discussions, the EDTT does not seek to set itself up as a «judge» or «guarantor» of an ethics of anthropology. Rather, the aim is to document, in an educational and reflexive way, the place of ethics in the various «moments» of the research process and to show how ethics can be concretely integrated into the reality of fieldwork.



SEARCHING FOR ETHICS

Legal requirements and empirical issues for anthropology

Authors: *Julie Perrin, Nolwenn Bühler, Marc-Antoine Berthod, Jérémie Forney, Sabine Kradolfer, Laurence Ossipow*

Abstract

This paper analyses the new legal provisions impacting qualitative research practices and contributing to the institutionalization of research ethics in Switzerland. After contextualizing the emergence of new forms of research regulation, it shows how their epistemological assumptions challenge anthropology. It then explores the issues related to the articulation between *procedural ethics* and *processual ethics*. Finally, it discusses the different postures which might possibly be adopted by scholars in anthropology and other qualitative social sciences.

In Switzerland:

Laws:

- Federal Act on Research involving Human Beings (Human Research Act, HRA, 2011), research related to the human body (in the bio-medical sense), health.

  Art. 1: The purpose of this Act is to protect the dignity, privacy and health of human beings involved in research.

  The application of the HRA is the responsibility of the cantonal research ethics committees which review research within the scope of the HRA.

  swissethics
  Swiss Association of Research Ethics Committees

- Laws on Data Protection (Federal Act on Data Protection, 1992; cantonal Act LIPAD, 2002, + if data collected in Europe: General Data Protection Regulation, GDPR, 2018).

)

3. Research ethics at the University of Geneva

Faculty boards (3 faculties: Psychology and Educational Sciences, Translation and Interpreting, Social Sciences) until 2020 > since January 2021, central board: University Commission for Ethical Research in Geneva (CUREG2.0, https://cureg.unige.ch/en/)

University Commission for Ethical Research in Geneva

Certify the ethics of your research

CUREG2.0 is a University committee that advises researchers and students on the ethical aspects of their work. The goal is to ensure that projects are conducted in accordance with the principles of ethical research.

CUREG2.0's role is to:

1) assess ethical aspects of research projects:

- that involve human participants and fall outside the scope of the Swiss Federal Human Research Act (RS 810.30);
- that take place in open spaces – typically outside a lab – and that could have an adverse impact on the environment; or
- whose results could serve multiple purposes and have military, security, political or intelligence-related implications;

2) assess, where necessary, inter-institutional research projects involving a researcher from the University of Geneva;

3) identify and approve the ethical principles and rules applicable to the research projects mentioned in points 1 and 2 above;

4) promote training on research ethics;

