Beyond authorship and accountability?

The ethics of doctoral research dissemination in a changing world

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Abstract

Discussion of ethics in doctoral training courses usually focuses on the initial stages of planning and conducting field research. Shifting attention onto the responsibility of the researcher to share their findings throughout the research process, we set out to consider how doctoral students can conceptualise and engage ethically with research dissemination in the broader context of the globalised knowledge economy. A comparative analysis of the ethical guidelines produced by BERA (British Educational Research Association) and ASA (Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth) reveals that both are more concerned with the possible benefits or harm of dissemination to those directly involved in or affected by the research, and pay little attention to the ethical implications of multimodal and digital dissemination to unknown audiences. Drawing on the concept of research as a moral endeavour and the problematising of collaboration as an ethical issue within participatory and ethnographic research debates, we explore the implications for doctoral training courses. We argue that engaging students in discussion on dissemination can open a space to explore who benefits most from research undertaken.

1. Introduction

The focus of this paper is on exploring the necessity and relevance of engaging with what we see as a largely neglected dimension of research ethics – consideration of the practice of dissemination within current doctoral training programmes. Our starting point is that whilst concerns about dissemination, fuelled by discussions of impact (particularly as noted in the Research Excellence Framework for UK higher education institutions), have become an important part of the reality of established academics, in our own experience over many years as doctoral supervisors and examiners this appears to be less reflected in doctoral training programmes. With a greater diversity of dissemination practices intended to enhance research impact, dissemination is likely to take on different meanings and raise new ethical issues. Doctoral researchers will need to actively engage with this change of meaning, yet this thinking is only just beginning to influence how we educate beginning educational researchers. This is particularly pertinent in times when demands on the PhD degree itself are changing, with the now established evidence of the commercialisation and commodification of academic knowledge (Torka 2018). Additionally, students are now faced with technologies offering greater access and opportunity to make their ideas (and research) heard (Fransman 2012).

Ethical discussions in current doctoral training programmes tend to be focused on the conduct and process of field research and collection of data. As Mason and Merga (2018) note, 'Unfortunately, the craft of writing academic papers and facilitating their publication is not typically a focus of doctoral education' (n.p.). The doctoral process is usually seen to end with the writing of a thesis and this perception is also evident when examining the many textbooks on educational research methods (see Cohen and Manion, 2017, Robson and McCartan, 2016). Dinham and Scott (2001: 45) note that '… those publications which deal with 'how to' get a research degree rarely if ever

specifically address the issue of dissemination at any length'. An exception is Ackerly and True (2010: 261) who argued that 'writing, presenting and publishing your work are integral parts of the research process which is always an evolving process' and warned that 'We should not short-shrift this process or think that the research is over before we have shared and disseminated our findings' (ibid). Doctoral dissemination has largely been considered at an individual level (Thompson and Walker 2010), positioning the student as an apprentice learning to write up research with their supervisor; or exploring ethical issues around the student's accountability to research participants (Robinson-Pant 2005). Others such as Dinham and Scott (2001) have focused on exploring how well students are being prepared to publish from their research and highlight that even though ad hoc approaches for supporting such work are more common, these need to be replaced with a more institutionally explicit focus. By contrast, we aim to move away from a focus on the student-supervisor or participant-researcher relationship to consider doctoral research dissemination in the context of broader influences currently transforming higher education and academic publishing. We argue that the case for dissemination of research should not be merely built on a utilitarian view, but has an important moral dimension.

The political implications are often considered in relation to dissemination, particularly in contexts where findings or particular digital modes of dissemination might be considered sensitive to Governments or funding bodies, yet these concerns are sometimes conflated with the ethics of research. Recognising this tendency, we take Warwick's (1983: 316) view that 'the politics and ethics of cross-national and cross-cultural field research are analytically distinguishable but closely connected in practice'. His distinction provides a useful starting point for this article:

> '*Politics* refers to interactions revolving around power, influence, and authority. Research is political to the extent that it affects the ability of individuals or groups to impose their will, to pursue their interests, or to be seen as legitimate authorities. *Ethics* deals with questions of moral goodness or evil and with the proper standards for human action. The politics of research raises problems of ethics particularly when the use of power, influence, and authority causes harm to persons or groups or serves the interests of some at the expense of others.' (ibid)

By focusing on the ethics of dissemination, we are including the immediate context of research practice (particularly fieldwork, as signalled by Warwick) but also broader relationships of power and inequality constructed, for instance, by publishing institutions. The increasing mobility of staff and students and the encouragement of cross-national research collaboration have highlighted North/South inequalities prevalent in research, writing and publication (Robinson-Pant and Wolf 2017). By framing doctoral dissemination in relation to the globalised knowledge economy, changing modes of communication, commercialisation of higher education and the geopolitics of academic publishing, we set out to explore what this broader understanding of dissemination might mean for ethical research practice. Moving away from the usual emphasis on the skills (including intercultural communication) that an individual student needs to acquire to disseminate their research to defined audiences within specific research contexts, we consider dissemination practices within a broader and dynamic research landscape. As doctoral supervisors and convenors of doctoral research methodology courses in two universities in the UK, we set out to explore: How can doctoral students conceptualise and engage ethically with research dissemination in the context of the

globalised knowledge economy? In this article, we draw on our experiences as higher education teachers and researchers in the field of international education in the UK to analyse what current ethical codes of practice have to say about dissemination, and to reflect on how doctoral courses could contribute more to students' learning about this dimension of research practice.

