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# Inventory of the Research Lessons Learned in the Field of Ethics

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<sup>1</sup> PU: Public, PP: Restricted to other programme participants (including the Commission Services), RE: Restricted to a group specified by the consortium (including the Commission Services), CO: Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services)



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## Partners



## SUMMARY

The *Inventory of the Research Lessons Learned in the Field of Ethics* presents a collection of selected vital lessons on research ethics and integrity in studying gender-based violence gathered throughout the UniSAFE project. This deliverable consists of twenty lessons grouped into four main parts: (I) *Building an Ethical System for the Research Project*, (II) *Research Participants*, (III) *Researchers*, and (IV) *Data*. It also includes a brief introduction explaining how to use the *Inventory* as well as a warning on ways some institutions misuse research ethics to avoid studies on gender-based violence.

The first part of this *Inventory* discusses setting the ethical framework (lesson 1) and implementing it in the research (lesson 2), as well as creating project bodies aimed at supporting research ethics (lesson 3), applying for ethical approval (lesson 4) and preparing for difficult and unexpected issues (for instance, incidental findings) that can occur in research (lesson 5).

The second part of the *Inventory* presents key issues concerning research participants of studies on gender-based violence, namely, ways of reaching out to them (lesson 1), the process of obtaining informed consent (lesson 2), protection of participants' safety (lesson 3) and ensuring their well-being (lesson 4) as well as giving back to those who participated in the study (lesson 5).

The third part of the *Inventory* is dedicated to researchers and includes lessons concerning training on research ethics (lesson 1) and resolution of internal conflicts emerging in research teams as well as between researchers and research institutions (lesson 2), clarifying the role of researchers (lesson 3), emphasising the importance of reflexivity and multi-positionality (lesson 4) as well as dealing with emotional consequences that studying gender-based violence can have on researchers (lesson 5).

The fourth part of the *Inventory* addresses essential issues related to data, including the significance of legal regulations (lesson 1), safeguarding data confidentiality (lesson 2), secure storage and protection of data (lesson 3), resolving concerns connected to research data and results ownership (lesson 4), and creating a research project's authorship policy (lesson 5).

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## INTRODUCTION

We put into your hands the *Inventory of the Research Lessons Learned in the Field of Ethics*, which was created as part of the Horizon 2020-funded project *Gender-based violence and institutional responses: Building a knowledge base and operational tools to make universities and research organisations safe* (UniSAFE). This *Inventory* presents a set of reflections regarding the ethical dimension of studying gender-based violence that stems from this transnational, multi-site and multi-design research project on gender-based violence in academia. The UniSAFE study conducted an extensive policy mapping at the national and institutional levels, a cross-national survey of 45 European academic organisations, 16 case studies on the institutional responses to gender-based violence conducted in 15 countries and 52 online in-depth interviews with researchers who had experienced or witnessed gender-based violence.

The UniSAFE consortium believes that the importance we attach to ethics and socially responsible research and our experiences in these fields can contribute to moving forward knowledge about the ethics of empirical research on gender-based violence. In our project, we sought to document numerous ethics-related research experiences and turn them into helpful lessons that could inspire gender-based violence researchers to reflect on research ethics and how it can be applied in their studies. In our approach to research ethics, we paid particular attention to the specific situation and needs of research participants who have experienced or witnessed gender-based violence, and it is reflected in the content of numerous lessons in this *Inventory*.

The presented lessons emerged and were tested during the UniSAFE study in research organisation settings. Nevertheless, the authors of the *Inventory* tried to go beyond these initial premises and make their lessons more widely applicable, flexible and easy to adapt to different research conditions. Even though we remain at a more general level of reflection and do not go into specifics of studying different forms of gender-based violence and particular ethical issues related to them, we still hope they can be useful for various gender-based violence, and indeed other, researchers who may be able to contextualise and adapt them to fit their own projects.

A feminist paradigm informs this *Inventory*. Therefore, our lessons include and refer to such elements related to and stemming from research practice as ethics of care, non-hierarchical researcher-participant relationships, active engagement of both researchers and participants in the research process and taking care of their well-being, empowerment of research participants, researcher's reflexivity and self-perspective, centredness of victims/survivors, continuous informed consent, and use of a trauma-informed approach (cf., e.g., Westmarland & Bows 2019).

We agree with Israel and Hay (2006: 130) that “ethical consideration is never a ‘done deal’”. Hence, we encourage researchers to go beyond a purely formal approach to research ethics focused solely on checking off boxes required, for instance, in the ethics review. We believe there is no simple formula or a single right way of “doing” research ethics – but there are certainly some wrong ways.

Ensuring the ethical soundness of research should be treated as an ongoing, dynamic, reflective process. Researchers and research teams should aim to contribute to building “a culture of ethical research based on continuous discursive engagement” (PRO-RES 2021).



Similarly, those of our readers who decide to put into practice any instructions provided in this Inventory should remember that this is just the beginning. All their decisions should be continuously reviewed and can be changed to safeguard research ethics better.

Ethical dilemmas are not predetermined; their resolution usually depends on several factors and interpretations. Nevertheless, the researcher has the final say on the ethical solutions adopted and how they are implemented. The authors of this paper want to prepare researchers for the challenges they will face and motivate them to analyse ethics-related decisions and their consequences in depth. We hope that our *Inventory* will prove to be a valuable tool to help gender-based violence researchers make their studies ethically sound.

### **How to use this *Inventory*?**

The *Inventory of the Research Lessons Learned in the Field of Ethics* presents critical takeaways from the UniSAFE study regarding the ethics of gender-based violence research. It comprises twenty lessons divided by topics into four main parts: (I) *Building an Ethical System for the Research Project*, (II) *Research Participants*, (III) *Researchers*, and (IV) *Data*. Even though the *Inventory* forms a comprehensive whole, lessons can be read separately and in any order.

Every lesson is divided into following six sections: (1) *Main Addresses* – pointing to whom this lesson can be particularly interesting; (2) *Challenge* – presenting the central problem the lesson addresses; (3) *Baseline* – providing background and introductory information; (4) *Main Steps* – identifying the selected areas to be discussed in the lesson; (5) *Recommended Actions* – describing in more details particular activities of the researcher that are written in imperative mood in attempt to present them as doable and to encourage taking actions; and (6) *References & Further Readings* – inspiring readers to continue developing their knowledge about research ethics. In the final section of each lesson, literature directly referred to is marked in blue, and literature that informed this lesson and/or constitutes recommended readings in black. Many lessons include tip boxes pointing out, for instance, interesting ideas, inspiring practices, essential recommendations, practical checklists and issues of which researchers should be particularly aware. To make it easier for the reader to navigate the *Inventory*, information about related lessons is provided at the beginning of each of them.

The presented lessons are addressed to researchers studying gender-based violence. When creating the *Inventory*, the authors considered the needs of research that are both small scale and large scale, international and local, conducted individually, in a team, and in a consortium. Each lesson has a specific focus and indicates addressees whom it can benefit. To help the reader find lessons that will be of particular interest, the addressees are named in their initial part and divided into four categories, namely, (1) researchers, (2) research teams, (3) principal investigators, and (4) research project coordinators. As authors, we are aware that these groups are non-homogenous and may include people with various backgrounds, expertise, needs and points of view. Unfortunately, due to the size and scope of this document, we could not differentiate lessons in detail by this diversity. We still hope that every person interested in research ethics can find something for themselves in this *Inventory*.

