

**FOR SCIENTIFIC ETHICS: INTERVIEW WITH
PEOPLE WHOSE OPINIONS ARE NOT USUALLY
TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION:
CROSSED VIEWPOINTS**

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Abstract: What ethics to adopt and what responsibilities to assume for the researcher who investigates by engaging the speech of those whose opinions are not usually taken into consideration? How is the researcher's report played out to his respondents? In very different fields of research - the sociology of mental health and the history of contemporary art - these questions arise in the same terms. This article is based on the research experiences of the research authors. They all have experienced a relatively complex survey approach because of the respondents' positioning, perceived as "stigmatizing" or "out of step" from society's point of view. Laurence Fond-Harmant has gathered a panel of testimonies for the de-stigmatization of psychiatric diseases by inviting patients to testify of their relation to their mental pathology and to the social world. Lydie Rekow has interviewed live models of the contemporary artist Paul-Armand Gette with the aim of listening to the voices of those who act as part of his art, in order to constitute a corpus of knowledge enlightening the modalities of the artist's artwork.

Mihaela Gavrilă-Ardelean has studied occupational interview techniques and educational methods to reduce stigma of people with mental health problems. Liviu Gavrilă-Ardelean has been working for over a decade with children with mental deficiencies, improving their compliance to medical treatment. In all cases, the researchers have adapted to a new audience and adopted a new position; what are the stakes and issues, the added values and the scientific postures in the field of the interview? These are the tormenting questions of scientific ethics that the article attempts to answer. It inscribes the tracks of reflection in the deontological and ethical framework of the fields of research reviewed in human and social sciences.

Keywords: scientific ethics; social survey; de-stigmatization; public mental health; live models.

Introduction

Although this reflection concerns different fields of research - The History of Contemporary Art and *Public Health* – it aims to identify, so as to analyze, the stakes of the practice of interview with disregarded, ignored people, studied in Humanities and Social Sciences. Because of their social position perceived as "stigmatizing" or "marginal", the approach of these subjects engages the researcher in a complex relation of proximity, of even intimacy. In the field of the *Promotion of Mental Health in Public Health*, it is a question of gathering a panel of testimonies on the de-stigmatization of psychiatric patients living outside the hospital. Surveys have been conducted on patients invited to testify about the relation between their mental disease and the social world. This work, completed as part of a European project, enabled the production of a DVD- used by health professionals and professionals in the social sector (Blanchet, *et al.*, 2010). In the research of *Contemporary Art History*, the aim is to create a body of knowledge that sheds light on the work of the contemporary artist Paul-Armand Gette (1927). The purpose of the collection of data is to gather the declarations of some of his living models, by questioning them about the working relationship they have with the artist, especially about the freedom he offers them in the setting of his artistic activity. It is a matter of analyzing their interaction and measuring its influence on the artist's work.

The interview always presents a social relation; it poses an *interlocution* situation and engages a research protocol. Concretely

supported by our research experiences, our concerns focus on the stakes and the respect for values and ethical standards in the field of interviewing in the humanities and social sciences. More specifically, we question the positioning of researchers who investigate individuals with a singular profile in that it is a deviation from an expected social or scientific norm. In the history of traditional art, living models are generally considered only a workshop *tool* devoid of artistic meaning. The mentally ill are also very rarely listened to; others take charge to speak for them!

Thus, because of the nature of the relationship which is nevertheless possible to establish with these people, we attempt to clear the new deontological problems that arise.

How does the researcher's relationship to his respondents play out when they do not constitute an identifiable group, and they are not given the opportunity to speak their minds? What ethics and what responsibilities must the researcher have?

We propose to formulate these ethical and normative questions because they torment us as researchers; they compel to consider the relation to the respondents and to the final outcome of the analysis not only as a scientific report, but also as the elaboration of a survey which calls for other measures of protection and interpretation of the research item.

Finally, we suggest ways to understand the scientific stakes and the contribution of such approaches to a renewal of the professional practices of the Human and Social Sciences researcher.

Mental health research

Our project concerns four European countries with different realities: France, Belgium, Luxembourg and Germany. It is financed by the European Regional Development Fund. It includes several components (Fond-Harmant, 2013), in particular a common and cross-border need for partners to work towards the de-stigmatization of mental illness among the general population and non-psychiatric professionals in these four countries. For pedagogical purposes, one of the pilot actions for this part of the project consisted in developing a bilingual German-French DVD, gathering interviews and testimonies from users of the psychiatric services. "The stigmatization of the madman and the asylum "has no borders. It is based on a social disagreement of personal characteristics or beliefs that are perceived as going against cultural norms". According to Goffman the stigmatization of individuals occurs when they present a variant relative to the models offered by their environment (Goffman, 1963).

