Emphasizing indigenous communities in social work research ethics

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Abstract
This article questions whether the development of Sámi social work could benefit from a greater emphasis on communities in research ethics. Using experience from a comparative research project carried out in indigenous communities in Norway and the United States, we discuss (1) the advantages and challenges associated with the institutionalization of research ethics and (2) the consequences for our research design resulting from dialogue with the ethical committees. We conclude that Sámi social work would benefit from more emphasis on external ethical validation. We call for a debate among social workers and researchers on community involvement in social work research.

Keywords
Community-based research, indigenous methodology, research ethics, Sámi social work, social work research

Introduction

The history of research within indigenous communities bears witness to oppression and exploitation (Manderson et al., 1998; Smith, 2012). Colonization, in addition to monopolizing the right to land, monopolizes the right to narrative, storytelling, and production of knowledge (Said, 2001). This history challenges researchers to reflect upon how research itself influences society and the potential consequences of doing research. In doing so, a question emerges on how to incorporate the voices of the people affected by the research in the development of research projects.

In this article, we discuss ethical regulation in indigenous social work research, a discussion that draws on experiences undertaking a comparative study on social work in two indigenous contexts. By indigenous social work, we mean social work carried out in an indigenous community. The article consists of three main parts. The first part presents an introduction and the context of indigenous communities in Norway and the United States, before presenting a theoretical basis for research ethics in indigenous social work research. The second is a two-part analytical account organized according to the two questions in the problem under discussion. First, we outline differences in ethical regulations between Norway and the United States; second, we detail the

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consequences these regulations have had on our research project. These two accounts make up the core of the article's third part, which contains the closing discussion.

Background

The discussion in this article is part of an ongoing comparative research project investigating how professionals working in indigenous communities conceptualize the involvement of the family in social work. The project involves interviews with social workers and stakeholders in indigenous regions in two countries, Norway and the United States, about their experiences working with indigenous families. The comparative research project has a normative starting point with the objective of enhancing cultural sensitivity in child welfare work.

The comparative research project has received ethical approval from the mandatory systems in both Norway and the United States. However, designing and carrying out this comparative research project have brought us face-to-face with the differences among various ethical committees. In particular, we have identified differences in the emphasis given to community perspectives and social impact. This article presents reflections and insights drawn from this experience.

Problems to be addressed in this article

Our curiosity was piqued by the variations in the ethical committees' regulations and expectations in two different countries in relation to the same research project. We realized that there was a lack of community perspective in the Norwegian ethical regulations. The discussion of ethical regulations is mired in complexity and challenges the distribution of power. The requirements of tribal committees in the United States have resulted in a greater emphasis on dialogue and broader deliberation with the involved parties in our research design. This experience provoked a pivotal discussion about research ethics and led us to the research question 'Could greater emphasis on communities in research ethics benefit the development of Sámi social work?'. To approach this discussion we have outlined two questions that led us to two different analyses:

1. What are the differences between the ethical regulation of indigenous social work research in Norway and the United States? This question provides a basis for discussing the advantages and challenges associated with the institutionalization of research ethics.
2. What consequences has the dialogue with the ethical committees had for our research design? Answering this second question offers a backdrop to the discussion of the role ethical committees play in the negotiation of power in research.

These two accounts serve as the article's analytical foundation and form a backdrop for the discussion of community involvement in indigenous social research. We discuss whether the mandatory consideration of community involvement and social impact of the research project concerning indigenous people in the United States may further inspire developments in Sámi social work.

Context: The discourse of indigenous communities in Norway and the United States

Indigenous communities in Norway

The Sámi live in four countries: Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia. They share a common cultural heritage and history. Historically, the Sámi people have experienced severe oppression

in the shape of assimilation politics, loss of land, language, and compulsory attendance of boarding schools (Minde, 2005; Pedersen, 2015). Over the last few decades the Sámi people in the Nordic countries – Norway, Sweden, and Finland, but not in Russia – have earned a degree of self-determination and political influence by establishing the Norwegian, the Swedish, and the Finnish Sameting, respectively. The Sameting are Sámi parliaments in the three Nordic national states (Josefsen and Haver, 2007). The power of the Sameting is subordinate to the national governmental organization.