2. Changing contexts of doctoral education and knowledge production

In past decades, research dissemination has been considered largely in terms of academic publications. In the UK and in the social sciences in particular, doctoral students have been encouraged to share their findings and final thesis with their respondents and a wider audience, usually after the study was completed (Mason and Merga, 2018). This is however now slowly changing (Christianson, et al., 2015) as is evident from the emergence of focus on PhD by publication. In contrast, in other national contexts doctoral degrees by publication are far more common in the social science disciplines (Pare 2017). This may be due to what Torka (2018: 60) identifies in Germany as the shift towards pre-defined PhD projects and consequent 'projectification of doctoral training'. Whilst doctoral training programmes in the UK regularly include sessions to introduce students to the practice of writing for publication, the method of assessment focuses students' efforts on the thesis and away from other publications (Pare, 2017). Although some supervisors have acted as mentors for their current or former doctoral students who sought to publish their work in other genres, in the UK this has sometimes been the exception rather than the rule in the social sciences (ibid).

Regarding other forms of dissemination, doctoral students who adopt participatory research methods to engage participants in the on-going analysis might have shared findings orally at an earlier stage, but such practices are neither formalised nor necessarily recognised or reported on at the point of final assessment. Currently, with the growing emphasis on the doctoral degree as professional training for a career in academia, it is expected that doctoral students should publish during, as well as after, their studies (Jlongo et al, 2013). Beyond the UK, some universities have changed the criteria for examining PhDs so that students are required to have published a number of journal articles, in addition to submitting a thesis (examples include Nepal and Iceland, see Robinson-Pant and Wolf 2017).

Alongside such changes in the structure and perceived function of the doctoral degree, the discourse of research impact has become central in universities and academia, particularly in the UK through the Research Excellence Framework. The REF is used for assessing the quality of research in UK higher education institutions, to provide 'accountability for public investment', 'produce evidence of the benefits of this investment', 'establish reputational yardsticks' and 'inform the selective allocation of funding for research' (REF, 2019). Established members of staff are adapting to the implications of the new REF criteria for evaluating their research and are now seeing dissemination as integral to the whole research design, rather than a bolt-on last stage (Fyfe et al., 2017). New forms of social media and electronic communication offer academics an opportunity to disseminate their research in spaces beyond the traditional peer-reviewed journals. The need to encourage a younger generation of researchers to think about their dissemination responsibilities and obligations in this way – particularly to foster greater openness in sharing their research findings – is being recognised (JISC/British Library 2012). Conducted in collaboration with over 70 UK higher education institutions, this research concluded that while students are sophisticated information seekers and users of complex information sources, aware of critical issues such as authority and authenticity in research and

evidence-gathering, nonetheless they remain far less open in their dissemination practices and do not share their research outputs widely, rather they seem to be confined to sharing it with their peers or work colleagues (ibid:12).

Thus, the little evidence that exists on this topic indicates the need for a change in perspectives and practices, by noting that it is essential for doctoral students to be more open in communicating and contributing within wider research networks. ESRC (2015) guidelines highlight that 'students must be made aware of the importance of working towards achieving academic, societal and economic impact' and connecting with multiple audiences/user groups. It further notes, 'The benefits of working with users, and engaging in the co-production of knowledge, can inform and improve the quality of research, enhance the understanding of research users and their needs and apply evidence-based knowledge to important business or policy issues.' (ibid: 14). It is worth noting that the rationale for enhancing students' dissemination and impact skills appears to be made on the grounds of enhancing the effectiveness of research and framed in terms of the 'benefits' to the researcher, rather than based on ethical or ideological considerations. While the conclusions of the JISC report and ESRC training recommendations are significant and raise questions around the kinds of communication skills that doctoral students need to develop, they also raise new ethical responsibilities around anonymity, authorship and accountability as doctoral students (and indeed established academics) engage with multiple, often unknown audiences and stakeholders.

Additionally, the growth of participatory methodology and postcolonial theory has contributed to an ideological perspective on research dissemination as not just about the most effective mode or timing of communication of findings, but concerned with learning to engage with and mediate relationships of power, knowledge, voice and identity. Tuhiwai Smith's (1999) seminal analysis of research conducted with Maori communities revealed how reciprocity, informed consent and written forms of publication were seen as imposing European colonial practices on indigenous values and knowledge. Exploring alternative forms of dissemination, writers have since developed approaches offering space to subaltern voices and the possibility of hybrid texts, such as Mutua and Swadener's (2004) auto-ethnographic narratives and Michael-Luna and Canagarajah's (2007) 'codemeshing'. Chilisa (2012), among others, considered the institutional implications, such as allowing bilingual or multilingual texts for doctoral degrees and journal publication. These writers have drawn attention to ways of adopting a transformative approach to research dissemination in terms of questioning dominant publishing practices - such as the assumption that research should be disseminated in English language and in high status journals. International students and researchers in the Global South may be more likely to recognise such issues since they are operating within 'transnational spaces' (Rizvi, 2010) and mediating between home and host (overseas) institutions. However, we argue that all doctoral students and researchers are engaging with the geopolitics of academic publishing and need to become more aware of the ethical dimensions of their role in North-South knowledge construction and dissemination.