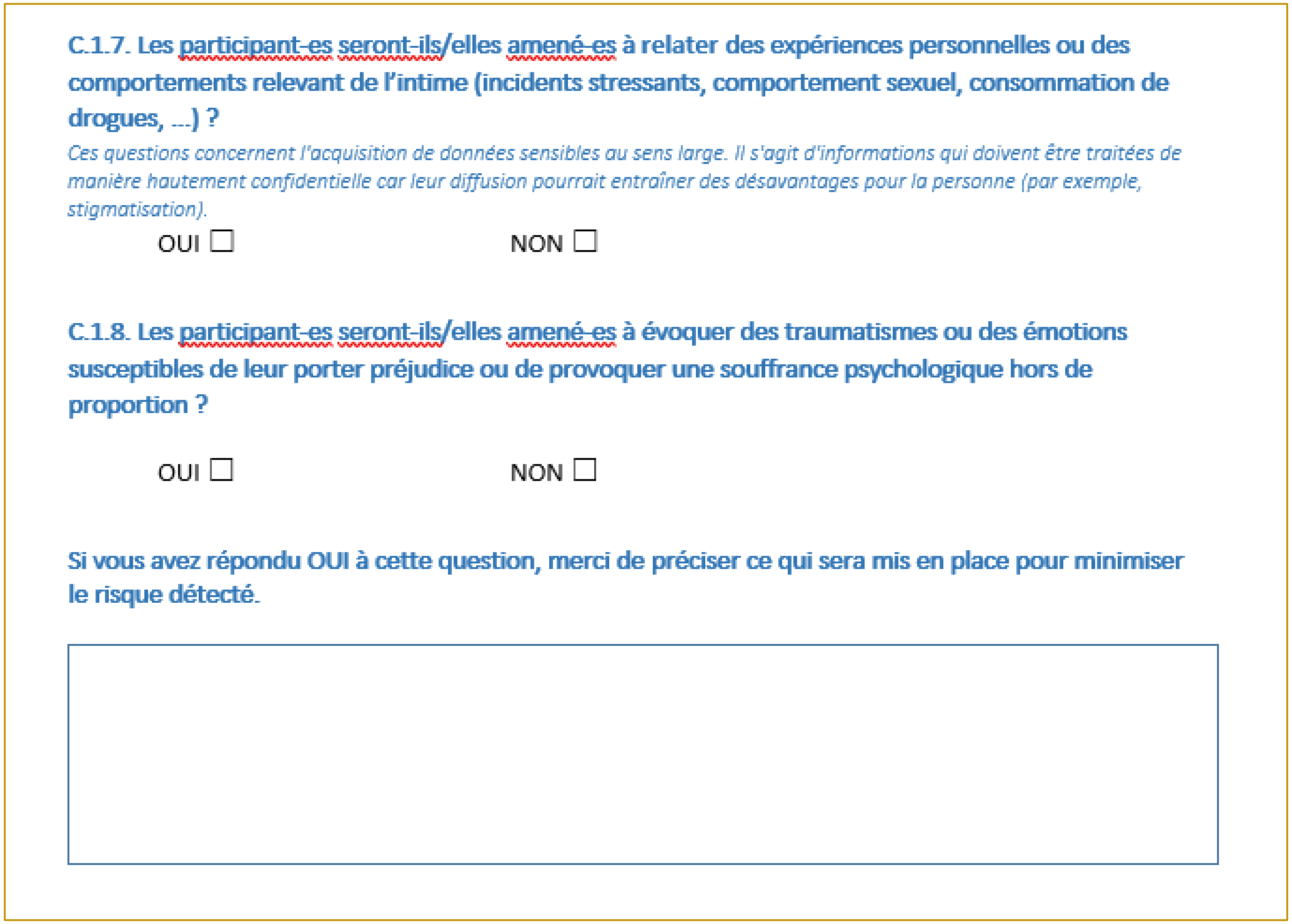
5) advise researchers on ethical aspects of their research projects.

First standardised CUREG questionnaire introduced in early 2021. Model imported from bio-medical research (experimental research).

Problems of standardisation = illusion of a unified science.

- Unsuitable for the social sciences, which, for the most part, do not use experimental research designs. The questionnaire is built on an experimental/hypothetico-deductive model. The questionnaire does not take into account the specificities of research conducted with qualitative methods and/or with an inductive approach.
- Notions from other disciplines are unclear for social scientists.

In practice: some questions are confusing for social scientists and create doubts about the answer to be given (and fears about the consequences that this answer may have on the certification of their project).



C.1.7. Les participant-es seront-ils/elles amené-es à relater des expériences personnelles ou des comportements relevant de l'intime (incidents stressants, comportement sexuel, consommation de drogues, ...) ?

Ces questions concernent l'acquisition de données sensibles au sens large. Il s'agit d'informations qui doivent être traitées de manière hautement confidentielle car leur diffusion pourrait entraîner des désavantages pour la personne (par exemple, stigmatisation).

