Feminist Ethics in Universities: How to Make Timely Decisions that Represent Community Values

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Abstract: In practical terms, decisions on various academic matters in universities are complex and reflective of the views held by those in positions of power. For a more egalitarian view derived from a feminist perspective, this paper proposes an alternative form of decision-making. An underlying moral code and its corresponding decisions influence policies and the broad spectrum of educational futures in universities. According to Walker (2007), theoretical-juridical models, which have dominated ethical understandings, assume a prevailing moral code that embodies universal ethical principles and applies to all people in every jurisdiction at all times. By contrast, embodied perspectives that recognize the relationality of networked participation enliven Walker's expressive-collaborative model (ECM) through moral conversations and negotiations among moral agents who are members of that specific community. The authors cite the #femedtech networked participatory community as an embodiment of feminist values that the ECM proposes and describe #femedtech's value activity and code of conduct generation activity. This paper applies feminist ethics to ameliorate universities' policy-making process. The paper builds the case for university community values to guide university decisions and advocates strategic trust as an essential criterion to uphold communal values. Finally, the paper concludes with practical propositions that reflect a commitment to democratic, deliberated, and inspiring process-based decision-making responsive to a diverse community's moral lives and ethical needs.

Résumé : En termes pratiques, les décisions sur diverses questions académiques dans les universités sont complexes et reflètent les points de vue de ceux qui occupent des postes de pouvoir. Pour une vision plus égalitaire dérivée d'une perspective féministe, cet article propose une forme alternative de prise de décision. Un code moral sous-jacent et ses décisions

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correspondantes influencent les politiques et le large éventail d'avenirs éducatifs dans les universités. Selon Walker (2007), les modèles théoriques et juridiques, qui ont dominé les compréhensions éthiques, supposent un code moral dominant qui incarne des principes éthiques universels et s'applique à toutes les personnes dans toutes les juridictions en tout temps. En revanche, les perspectives incarnées qui reconnaissent les réseaux relationnels animent le modèle expressif collaboratif (ECM) de Walker à travers des conversations morales et des négociations entre les agents moraux qui sont membres d'une communauté spécifique. Les auteurs citent la communauté participative en réseau #femedtech comme une incarnation des valeurs féministes que l'ECM propose et décrivent l'activité de valeur de #femedtech et l'activité de génération de code de conduite. Cet article applique l'éthique féministe afin d'améliorer le processus d'élaboration des politiques des universités. Le document plaide en faveur des valeurs de la communauté universitaire pour guider les décisions universitaires et préconise la confiance stratégique comme critère essentiel pour défendre les valeurs communautaires. Enfin, le document se termine par des propositions pratiques qui reflètent un engagement envers une prise de décision démocratique, délibérée et inspirante basée sur des processus et répondant des vies morales et aux besoins éthiques d'une communauté diversifiée.

Introduction

As Griffiths (1959) once remarked, the theory of leadership is about decision-making. Implied in this keen observation is the idea that leaders make decisions, but do such decisions reflect the values of the community on whose behalf the decisions are made? The short answer is: possibly, but most probably not. What if an alternative model could be implemented to better reflect community members' values? What if such a model already exists, perhaps not in conventional organizations as we know them, but in online communities (such as #femedtech) that have integrated the democratic power of the Internet and have brought diverse groups together to create communal values? Can we apply such a process in universities? Here again, the answer is: unlikely because it will take too much time. Yet, situations such as the pandemic demanded expedient decision-making. So, what if there was a way to improve universities' policy-making processes to articulate the values of all institutional stakeholders? This paper presents an alternative decision-making model for universities that also addresses the shortcomings described above.

Context

Universities in Ontario, Canada are semi-autonomous organizations that are structured on a bicameral system of governance. The board of trustees oversees the fiduciary responsibility, and academic matters are the senate's jurisdiction. A university's executive branch comprises the president, provost, various vice-presidents, associate vice-provosts, and the deans of the faculties (Pennock et al., 2016). In this paper, the executive branch of university operations is referred to as administrators. The administrators make decisions, which are encoded in policies that affect the entire university community.