Why give the floor to users of psychiatry services? What difficulties does the researcher encounter? Gathering the opinion of users, patients of psychiatric services, is not always easy (European Commission, 2005). Before the major reforms of psychiatry, the users of hospitals have never had the opportunity to express their thoughts in this environment. If needed, caregivers, educators, or their families would speak for them. They would communicate the patients' discomfort, their relation to the disease, their compliance with drug treatments, etc. Twenty years ago, the situation started to change. The emergence of new neuroleptics and the reduction in the number of psychiatric hospital beds have caused patients to live outside the hospital in the ordinary environment and to become full-fledged citizens. The development of ambulatory services ensured that patient care was provided and crisis situations were avoided.

This is how our project fits into a "community" vision of mental health, in which each type of actor expresses themselves, valorizing their own point of view (WHO, 2004). It is based on the concept of user *empowerment*, of recognition of their expression and expertise (Blanchet, *et al.*, 1993; Gavrilă-Ardelean, 2016; Gavrilă-Ardelean, 2016).

Methods

A sample of respondents was constituted to gather interviews of testimonies, for a better understanding of mental health disorders and their consequences on the social life of people who no longer live in psychiatric hospitals, but in a community. A semi-directive interview grid was developed for the patients invited to testify to their relationship to their illness and to the social world. Nine themes were chosen to structure the speech:

- a. User perspectives on mental health;
- b. Solitude;
- c. Addictions and substance addictions;
- d. Couples and sex life;
- e. Temporality and rhythm of life;
- f. Views of others;
- g. Relation to the general practitioner;
- h. Violence;
- i. Knowledge about the care system.

In this context, our interviews consist of producing a more or less linear discourse with the minimum of intervention on the part of the researcher. The aim is to provoke a discourse based on the nine items, after having received the agreement from the surveyed patient, then to facilitate it to explore the information available to the respondent on

these topics. The purpose of the interview is to gather information on the respondent's opinion on the subject.

The interview's setting corresponds to a symbolic and physical social construction that is necessary to maintain regardless of who the questioned people are and the pathology that affects them. For the researcher, the work is based on the need for a scientific methodological framework.

It is a research interview, not a therapeutic meeting, whose function is to solicit a speech aimed at eliminating symptoms in the context of a consultation, and not yet a clinical interview, which is both therapeutic and a research (Blanchet, 1985; *et al.*, 1987). In our work process, our interviews and collections of testimonies are intended to verify hypotheses and to deepen knowledge (Ghiglione & Matalon, 1978). It is a matter of collecting fragments of life stories, by the method of *ethno-biography*, of integrating the narrative into its environment, for which it represents a component (Bertaux, 1974).

For Gorden, the methodological approach is based on the triptych: Intrigue/Scene/Distribution which constitutes its three central dimensions (Gorden, 1969).

Results and Discussions

It is about being cautious with people as well as with the normative and scientific codes of ethics. We have ensured the smooth running of each interview, emphasizing caution, respect, listening.

Table 1.
Table summarizing triptych for the methodological approach, after Gorden

The triptych	The items
Intrigue	The theme / Objectives
Scene	Time and place The definition of the situation
Distribution	The different actors

Aware of the fragility of people and of the strength of their speech, the researcher collects the words that give the meaning of their testimony as

a direct contribution to the work of *de-stigmatization* of psychiatric disorders. To achieve this goal, the researcher must build a scene, as Gorden says, and find the right cast of actors.

Research in History of Contemporary Art

The lack of interest in the personality of living models is evident by the almost total absence of documents on their subjects. There are certainly some letters, anecdotes, biographies, but the use of the living model for academic purposes erases any attachment to people. Apart from the intimate relations that Rembrandt, Rubens or Picasso have maintained with their models that were also their wives, the living model has no recognized personality; like a still life, the model is for study. Since the XVth century, many documents attest to this. The XIXth century offers some emerging personalities in the world of brothels and thus the scandalous model appears - in the features for example of Victorine Meurent, regularly employed by E. Manet (1832-1883). The pecuniary relationship that usually binds the model to the artist has not favored his reputation: surreptitiously, tradition has made living models women of little virtue who earn their living by showing off their bodies. Art and morality merge in the eyes of the public; a charge of indecency is even supposed to weld the question of looks in the closed workshop of an artist. Changes are beginning to occur due to some artists who introduce relative disorder into the conventional pose of professional models. E. Degas (1834-1917) or H. Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901) are interested in women that are "simple and honest, who take care of nothing other than their occupation" (E. Degas, apud Borel, 1990: 122). These models of a new kind - they no longer pose but indulge to an activity, from the most banal to the most intimate - were appreciated because they represented the reality of everyday life. Likewise, in the studio of A. Rodin (1840-1917), the models remain solicited so that they engage with naturalness; it is no longer a matter of still poses, but of lively body movements. The integration of the model in the (or her own) daily life implies a real personal engagement in the exercise of this activity. The fascination with the model becomes obsession to P. Picasso (1881-1973). In his work, the model takes over the palette, and painter-model couples freely embrace. Through the game of substitutions or inversions, the artist takes the place of the model that takes the place of the painting that takes the place of the artist ... the stagings of the gaze redouble in a play where relations are confused. The figure of the model imposes itself, beyond the person or her temperament, as the master of the artwork. Current artistic research is no longer guided by model compliance; the stakes follow the emancipated gaze of artists freed from the plastic constraints they once submitted to. Nevertheless, working with live models occurs from a tradition for certain photographic, filmic or scenic practices: the models either