The traditional homeland of the Sámi in Norway lies for the greater part in Northern Norway. However, there is no national overview of where the Sámi live (Selle et al., 2015: 21). The Sámi do not share a single common community; they have a number of communities. However, the Sámi have in common the fact that they belong to a common social network distinguishing them from the overall population. The Norwegian constitution protects the Sámi culture, language, and society, but there is no special legal system for the indigenous people in Norway.

Indigenous communities in the United States

In the United States, native peoples were moved into reservations as part of the government's Peace Plan of 1867 (Fifer, 2005: 26). The American indigenous people have experienced not only oppression but also severe deprivation, as evidenced in poverty and health disparities (Corlett, 2010; Sarche and Spicer, 2008). There are today 566 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and villages (US Department of the Interior Indian Affairs, 2015). Through a series of Acts passed by the American Congress between 1960 and 1970, American Indians have earned a degree of sovereignty on reservations. While the indigenous peoples of North America share a history of oppression, the various tribes have different cultures and languages. American Indians live both on and off reservations.

Two dominant discourses: Integration and separation

In terms of history, law and the present organization of child welfare services for indigenous people, Norway and the United States share a number of common traits (Jacobs and Saus, 2012). However, there are differences in the construction and expression of indigenous communities and identities, both within Norway and the United States and within each country. The logic underlying the identification of indigenous communities in the Scandinavian countries differs from that in North America and Australia, where modern society has largely been defined by a history of immigration. In Scandinavia, however, both indigenous and majority populations have strong ties to the land (Friedman, 2008: 33).

Norwegian national identity is built on cultural homogeneity (Eriksen, 1997: 10). This discourse gave the majority population a framework and political legitimacy that rendered indigenous communities invisible (Nergård, 2005). It led to the assimilation and severe oppression of 'Sáminess' in Norway. Having lived side by side for generations, many people in northern Scandinavia claim that the Sámi are no more indigenous than themselves (Friedman, 2008: 33). Political processes during the second half of the 20th century challenged the lack of rights for indigenous people in Norway and led to the acceptance of indigenousness in Norway. The acceptance of indigenousness is set within the paradigm of integration. Research ethics in relation to Sámi society have largely followed this discourse, a discourse in which little attention is given to minority groups.

The evolution of national identity in the United States has followed a different path, the country being a country of newcomers and thus built on cultural plurality (Friedman, 2008: 34). In this

discourse, fate is individualized, and the consequences of oppression are linked not only to the historical course of events that affect a group, but also to post-traumatic stress for the individuals themselves, as described by Kirmayer et al. (2014) and Duran and Duran (1995). When the Native American communities resist the negative impact of research, it has been important to communicate the historical link between the groups' past experiences and the impact on individuals today.

In Norway and the United States, different laws regulate indigenous social work. The ILO (International Labour Organization) 169 Convention on the Rights of Indigenous People grants indigenous people some fundamental civil rights. Norway has ratified this convention, while the United States has not. In Norway, the ILO 169 grants the Sámi people the right to receive culturally sensitive health and social services (Boine, 2007: 8; Vars, 2009). In Norway, the main approach is to integrate these rights into the ordinary provision of services. In the United States, several Acts of Congress, such as the Indigenous Children's Welfare Act of 1978, cover health and social rights for indigenous people (Cross, 1986). The overall approach has been to make the participation of the tribes mandatory in social work.

The two dominant discourses, integration and separation, have pushed Norway and the United States onto different paths in the ethical regulation of indigenous research. In the United States, separation led to an individualistic focus that enforced a group perspective. The lack of community perspective in indigenous research in Norway is the result of the Sámi's ongoing invisibility caused by the strong belief in integration.

