

A Letter from the Guest Editor
A FEELING ABOUT ETHICS



As you might expect, editing an issue like this has affected how my co-editor Aileen and I think about ethics itself. The collection of case studies in this issue was intended to focus on ethics as a *practice* rather than a theory. We ended up not including several contributions because they did not focus on that practice—on the agency of acting ethically. Instead, some of these contributions expressed a feeling of non-agency or being wronged, and described how their authors reacted to *that* experience.

In editing these papers, we came to understand an important thing about ethics: ethical lapses are *felt*. That is, when faced with wrongs, whether as victims or onlookers, we very often *feel* the wrongness of the situation in our bodies before we understand them intellectually in terms of rules or principles. In a sense, this feeling is why we often find ethics urgent. We want that visceral feeling of wrongness to be addressed, acknowledged, and righted (or at least prevented from happening in the future). It often isn't, but we still want resolution.

In particular, we want to acknowledge Vanessa Knoppke-Wetzel's unpublished submission, which used trauma as a framework to discuss her journey from what she experienced as an abusive work situation to one in which kindness and respect dominate. In a sense, this trauma framework centers the lack of agency many people feel in the wake of a breach of trust—we are physically shaken and some part of our body and mind may even stop working as we expect. Our bodies *are* involved, and our emotional lives are embedded in our physical bodies, and is something we often seem to try to ignore in formulating ethical structures. This disconnect recalled for us NACIS member Steven Holloway's long-standing calls for us to engage in embodied mapmaking work.

In emphasizing the *practice* of ethics, we center actions and agency. But in our professional lives, we are sometimes embedded in social structures based in dominance or hierarchy, where we feel ourselves relatively powerless. That feeling is also one we can feel in our bodies as fear and stress. The rational, analytical approach to ethics in many of the contributions to this issue is one mode of resolving these difficult felt experiences... but what if we do not find ourselves with the leverage to use this approach? Considering why and how power structures of various kinds affect our ability to behave ethically, and how power and ethics are co-constructed, seems to us to be a fruitful avenue for further exploration.

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Guest Editor