## INSTITUTIONAL MISUSE OF ETHICS AS A SPECIFIC CHALLENGE IN RESEARCHING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The experiences of UniSAFE show that institutions, including research performing and research funding organisations, may use ethical concerns as a smoke screen to conceal their reluctance or resistance to conducting, hosting and supporting studies on this topic. Institutional malpractices used to avoid studying gender-based violence may manifest itself, for instance, in:

- Rejecting and criticising research on gender-based violence solely based on the terminology, methods or theoretical frameworks that are planned to be used.
- Misusing institutional ethics review processes so as to completely block research on gender-based violence regardless of their ethical soundness and measures foreseen to protect research participants.
- Misusing institutional ethics review processes so as to delay and prolong research by *a priori* ruling out the possibility of the expedited or exempted reviews and demanding the full ethics review, often protracted with additional requests for amendments, regardless of the extent of actual risks posed by a study to the research participants.
- Invoking, without a proper justification, legal limitations related to, for instance, regulations concerning personal data protection and laws on protecting confidential information, as obstacles that prevent them from providing researchers with access to information or persons.

The organisations that avoid studies on gender-based violence often argue that such research is sensitive and intrudes too much into the private lives of research participants. These arguments are often only slogans used to hide their actual concerns. For instance, some institutions might be afraid that permitting a study on gender-based violence will expose problems that they prefer to cover or put at risk their reputation, sometimes just by association with potentially controversial issues.

Research performing and funding organisations must realise that avoiding research on gender-based violence breaches their scientific and ethical responsibilities to generate innovative knowledge that contributes to societal change by addressing critical challenges faced by modern communities and designing interventions that aim at tackling these problems (Kelmendi 2013; Ellsberg & Heise 2002; Dickson-Swift et al. 2008), and may even itself become a source of violence against researchers studying this topic. The UniSAFE consortium believes that researching gender-based violence should be prioritised by these institutions to build safer institutional environments. Research performing and funding organisations should break the silence and actively engage in eradicating gender-based violence.





## **PART I. BUILDING AN ETHICAL SYSTEM FOR THE RESEARCH PROJECT**

**By Katarzyna Struzińska**



## 1. SETTING ETHICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH

Lesson author	Katarzyna Struzińska
Related lessons	<i>Part I</i> , lessons 2–5; <i>Part II</i> , lessons 1–4; <i>Part III</i> , lessons 2–3, 5; <i>Part IV</i> , lessons 1–3, 5

### MAIN ADDRESSEES

- Researchers
- Research teams
- Principal investigators
- Research project coordinators

### CHALLENGE

Meeting critical research ethics standards and establishing proper ethical framework in studies on gender-based violence

### BASELINE

Gender-based violence research is ethically charged; therefore, special attention must be paid to its ethics and integrity. Researchers should spare no effort to ensure that their work adheres to the critical ethical research principles of:

- respect for individuals,
- non-maleficence (minimising harm),
- beneficence (maximising benefits),
- justice (balancing risks and benefits).

Researchers should think carefully about ethical standards and concepts that constitute the basis of their study. In their research, they must ensure voluntary participation, informed consent, and confidentiality, protect the well-being, safety and privacy of research participants, including the security of data they share, as well as guarantee the safety and welfare of research team members.

### MAIN STEPS

- 1) Decide on the research ethics approaches that will guide your research. ⇒ **Ethics concepts**
- 2) Consider how the fundamental research ethics principles will be implemented in your study. ⇒ **Meeting ethics standards**



## RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

### 1) Ethics concepts

**Remember** that while studying gender-based violence, it is crucial to act as an “ethical thinker” in every stage of your research and **approach** research participants professionally and empathetically (cf. Downes et al. 2014: 5).

**Think** carefully about ethics-related concepts and theories that will inform your research process. **Set** a general framework for how research ethics will be implemented in your study (see the *Tip box* below for examples of some useful concepts).

**Make sure** that all team members **know** about the ethical approaches and concepts selected for your study, **understand** and **accept** them as the ethical background of your research. If possible, from the very outset of the project, **include** them in discussions about choosing an appropriate ethical conceptual framework.

TIP: Examples of ethics concepts useful in research on gender-based violence	
<b>Ethics of care</b>	Researchers centralise compassion, “understand the necessity of care to well-being,” and prioritise interpersonal relationships – “relationships with others, particularly those made vulnerable by different forms of oppression or marginalisation” (Brannelly & Barnes 2022: 6, 7).
<b>Ethics of engagement</b>	Researchers are genuinely, critically, and collaboratively involved in ethical decision-making and reflect on the ethical dimension of every aspect of research (Smythe 2015).
<b>Trauma-informed approach</b> (Campbell et al. 2019)	In their studies, researchers focus on “centring survivors [of gender-based violence], [...] and building research practices that are responsive to their needs” (Campbell et al. 2019: 4785).
<b>Positive “empowerment” approach</b> (Downes et al. 2014)	Researchers conceptualise the research process in a way that maximises positive impacts on and empowering opportunities for respondents who are always treated as active agents (Downes et al. 2014: 6).
<b>Victim-centred approach</b>	Researchers are careful and non-judgemental listeners who concentrate on the victim’s/survivor’s “safety, rights, well-being, expressed needs and choices, thereby giving back as much control to victim(s) as feasible and ensuring the empathetic and sensitive delivery of services” (UNHCR 2020: 6).

## 2) Meeting ethics standards

<b>TIP: Examples of how ethical principles are implemented in studies on gender-based violence</b> (Based on the experiences of the UniSAFE research)	
<b>Respect for individuals and their autonomy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carefully planned procedure for obtaining individual informed consent that follows applicable regulations and ensures that the information about the research is precise and comprehensive.</li> <li>• Safeguarding voluntary participation by ensuring the possibility of declining a request to participate in the study and withdrawing from the research.</li> <li>• Deciding on the scope of confidentiality offered to research participants and, if necessary, circumstances under which it can be breached.</li> </ul>
<b>Non-maleficance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimising risks and potential harm for research participants and researchers.</li> <li>• Protecting respondents' well-being, safety and privacy.</li> <li>• Taking measures to reduce respondents' discomfort and distress.</li> <li>• Protecting respondents who might be particularly vulnerable due to their victim/survivor status by implementing the trauma-informed approach.</li> <li>• Providing respondents with tailored referral information about suitable and accessible care and support services.</li> <li>• Ensuring the safety and welfare of researchers.</li> </ul>
<b>Beneficence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing research participants with an opportunity to be heard and to reflect on their experiences.</li> <li>• Raising societal and institutional awareness about gender-based violence.</li> <li>• Giving back to institutions participating in the research, for instance, in the form of recommendations on tackling gender-based violence.</li> </ul>
<b>Justice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balancing risks (e.g. potential distress that participants can encounter; risks of breaching confidentiality) and benefits (e.g. providing respondents with a possibility to reflect on their experiences; expanding the current state of knowledge) connected with conducted research and participation in it.</li> <li>• Ensuring equal and fair opportunities to participate for various groups of potential respondents.</li> <li>• Using research findings to facilitate positive change in the communities participating in research and the broader society.</li> </ul>

**Consider** carefully what ethics-related elements, procedures and activities will be included in your research to guarantee that it is consistent with ethical standards of respect for individuals, non-maleficence, beneficence and justice and **put them into effect** (see the *Tip box* above for examples of implementing these standards).

