

# Moments of Integrity, Reflexivity and the Fraud Triangle: A New Way to Approach Improving Research Culture



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# Ethically important moments

- Guillemin and Gillam describe two sets of related but different research ethics processes
- Procedural ethics
  - the process of getting ethics approval from a review committee
  - use of learned answers
  - analysis and consideration of risk, but not complete
- Ethics in practice
  - “day to day ethics issues that arise in the doing of research”

“Picture this scene.

You are a researcher working on a study examining women’s experiences of heart disease. You are interviewing Sonia, a woman in her late 40s with diagnosed heart disease. Sonia lives on a remote farming property in a rural region. She is married and has one teenage daughter living at home with herself and her husband. The interview is progressing well.

Over a cup of tea in Sonia’s kitchen, you inquire about the impact of heart disease on her life. Sonia stops and closes her eyes. After a few moments’ silence, you notice tears welling up in Sonia’s eyes. Sonia tells you that she is not coping—not because of her heart disease, but because she has just found out that her husband has been sexually abusing her daughter since she was a child.”

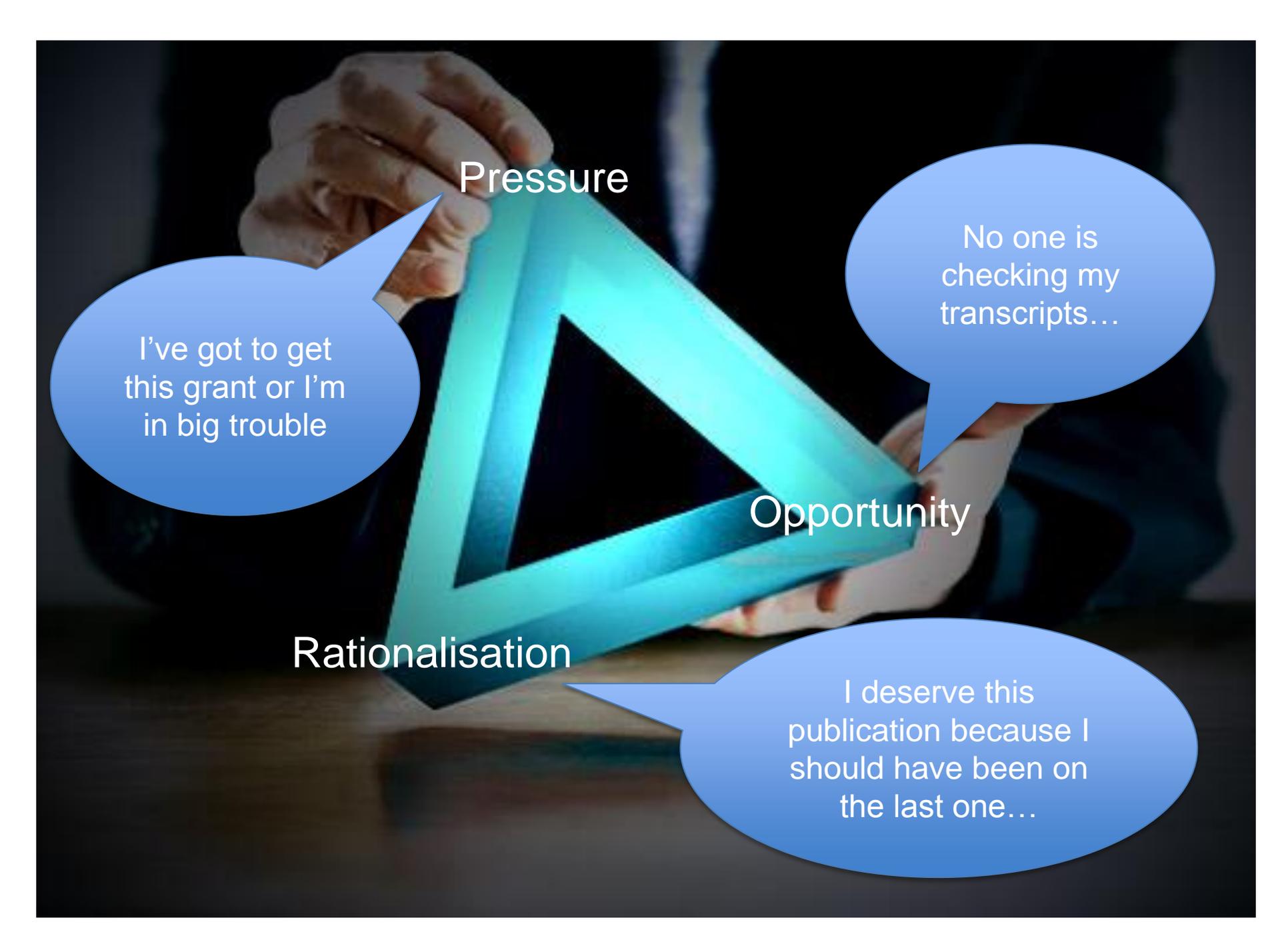
Guillemin and Gilliam describe these as ‘ethically important moments’ – the ‘difficult, often subtle and usually unpredictable situations that arise in the practice of doing research’.

# Reflexivity helps prepare for these moments

- Reflexivity in research is common in qualitative social research

*“...means that the researchers should constantly take stock of their actions and their role in the research process and subject these to the same critical scrutiny as the rest of their data”*

- Perhaps reflexivity (reflectivity?) in STEM research would also be helpful...what biases or prejudgement or perspectives are influencing my research?



Pressure

I've got to get this grant or I'm in big trouble

No one is checking my transcripts...

Opportunity

I deserve this publication because I should have been on the last one...

Rationalisation

# A helpful tool

- For institutions
  - What can we do to reduce pressure, reduce opportunity and make it harder to rationalise? What levers are we applying?
- For researchers
  - What is the pressure that is making this tempting? How am I rationalising this? Is that a good reason?

# Fraud triangle and reflexivity

- The three points of the fraud triangle provide additional foci for reflexivity
- If you're tempted, ask yourself
  - Is this action legitimate or the result of pressure?
  - Would I do this if someone was watching?
  - What would I think of this rationalisation if someone tried it on me?

# Reflexive integrity and moments of integrity

- We should extend these ideas to the broader conduct of research so that these ethically important moments become 'moments of integrity'
- It is needed as a way to encourage recognition of seemingly unimportant events that have great consequences later
- Reflexive integrity essential as part of translating principles into practice
- Developing material to encourage reflective thinking in STEM and practice recognising and responding to 'moments of integrity'

Thank you