Theoretical foundation for research ethics in indigenous social work research

Indigenous methodology

Indigenous research ethics in the field of social work have experienced a sea change over the past decade. There is now a consensus that indigenous research should no longer be *about* indigenous people, but has to be *by or with* members from an indigenous society, a philosophy that has grown out of the participatory research tradition (Darroch and Giles, 2014; Hall, 2014). The development of indigenous methodology has been a counter-response to the colonization of knowledge and worldviews. As a theoretical framework, post-colonial theory relates the understanding of individual experiences to historical events of oppression (Adelson, 2005; Blix, 2013). The conception of indigenous knowledge can be useful in highlighting the existing power imbalance, challenging and widening the hegemonic Eurocentric worldview within research.

Agrawal (1995, 2009) raises the issue of the analytical distinction between indigenous and Western knowledge. He points out that such a categorization upholds stereotypes and overlooks variety within both knowledge paradigms. Agrawal's contribution helps raise awareness of the danger of stereotyping. Western social sciences and indigenous methodologies are not static units; both forms of knowledge incorporate a range of disciplines and traditions (Olsen, 2015; Oskal, 2008). In order to understand the complexity in indigenous research, we need to move beyond the dichotomy of Western versus indigenous knowledge (Olsen, 2015: 11).

Hermeneutic science, from the Western academic tradition, states that researchers analyze a world that is already understood by the actors being studied (Giddens, 1976: 144–148; Oskal, 2008: 339). The understanding of the world should both correspond to the self-understanding of the people being studied and add a new level to the understanding of social phenomena (Giddens, 1976; Oskal, 2008: 343). Post-colonial theory involves the study of the history of oppression and the dominance of European culture. Post-colonial theorists investigate how the domination of one culture has influenced research and the construction of narratives of 'the other' (Said, 2001).

Upholding the distinction between indigenous methodology and Western methodology may maintain the 'othering' rather than challenging this classification (Olsen, 2015).

We understand indigenous methodology as the placing of knowledge production within a local context, taking history and local culture into account. Smith (2012) formulates questions that researchers should ask themselves when undertaking research with or by indigenous peoples:

> Whose research is this? Who owns it? Whose interests does it serve? Who will benefit from it? Who has designed its questions and framed its scope? Who will carry it out? Who will write it up? How will the results be disseminated? (Porsanger, 2004: 113; Smith, 2012: 10)

Another central imperative in indigenous methodology is bringing results back to the community and participants (Porsanger, 2004: 113). This requirement calls for the researchers to involve local communities in research development, as well as giving back something relevant to participants and the community.

Ethical regulation in research

As production of knowledge is not neutral, but rather a deliberation always performed within a given context, conducting research raises ethical questions concerning the knowledge produced. Hudson (2009) introduces two levels of ethical principles: internal and external ethics. Internal ethics address the safety of the individual participant in a study. On this level, ethical considerations relate to informed consent, confidentiality, research validity, as well as respect for, minimizing the harm inflicted upon, and compensation of, participants. External ethics address the ethics and safety of the community involved. This level concerns justice, cultural responsibility, social responsibility, respect for the community, as well as minimizing the harm inflicted upon and compensation of communities (Hudson, 2009: 127). External ethics address consequences of research in society at large.

Ethical regulations influence power relations between the researcher and the object(s) of the research. Ethical committees often overlook the external and collective risk involved in research projects and do not acknowledge diversity among groups (Committee on Native American Child Health and Committee on Community Health Services, 2004: 148; Sharp and Foster, 2002: 145). When there is no consideration of culture and context in the institutionalization of ethics, the ethical considerations depend solely on the ethics and morals of researchers.

There is an ongoing debate in the discipline of anthropology on the conflicting requirements of formal ethical regulations and the methodology of ethnography. There are a number of arguments in favor of skepticism toward the institutionalization of research ethics, including that it detracts from academic freedom and the undermining of the dialogical process in the field (Pels, 2000; Øye and Bjelland, 2012: 147). The requirements of a clear research design hinder a dialectic process, where the questions that are asked and researchers' understanding evolve in interaction with the participants and community being researched (Øye and Bjelland, 2012: 147). The standardization and institutionalization of ethics can diminish, removing both responsibilities and possibilities from the researcher.