**Map** what ethics-related documents, structures and mechanisms you should create to conduct ethically sound research. **Make sure** that those you decide to implement will be tailored to your study and take into account the particular context of your project. **Consult** with your team members to check what documents and procedures they deem necessary and how they envision them.

## REFERENCES & FURTHER READINGS

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## 2. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ETHICAL FRAMEWORK IN THE RESEARCH

Lesson author	Katarzyna Struzińska
Related lessons	<i>Part I</i> , lessons 1, 3–5; <i>Part II</i> , lessons 1–5; <i>Part III</i> , lessons 1–3, 5; <i>Part IV</i> , lessons 1–5

### MAIN ADDRESSEES

- Researchers
- Research teams
- Principal investigators
- Research project coordinators

### CHALLENGE

Effectively implementing the ethical framework established for the research on gender-based violence

### BASELINE

Once researchers decide on the ethical framework and carefully map possible measures to implement in their study, they should create specific solutions that target different ethical aspects of their research. Nevertheless, implementing the ethical framework is not a one-off activity limited to writing down a set of procedures that researchers should follow. It must be continuous and comprise ongoing monitoring of research ethics and integrity as well as readiness to adjust any of the previously established mechanisms if the ever-changing reality of research proves it necessary. Researchers must know that research ethics is not just another box to check off. Putting research ethics into practice demands time and person-power to prepare, implement, draw and share conclusions. Ethical research on gender-based violence cannot happen without dedicated time, resources and proper monitoring mechanisms.

### MAIN STEPS

- 1) Before starting your research, establish contextualised ethics-related measures needed for your study. ⇒ **Creating relevant measures**
- 2) During your study, track the implementation of research and introduce any necessary adjustments to the existing ethics-related mechanisms. ⇒ **Monitoring research ethics**



## RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

### 1) Creating relevant measures

Based on the mapping of needs and expectations discussed in the previous lesson, **decide** on the research ethics solutions you must create for your study (see the *Tip box* below for ideas). **Write down** any guidelines, instructions and procedures that must be followed in your research. **Remember** to treat them as living documents that might be further developed to better respond to your research needs.

#### TIP: Examples of ethics-related solutions helpful in research on gender-based violence

(Based on the experiences of the UniSAFE research)

- Standards of reaching out to research participants
- Informed consent procedure
- Guidelines on research participants' safety and well-being
- Standards of referring participants to services of care and support
- Guidelines on researchers' safety and well-being
- Guidelines for conducting field research
- Procedure for tackling severe ethics violations
- Protocol for resolving conflicts within the research team
- Approach to and timeline of the research ethics review
- Data management plan
- Incidental findings policy
- Data protection policy
- Protocol on ensuring data confidentiality in publications and project outcomes

**Decide** if you need any ethics-related mechanisms and advisory bodies in your study. If yes, **describe** their scope of activities and ways of acting; **take steps** to set them in action (see lesson 3 in this part for more details). **Safeguard** any necessary resources for these bodies and mechanisms to function properly.

**Ensure** that all research team members and, whenever relevant, research participants are informed in detail about the established guidelines, procedures, mechanisms, and any existing ethics support bodies.

### 2) Monitoring research ethics

**Remember** that needs, expectations, and informed predictions that set a basis for the ethical solutions you adopt may change or turn out to be insufficient during the field or other research phases. **Stay flexible** and **open** to both adjusting the existing ethics solutions and creating new ones whenever it turns out to be necessary. Especially in multi-design research, **be ready to change**, after agreeing with members of your research team or at

their request, more general ethical guidelines into ones tailored to the specific research activity.

To **ensure** that the ethics framework and system built for your research function correctly, **monitor** them continuously. **Adopt** the reflective approach to research ethics. **Track** key “indicators” of the ethics development (e.g. monitor course of ethics review, granted ethics approvals, informed consent process and obtained informed consents, ethics violations, ethics queries, issues reported by external actors, data storing and sharing). **Hold** regular **meetings** with your research team to discuss ethics.

**Give** the same **significance** to your research ethics as to your research findings. **Share, exchange, and discuss knowledge** on ethics you gained during the study both internally with your team members (e.g. in the form of lessons learned) and externally (e.g. in the form of conference presentations or publications).

## REFERENCES & FURTHER READINGS

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### 3. ESTABLISHMENT OF STRUCTURES SUPPORTING RESEARCH ETHICS

Lesson author	Katarzyna Struzińska
Related lessons	<i>Part I</i> , lessons 2, 5; <i>Part II</i> , lessons 3–4; <i>Part III</i> , lessons 2, 5; <i>Part IV</i> , lessons 4–5

#### MAIN ADDRESSEES

- Research teams
- Principal investigators
- Research project coordinators

#### CHALLENGE

Establishing project structures that will support and safeguard the implementation of the research ethics

#### BASELINE

Researching gender-based violence in a multi-partner consortium, particularly when the study is multi-design, transnational or multisite, comes with challenges in ensuring that every aspect of the project's implementation evenly and completely follows critical ethical principles, standards and agreed protocols. In such complex circumstances, research teams should consider setting up dedicated advisory and support structures, which can take different forms (for instance, they can create a helpdesk, a platform or a board), to oversee their research ethics. The form, composition, ways of acting and means of communication of the ethics support bodies established for social research projects should be adjusted to their specific needs and contexts.

#### MAIN STEPS

- 1) Consider what type of ethical support structure will fit your research project best. ⇒  
**Selecting the ethics support body**
- 2) Decide on your project's ethics structure, organisation and functioning in detail. ⇒  
**Ethics support body's mode of action**

#### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- 1) **Selecting the ethics support body**

**Identify** the specific purposes for having an ethics support structure in your research project.



**Reflect** if such a structure should be an internal project body composed of the research team members or an external project-related body consisting of independent experts. When making a decision, **consider** the human and financial resources at your disposal.

**Decide** what roles you want this body to perform (see the *Tip box* below for examples).

**Define** in detail its mission, composition and services that it will offer.

<b>TIP: Examples of roles that ethics support bodies can perform</b> (Based on Kaptein 2002: 229; Universal Class 2021)	
Sharing information on ethics	Solving ethical issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicator</li> <li>• Contact/information point</li> <li>• Marketer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problem eliminator</li> <li>• “Customer service”</li> <li>• Follow-up care</li> </ul>
Facilitating ethical conduct	Setting and monitoring the project’s ethics framework
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Booster</li> <li>• Coach</li> <li>• Endorser</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervisor</li> <li>• Controller</li> <li>• Norm-setter</li> </ul>
Advising research team	Adjudication of ethics violations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adviser on measures/sanctions</li> <li>• Policy adviser</li> <li>• Supporter in defence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigator</li> <li>• Decision-maker on sanctions</li> </ul>
Mediator between those in need of ethical support and those who can provide it	Collecting information about the project’s ethics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intermediary</li> <li>• Referrer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Registrar</li> <li>• Data gatherer</li> </ul>

## 2) Ethics support body’s mode of action

**Think** carefully about how the ethics support body established for your study will function.

**Decide** whether it will be:

- a contact point just for your research team or/and for research participants,
- centralised (e.g. run by the project coordinator or one selected partner with necessary expertise) or decentralised with tasks divided between different team members and partners,
- available part-time, during working hours or 24/7,
- run continuously during the whole life of the project or just during its selected stages,



- led by one dedicated person or a group.