The purpose of this paper is to propose an alternative approach to how university administrators currently make decisions—one that might prioritize time-sensitive action and encompass universities' community values at the same time. At present, the timeliness of the decision-making process often trumps communal values. Therefore, the authors advocate a process-driven rather than prescriptive approach to decision-making, consistent with Walker's (2007) proposition that determining a community's values depends on its members. This underscores the importance of situating ourselves as collaborators and co-authors of this paper and is in accordance with Haraway's (1988) notion of positionality. Cumulatively, we both have been working in the Ontario university system for nearly 50 years and have witnessed decision-making at various levels and through numerous changes in leadership and personnel. Our observations and subsequent reflections form the basis of this paper. The COVID-19 pandemic acted as a catalyst for our ruminations on how decisions were made at our university. Our insights as a member of an ethnic minority cisgendered man and as a White cisgendered woman, although not unique, reflect a non-dominant perspective. As an adjunct faculty member and as a mid-level manager, respectively, we do not reside in dominant positions of power, nor do we directly influence decision-making.

Soon before the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Williamson et al. (2019) called upon researchers to actively participate in research related to digital education policy, and we were particularly intrigued by the questions of "the chains of influence that lead to new edtech strategies" (p. 87) and ethical concerns. The speed with which universities pivoted to online teaching and learning in March 2020 revealed some confounding issues related to how policy decisions are made, how they are justified, and whose values are represented in the decisions made.

From a felt sense of an opaque decision-making process that led to the adoption of educational technologies when the pandemic took hold in our university, our concern is that university community values have not been reflected in the decisions made. This paper, which is part of a larger project examining various decision-making models at universities, offers an alternative to conventional decision-making by applying Walker's (2007) feminist ethics. We contend that the application of Walker's expressive-collaborative model (ECM) can ameliorate university practices of cloistered decision-making related to educational technologies. Criticism of the ECM as being time-consuming (Kumar & Mitchell, 2002) is also addressed.

Policies Are Values

The policy formulation process encompasses a series of sequential decisions. In large part, the decisions made reflect the values of the decision-makers (Douglas, 2016; Howarth, 2010; Sorenson, 2013). In other words, those who draft policies are often the ones in power, and as such, their values become encoded and embedded within operational decisions. Once formulated, these policies script people's actions and lives in the jurisdiction of these policies. These effects are heightened at the public policy level because the governing political party's values are often ensconced in the policies. When the democratic process works as intended, these ideological positions are tempered through broad consultation from diverse constituents, other political parties, and elected representatives.

Institutional policies, often considered public policy's close cousins, differ in one important way: Institutional policies are formulated without consulting broader institutional members beyond academic governance structures (Delaney, 2002; Wu et al., 2018). This stratagem is considered adequate in universities because structural representation in the senate and the board of trustees is deemed to be sufficient within the bicameral system (Pennock et al., 2016). Howlett (2009) explains that policy formation within such organizations entrusts capable analysts working with relevant information to guide administrators towards beneficial and evidence-based decision-making processes. Administrators have institutional means to disseminate and collect relevant information, making the policy formation process rigorous and pertinent. For the most part, this institutional policy formation process is being practiced in university communities.

Institutional policy formation is a lengthy process because of the steps involved (Howlett, 2009). The usual policy formation

process had to be (quickly) modified due to the unusual circumstances brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Decisions at the operations levels in universities needed to be made expediently and without the usual back-and-forth consultation of affected parties. For instance, the move to online course delivery and learning assessment had to be conducted in entirely new ways for many stakeholders. Decisions and policy formulation regarding which tools would be used and which hardware and software would be supported, amongst the limited but increasingly expanding set of choices, needed to be made by those in the administrative cadre. In reality, in many cases, decisions were left to individual faculty members' discretion under institutional policies supporting academic freedom, resulting in many unaddressed (or unforeseen) problems pertaining to online course delivery—such as cost, privacy, equity, accessibility, feasibility, and availability—to be borne by students. Such decision-making and policy formation are lauded by some and derided by others, as is the nature of institutional policies.