By regulating ethical norms, ethical committees exert power over research. There has been an extensive discussion regarding separate ethical committees for research in the Sámi area. The Nordic Sámi Institute conference in 2006 addressed Sámi research ethics and asked whether there is a need for a separate committee for Sámi research. In 1997, the Sámi Parliament decided that a separate Sámi research ethics committee would have to be established. In 2002, The National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH) arranged a conference on Sámi

research ethics. Stordahl et al. (2015) advocates the necessity for special ethical regulations and guidelines for research within Sámi communities to secure the involvement of the indigenous community in research. In their analysis of ethical regulations for the inclusion of children in research, Strandbu and Thørnblad (2010) ask whether the protection of children can lead to a one-sided emphasis on problems when it comes to this group. When ethical regulations protect vulnerable groups, this may result in the unnecessary exclusion of groups from research. To date, no specific guidelines for research in Sámi communities have been developed (Stordahl et al., 2015: 1–2). The question following Strandbu and Thørnblad (2010) analysis is whether community involvement should be integrated in general ethical regulations rather than handled by separate committees.

Power in research

In his monograph 'Orientalism', Said (2001) shows how Western science and literature have shaped ideas of the Orient. Through the writing of narratives and the creation of categories, the Orient has become 'the Other', a repository of an exotic history, culture, and way of living. This othering is relational, in this context relative to the West. The Orient and the West emerge as distinct concepts, where the West is in the position of defining content and concepts. Through his analysis, Said demonstrates the inherent relativism involved in research. Like other social activities, research evolves dialectically from and is formed by social reality. Research carried out without an understanding of local context can lead to the reinforcement of misconceptions, discrimination, or the development of useless and biased knowledge (Committee on Native American Child Health and Committee on Community Health Services, 2004: 149; Sharp and Foster, 2002: 145; Smith, 2012: 3). Research findings can interrupt social relationships among and within groups (Sharp and Foster, 2002: 146).

Research is not a neutral activity but a product of politics and culture in a wider social context (Hyland, 2004: 158; Smith, 2012). By virtue of the questions they raise, methods they use, analyses they undertake, and conclusions they address, researchers exercise power (Hyland, 2004: 158). Questions raised and methods employed are under the influence of the common consensus of what is seen as ethically accepted research. Universities have been core institutions in modernity (Østberg, 1999) and the hegemony of Western ideas and culture frames science. Feminist and post-colonial theories are theoretical positions that challenge the dominant position of knowledge production by the White, heterosexual male (Aakvaag, 2008: 201). They question the power and perspectives of those conducting research and demand that more voices be heard in the deliberation of knowledge.

Deliberation of knowledge

Just as ethics are a fluid concept covering identification and construction of required values in research (Kaiser, 2014; Ziman, 1996), research ethics are a matter of definition and are influenced by cultural hegemony. The administration of research ethics has consequences for the construction of knowledge. To ensure a broad dialogue and appropriate deliberation, three actors – the communities, researchers, and ethical committees – should be negotiating how to define ethical standards and how to validate good research.

Community perspective in research

Dialogue with communities may be a way of evening out the power imbalance between researchers and other parts of society. Local community members and academia may differ in their values and goals. Lack of awareness on these differences may pose ethical problems (Lightfoot et al., 2008: 509). Researchers in the social sciences are engaged in a double dialogue – with fellow researchers

and with the participants involved in research, society, community, and informants (Kalleberg, 2002: 165). In social science, research will be evaluated not only by fellow researchers, but also by society and the participants in the study (Kalleberg, 2002: 168). This makes ethical considerations complex.

Researchers who actively involve communities in their studies find that they gain a deeper knowledge of culture and history and that this enhances the quality of their work (Goldberg-Freeman et al., 2010; Lightfoot et al., 2008; Manderson et al., 1998). Involving community members in the planning of research will identify any risk of harm to the community and bring knowledge on minimizing this risk to the process (Committee on Native American Child Health and Committee on Community Health Services, 2004: 150; Sharp and Foster, 2002: 146). The community is a unit that implies and is characterized by identification and emotional connection (Israel et al., 1998: 178). Just as the concept of community is a fluid one, so community boundaries are a fluid concept. Defining a concrete community for a specific research project may therefore be a challenging task (Manderson et al., 1998: 224–225). Involving informants in the construction of data can contribute to narratives and bring the results of the research closer to the community context.