**Consider** if you want your ethics body to have any investigative or decisive powers in case of severe violations of research ethics or if you prefer it to serve as an advisory and support structure with no such powers.

**Reflect** on whether this project structure should react to any ethical incidents or just selected ones (e.g. only to complaints) (see the *Tip box* below for examples).

#### TIP: Types of ethical issues that can occur in the research project

- |                          |                      |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| • Comments               | • Problems           |
| • Complaints             | • Questions          |
| • Conflicts of interests | • Suggestions        |
| • Dilemmas               | • Unethical conducts |
| • Doubts                 | • Violations         |
| • Incidents              |                      |

**Consider** whether your ethics support body should act proactively and monitor the research processes to intercept potential ethical problems before they occur or at the earliest possible stage. **Think** about practical ways of engaging this body in the ongoing research team's work.

**Create** a comprehensive list of tasks that will be performed by your ethics support body (see the *Tip box* below for ideas). **Ensure** that the scope of its responsibilities and activities is clear and understood in the same way by research team members.

**Disseminate** information about available ethics support to those to whom it is addressed.

#### TIP: Examples of tasks that may be appointed to ethics support bodies

- Managing, addressing, consulting and helping to tackle incoming ethical issues
- Responding to queries on the project's ethics
- Providing information on and raising awareness of the project's ethics among internal and external beneficiaries
- Providing guidance about the project's ethical standards and mechanisms
- Interpreting ethical procedures when they seem to be unclear
- Advising in ethically ambiguous situations
- Providing a confidential channel for whistleblowing
- Identifying recurring ethical issues and bringing them to the attention of the research team
- Registering and documenting anonymised ethical issues to develop knowledge and project's lessons learned

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## 4. RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW

Lesson author	Katarzyna Struzińska
Related lessons	<i>Part II</i> , lessons 1–3

### MAIN ADDRESSEES

- Researchers
- Research teams
- Principal investigators
- Research project coordinators

### CHALLENGE

Ensuring timely ethical review and approval of the multi-site research

### BASELINE

Before starting the project implementation, the research team must obtain all required national and institutional permissions, including going through the ethics review processes. Since research on gender-based violence is commonly acknowledged as carrying a potential risk of causing harm to participants, many institutional ethics committees act as gatekeepers – they are particularly cautious and may be reluctant to approve such studies (cf. Sikweyiya & Jewkes 2011: 1097; Israel & Hay 2006: 139). Consequently, research teams studying this topic should be as diligent and thorough as possible when preparing documents necessary for the ethics application. In this process, attention must be paid to appropriately address issues that Oakes (2002: 460–467) recognises as especially disturbing to ethics review bodies, namely:

- equitable and unforced recruitment of research participants,
- adequate informed consent,
- well-balanced confidentiality (because both promising “too much” and “too little” of it can become a source of concern).

The research ethics review can be a lengthy procedure. Since the ethics bodies commonly hold meetings approximately once a month (or even less often), the waiting time for an initial reaction to the application can take around 4 to 6 weeks (Oakes 2002: 459) or even more. The process of reviewing the research project is open-ended, and the ethics body can require multiple amendments to the application form, additional explanations, etc. Consequently, the average time needed to obtain the ethics approval is between 3 and 6 months (Griffin & Leibetseder 2019: 8). The approval of research studies that are transnational and multi-institutional is often connected with applying to multiple national and institutional ethics review bodies that may be regulated differently, work according to various timelines, and use varying assessment criteria and monitoring devices. Under such



circumstances, ethics approval is exceptionally time-consuming and, if not prepared properly, can take even longer than six months.

## MAIN STEPS

- 1) Establish how the ethics review will be approached and divide responsibilities between team members. ⇒ **Planning for the ethics review**
- 2) Apply for the ethical approval of the planned research. ⇒ **Ethics review application**

## RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

### 1) Planning for the ethics review

Conducting social research simultaneously at several institutions in multiple countries involves fulfilling divergent formal requirements related to various national and institutional ethics review procedures (cf. Israel and Hay 2006: 136). **Be mindful** of and **sensitive** to the specifics of different review contexts.

Meeting the ethical requirements of many different institutions and obtaining their permission to conduct the study is impossible to achieve just by one person. **List** all the tasks related to this process and **divide** them among the research team members based on their capabilities and role in the project. **Decide** who will:

- **coordinate** and **guide** the process of applying for research ethics approvals – this includes, for instance, framing the research team’s approach to the ethics review, establishing how tasks can be split, shared and performed, suggesting the best way and order of addressing ethical committees, providing team members that apply for ethical approval with advice and support,
- **gather** from all team members any **information** necessary for in-advance preparation for the ethics review procedure,
- **monitor** the **progress** of ethics review processes, as well as **collect** and **compile information** about the results of all the ethics reviews,
- **be responsible for applying** for approval at each relevant institution – this includes, in particular, completing the documentary requirements (e.g. filling in the ethics review form), representing the project team in communication with ethics review bodies and engaging in dialogue with them, keeping securely on file documentation related to the particular ethics review and all copies of ethics review bodies’ opinions.

### 2) Ethics review application

**Start preparing** the application required by the relevant ethics body well in advance and **exercise due diligence** to ensure it runs smoothly and is completed before the research begins.

**Put together** ethics application forms and all other required documents (see *Tip box* below), allowing the appropriate ethics review bodies to decide if the planned research is ethically sound. **Remember** that they focus on verifying if:



- the study meets the institution's requirements of sufficiently protecting research participants and gathered data,
- researchers are prepared to mitigate ethical challenges emerging during fieldwork and respond to them efficiently.

**TIP: Documents most commonly demanded by ethics review bodies – a checklist**

(Based on Van Den Hoonaard 2011: 127, 129; Westmarland & Bows 2019: 21–22)

- Ethics application forms
- Ethics checklist
- Research (project) information sheet
- Research protocol
- Instruments of data collection (draft research tools)
- 'Call for participants'
- Participant information sheet
- Consent form
- Referral information about support services
- Evidence of prior ethical approval
- Evidence of previous scientific peer review
- Curricula vitae of researchers

While completing the ethics application forms, **be attentive** and **precise**. **Use** appropriate language. **Strive to adhere** to the following advice formulated by Van Den Hoonaard (2011: 127, 130, 214, 218–221):

- **Do not leave** the preparation of the application to the last minute.
- **Address** every aspect of the application.
- **Provide** an appropriate level of detail.
- **Pay** particular **attention** to how you phrase answers to questions presented in the application.
- **Adopt** a language similar to the application form.
- **Do not exaggerate** the benefits connected with research.
- **Do not undermine** the risk associated with research.
- **Be clear** about the risk that your project might pose to participants.
- **Try** to be persuasive without any form of deception.
- If possible, **consult** the application with someone from the institution familiar with its ethics review procedures.