In addition to the technical and operational factors that influence policy formation (Wu et al., 2018), policies reflect or encompass the values of their authors and signatories (Albornoz et al., 2018; Howarth, 2010). They reflect the values of the administrative team de facto. The structural makeup of universities and the locus of decision-making is such that a select few are entrusted to make decisions for the entire university community. While this is efficient, expedient, and responsive to the changing context, it neither accounts for nor necessarily respects the values of the community it is supposed to serve.

At least two central issues emerged from decisions made in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The first is knowing how to make decisions that represent the values of the university members, and the second is knowing how to make decisions quickly because circumstances demand prompt and effective decisions. Each of these problems is addressed separately.

Inclusive Decision-Making

To establish a participatory, inclusive, and democratic model, we discuss how a typical policy decision is justified in universities and what alternatives might be possible. This is accomplished by critiquing the prevalent ethical model explicated by Walker (2007) and exploring her alternatives. Walker's system of ethics could be classified as a combination of what Noddings (2015) calls the liberal and social agenda of feminist ethics. It is more

accurately concerned with the process of articulating moral codes and values rather than codified dictums.

Theoretical-Juridical Model (TJM) and ECM. In *Moral Understandings: A Feminist Study in Ethics*, Walker (2007) examined the dominant model for decision-making based on established moral theories. She submitted numerous critiques of this dominant model and offered a more inclusive alternative. In this section, we present a summary of these two models.

In her discussion of morality, Walker (2007) stressed the importance of how decisions are made as opposed to their validity as right or wrong based on accepted moral theories. Her decision-making critique is based on the prevalent practice of basing decisions on theories and excluding perspectives of individuals or groups who are not in positions of authority or in administrative positions. The prevalent practice, according to Walker, is that when people make decisions, consciously or not, they rely on moral theories, such as deontological, utilitarian, and virtue, to name just a few prominent ethical theories in the West. These decisions then embody and reflect a particular orientation grounded in the theories. The code becomes an ideology of moral life that sets out standard assumptions about what is right and good. These decisions made at the individual level by university administrators expand beyond the self and affect others to delineate the boundaries of what is unacceptable or undesirable. The key here is that even though this transpires at the individual level, the decisions made on those principles affect others. It also becomes the basis of acceptability and desirability determined by individuals making decisions.

Historically, this has led to numerous cases of exclusion and marginalization. More recently, for example, Swauger (2020) indicated that policies allowing remote proctoring heralded exclusionary practices that disproportionately affected students who may be disabled, caregivers, or people of colour. Hill Collins (2000) described this as the "matrix of domination" (p. 18). The multiple sites of oppression for Black, Indigenous, People of Colour (BIPOC), women, and non-binary scholars have systemic structural barriers in laws, policies, and embedded practices. As Brookfield (2014) stated, "these structural mechanisms make societal inequity appear normal" (p. 420); that is, structural barriers normalize inequalities by making the latter appear tolerable and eventually customary. Therefore, it is important to target systemic mechanisms rather than merely toiling at the individual level. Administrators' moral codes enshrined in policies embed assumptions and do not necessarily reflect community members' values and principles. In policies, these

embedded assumptions become the moral code of persons within a community and guide their decisions and practices.

Walker's (2007) position is that "differently placed people know different things in fact" (p. 6). A wealth of knowledge is lost in excluding diverse perspectives from decision-making and policy formulation. Opportunities to explore novel solutions are also lost. Furthermore, policies designed through exclusion are not positioned to meet the needs of a diverse community. Walker's explanation draws our attention to the power dynamics embedded in the processes of decisions. Invariably, the decisions leading to policy formation are a privilege of those in the organizational hierarchy's upper echelons. Walker draws our attention to how these decision-makers rely on theories rather than on constituents. Walker classifies theory-based and model-based decisions under the umbrella of the theoretical-juridical model (TJM) of moral decision-making. The term juridical in her categorization is key. She states,

> Moral theories are themselves seen as delivering or justifying verdicts on cases (jury or judge, as it were); and moral philosophy is a tribunal under which competing moral theories are scrutinized and judged for (especially their logical and epistemological) adequacy. (Walker, 2007, p. 43)