Whilst doctoral education research has focused on how to support individual students' academic writing and publishing, what is often missing is a broader ideological perspective on research dissemination, such as that signalled in the postcolonial critiques above. Gonzalez-Ocampo and Castello (2018: 388) point out that 'research on other complex related genres that are components of doctoral training (e.g., conferences, literature reviews, research reports, proposals, journal articles)' is scarce, and note that 'the supervisors' conceptualization of writing and the type of writing support that supervisors should offer to their students remain understudied' (ibid: 389). Our

attention to the ethics of dissemination relates to this deeper conceptualisation of doctoral writing as connected to relationships of power and inequality. Turning to how doctoral programmes address ethics, though there is increasing recognition of the rapidly changing contexts in which doctoral students are researching – particularly in relation to social media – ethics education still tends to focus on the preparation and initial stages of the research. Although the current impact agenda has put more emphasis on dissemination as integral, rather than at the end of a project, ethical concerns are often narrowly conceived in terms of how to anonymise informants' identities or field sites, and how to protect sensitive data. Whilst not downplaying these dangers, we take Simons and Usher's (2000) notion of 'situated ethics' to extend ethical discussion beyond the immediate fieldwork or institutional context and to consider dissemination as a broader social practice situated in global relationships of power and inequality with regard to knowledge construction. We argue that while dissemination is an important social practice within the research process, it is inadequately addressed in current ethical frameworks.

3. Theoretical lenses for looking at the ethics of dissemination

In the remainder of this article, we turn our attention to how to expand existing ethical guidelines to engage with this broader understanding of dissemination and the implications for doctoral training. Our analysis is informed by conceptual work on the geopolitics of academic writing mentioned above (Canagarajah 2002, Lillis and Curry 2010) drawing on theory around academic writing, identity, mediation, voice and audience generated through academic literacies research in higher education (Turner 2011). Here we introduce the theoretical framework that we use to analyse and compare ethical guidelines, and later in this paper, we will draw on these ideas to consider the implications for doctoral education in this area.

As discussed above, theoretical debate on research ethics (particularly around 'situated ethics', Simons and Usher 2000) and postcolonial theory (Tickly and Bond 2013) provides a resource for analysing guidance around researcher responsibility, managing differing values and oral/written practices (see Robinson-Pant and Singal 2013). These debates foreground issues of power and inequality in knowledge construction (Tuhiwai Smith 1999), particularly North-South hierarchies influencing research practice, including textual representation of findings (Chilisa 2012). Our overall stance is informed by postcolonial theory, starting from recognition of differing understandings of ethical practices and values which may not be reflected in researcher guidelines constructed within dominant research institutions in the Global North.

To look at dominant discourses and practices in higher education around ethics, we draw on theoretical debates about literacy as a social practice (Street 1984), particularly literacy mediation and academic literacies. The concept of 'literacy mediation' emerged from an understanding of literacy as a collaborative activity where a text (such as a consent form or a research output) is frequently mediated from one person or institution to another, through different languages, genres and modes of communication. Acknowledging the presence and role of literacy mediators in research – not just in fieldwork but also in dissemination – shifts attention from the individual researcher to considering networks of collaboration and publishing. Within the context of higher education, research on academic literacies has revealed the ways in which students learn about and adjust to different cultures within the Academy and the importance of articulating the differing expectations and practices of academic staff and their students (Jones, Turner & Street 1999). Taking an academic literacies lens on ethical guidelines - which foregrounds how power relationships

are constructed through textual and oral practices in higher education - can help illuminate how power relationships, particularly North-South inequalities but also power hierarchies within academic institutions, can shape and influence research processes.

Recognising that ethical guidelines now take account of social media and electronic forms of dissemination and data collection/sharing, we turned to research on multimodality and digital literacies in higher education, particularly in relation to doctoral research (Fransman 2012). This body of work helped expand the notion of 'publication' to investigate new forms of dissemination (such as Twitter, blogs, Research Gate) in relation to identity, voice and audience. The insights provided into informal learning of digital literacies, the interaction with 'conventional' media and producing/interpreting texts in transcultural contexts (Blommaert 2004) offer ideas for moving beyond the concept of dissemination as only consisting of an academic journal or book publication. We were interested to explore how current ethics guidelines engaged with digital dissemination to global, multilingual and often unknown/unexpected audiences.