Account 1: Comparison of the ethical regulation of indigenous research in Norway and the United States

Ethical research regulation is set out in international regulations and global dialogues within a variety of disciplines. However, the institutionalization and concrete formulation of these are carried out in local and national contexts (Leach and Harbin, 1997: 191). Some norms are culturally specific, while others are culturally universal. Investigating cultural guidelines across different states and cultural regions can give us a broader understanding of ethical standards and principles (Leach and Harbin, 1997: 182). Norwegian and North American ethical guidelines toward research in indigenous contexts differ in critical ways in both organization and content.

The administration of research ethics

The Norwegian national ethical committees govern ethics in Sámi social work research. Since 1990, three committees covering all research disciplines have administered research ethics in Norway. These are the National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH), the National Committee for Research Ethics in Science and Technology (NENT), and the National Committee for Medical and Health Research Ethics (NEM). The committees' mandate is to coordinate research ethics and develop research guidelines. Our research project lies within the social sciences; hence our project was required to meet the formal principles regulated by the NESH. Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) administers the approval or refusal of research projects conducted within the social sciences and involving humans.

The national guidelines for research ethics on research involving humans in the United States are set out in the Belmont Report of 1979 published by the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research. The Human Subject Research (45 CFR 46) is a Code for Federal Regulation (CFR) regarding research with persons. These regulations concern basic policy for the protection of participants in the research, additional protection for vulnerable groups, and registration with Institutional Review Boards (IRBs). In the United States, the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) regulates the ethical committees, while the universities or colleges administrate the IRBs.

In contrast to the administration of indigenous ethical guidelines in Norway, in the United States, local committees, Tribal IRBs, have been established to secure ethical and beneficial research within indigenous communities (Hodge, 2012: 432). Norway does not have similar institutions to ensure that communities are given a voice in the deliberation of research ethics.

Researchers who apply for approval from either the NSD or Tribal IRBs have to fill in a standard form. These approval forms represent the most concrete dialogue on ethical validation of our comparative research project. To obtain ethical approval for our comparative research project, we had to follow a bilateral procedure, that is, comply with both the Norwegian and the US systems. Neither system took into account the response given to the application by their counterpart in the other country.

External and internal ethical validation

The NESH mandate for the NSD is to clarify whether a research project complies with the provisions of the Personal Data Act and Health Register Act (NESH, 2014: article 10). In the NSD application form, the first question asks applicants to 'briefly describe the purpose of the project, problems that will be addressed, research questions etc.' (our translation). This is an open question about the purpose of the project, affording room for reflection upon the external ethical validity of the project. The rest of the application form raises questions that relate to the collection and management of data, and all address internal ethical validity. There are no questions on reflection upon how to address local knowledge and history in the research project or about whether and how community members would participate in research development. The form did not request any plan for giving information back to the community involved. In our research project application, we answered the first question by describing the main aim of the project and the research question at that time. Our project received approval in the Norwegian system without any further dialogue on the project's cultural aspects.

In the United States, the dialogue with the Tribal IRBs raised questions about culture and context. Even though the various Tribal IRBs' application forms differ slightly, they all address questions on how the project will involve the community. They ask how the research will benefit the community, how the research project involves community members in the development of the project, and how the project addresses local culture and history. Some IRBs ask how the research project relates to previously undertaken research. These questions concern the external ethics of the research project and call for reflection on how the research project involves the community from initiation of the research project to its conclusion. None of these questions were required in the Norwegian ethical application forms, which moreover had few requirements concerning external ethics.