Administrators' reliance on the hypothetical versus practical aspects of theories has the power of arbitration. In other words, the disputes or contestations on the decisions are resolved by appealing to the theories used. Walker outlines three constraints that emerge from this configuration of the TJM: (a) restriction of morality to knowledge, (b) restriction of moral knowledge to moral theory, and (c) restriction of moral theory to the "scientific" model (p. 44). Said another way, the morality that is supposed to guide action towards good is a theoretical construct that has the veto over other considerations – much like science's sway over sentience. The implications of this are severe. The justifications of decisions are based on established theories not on the expressed community's values that originate in lived and professional experiences. This can be especially problematic if the relied-upon theories do not represent community members' values. Yet, the decisions and policies affect the same community members.

The TJM is a "representation of morality as a compact, propositionally codifiable, impersonally action-guided code" (Walker, 2007, p. 8). The problem with the TJM stems from the fact that moral philosophy has historically been understood from the "Anglo-European canonical tradition" (Walker, 2007, p. xi).

When a universal dictum stems from a narrow pool of philosophers from a certain race, class, and gender (i.e., typically the aristocratic White male), it is difficult and hugely problematic to apply these morality notions to the global population writ large.

Walker (2007) proposed an alternative to the TJM: the expressive-collaborative model (ECM) of moral decision-making. She argues that the TJM has been the dominant template for moral discourse, deliberations, decision-making, and the grounding of action, but it has historically ignored, neglected, and marginalized women and BIPOC in all phases of decision-making and, by extension, the policy making. Therefore, the TJM is inadequate and incomplete in establishing moral codes and principles to help craft decisions and policies. For our current times, defined by plurality, diversity, and ability, an alternate model that embodies those elements is needed. Therefore, it is impossible to align with theories a priori that will represent the community in question. Epistemological, cultural, and other differences within a community are obfuscated within the TJM under the guise of assumed objectivity. Feminist epistemologists have critiqued these traditional norms of objectivity by examining cognitive authority, which embeds "cultural, political, or economic dominance" and suppresses "relevant criticism from diverse viewpoints" (Walker, 2007, p. 65).

While the ECM is a more appropriate template for these sorts of activities in a pluralistic social world, we acknowledge that community involvement in every decision is neither efficient nor practical. What is needed is a process that intentionally invites community members to determine the values that guide decisions and actions. In Walker's (2007) explication of the ECM, the power embedded in the TJM is disseminated among the community members by giving all of them the opportunity to participate, especially when members are willing and capable of engaging in the discourse. The moral codes and values established through such a process have an automatic acceptance by the community members. The decisions that emerge from adherence to these values are, by extension, also accepted. This power-sharing arrangement is not easy to achieve in practice because sometimes there is neither the desire to share power by those who possess it nor ample time to do so. Equally problematic is the situation if community members are incapable or unwilling to participate and contribute. However, such is not the case within a university community. Walker (2007) warned that certain individuals who hold power and who speak for and constrain other individuals' choices have a vested

interest to retain epistemological and hence moral authority over other community members.

In theory, the ECM goes beyond the theoretical assertions of the TJM. The ECM can be more inclusive, egalitarian, and reflective of community members' positions; however, the ECM is fraught with many practical problems (Kumar & Mitchell, 2002). We agree that these issues impede the successful adoption of the ECM. The COVID-19 pandemic has further revealed that the ECM, as conceptualized by Walker (2007) and as practically proposed by Mitchell and Kumar (2001), might not be workable when swiftness in decision-making is required. For that, we need to turn to an extension of the ECM that would retain its best elements and overcome the problems of time constraints.

Timely Decisions

When university operations moved online because of the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the challenges was that decisions needed to be made and implemented quickly. It was an operational, ethical, and existential crisis. As discussed above, the ECM proves to be a candidate that characterizes community representation and buy-in, but it is time consuming, taxing, and elaborate. Looking at networks of participation (such as #femedtech) offers glimpses of hope at how timely decisions might be enacted while preserving the inclusive elements of community participation endorsed by the ECM. For example, if the committees and subcommittees invited the broader university community to iteratively over time co-construct communal values, akin to the #femedtech approach, then the values could guide timely decisions at the university level. The following subsection explains and describes this collaborative, value-generative activity that can be adapted in a university setting.