In the first instance, we use these lenses to analyse current ethical guidelines produced for educational researchers. However, as we will discuss later, these three areas of conceptual debate could in themselves provide doctoral students with a differing perspective on the ethics of research dissemination and might form the basis of an introductory course on ethics – to shift the emphasis onto North-South inequalities in knowledge construction and multimodal, multilingual approaches to dissemination. Although these debates have long been central to methodological courses for anthropology and development studies doctoral students (see for instance, Ellen's 1984 seminal handbook), we argue that **all** doctoral students need to look critically at how they position themselves in relation to the geopolitics of academic publishing and research dissemination.

3. Review of current guidance given to doctoral students and researchers

Given that we are both located in universities in the UK, we have chosen to begin with a comparative analysis of the BERA (British Educational Research Association) ethical guidelines (2004, 2011 and 2018), and the ASA (Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth) Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice (2011). Although the ASA guidelines are not specifically for educational researchers, we selected these as offering a complementary perspective to the BERA guidelines – since they respond to and are framed around the specific issues faced by researchers working in cultural contexts outside the UK. We recognise that most doctoral students will be instructed to use specific protocols and templates for Participant Information Sheets within their departments – rather than referring to disciplinary ethical guidelines like BERA's. However, the BERA and ASA guidelines may give an insight into the discourses which influence ethics policy and practice at university level.

BERA Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research

The key principle underpinning the BERA 2018 guidelines is noted as, 'All social scientists should act with regard to their social responsibilities in conducting and disseminating their research.' (p. 4) Dissemination holds a central place in the framework, and is one of the five headings of the BERA framework: 'Responsibilities for publication and dissemination'. This explicit and expanded focus on publication and dissemination is a significant addition in comparison to BERA 2011, which interestingly had only one mention of the word 'dissemination' in the 12 page document. This mention of 'dissemination' was under the section highlighting the researcher's 'Responsibilities to

sponsors of research.' Comparing the 2004 guidelines, which simply referred to the 'researcher's responsibilities to the community of educational researchers', it is clear that there is an opening out to include 'Responsibilities to Educational Professionals, Policy Makers and the General Public' in 2011.

Importantly, the 2011 guidelines drew together the researcher's rights in publishing but also the researcher's obligation to publish, highlighted in Point 40. Engaging with the notion of obligation raises questions about to whom the researcher is obliged and why? The implications of this could be that thinking about the main stakeholders and beneficiaries should be a key aspect of doctoral training – rather than being relegated to a small section in the concluding chapter of a doctoral thesis. Seen through the lens of postcolonial theory and the literature on decolonising methodology, the obligations outlined here seem quite narrowly defined in terms of publishing in forms appropriate for the audience, but not taking account of hierarchies of languages and modes of communication. Additionally, it also raises questions around how far these obligations extend. For instance, when research is undertaken in a foreign country with public funding (as is the case of scholarships) on a question pertinent to a completely different national context, the notion of 'wider public' needs to firmly include people with whom the research was undertaken, however far they might be located from the purse strings that funded the research.

Moving to the 2018 guidelines, the sub-section on 'Responsibilities for publication and dissemination' states that researchers should make results of their research public, in a clear straightforward fashion and making its practical significance known. A difference as compared to earlier BERA guidelines is the recommendation that when research is conducted in an international setting in which English is not the prevalent language researchers should seek to make the fruits of their research available in a language that makes it locally as well internationally accessible' (p.32). Also highlighted are the virtues of Open Access and the need for ensuring the trustworthiness of findings. Both these additions indicate recognition of multilingual and multimodal forms of dissemination to some degree. Nonetheless, the main emphasis is on conventional forms of academic dissemination, particularly journal articles, and the guidelines provide detailed advice on decisions about the order of authors' names. The advice is at the level of technicalities, with no recognition of how ideological questions around voice, power relationships and identity (as addressed within the literature on academic literacies) might be considered in relation to decisions about language and form of publication.

Whilst the difference between the 2011 and 2018 guidelines signals a greater acknowledgement of issues around the ethics of dissemination, the scope is still constrained to discussing primarily academic outputs and journal articles. The dissemination narrative is developed around notions of the utility of research, rather than addressing the moral dimension of dissemination, the notion of 'goodness', which we elaborate upon later in this paper.

ASA GUIDELINES (2011)

The guidelines developed by ASA are a real contrast to the BERA guidelines, especially in the tone in which the document has been written where the focus in on encouraging researchers to reflect critically on their own practice. The epilogue warns against simply following rules in order to adhere to institutional requirements:

> 'This statement of ideals does not impose a rigid set of rules backed by institutional sanctions, given the variations in both individuals' moral precepts and the conditions under which they work. Guidelines cannot resolve difficulties in a vacuum nor allocate greater priority to one of the principles than another' (p. 10).