The completed ethics review application form should reflect the importance that your research team attaches to ethics and show that you can and will conduct research that meets the highest ethical standards.

**TIP: Be aware**

Some research institutions might stall the ethics review or misuse it as an excuse not to research gender-based violence since they find this topic undesirable, controversial or inconvenient. In your ethics application and any related interactions with the institution, be persuasive and emphasise that studying gender-based violence is scientifically essential and constitutes the ethical and societal obligations of any research performing organisation (cf. *Institutional Misuse of Ethics as a Specific Challenge in Researching Gender-Based Violence* in this *Inventory*).

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## 5. PREPARING FOR THE DIFFICULT AND UNEXPECTED

Lesson author	Katarzyna Struzińska
Related lessons	<i>Part I</i> , lessons 1–3; <i>Part II</i> , lessons 2–4; <i>Part III</i> , lessons 1–2, 5; <i>Part IV</i> , lessons 1–2, 4

### MAIN ADDRESSEES

- Researchers
- Research teams
- Principal investigators
- Research project coordinators

### CHALLENGE

Recognising in advance the ethical problems and difficulties that may arise during research and identifying how to deal with them

### BASELINE

Before going to the field, researchers must try to foresee and prepare for the emergence of challenging and unexpected issues. Planning and setting relevant procedures in advance help with the smooth resolution of such difficulties and allow to avoid negative consequences for the research. The potential challenges occurring during the study can stem from different sources and connect with:

- the very fact that gender-based violence is the research theme – for example, anti-feminist research attacks,
- research findings – incidental findings and mandatory reporting,
- research process – severe violations of ethics,
- researcher – conflicts of interest, conflicts between researchers and institutions,
- relations in the research team – internal conflicts, for instance, related to data ownership.

### MAIN STEPS

- 1) Map potential problems related to your research process and research team. ⇨ **Preparing for the difficult**
- 2) Consider the incidental findings possible in your research and how you will deal with them. ⇨ **Preparing for the unexpected**



## RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

### 1) Preparing for the difficult

**Reflect** in-depth about potential difficulties that may arise in your research, such as possible severe ethics violations, conflicts of interest, conflicts inside your research team and external anti-feminist research attacks. **Estimate** how large or small is a chance that each of these issues will occur.

**Plan** actions you will take to mitigate each of the difficulties. Whenever the risk of a particular challenge seems high, **prepare** a step-by-step protocol for tackling this problem (see also lessons 1 and 2 in this part and 2 and 5 in *Part III*). **Inform** all research team members about these procedures and **emphasise** that they must be followed.

### 2) Preparing for the unexpected

#### TIP: Incidental findings

Incidental findings can be defined as unintended “findings generated in the course of research but beyond the aims of the study” (Wolf et al. 2008: 361) or “findings [...] that fall outside of the scope of the research questions” (Gutmann & Wagner 2020). Depending on whether or not their occurrence may be expected, the incidental findings can be anticipated or unanticipated.

**Think** carefully about anticipated incidental findings that may occur in your research activities. Some of them will present you with the dilemma of whether or not to disclose them to a relevant person, group, institution or authority (cf. *Tip box* below). **Reflect** on how you will deal with such incidental findings if they appear in your research.

#### TIP: Examples of possible incidental findings which disclosure researchers can consider

UCD Research Ethics Committee (2010: 2)	<p>“The types of disclosures participants may make that present challenges to researchers include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disclosure that someone they know is at risk of harm or abuse</li> <li>• Disclosure of a past offence they have knowledge of or have committed</li> <li>• Disclosure of serious danger to unsuspecting third parties</li> <li>• Disclosure of the commission of a criminal offence.”</li> </ul>
European Commission (2021: 14)	<p>“Unintended/unexpected/incidental findings may include indications of criminal activity, human trafficking, abuse, domestic violence or bullying.”</p>
Panel on Research Ethics (2019: 3)	<p>“[A] discovery of physical abuse or suicidality in studies unrelated to those phenomena.”</p>

**Remember** that some incidental findings may fall under the mandatory reporting laws of the country where research is conducted. In such a case, the obligation to report has a legal character and is often connected with sanctions for not complying. **Consider** that the legal

obligation to disclose information may contradict your ethical convictions as a researcher. **Reflect** on how mandatory reporting influences the confidentiality level you can offer to research participants (cf. Stiles and Petrila 2011: 356).

**Write down** the *Incidental findings policy* for your research. Based on the relevant literature, your own and other researchers' experiences and knowledge about the study you will conduct, **define** what types of anticipated incidental findings can emerge in your project and what procedures you will follow once they are discovered.

**Ensure** that each research team member understands and knows the procedures applicable to incidental findings in your study.

**Inform** respondents in advance (as a part of the informed consent process) about plans to disclose incidental findings and any limits to the confidentiality you offer them.

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## **PART II. RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

**By Katarzyna Struzińska**



## 1. REACHING OUT TO RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Lesson author	Katarzyna Struzińska
Related lessons	<i>Part II</i> , lessons 2–4

### MAIN ADDRESSEES

- Researchers
- Research teams
- Principal investigators

### CHALLENGE

Reaching out to and recruiting potential research participants in an ethically sound and non-harmful way in the research on gender-based violence

### BASELINE

Each researcher, while planning and implementing their study, should reflect on the ways of (1) accessing respondents whose participation is relevant to the research problem, (2) being sensitive to local and cultural conditions, and (3) ensuring the balanced and fair representation of diverse perspectives without “exploiting or ignoring one group to benefit another” (Logan et al. 2008: 1231). Research participants should be treated as active agents in the study and allowed to “manage their participation” (Downes et al. 2014: 7). To comply with the principle of respect for individuals and to be mindful of the potential sensitivity of research on gender-based violence in the recruitment process, researchers should consider recommendations formulated by Campbell et al. (2019: 4769–4770) to:

- use the empowerment model that allows participants to control the degree and form of their engagement in the study,
- shape the “researcher–participant relationship as a relational collaboration” and work towards decreasing power imbalances between the researcher and the research participant,
- aim at being “culturally competent” and understanding participants’ specific contexts.

### MAIN STEPS

- 1) Decide who should participate in your research. ⇒ **Research participants**
- 2) Gain access to the field. ⇒ **Gatekeepers**
- 3) Recruit research participants. ⇒ **Recruitment strategies**



## RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

### 1) Research participants

**Decide** which populations should be engaged as participants in each part of your study. Setting the criteria of respondent sampling often demands the researcher to balance the research needs and ambitions with the research ethics and integrity, therefore **consider** carefully if:

- your study must include persons who are not able and legally competent to decide about their participation (e.g. minors),
- you need to introduce any limitations on who can participate in your research,
- your position towards potential respondents or any relations between you and them (including institutional power relations) can force someone to participate in your study or become a source of conflicts of interest for you.