Hashtag femedtech (#femedtech). Many networked participatory scholarly (NPS) communities can be found online, specifically on academic Twitter (Stewart, 2016). One exciting NPS community, #femedtech, is a loosely formed group of geographically dispersed and culturally and disciplinarily diverse participants who express interest in using feminist critique to analyze educational technology.

The open scholarly community #femedtech curates resources, ideas, and conversations focused on identifying and addressing chronic and acute inequities. Conversations transcend spatial and temporal constraints in the online world. Williamson et al. (2019) have commended #femedtech for

adopting a feminist lens to understand and critique educational technologies. Often, equity, gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and disability are not engaged in the study of educational technologies, and yet, they form the basis of the #femedtech discourse. In our understanding, this is a living example of Walker's (2007) ECM.

Curating resources from an open webspace (femedtech.net), the Twitter hashtag femedtech, and collaborative conference proceedings, #femedtech embodies a feminist NPS community. Haraway's (1988) situated knowledge is helpful in thinking about NPS in a feminist context, in which she describes the need for an "earth-wide network of connections that translate knowledge among different and power differentiated communities" (p. 580). Understanding the power differentials that exist across gender, race, class, and time is part of a 21st-century definition of feminism (Ahmed, 2017; Rivers, 2017). Over time and with changing membership, the power dynamic and values of the group members are bound to change. The #femedtech group takes the impermanence of values seriously, as evidenced by its periodic re-examination of small-v values through a values activity. These activities are inclusive and iterative, and the results are honoured. They form the basis of what the group condones and rejects. The reliance is not on unwavering principles derived from the moral theories of the TJM; instead, the femedtech group relies on the collective values that make up their community and are reminiscent of Walker's (2007) ECM.

The deliberation process, which is at the heart of the values activity of the femedtech group, was thorough—often generating passionate discussions, which were deliberated by members online. The tenets that emerged from the value-generating activity were of less consequence than the process that generated them. The content reflects what the community prized in a particular context and medium for a duration of time. In deliberation itself, the value of the differences in perspective is described in this way:

> The strength of our community comes from its diversity, people from a wide range of backgrounds. Different people have different perspectives on issues. Being unable to understand why someone holds a viewpoint doesn't mean that they're wrong. Don't forget that it is human to err and blaming each other does not get us anywhere. Instead, focus on helping to resolve issues and learning from mistakes. (femedtech, n.d., para. 6)

Clearly, diversity and inclusivity across all lines are accepted.

Furthermore, the code of conduct, which is similarly generated, concludes with the recognition that it is an ongoing collaborative process subject to periodic modification, as is its membership. "This code is not exhaustive or complete. It serves to distill our collective understanding of a collaborative, shared environment, and goals. We expect it to be followed in spirit as much as in the letter" (femedtech, n.d., para. 7).

We found this process responsive to ever-changing membership and, as a consequence, an evolving set of values that might need reformulation. Similarly, values co-created by a university community can guide administrative decisions and actions: what is to be preserved, what is to be upheld, and knowing when and how to resist in the face of external pressures. Often the university community is large, and, owing to disciplinary affiliations, its members are often diverse and sometimes even entrenched in their outlook. It is normal to anticipate that the articulation and resolution of divergent values would take time and effort. Consequently, it would be expensive and difficult to coordinate and facilitate consensus, requiring multiple modalities (in-person, focus groups, surveys, symposia, town-halls, and workshops, to name a few). Some approaches are conducive to synchronous participation, while others lend to asynchronous participation. The co-generated values guide the planning and decision-making until the next iteration of the values activity.

As a concrete example, final exams administered in our institution during the first phase of the pandemic (March–April 2020) necessitated a dramatic pivot from the seated conventional examinations in our large university gymnasiums to online modes that raised concerns about proctoring. The strategy to use proctoring software (Proctorio, Proctortrack, and Respondus LockDown Browser) or to amend the assessment strategies was an institutional decision made by administrators at our university (as at others). Whether those decisions reflected communal values is happenstance. These decisions needed to happen in a timely fashion (a matter of hours and days, not weeks), and they put a lot of pressure on decision-makers (i.e., administrators).