Account 2: Consequences of the dialogue with the various ethical committees for our research design

The Tribal IRBs questioned the local and cultural dimensions of our research project during the project acceptance process. The Norwegian system of ethical validation did not question study context. In our research project, carrying out research within the field of social work and child welfare, dialogue with the practice field was ongoing from the beginning of the project in Norway. Three groups of actors were involved in establishing the research project: researchers, the Norwegian government, and Sámi community professionals. In dialogue with local stakeholders, we developed the study's theme and research question. None of these elements were of interest to the Norwegian NSD. Our communication with the Tribal IRBs, on the other hand, challenged us to expand our dialogue with the practice field and community.

The dialogue with the Tribal IRBs resulted in the emergence of two principal elements, in addition to increasing cultural and contextual awareness: (1) how we designed our interviews and (2) how we exchanged views with participants about giving back. We will briefly describe the effect this had on our research design.

Interview and mini-seminar

When doing interviews with professionals, we invite the participants to a dialogue in which we aim to create an atmosphere of sharing. The idea behind the design is to give something back to participants, not only after we have completed our analysis but also during the data construction process.

We design our interview as a mini-seminar, which includes a short presentation before conducting a focus group interview. The presentation is informal and encourages dialogue. We present the background of the project, indigenous context in the United States and Norway, the model Family Group Conference, and experiences from our project so far. In this exchange, we describe our findings and present some early trends in the material we have accumulated. The presentation is different in Norway and the United States, and the content changes and evolves in line with developments in the project and in dialogue with participants. In addition to giving something back to the participants, we also aim to provide a framework for the discussions in the interviews.

Giving back research results

Tribal IRBs stress the importance of giving back to the community. The knowledge gained from the research project will benefit the community and not merely be of academic interest. During the interviews, we ask the participants what is a suitable form of giving back research results to their community. We believe that engaging in this dialogue during the research process will ensure that the information we give back to the participants will be of value to them. Until now, the informants have asked us to give presentations at work places, both in Norway and in the United States, and in a Tribal college. We plan to present our early analyses in these forums.

In addition to giving back research results, reporting findings to those close to the communities at an early stage of the research process provides an opportunity for feedback during the analysis. We use this arena to help widen our perspectives, encouraging us to see our work from a different viewpoint. We believe closeness to the field of study will bring new perspectives into our understanding and make us more competent at interpreting and drawing relevant analyses out of the data, thus heightening the quality of our research design and outcomes.

Discussion: Can a stronger emphasis on communities in research ethics benefit the development of Sámi social work?

Institutionalization of ethical regulations

According to indigenous methodology and post-colonial theories about 'othering', ethical regulation should include in its discussion the impact of research projects on the production of knowledge, ideas, and narratives within a concrete context and society. The Norwegian ethical regulatory system does not reflect this aspect of ethical validation, leaving ethical validation up to the researcher and the research community.

Indigenous methodology has raised important issues, placing the objectives of research and research questions within an indigenous context and incorporating historical and cultural aspects in the research. By continuing the distinction between indigenous methodologies as something different from Western academic methodology, we may be prolonging the 'othering' of indigenous peoples. Regulating research ethics specifically for indigenous people may potentially have the same consequences. There is a need to move beyond the 'othering' of indigenous peoples. Ethical validation in all research should take external ethical validation into account. Mainstream ethical

regulations can learn from the ethical regulation of research on indigenous peoples, which provides an opportunity to learn and develop in interaction with indigenous methodologies.

Research projects engage most explicitly with ethical issues at the time of applying for approval from the ethical committees. Institutionalizing external ethicality establishes certain specific requirements as regards cultural awareness. External ethics are more easily ignored when ethical committees are not required to elaborate on these aspects of research project.

Historically, there has been an imbalance of power between the researcher and the community studied. Tribal IRBs require researchers to interact with communities, reflect more extensively on culture, and prepare a plan for giving back to the community, thus shifting the uneven balance of power between the researcher and the community studied. However, the institutionalization of ethics makes research and knowledge production more rigid. Ethical committees often follow stringent rules and are necessarily less dynamic than an academic debate where fellow researchers challenge hegemonic ways of thinking. The anthropological debate on ethical guidelines and regulations has highlighted that the same rules and principles do not suit all disciplines (Øye and Bjelland, 2012). High degrees of regulation and institutionalization may have the potential to shift the dialogue from communication between the researcher and the field, to communication between the researcher and local ethical research committees. This reorganization may result in sacrificing flexibility of contact with the research field.