The ASA guidelines are framed around 'educating' researchers to be more sensitive about their actions and strongly advocate a situated approach to ethics, as the above statement illustrates. Given the nature of the research approach, these guidelines recognise the longer-term relationship that ethnographers usually have with host communities both in terms of more democratic decision-making around the research process and future actions. They state that researchers, 'should recognise that their obligations to the participants or the host community may not end (indeed should not end, many would argue) with the completion of their fieldwork or research project.' (P 7)

The notion of 'obligations to the participants' in the future could encompass participants' views on the intended outcomes of the research, including their preferred forms of communication and anticipated audiences of dissemination. Certainly, within the ASA guidelines, there is more discussion about guarding against the possible misuse of the research in politically sensitive situations and within policy contexts where 'anthropologists should be careful to state any significant limitations on their findings and interpretations' (p 10). This could be recognition of the tendency for policy makers to attempt to generalise inappropriately from small-scale ethnographic studies.

As with the BERA guidelines, dissemination appears most explicitly in the sub-section on 'Relations with and responsibilities towards, colleagues and the discipline' and begins with a statement about the discipline: 'Anthropologists bear responsibility for the good reputation of the discipline and its practitioners'. The notion of 'equity in collaboration' (p 8) comes through in relation to cross-national research where researchers are urged to consider disparities in resources with regard to local scholars and how to share research materials without breaching confidentiality. Looking at these guidelines through a post-colonial lens, there is some attention to possible inequalities between outsider researchers, local researchers and participants. However, this is more in terms of intellectual acknowledgement than considering possible differing ethical perspectives on dissemination: 'It should also be a duty to acknowledge the support and intellectual input of colleagues in the field' (p 9).

Surprisingly, the only reference to different cultural understandings and values comes in an earlier section on the use of audio-visual media for data collection or 'broader representational purposes':

> 'And anthropologists must take steps at the beginning of fieldwork to sensitise themselves to local norms that may embody different ideas about the private and public from those of the anthropologist's own society'. (p 5)

This statement about the importance of learning about differences in cultural practices could have implications for the training of educational researchers too – in terms of considering how forms of dissemination might be interpreted in various contexts. The ASA guidelines also draw attention to the use of electronic texts and images already in the public domain, suggesting that 'the very notion of public domain (given the issue of membership for some sites and corporate ownership in social networking sites) is an evolving, shifting phenomenon and hence so is cyber ethnography and its ethical implications' (ibid). Significantly, this is the only section where multimodal communication is

discussed and the rest of the document appears to assume dissemination is to immediate and to known audiences. The exception is a statement advising that 'Anthropologists should use the possibilities open to them to extend the scope of social inquiry and to communicate their findings for the benefit of the widest possible community' (p.9). However, the assumption throughout the document is on dissemination in more conventional forms of publication to the audiences directly involved in the research. Like the BERA guidelines, there is recognition of the possible need for multilingual or bilingual versions of the research, though no discussion about different forms or genres of research communication that might be more accessible to local communities.

In conclusion, both the BERA and ASA guidelines recognise the importance of a 'situated' approach to ethics, though this is more evident in the sections on fieldwork/data collection than on dissemination. A significant point of departure is in how they view dissemination. BERA constructs research dissemination primarily in terms of its utilitarian values, taking the starting point of Northern conventional academic literacy practices, such as advising on the order of authors' names on a journal article and issues around Open Access journals.

> The central principles of the ASA guidelines are very much about responsibility to the discipline (of anthropology and their 'professional citizenship') and stress the 'moral dimensions' of research, with greater emphasis being put on the researcher's obligations, not only to their participants, but also to the wider discipline.

Whilst both sets of guidelines recommend translating findings into local languages if required, there is less attention to the ethical implications of multimodal and digital dissemination to unknown audiences. What seems to be missing in both is guidance on the role that differing/unfamiliar academic literacy practices can play in dissemination processes – including how literacy mediators may be situated in relationships of power and inequality. Related to this point, both guidelines are more concerned with the benefits (or harm) of dissemination to audiences directly involved in or affected by the research, rather than issues around how the researcher engages with or may unintentionally support inequalities in academic publishing.

4. Educational research, ethics and morality

Both the guidelines discussed above are important frameworks which inform the policies and protocols of UK-based University Research Ethics Committees, to which doctoral students are required to adhere. In recent years, changes in the structure and teaching of methodology within doctoral courses have been linked with broader shifts in educational research, from what Stronach refers to as 'research as knowledge production to research as entrepreneurial activity' (cited in Bridges 2003: 156). Alongside this shift, there has been a greater focus on skill development in terms of research methods and tools, with less attention given to research as an educational and moral endeavour. Sarauw et. al., (2019) reflect on what we are terming 'moral endeavour' as central to researcher development in Danish universities, where the focus is on promoting 'individually responsible researchers, reflexive about the consequences of their actions as academics and their personal and collective responsibility for safeguarding the scientific project' (ibid:189).

The growing emphasis within UK university doctoral provision on formal 'research training' – which has been strongly influenced by the Research Councils such as ESRC - could be seen as exemplifying a trend towards quantifiable and measurable skill development, rather than 'principled thinking' about research (ibid). As Pring (2000: 143) discusses, 'moral thinking is a kind of practical thinking'. A

challenge for educators is how to encourage and nurture such ‘moral thinking’ in the increasingly marketised university culture and given the current scale, where it is difficult to sustain the apprenticeship model of doctoral supervision/mentoring of earlier decades.