Expediency is achieved by having the values and codes available at the time when decisions need to be made. Yes, decisions rendered at one time could turn out to be poor under a new set of values, but the transitory nature of values always has that property. Inclusive and timely decisions are manufactured if the set of values are available even when the new ones are being negotiated and if all parties (administrators, students,

faculty, staff, etc.) can be entrusted to make decisions faithfully in accordance with the community's values.

Moving Beyond ECM: Values and Trust

A more expedient decision-making model is needed to work within the structural and organizational framework during a pandemic or other situations that require timely and widely impacting decisions. Under time-constrained circumstances, entrusted people (i.e., administrators) should be expected to make decisions congruent with the values of the community they serve. Such a configuration requires at least two prerequisites. The first and foremost is decision-makers' awareness of the community's established *values*. The second requirement for quick and honest decisions is that *trust* must exist between community members and the administrative body. The community must have confidence that the administrators' decisions will be in accordance with the values that all community members co-create.

The issue of values has been sufficiently covered in the preceding sections. Amidst the pandemic turmoil, decisions about various facets of teaching were of paramount concern, including how best to deliver the course material, which software to use for conducting assessments, how to get students to participate in the lab work, and how to support various research functions of faculty and students, amongst others. Technological limitations bound the solution options.

The set of values needs to be discursively established and re-evaluated periodically as the membership of the constituent community changes and the context changes. Logistically, this can be done, as witnessed by NPS communities (such as femedtech) in action. Members who engage in NPS communities leverage tools on the Internet that "support, amplify, and transform scholarship" (Veletsianos & Kimmons, 2012, p. 768), which is reflective of the values. Through this exercise of choice, all practices (including administrative ones) are (re)shaped. The emergence of NPS communities in academia reflects the reality of the Internet's effect on the dominant culture and society at large (Veletsianos & Kimmons, 2012). Like many other aspects of academic life, policy formation can also be transformed and improved through participatory online networks. The fundamental shifts towards democratic and decolonial teaching and learning practices that hooks (1994) championed can also enrich the policy domain. Questioning, critiquing, and challenging conventions and previously established truths, NPS communities represent a shift in epistemological questions about what knowledge is and how it is gained, verified, and

valued (Veletsianos & Kimmons, 2012). The affordances of online participation make the process efficient and expedient without compromising inclusivity. Consequently, it can serve as a model of how decisions and policies can represent a diverse academic community that stands to be affected by the decisions made. This feature of online participation is neither novel nor exemplary, but the way it is implemented in the #femedtech community is instructive.

The second underlying assumption in the successful application and implementation of community values in administrative practices is trust—an elusive concept that conjures many images. Uslaner (2002) described two kinds of trust to illustrate this variability. The first is the generalized trust that is learned and based on one's optimism towards the future. Uslaner states that "*Trust must be learned, not earned*. Generalized trust reflects our outlook on the world and is stable over time" (p. 77). The second form is strategic trust, which is based on experience. This strategic trust needs to be the basis of administrator and community member interactions. As Uslaner explains, strategic trust erodes when one experiences betrayal, and thus it must be preserved by administrators who are making tough decisions on behalf of universities' community members. Without trust in decision-makers (administrators), community members could always find flaws in decisions and actions. However, when there is trust and understanding in the administrators that they will preserve communal values, then decisions and actions are more readily accepted.

One technique to preserve strategic trust is to be open and transparent. Such openness is a cornerstone of how NPS communities operate. As society moves from knowledge scarcity to knowledge abundance, characterized by ubiquitous connectivity, so too can higher education transition from a hierarchal to a more networked discourse (Cronin, 2019). This flattening of hierarchal systems requires trust within the network to contribute towards a common goal in good faith. NPS communities often operate within scholarly communities around teaching, research, service, or some combination of all three. Veletsianos and Kimmons (2012) claim that NPS communities have influenced dominant culture, behaviour amongst scholars, and scholarly journals' output; likewise, we posit that policy discourse can adopt an open, honest, and transparent negotiation of values.