When writing to the tribal ethical committees we were uncertain about what to expect in response. We found ourselves adjusting our language and the presentation of our project according to what we assumed were committee preferences, thus inadvertently conforming to our own pre-conception of an assumed local paradigm. In this way, we may be contributing to the reproduction rather than challenging and widening of the language, categories, and established truth, something that may pose an ethical problem. Some Tribal IRBs asked to review our results prior to publication. How this will affect the research process is a further question for validation. In our project we are determined not to let the control exercised by the Tribal IRBs affect the questions we raise and the analyses we undertake. Giving ethical committees the power to stop or change research results may be potentially unethical. A further question is how we should manage a potential refusal to publish or a request to rewrite the results.

Establishing stringent ethical rules may be detrimental to the quality of projects as well as relieving the researcher of the responsibility for conducting ethically sound research. As illustrated by our reflections on the process of adjusting and the uncertainty on how the committees would welcome our project, the institutionalization of research ethics is, ultimately, a question of power. To counterbalance the power placed with the researcher, it is important to facilitate the negotiation of power between the researcher, the community, and the research committees.

The potential for greater community involvement

Research carried out in one group may benefit society at large, but not help the group directly involved as participants in the research. We regard the Tribal IRBs' requirements that the research benefit the community to be an extension of the Belmont Report's principle of beneficence. In addition to benefitting the population as a whole, Tribal IRBs request that the research benefit the community involved in the specific research project.

If social work research in indigenous communities is to be relevant, it must be sensitive to local social reality. In our own research project, we believe that the emphasis on external ethical validation will heighten the quality of our research. Exchanging views with the Tribal IRBs challenged us to interact with participants in our study more actively than we would have done otherwise. By holding a mini-seminar as part of the data construction, we as researchers give of ourselves and

share the early findings in a way that is very different from an ordinary interview. Through presentation, we give the informants insight into our understanding of the themes we are discussing. We share our experiences so far in the research project, confirming the informants and ourselves as equal partners in dialogue. The contents of the mini-seminars will change during the research process as we continuously integrate new insights from our project in the presentation. This makes the interview a forum for the discussion of early trends and findings from the analyses we perform. In each case, we adjust the presentation to the context. The presentation must be of interest to those who participate; if they have questions or requests, we try to accommodate this. By doing this, we hope to be able to involve the participants and enable them throughout the research project.

We see a potential for making research more appropriate for local contexts by involving communities in research development. The double dialogue in social science, negotiating both with fellow researchers and with informants, can be made more explicit. Involving participants throughout the entire research process allows the inclusion of more voices in the production and deliberation of knowledge. We strive for relevance and recognition of the construction of narratives from the participants in our study. By giving presentations, and entering into dialogue with the informants throughout the entire research process, the material produced will be thick and rich, complemented and adjusted by the social workers and stakeholders interviewed.

Conclusion

The comparison of ethical regulation in indigenous social work research in Norway and the United States shows that ethical validation in Norway is highly centered on internal ethical validation. The focus is on the safety of the participants, and there is little concern for the potential consequences of the research for the community as a whole. We advocate stricter requirements to external ethical validity through dialogue between the researcher, the community, and the ethical committees.

The demand for community involvement, addressed by the Tribal IRBs, changed our project design, bringing us to include the study's participants more actively and making room for more voices in the production of knowledge. Sámi social work development would benefit from a higher degree of community involvement in research. Knowledge production from indigenous society and social work research influences the practice of indigenous social work. Bearing this in mind, debates about the research ethics in the field of Sámi social work among researchers and social workers are of importance. The debate has the potential to enhance the development of social work in indigenous regions and positively influence Sámi society. It is debatable where Sámi society should be actively included. We call for a debate between social workers, fellow researchers, and within the research communities.

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