The decisions you make at this stage will bear consequences for, among other things, the future ethics review, informed consent process, protection of research participants' safety and well-being, as well as, in international and transnational projects, for comparability of the measurement and data across various countries.

### 2) Gatekeepers

**Reflect** on your strategies for entering the field and gaining access to populations you want to involve in your research.

**Consider** whether any persons, organisations or institutions can act as gatekeepers whose permission, formal approval or support you need to obtain to conduct your study.

**Contact** the gatekeepers in advance, **present** your research plan, and **request** their authorisation to access populations you want to study. **Give** the gatekeepers **time** to decide and **be ready** to promptly provide them with any additional information they need.

**Keep in mind** that through existing power relations, gatekeepers can significantly impact who will be included in and excluded from your research (Miller & Bell 2002). To mitigate such risks, always **remember** that gaining access does not imply acquiring consent; therefore:

- **apply** a carefully prepared informed consent procedure that ensures actual voluntary informed consent of each person from whom you directly obtain data (Hammersley & Traianou 2012; Miller & Bell 2002: 55; cf. next lesson in this part),
- **keep** any potential respondent's decisions about not partaking from gatekeepers (Wiles 2013: 31).

### 3) Recruitment strategies

**Be ready to adapt** – make your approach to recruitment flexible, situated and contextualised (Downes et al. 2014: 7) to provide various populations of your interest with equal chances to partake in your study.

To ensure respect for individuals' autonomy and privacy, **allow** potential respondents to make decisions about their participation freely.



**Prioritise** passive (indirect) recruitment strategies (e.g. e-mail invitations, online announcements on relevant platforms, open calls for participation, leaflets and information sheets, in particular, digital ones) that raise awareness about the research but leave it up to potential participants to contact the researcher (Khatamian Far 2018: 284).

Different groups of potential research participants might require different ways of reaching out. If you need to engage any specific group within the studied populations, **consider utilising** more active and direct recruitment strategies.

**Check if you need** extra support to recruit research participants – **reflect** if you have to use your networks, personal contacts or chain referrals (snowball recruitment) and how you can do this effectively and ethically without coercing anyone to participate in your study.

#### **TIP: Online open call recruitment to qualitative research on experiences of gender-based violence**

To ensure that persons who experienced gender-based violence have enough time and information to decide about their participation, in your online call, request those interested in sharing their experiences to fill in a dedicated digital “agree-to-be-contacted form” (Campbell et al. 2019: 4772) where they leave their basic contact information (e.g. name and e-mail address). Based on this initial expression of interest, send each person a targeted message with detailed information about the study, how it is conducted, referral information about services of care and support, and encourage them to ask questions regarding research.

If someone who expressed initial interest did not respond to your message, you may send them reminders. Nevertheless, you must be careful and attentive – do not pressure them to participate. If you still do not receive feedback after sending a reminder or two, it might mean that the person has changed their mind about participating in the study and wants to be left alone.

**Consider** if you have to offer incentives to persons participating in your research. If yes, **think** about appropriate forms of remunerating participants and **consult** your ideas with the ethics committee at your institution and/or other experienced researchers (see also lesson 5 in this part).

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## 2. OBTAINING INFORMED CONSENT

Lesson author	Katarzyna Struzińska
Related lessons	<i>Part II</i> , lessons 1, 3–4; <i>Part IV</i> , lessons 2–3

### MAIN ADDRESSEES

- Researchers
- Principal investigators
- Research teams

### CHALLENGE

Ensuring that research participants continuously understand the purpose and scope of the study and voluntarily decide to take part in it

### BASELINE

Researchers must safeguard informed, rational and active consent given freely by legally competent persons who understand, based on adequate information provided, what participation in the research involves for them. To achieve this goal, researchers should ensure that their informed consent procedures are guided by essential ethical standards of providing participants with complete information about the research, revealing anticipated risks, and identifying potential benefits (Oakes 2002).

Research participants should have as much control over the research process in which they participate as possible, and researchers should guarantee them the rights to:

- refuse or withdraw participation without any repercussions,
- decide how much information to share,
- be aware of any limitations to confidentiality and anonymity of the information provided,
- re-negotiate their consent (cf. Campbell et al. 2019; Hoong Sin 2005).

Informed consent is not a “one-off-event” which ends with the consent form being signed, but a complex process of “fluid and ever-changing nature” that can be impacted by the content and a phase of research, demands of external actors or different extent of engagement with research ethics among various researchers (Hoong Sin 2005: 281). Researchers should consider framing the informed consent in their studies as “process consent” that is flexible, situated and can be discussed, (re-)negotiated and retracted by research participants (Downes et al. 2014: 7; Wiles 2013: 28).

## MAIN STEPS

- 1) Consider the actual extent of consent you expect from research participants. ⇒ **Scope of consent**
- 2) Decide on ways of expressing and recording participant's consent. ⇒ **Forms of consent**
- 3) Set the informed consent protocol for your research. ⇒ **Informed consent procedure**

## RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

### 1) Scope of consent

**Remember** that by asking for informed consent, you not only request respondents to participate in the study but also agree on how the information they provide will be recorded, processed, disseminated, stored, and archived. **Think carefully** about all elements that should be included in obtaining informed consent in the context of your research and dissemination plans (see *Tip box* below).

#### **TIP: Elements to be considered while establishing the participant's scope of consent**

(Based on Hammersley & Traianou 2012)

- Participation in the research
- Providing data
- Methods of data recording
- Ways of data processing and sharing
- Use of data for research purposes
- Dissemination of research results, including academic and non-academic publications and presentations
- Secondary use of data
- Publication of data in public repositories

In qualitative research, **decide what steps you will** take if a respondent agrees to participate but refuses to be audio/audio-video recorded. Remember to **ask for permission** if you want to take notes documenting the course of your conversation.

**Consider** if you will allow the secondary use of your data by external researchers. **Inform** research participants about planned secondary data use, storage methods and procedures for accessing data for this purpose.

**Ensure** that you provide research participants with easy-to-use possibilities to opt out of your study without consequences and a need to explain their reasons. **Reflect on how and when** participants can withdraw from your research activity. **Inform** potential respondents in advance about any limitations, e.g. time restrictions, concerning the consent withdrawal.



**Instruct** research participants about persons they can address or channels of communication (e.g. e-mail address, online form) they can use to withdraw their consent.

## 2) Forms of consent

**Decide** in which form(s) persons participating in your research can express their consent. In quantitative research, informed consent can be given explicitly – in online surveys, by ticking off the relevant box, or implicitly, in traditional surveys, by completing and submitting a questionnaire. In qualitative research, the general recommendation is to, when possible, obtain the consent of each participant in writing by asking them to sign a copy of an informed consent form.

If you work with research participants who are concerned about the potential negative consequence of being identifiable by signing written consent, for instance, due to the status of victim or perpetrator of gender-based violence, fear of retribution or reprisal (cf. Wiles 2013; Israel & Hay 2006; Aronson Fontes 2004; Aronson Fontes 1998), **give** them a **possibility** to express their consent verbally.