play roles in agreement with the artist, the director of the work, or become partners, collaborators or activators of artistic events. For example, the *Anthropométries* by Yves Klein (1960) shows the active participation of the models in that they are at the same time, models, brushes, painting, and sculpture.

In and through his attachment to models, the entire work of Paul-Armand Gette expresses a particular and delicate attention to the world. Nature and body are observed, combined, explored and captioned to form a universe inhabited by nymphs of all kinds, where discourses with a scientific tone are translated into poetry.

Methods

Our study of this prolific work focused, at first, on the notion of shared pleasure with living models; they occupy the space of this art with such freedom that it seemed relevant to us to reveal a new type of artist-model relationship outside of all conventions, study conducted in the framework of a D.E.A. in History of Contemporary Art, in University of Lyon II, 1994. Through direct interviews with people who have been models for Paul-Armand Gette, our objective was to create new, original sources and to show the specificity of the relationship that is being played out, for a better understanding of the artist's work.

Before meeting the models, we made a semi-directed interview grid in order to structure the conversation. While respecting individuality, this grid also allows a common sense of analysis of the singular experiences of each model. For the development of this grid, our work elements came partly from conversations with the artist, and also from the results of our research on the traditional use of living models, which faithfully follow the thread of history art (Borel, 1990; Clark, 1969).

Paul-Armand Gette develops an artistic activity with models - feminine or masculine - in terms of collaborations. He treats this matter as a committed criticism to the systems, codes and methods of which he systematically foils the purpose, by using them out of context or by applying them to different objects. Like any other system, the models are apprehended out of context; by depriving them of the comfortable role of being at the service of the artist, Paul enjoys "watching the models idle" (Gette, 1994).

Note that he does not choose his models, he only determines the framework in which he agrees to meet people who wish to work with him; in fact, he accepts all those whose motivation is stronger than a physical quality or relative canons. The fact of not remunerating those who accept to work with him renews the idea that the motivation of the model must be totally oriented towards the desire to be a model, driven by pleasure. The chance of the meeting

often guides the artist, reaffirming the autonomy of the model he intends to respect. Moreover, by submitting to the desires of the model, he proceeds to an unusual reversal when it comes to artistic creation. Not guiding his models and, what is more, enjoying being led by them, can be interpreted as laziness or even indecency. Nonetheless, the models are invited to find freedom in the open space of the art of Paul-Armand Gette, and are given the opportunity to demolish the stereotypes, to have fun teasing the artist and the public in the field of representation.

As a historian of Paul-Armand Gette's art, we are interested in the way in which artistic collaboration works; the terms of freedom, recurrent in this work, unravels the practices and opens unexpected fields for the artist. Our approach fits into the logic of *a contribution to the study of ...*, placed within limits inherent to the work of the researcher engaged in a prospective research, necessarily incomplete for various reasons (some answers are negative, the number of answers I receive is well below the number of models, I can not meet all models that agree to talk to me (lack of time, economic issues).

Before the beginning of the actual interviews, we invited the participants to become acquainted with our previous work. They received the general outline established for our interview – an opportunity for them to discuss the axis of our conversation, to consider another, or, if they accepted the project, to keep in mind the proposed structure before meeting us; we did not want to force or compel people to choose any line or orientation; the questions were asked only in case of need, the tone of the conversation being more easily adopted. Our method was to listen. Our constant concern was to allow the models to talk and to let the conversation flow in the direction they wanted it to.

We are aware that we are in the presence of personalities from whom we have everything to learn, since they were at the heart, and often at the origin of the time of creation. They have lived an exceptional experience that they are proud to describe. Likewise, we measure the immense favor we benefit from. Logically, in this context, our method of inquiry is a means of establishing a dialogue that aims to give the word its freedom, in the open space that we organize, in our turn, at the time of the interview - as their gestures, their postures, their presence were free and creative while working with the artist.

Issues of discrepancies

Thus the investigative work involved in the elaborate research reveals a twofold deviance: that of the artist facing conventions - with and in close agreement with his models-collaborators; but also that of the interviewer facing the stereotypes of the interview, since we accept that the interviewees decide themselves the tone of the meeting.