In the changing UK higher educational context, Nixon and Sikes (2003: 1) argued for the importance of addressing ‘what is distinctive about educational research’. This is not just that findings should be useful to practitioners or policy makers, but around a shared understanding that educational research involves ‘a moral commitment to improvement of some kind, whether that be primarily in terms of adding to the sum of knowledge, or more immediately, by impacting on students’ or teachers’ experiences in some way to make them better’ (Sikes and Goodson, 2003: 37). The distinction between ‘utility’ and ‘goodness’ is expanded on by Paechter (2003: 112), who identifies three broad categories of what we mean by ‘useful’ educational research: i) immediate utility in schools, ii) immediate utility in terms of government policy and iii) furthering educational (or psychological or sociological or philosophical or historical) knowledge. The first two categories, she suggests, are usually prioritised over the third, ‘the short term over the long term’ – which can ‘militate against research that is good’ (ibid: 113). Paechter’s warning about the difficulties of deciding what is of ‘immediate practical relevance in a rapidly changing context’ (ibid) is even more pertinent when considering research conducted for/by a Northern institution with/for communities in the Global South.

So what part do formalised ethical codes and principles – such as the BERA and ASA guidelines - play in ensuring the ‘goodness’ of educational research? There is a strong argument that ethical codes/protocols can lead researchers to reflect *less* on their moral actions in a specific context, particularly after their proposal has been ‘cleared’ by an ethics committee and ethics has been regarded as a ‘politically conservative part of audit culture’ (Caplan 2003 in Okley, 2012: 48). Sikes and Goodson (2003) suggest that ‘much research practice is based on the understanding that, as long as a code of ethics is adhered to then it is “moral”’ (ibid: 48) and that ‘blanket codes, concerned with ‘principles of action’ can be seen to proceduralise and depersonalise’ (ibid: 38). The tension between developing universal principles to guide ethical practice, and the diversity of research communities within different cultural contexts with possibly conflicting values means that complex judgements will always have to be made.

Specific contextual factors can influence not only the interaction and relationships with research participants, but also how the research findings and processes may be viewed and taken up by specific communities and institutions. Pring (2003) draws attention to the importance of engaging with and possibly mediating differing social practices in relation to research dissemination. He points out that ‘the context affects the extent to which secrecy might be equated with deceit’ (2003: 56) and to what degree research can be compromised ‘for the greater good of the whole’ (ibid). Emphasising that research takes place within a framework of community values, he introduces the notion of ‘virtue’ (defined as the ‘*disposition* to act appropriately in particular circumstances’ (ibid: 64)): ‘it may be more important, from an ethical point of view to consider much more carefully the virtues of the researcher than the principles he or she espouses’ (ibid: 52). His ideal of the ‘virtuous research community’, which learns to accept and nurture criticism, shifts the focus from methods and training to the social practices and informal learning processes that will help researchers to grow. Taking these ideas into the context of North-South research collaboration, including doctoral

students' research, we need to ask *whose* community values are informing the framework to which Pring referred, and even *whose community*?

Thus, discussion on educational research, ethics and morality shifts attention onto the qualities rather than the skills held by researchers, with strong implications for doctoral education and the challenge of 'training' students in such attributes[1]. The highlighting of 'context' in relation to ethical decision making, communicative practices and representation emphasises the limitations of codified principles, but also offers the potential for reflecting on how dissemination might be interpreted in differing contexts. By introducing 'goodness', 'virtue' and 'context' into the dominant research discourses around impact, effectiveness and utility, these debates have opened up new questions about the values underpinning educational research and the kinds of knowledge prioritised. A key assumption is that ethics is not just around gaining access or guiding the researcher's conduct in the field but also about how the researcher positions her/himself in relation to knowledge and power. As Bridges (2003: 174) comments, 'ethical principles apply not only to the relationship that the researchers enter into with participants… but to engagement with the process of enquiry and coming to know'. The ethics of dissemination is clearly integral to this process of enquiry, though there is a sense in which questions of 'whose knowledge?', 'what form of knowledge' and 'knowledge for whom and what purposes?' often remain unasked within these debates about ethics and morality in educational research.

5. Collaboration and action: starting from the ethics of dissemination?

To answer these questions, we turn now to consider research approaches where collaboration between researchers and participants is an essential principle of procedure and can lead to an early focus on the anticipated jointly owned outputs, including forms of dissemination and action. In participatory action research, for instance, the co-creation and sharing of knowledge can be seen as the starting point – in contrast to conventional research approaches, where dissemination is often the last stage. Our aim here is to examine what the case of participatory research can teach all researchers about the ethics of dissemination. Are there specific principles and practices that can inform other research methodologies too?

The problematising of collaboration and the questions raised around whose forms, purpose, voice and ownership of knowledge become central in discussions of participatory research methodology. As LeCompte and Schensul (2015: 223) observe, this influences ethics procedures too, and for participatory researchers, obtaining consent can thus be less problematic, as 'their relationship with communities and individuals has been negotiated and already has established a pattern of reciprocity'. Within ethnography too, Campbell and Lassiter (2015) note that this 'mixing of various elements of collaboration, research, writing and action' (ibid: 125) has led to a wide range of dissemination forms, including documentary videos, photographs, website, interpretive exhibitions, presentations to colleagues and community groups.