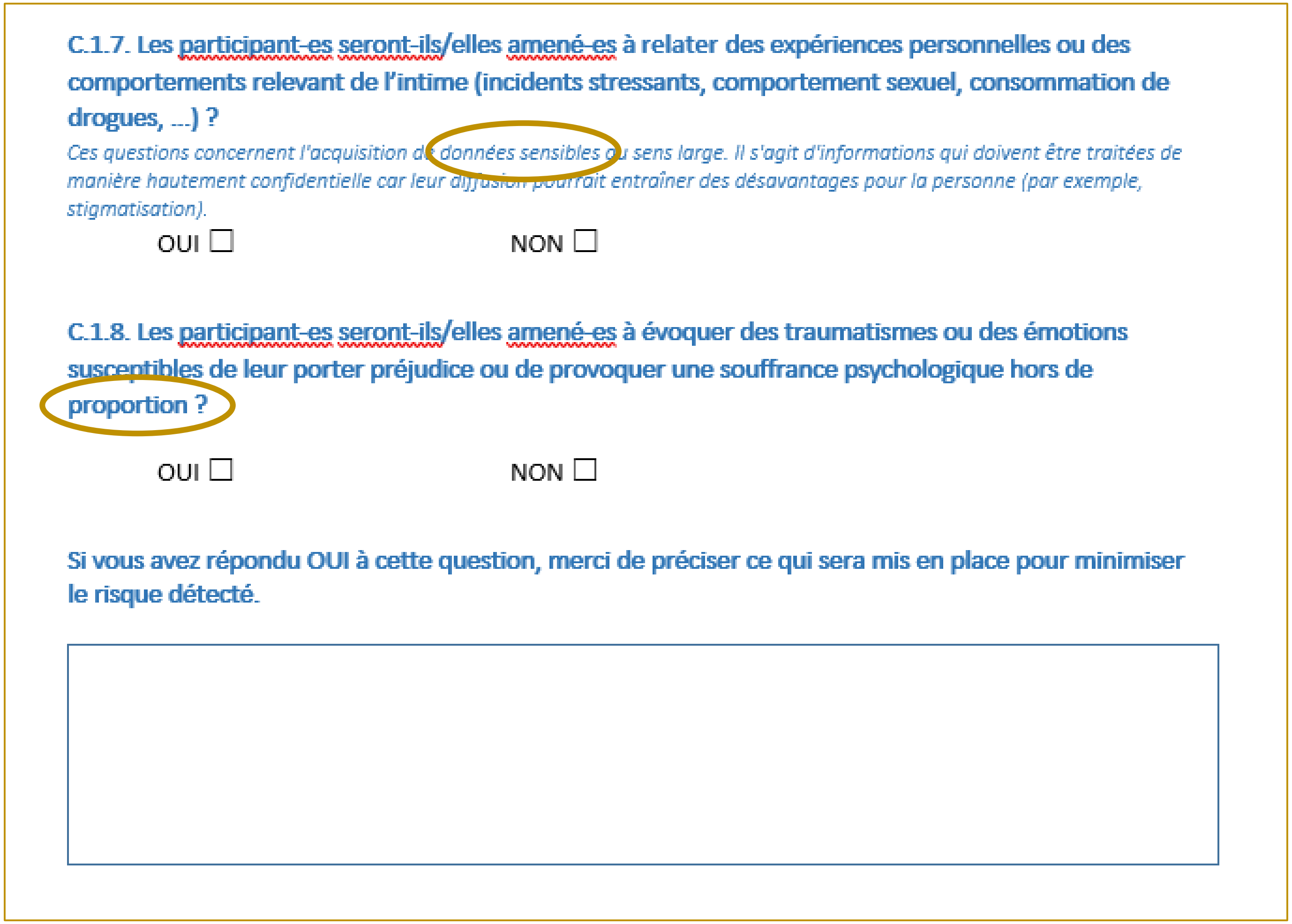
OUI ☐ NON ☐

C.1.8. Les participant-es seront-ils/elles amené-es à évoquer des traumatismes ou des émotions susceptibles de leur porter préjudice ou de provoquer une souffrance psychologique hors de proportion ?

OUI ☐ NON ☐

Si vous avez répondu OUI à cette question, merci de préciser ce qui sera mis en place pour minimiser le risque détecté.

(CUREG questionnaire , part C “Self-assessment of ethical risks», 13.06.2022 – NB. The questionnaire does not exist in English yet).



C.1.7. Les participant-es seront-ils/elles amené-es à relater des expériences personnelles ou des comportements relevant de l'intime (incidents stressants, comportement sexuel, consommation de drogues, …) ?

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OUI ☐ NON ☐

C.1.8. Les participant-es seront-ils/elles amené-es à évoquer des traumatismes ou des émotions susceptibles de leur porter préjudice ou de provoquer une souffrance psychologique hors de proportion ?

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(CUREG questionnaire , part C "Self-assessment of ethical risks», 13.06.2022 – NB. The questionnaire does not exist in English yet).

Some basic notions:

- **Consent:** agreement given by a person to participate in research; this agreement may be oral ("oral consent") or written ("written consent") and must be preceded by the provision of information about the research (research team, funding, topic of the research, participation process, etc.).

→ FAQs 4.1 and 4.2 on the CUREG website (https://cureg.unige.ch/en/faqs/)

- **Personal data**: any information allowing the identification of the research participants (name, postal/email address, date of birth, ...photo/video image, recorded voice).
- **Sensitive data**: data relating to religious, philosophical, political, trade union or cultural opinions or activities; health, privacy or ethnicity; social welfare benefits; criminal or administrative proceedings or sanctions.

(definitions of the Geneva LIPAD law).

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