Rich in their experiences of freedom in art, the models offer unrestricted speech time, with or without intrigue, in the field of narration; we never prejudge reality or the fictional dimension. As the artist foils artistic conventions, the inquirer must shift from an interview with analytical purposes, subject to the usual social typology. When we bring to light the point of view of the model, we are led to play a role of *between-content* (the one who holds information between two parties) to make a singular voice heard that reveals an originality, and that determines intentions regarding the stake of the participation in the space of the artist's art. In this way, the investigator partially opens an obscure field of art history by making the voice of those generally constrained to silence, and whose role is limited to figuration in an image, readable - and audible. This contribution to thinking about the history of a discipline cannot be fulfilled without the support of the main actors, because the way in which the sources were collected guarantees their validity, and the respect for each person's role.

Discussion-Conclusion: for scientific ethics

In both disciplines of our research experience, reflection tracks enable the identification of scientific stakes in conducting interviews with people whose opinions are not usually taken into consideration.

How does the researcher's report play out to the respondents?

These interviews are not just a collection of users' or artists' models' opinions. The mental health researcher influences the respondent who signs an "informed consent form" validated by the National Ethics Committee for Research that informs him of:

- the purpose and description of the study;
- the duration, the place, the possible risks or inconveniences (for a study with medical analysis or therapeutic interventions);
- anonymity and protection of privacy and collected data.

In the History of Contemporary Art, respondents are verbally assured of this data, there is a tacit agreement which takes the value of a "contract" as long as people agree to have their words re-transcribed, and, later, published with their consent.

In this formalized context, the recognition of a bias in the relationship does not invalidate the method. On the contrary, it is a necessary and obligatory condition for this method to attain a scientific status. All discourse produced by an interview is co-constructed by the exchange partners depending on the stakes and interactions at work.

What are the responsibilities of the researcher?

In both art history and public health, the interview as a

qualitative method does not only provide data to the subjective judgment of the researcher. It possesses its own rigorous rules and methodologies (Mucchielli, 1996). From our experience, it seems relevant to formulate three great logics corresponding to three registers of scientific rigor.

A complementary logic:

Collecting data from any research discipline, in the form of interviews, is "to realize" in order to clarify science and research questions. It is a matter of elucidating, explaining and objectifying. To give the opportunity to speak to those who are not usually questioned is to change the social norms; it is to participate in a better understanding of the world and to advance the disciplines. These professional situations put the researcher in charge of bringing to light the invisible part of the 'iceberg'. Sociologically, it is to say out loud "the unspoken, the hidden, and the masked part"; it is to let talk those who had previously been silent because society and science were not yet ready to give them the floor.

A logic of producing valid results:

The validity of the results must respond to a solid methodology as opposed to an intuitive interview approach.

Listening to those who are not often interviewed requires the sharp knowledge of a subject, its problematic and the questions to be addressed. The survey protocol must be in adequacy with the data sought. These social survey situations involve a great control over the parameters that influence the interview situation. The researcher must selectively orient the listening according to objectives and hypotheses well worked in advance. As for the discourse analysis, it must have a coherence that inscribes it in the social dynamics of the evolution of the scientific demarche.

A deontological and ethical logic:

The research guidelines propose an ethical evaluation of projects based on the principles of beneficence and respect for the individual and social justice. The interview survey is constructed in compliance with ethical standards relating to the scientific validity and the necessity of obtaining the consent of the respondents. The fair selection of subjects, especially with regard to vulnerable people, represents an important reflection prior to field work. Aspects related to respect for confidentiality and private life are also taken into account and participants' anonymity is preserved.

In Public Health, ethical issues concern individuals but also concern the communities. They accentuate the respect for the autonomy

of the individual and the group. The researcher's problems and difficulties arise from the tension between the application of scientific methods and the moral demands of the principles of respect for the autonomy of the person and benevolent and justice groups. The solution lies in the right balance to build and experiment in practice. In Contemporary Art History, we find more and more frequently participation-oriented works. They involve the contribution of either the audience, which becomes the performer, or the actants or actors who have the ability to modify or interact with the meaning of the artwork. This situation generates fundamental reversals as to the place of the protagonists and as to the very definition of what a work or an action of art is. However, it must not overlook people and individuals who play on a field of high level of personal commitment; people's intimacy, the secrets kept or whispered, the ways of seeing and understanding what they execute on behalf of another, must be respected and brought to light according to their will. The researcher is the guarantor of the intimacy revealed in the narrow framework of a study interview, whose sole objective remains the understanding of a collaborative work. Thus, the research is enriched by the consent of the actors, key essential to the right outcome of the investigation work.

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