The cited example of #femedtech illustrates the membership's inherent trust of the authors and curators, which is equally reciprocated. A similar trust must exist across various sectors that make up the university community for any success. Sometimes, self-serving myopic needs, expectations, ambitions,

and wants undermine nobler possibilities. Hill Collins (2000) tells us that policies can devolve into tools of oppression or can elevate into tools of liberation, depending on the foundational trust in the process of crafting them. When administrators engage in an ongoing open conversation about values and understand that shared values (not individual values) must inform decisions, then strategic trust is upheld.

Conclusion

The decision-making processes in universities are neither inclusive nor quick. Furthermore, the hierarchical structure of university administration risks precluding community members' diverse perspectives. The university senate, where various faculties are better represented through the membership, are limited in the scope of their decisions. The pandemic has further revealed that hastily made decisions do not necessarily serve the community (Kumar, 2020; Williamson et al., 2020). Feminist philosophy and ethics, which favour inclusion because of diversity, have a better chance of arriving at decisions that reflect a diverse community. These decisions also have a better chance of acceptance even if the decisions veer from the proposed positions. Walker's (2007) ECM is one such model, and it underscores administrators' obligations to the community they serve. These responsibilities emerge because those affected by administrative decisions are dependant on administrators. Walker states:

> The principle that "we are responsible for protecting those vulnerable to our actions and choices" seems to describe so well the specific obligations of promisors, parents, employers, professionals, and friends (as well as passerby of drowning children) is that these cases involve much more than vulnerability-in-principle, i.e., vulnerability to someone or other. These cases involve what might be better called dependency-in-fact, vulnerability to someone in particular where the one who, as it were, "holds" control of the vulnerability stands in particular sort of relation to the one who has the vulnerability. (p. 90)

In our case, this means that because of administrators' position and power, the decisions they make affect the lives of community members (be they students, staff or faculty members, or some combination of them), thereby making the community members vulnerable to the administrators. These vulnerabilities and dependencies are the basis of responsibility for the

administrators. To fulfil these responsibilities, community members' values must inform the decision-making process. We acknowledge that differing value valency among community members may make it impossible for individuals to compromise and reach a consensus. We see Walker's (2007) sense of responsibility ascribed to administrators, emerging from the community's interdependence and vulnerability to administrators, as a way out of such conundrums.

The delay in negotiating and crafting these values can be addressed in practice by regularly engaging in such demanding processes. The template of how this could be accomplished across members who are disciplinarily, geographically, and culturally diverse is illustrated in the #femedtech process of value determination, an activity that crowdsourced keywords and ideas to summarize the collective values within the group. Members themselves generated the key value terms, which then were exchanged among the community members to ascribe meaning and definition of these terms. The generated document with values and various interpretations became the template of the values of the community. This activity was iterative and reflexive. The logistics included face-to-face workshops and online discussions mediated through Twitter and a centrally maintained blog space. Through an intense process of conversation and consensus-building, the dispersed network of participants collectively articulated the values of the community.

Lastly, we demonstrated that for such an arrangement to be workable, feasible, and sustainable, there must be an element of strategic trust amongst all community members and administrators. It is the basis of the relationship that grants power to the administrators and trusts that the decisions will be congruent with the communal values. Concomitantly, administrators trust community members to understand the different demands of other groups in the community and that others will accept administrators' decisions. Without trust, there is a danger of considering differences as obstacles to overcome. Walker (2007) cites this complex topology of trust as the basis of moral relationships and preserving existing relationships in the future.

This articulation of responsibility is a demanding task. Are community members prepared to take on the responsibility of holding others and themselves accountable? If a university community is knit, stitched, or woven together by different disciplinary, epistemological, and cultural fabrics, its strength is not determined by the elegance of artful design but rather by the accretion and concurrence of its members' concerted efforts to hold each other accountable. That is, if there is any chance for a

community to function as envisioned by feminist philosophy and ethics, then everyone must take responsibility, and everyone has to acknowledge their vulnerability to each other. This understanding of genuine openness and interdependence is the way to move forward and also the source of power. In keeping with this ethos, we invite researchers to enact, investigate, and improve upon the model proposed here.

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