### TIP: Expression of consent in qualitative online research

Provide potential respondents with a digital copy of the informed consent form before the research activity. Explain to the participant in detail how they can express their consent. For instance, you can decide that the respondent will:

- print a copy of the informed consent form and sign it by hand, then take a photo or scan of the signed form and share it with you in a protected manner (e.g. by uploading it into the safe cloud folder created by you for this purpose);
- if they have the technical ability and wish to do so, sign a digital copy of the informed consent form with an electronic signature and share it in a protected manner;
- complete a short anonymous electronic form confirming their consent at the beginning of the interview,
- express their consent verbally and confirm it at the beginning of the interview recording.

In qualitative research, **consider** tracking and documenting the consent obtained in each interview. You **can create** an information template to be completed after the research activity that will comprehensively and anonymously summarise essential information about obtaining informed consent and the form in which it was given. Such a document is helpful to ensure that verbal consent is properly documented.

## 3) Informed consent procedure

**Create** an informed consent form adjusted to your research, in which you **notify** respondents in detail about your study. **Include** the information presented in the *Tip box* below.

**TIP: Information to be presented in the informed consent form**

(Based on Bos 2020; Wiles 2013; Van Den Hoonaard 2011; Fisher &amp; Anushko 2008; Israel &amp; Hay 2006)

- Purpose, focus and goal of the research
- Research funding
- Research methods, techniques and strategies in use
- Potential outcomes
- Estimated duration of the research activity
- Expectations toward participants (nature of their involvement)
- Possible risks (adverse effects, inconvenience, discomfort) connected with the participation
- Potential benefits to participants and the wider community
- Data storage, use and access
- Dissemination of results
- Guarantees and limits (e.g. due to mandatory reporting obligations) of confidentiality and anonymity
- Respondent's right to (with no repercussions):
  - decline the participation
  - withdraw from the research at any time
  - refuse to answer any question
- Protection of persona data
- Contact points to which participants can turn in case of questions, doubts and complaints

**Establish** a step-by-step protocol of action that you will take before, during and after the research activity to ensure that the consent you obtained is informed, continuous and given voluntarily (see the *Tip box* below for ideas).

**TIP: Examples of researcher's activities aimed at ensuring informed consent**

<b>Before the research activity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whenever possible, in advance, inform potential participants about your project, share copies of the informed consent form with them, and link them to any relevant resources (e.g., information on personal data processing).</li> <li>• Answer any questions posed by a respondent.</li> <li>• In qualitative research, if requested and feasible, organise an introductory meeting with a research participant to clarify any emerging issues.</li> </ul>
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<b>TIP: Examples of researcher's activities aimed at ensuring informed consent</b>	
<b>At the beginning of the research activity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a research participant with an extra copy of the informed consent form to be kept for further reference and, if applicable, with written information on personal data processing.</li> <li>• Give a respondent sufficient time to read and understand the informed consent form. Provide them with an opportunity to pose questions and request supplementary explanations.</li> <li>• In qualitative research, ask participants for permission to record the interview and to have it transcribed. If a person refuses to be recorded, request permission to take notes.</li> <li>• Obtain individual consent from each research participant when the activity occurs in a group setting.</li> </ul>
<b>During the research activity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whenever possible, warn a participant that the forthcoming question regards an issue that might be considered sensitive or cause distress. Make sure that a respondent agrees to discuss such a topic (cf. Ellsberg &amp; Heise 2002).</li> <li>• Pay attention to the research participant's verbal and non-verbal expressions. If it seems to you that they might want to opt out of the activity, remind them about their rights to omit any questions and to withdraw (cf. Ellsberg &amp; Heise 2002).</li> <li>• In qualitative research, remember to obtain consent from any person who contributes to an interview unexpectedly and partially. Based on the degree of their involvement, decide if this person should be treated as a research participant (cf. Wiles 2013: 30).</li> </ul>
<b>After the research activity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safely store informed consent forms, your notes and recordings.</li> <li>• Whenever possible and always when promised to or agreed with respondents, follow them up on the relevant results and share information about where your outcomes can be found.</li> </ul>

**Pay attention** to the language you use when informing research participants – **make** it clear and accessible.

**Present** information comprehensively and, to the utmost, concisely. **Be ready** to give research participants supplemental information whenever they need it.

**Reflect** on the conditions under which you might breach the confidentiality offered to research participants (see also lesson 5 in *Part I*). **Consider in advance** what to do if, during your research, you learn about the act, which, under applicable law, should be brought to the attention of the competent public authorities or discover a severe safety risk to a research participant or other person. **Be realistic** about the limits of confidentiality guaranteed and **explain** them to respondents.

**Do not coerce** potential respondents to partake in the study. **Avoid** using personal or professional impact to shape their decisions.

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### 3. PROTECTING RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS' SAFETY

Lesson author	Katarzyna Struzińska
Related lessons	<i>Part II</i> , lessons 1–2, 4; <i>Part IV</i> , lesson 3

#### MAIN ADDRESSEES

- Researchers
- Principal investigators
- Research teams

#### CHALLENGE

Maximisation of respondents' safety and protection from potential negative consequences related to their (non-)participation in qualitative research

#### BASELINE

Each person invited to participate in research must be treated as an active agent – researchers should aim to protect and, at the same time, empower them as much as possible (cf. Downes et al. 2014). Research participants have a right to actively and ongoingly negotiate and decide about their engagement and its scope. Thus, researchers must enable them to exercise this right without repercussions and unjustified limitations (cf. Campbell et al. 2019; Hoong Sin 2005). A significant aspect of ensuring that partaking in qualitative research will be a satisfactory interaction for participants is the proper informed consent procedure that provides respondents with all necessary information about the research process as well as the secure storage of information they shared (cf. previous lesson in this part and lesson 3 in *Part IV*).

#### MAIN STEPS

- 1) Make sure that persons are not forced to participate in your study. ⇒ **Non-coerced participation**
- 2) Take into account that your behaviour as a researcher can have a critical impact on research participants. ⇒ **Researcher's behaviour**
- 3) Ensure the physical safety of people taking part in your study. ⇒ **Respondent's safety**

#### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- 1) **Non-coerced participation**

**Remember** that respondents representing particular institutions can agree to participate in your study under the influence of their organisational context (e.g., because of existing



power structures, hierarchies, relationships, and peer pressure). **Be mindful** of these factors and **take measures** to ensure that participant's autonomy is respected:

- **Dedicate** extra **time to** exhaustively **clarify** standards of confidentiality, anonymity and data management set for your project.
- **Explain** to potential respondents their right to decline participation and withdraw from the research at any time without consequences.

**Point out** that a decision about (non-)participation will be kept confidential from others.

Also, during the study, **emphasise** that participation is voluntary. In qualitative research, a decision to withdraw or decline a question can become a source of distress for some participants (Campbell et al. 2019: 4774). **Pay attention** to respondents' verbal and non-verbal communication. Whenever you notice symptoms of discomfort, **ask** them whether they want to continue the activity, answer a particular question or discuss a topic (Campbell et al. 2019: 4774).

## 2) Researcher's behaviour

**Be empathetic** and **build** a non-judgemental, open rapport with research participants. **Avoid** imposing your authority, attitudes, biases, and convictions. When conducting the research activity, **give** research participants **space** to talk and **listen** to them actively and attentively.