By contrast, the assumption within many ethical codes of practice is that the main output will be published as a journal article or report, rather than considering the many different ways in which knowledge may be shared or constructed. As Cahill and Torre (2007: 204) comment, ''PAR

introduces new questions about representation, audience and product that compel us to rethink the role and impact of research'.

Exploring a PAR project in a prison, they discuss who might benefit from the research and ask 'Do we as researchers and community members have a right to benefit from it?' (ibid: 198). Collaboration went beyond sharing information to deciding and agreeing on 'what is our 'message'?' (i.e. from the findings). Paechter's (2003: 105) earlier discussion of 'research utility' and her strong challenge to the assumption that 'there is a group of people who use findings of educational research and that research should be targeted to service these groups' could be set against these aims. Although collaborative approaches such as participatory research or applied and critical ethnography might be regarded as 'targeted' in terms of working with specific groups, the aim is to generate rather than to 'use' findings and researchers are positioned as co-facilitators of knowledge/research, not service providers.

The very starting point of participatory researchers might be described as a moral stance – that 'they attempt to do something more than collect data and leave without a trace… and it is in fact unethical to look in on circumstances of pain and poverty and yet do nothing' (Manzo and Brightbill 2007: 35). Whilst ethics committees may insist on anonymity in order to protect participants from harm, participatory researchers have suggested that it is unethical to deny participants the choice of using their own name and voice in research texts (ibid). These questions around researcher power and voice are even more pressing when considering North-South research studies where historically scholars have 'spoken for' and constructed dominant representations of colonised communities. As Cahill and Torre (2007: 196) observe 'Postcolonial colonial scholars raised the critical problem of academic research being a conversation of 'us' with 'us' about 'them''.

Within ethnography – a methodology where the text ('the ethnography') has conventionally been seen as central to dissemination – current researchers have explored the potential for collaborative approaches to writing and interpretation. Campbell and Lassiter (2015: 130) discuss an idea of ethnographic writing as 'a kind of "writing with", where ethnographers produce, share, and negotiate texts with or alongside participants'. They draw attention to 'issues of power and voice, of who speaks, and of who speaks for whom' and suggest that ethnographic writing 'does much more than communicate or represent; it works between people, *making* and *remaking* the individuals, communities and issues it engages' (ibid: 131). This approach to ethnographic writing is based on the earlier concept we introduced of literacy as a social practice – challenging assumptions about writing as a neutral technology and that 'authorship is, somehow, the product of an individual mind' (ibid: 132). There is also a recognition of the need to develop shared values 'of generosity and faithfulness' (ibid: 131) as the basis for collaborative practice. This approach to research writing as involving ethical issues around ownership, co-construction and voice has relevance for conventional research too – broadening the debate from a focus on whose name goes first on journal articles.

In the context of participatory research, Manzo and Brightbill (2007: 37) point to the limitations of conventional ethics codes and outline five possible additional 'dimensions of participation that have direct implications for ethical decision making': representation, accountability, social responsiveness, agency and reflexivity. Significantly, these dimensions are considered in relation to participants as well as researchers – for instance, the need for participants to develop a reflexive approach, so that they can engage in ethical review of their own projects, reflect on their beliefs and values, asking 'What kind of change agent am I and how am I accountable for my own actions?' (p

39). This idea of research as a learning process for all participants (the researchers and the researched) could be seen to extend Pring's notion of the 'virtuous community'.

The emphasis on developing reflexivity around power relations and representation within participatory research practice is particularly relevant to our discussion on the ethics of dissemination. The question of who has the power to disseminate connects with questions about who within communities benefits from the research, as well as which participants further afield. Above all, participatory researchers are encouraged to start from a position of learning and reflection – and this includes finding out about participants' indigenous ways of communicating and constructing knowledge. This recognition of different literacy, oral and digital practices is a necessary first step towards negotiating with research participants about how, when and to whom to communicate findings within the research process.

Participatory research is not only concerned with facilitating action at local level. Questions about dissemination also include recognition that the research could incite change further afield, as Cahill and Torre (2007: 205) note:

> 'The challenge for PAR researchers who are serious about social change is to think through how to effectively provoke action by developing research that engages, that reframes social issues theoretically, that nudges those in power, that feeds organising campaigns and that motivates audiences to change both the way they think and how they act in the world.'

This mention of the unknown audience is a harder challenge ethically than the immediate audience/participants – raising questions about possible misuse of information by those who were not involved in the research process. This returns us to the notion of research as property that can be bought or sold, which has intensified through the commercialisation and commodification of higher education in the UK[2]. Although participatory researchers and ethnographers have expanded on conventional ethical codes to address issues of power and control more explicitly within their immediate research contexts, the issue remains regarding how to encourage ethical use and limit the possibility of misuse of findings when disseminated globally. The example of participatory research in this section does however point to ways in which ethical concerns around dissemination can be embedded in the whole research process, and could be similarly developed within other methodologies.

6. Exploring the implications for ethical guidelines

Taking this discussion about collaboration and morality in educational research back to our earlier documentary analysis, we see that the concept of the researcher as facilitator or 'counterpart' (Campbell and Lassiter 2015: 44) raises questions about the assumed parameters of ethical guidelines produced by organisations such as BERA and ASA (notably that the researcher should determine the process). As Campbell and Lassiter (ibid) suggest, the final report or research thesis is often considered sufficient in terms of reciprocity – and this may explain why the main advice in the guidelines we reviewed is around issues of anonymity and the order of the authors' names. However, challenging the conventional role and unequal power relationship between researcher and

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[2] See Bridges' (2003: 154) example of a reported conversation about an evaluation study in which the commissioner said 'I buy research like I buy a sack of coal and when I have bought it I expect to do what the hell I like with it!'

participants implies discussion of what the researched community want from the process too – and it may be more than a book. This is where the discussion of shared values comes in, offering the possibility to find out what each party wants from the relationship and considering different forms of collaborative action/research outputs.

There is a striking difference between the way that writing is addressed in the ethical guidelines, as compared to the accounts of participatory and ethnographic research discussed above. The advice given around anonymity and authorship by BERA and ASA suggest that this can be seen as a straightforward decision for the researcher and participants to make. By contrast, the literature on participatory and ethnographic research takes writing as a central aspect of the research process and a rich site for collaboration too. Ideas about 'remaking identity' (Campbell and Lassiter 2015) through writing bring out the complexity of these decisions around representation, authorship and what Gregory (2005) refers to as 'the art of collusion' between participants and researcher. As LeCompte (2015: 242) suggests, the question is then more around 'Whose story prevails?' and whose voices are foregrounded.

To fully address the ethics of research dissemination, we suggest that ethical guidelines should point to the importance of the researcher creating a space to discuss what the participants, as well as themselves, want to gain from the research. The guidelines also need to consider writing and reading as a social and collaborative practice that extends beyond the researcher's control - not only in terms of social media and e-dissemination, but also the idea that participants can own and contribute to various kinds of texts. Responding to the geopolitics of academic writing and publishing could also be part of this process.

7. Implications for doctoral training and educators: concluding reflections

In our concluding reflections, we turn to the implications of these ideas for doctoral training. Firstly, we have argued that within the educational research process, dissemination needs to be recognised as an important element in itself, not simply relegated to thinking about after the completion of research but as centrally important during the process. Thus doctoral training courses need to focus not only on how to write for research publication, a common feature in many universities in the UK, but to think carefully about the principles underpinning dissemination. In this paper, we have argued strongly for the case of the morality of dissemination - the obligation that researchers have to share findings. The ESRC *Research Ethics Guidebook* elaborated on the researchers' responsibilities as, 'stating the need for 'research findings to be accessible' and a 'responsibility to disseminate well'.

We have also argued that engaging with a discussion on dissemination opens up the space for critiquing and discussing who benefits most from the research undertaken, an important ethical consideration and reflection.

Going back to our opening question - How can doctoral students conceptualise and engage ethically with research dissemination in the context of the globalised knowledge economy? – we suggest that there are particular implications of these discussions for students and researchers working across cultures. Taking our earlier theoretical framework, in the case of international students and their supervisors, these tools can help to point to areas of possible difference in ethical values, assumptions and intercultural communication that influence dissemination strategies. However, we

consider that introducing an 'ideological' approach to ethics – drawing on theoretical resources from postcolonial theory, decolonising methodology and academic literacies – might encourage all students to consider how dominant ethical practices and values can be contested or transformed by themselves, their participants and their supervisors. With regard to virtual communities and relationships, there is a lot of focus in current doctoral courses on using multi modal ways (online, web researching) to search information and collect data, but often less ethical reflection on how students might be using these modes of communication and engagement for research dissemination purposes. Learning about how their decisions about the form and language connects with – challenges or reinforces - the geopolitics of academic publishing is also an important ethical dimension of dissemination. This signals the importance of helping all students to become more sensitive to issues of inequity of access that are inherent in different approaches to dissemination and to explore whether different types of dissemination (including different modes of communication such as various social media) raise different ethical implications. We are aware that these recommendations have implications for doctoral educators too – and the need for many of us to re-examine our own dissemination practices in the light of the ethical issues raised in this article.

Equally important is to help students and academics to engage with and appreciate the contested and somewhat problematic place of research in influencing change both in policy and practices. The ESRC guidebook simply but powerfully reminds its readers that 'Dissemination literally means sowing seeds, and goes beyond publication of your research' (n.d.). The intention of introducing an ethical dimension on dissemination is to sow the seeds for change. It is also about learning how to enter in a dialogue and develop a range of academic literacies to influence different user groups, which should be an important and integral part of the doctoral training process. It is not simply about the practical and strategic value of disseminating one's research, which is important, but we need equally to emphasise the moral dimension of research dissemination.

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