**Ensure** that the research activity is non-invasive (cf. *Tip box* below) and that research participants feel that they and the information they share are and will be respected.

**Explain** to participants the limitations to the confidentiality you offer (e.g., circumstances under which mandatory reporting might occur) (cf. previous lesson in this part and lesson 5 in *Part I*).

### TIP: Researchers' behaviours valued by research participants

(Lewis & Graham 2007: 77)

To make a research activity tactful and non-intrusive, try to adapt the following behaviours:

- act in a professional but friendly manner,
- look relaxed and confident,
- agree to offers of hospitality,
- ensure that no answer is right or wrong, explain unfamiliar words and recognise that a question is complex or confusing,
- not rush the participant, follow their pace,
- communicate respect to participants and appreciation for their words,
- show consideration and interest, for instance, by maintaining eye contact,
- sincerely thank for participating in the research.



Since the research can be a stirring or unfamiliar experience for participants, **treat** the introductory phase of the meeting and informed consent procedure as a way to **give** them **time** to prepare, relax, and become more confident about the activity.

### 3) Respondent's safety

The physical or online settings selected for the research activity should protect confidentiality, be secure, and be perceived as safe by all persons engaged in this interaction. Thus, **propose** and **use** only venues or platforms of communication where the research participant can safely share their stories.

**Strive** to meet with a potential research participant in private. **Make sure** that other persons are not present or at least unable to hear the conversation.

When discussing sensitive issues, **be prepared to** (1) **terminate** the conversation, (2) **pause** the conversation, or (3) **change the topic** whenever the research activity is interrupted by someone. **Warn** research participants in advance about when such a pause or switch to a different subject can occur.

**Be ready** to keep participants' decisions not to partake or withdraw confidential and **conceal** these facts from others, e.g. colleagues or supervisors.

Before sharing any hard copies of and links to referral information about services of care and support or results of your project, **check** with your respondents whether it is safe for them to have such materials, and which form of receiving is free from the risk of having them found by an undesirable person. When providing research participants with follow-up information, **use** only agreed ways and forms.

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## 4. ENSURING RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS' WELL-BEING

Lesson author	Katarzyna Struzińska
Related lessons	<i>Part II</i> , lessons 1–3

### MAIN ADDRESSEES

- Researchers
- Principal investigators
- Research teams

### CHALLENGE

Maximisation of respondents' psychological well-being and support of participants who reveal being victims/survivors of gender-based violence in qualitative research

### BASELINE

When discussing issues related to gender-based violence, researchers should make the interaction natural “rather than something mechanistic or awkward” (Lewis & Graham 2007: 77). They must accommodate the needs of research participants as much as possible, e.g., by being flexible with the research activity structure and primarily allowing the participant to guide them through it – “allowing the respondents to direct the interview and pacing the interview so that topics emerge gradually” (Kavanaugh & Ayres 1998: 93).

Researchers who conduct a qualitative study have to bear in mind that (1) any participant can be a victim/survivor of gender-based violence regardless of whether they reveal this during research, and (2) not only victims/survivors but also other research participants (e.g. service providers who deal with cases of gender-based violence in their work) can react emotionally during the research activity. Researchers should be sensitive and consider implementing a positive empowerment approach to enable respondents to improve their lives and boost their chances “for positive experiences” and research influences (Downes et al. 2014: 6).

Furthermore, researchers must know that their behaviour significantly shapes respondents' research experience. Before going to the field, they should reflect on the needs of research participants and the emotions the study can bring them.

### MAIN STEPS

- 1) Observe and analyse research participants' emotional reactions and offer them support. ⇒ **Discussing experiences of violence**
- 2) Prepare strategies to manage respondents' difficult emotions and feelings. ⇒ **Managing research participants' emotions**
- 3) Be ready to advise research participants on services of care and support that suit their needs. ⇒ **Referring research participants to services of care and support**



## RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

### 1) Discussing experiences of violence

If in your research activities, you address gender-based violence experienced by respondents, before starting the interview, **discuss** and **agree** with research participants what steps will be taken in different scenarios, e.g., how they will signal that they do not want to answer a question, what do they expect you to do or not to do if they react emotionally to the discussed topic (cf. Aronson Fontes 2004: 148).

Before asking a question about gender-based violence:

- **warn** the participant about the topic which is to be raised and **explain** that to some persons, it may be personal or difficult to discuss,
- **remind** the participant about their right to omit any question they do not want to answer,
- **ask** the participant whether they would like to continue or prefer to skip the question or end this research activity.

During the research activity, **offer** the participant several chances to disclose their victimisation but **minimise** the necessity of repeating or going back to their story multiple times. **Give** them **time** to reflect and decide whether to disclose and discuss their experiences. Additionally, following the feminist interview strategies, **if you want to** and **feel safe** about doing so, you **can express** compassion, **reciprocate** emotions, and **share** your own experiences with research participants (Burgess-Proctor 2015: 132).

At the end of the research activity, **highlight** the participants' strength and insights (cf. *Tip box* below).

#### TIP: How to end an interview with a victim/survivor of violence?

"A number of studies have carefully scripted such endings to ensure that the interview finishes with clear statements that explicitly acknowledge the abuse, highlight the unacceptability of the violence, and emphasise the respondent's strengths in enduring and/or ending the violence. The WHO study ends each interview with the words, 'From what you have told me, I can tell that you have had some very difficult times in your life. No one has the right to treat someone else in that way. However, from what you have told me, I can also see that you are strong and have survived through some difficult circumstances.'" (Ellsberg & Heise 2005: 44)

After the interview, **write** a thank you message to a participant with a personalised part that refers directly to their research experience.

### 2) Managing research participants' emotions

During the research activity, closely **observe** and **examine** a respondent's verbal and non-verbal reactions for indicators of acute emotions (see *Tip box* below).

<b>TIP: Acute emotional reaction indicators – examples</b>	
<b>NON-VERBAL</b>	<b>VERBAL</b>
	(Based on Burke Draucker et al. 2009: 349)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intense crying</li> <li>• Burst of anger</li> <li>• Fatigue</li> <li>• Moodiness</li> <li>• Agitation</li> <li>• Trembling</li> <li>• Incoherent speech</li> <li>• Acute headache or stomach ache</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statements indicating that the interview is too stressful</li> <li>• Statements indicating that a participant is considering hurting themselves</li> <li>• Statements indicating that a participant is considering hurting another person</li> <li>• Statements indicating that a participant might be put in danger if someone learns about their participation in the interview</li> </ul>

**Avoid** making assumptions about research participants' emotional reactions. **Clarify** with them the reasons behind the emotions they manifest. **Remember** that “crying is not always a cue for the interviewer to intervene, and the absence of tears is not always reassuring” (Kavanaugh & Ayres 1998: 94).

**Recognise** the respondent's self-initiated coping strategies (e.g. drinking water or soda, chewing gum, getting up and walking around the room, using humour to ease tension) and **encourage** their use during the interview (Kavanaugh & Ayres 1998).

**Offer** to the participants additional strategies for dealing with emotions, for instance:

- **adjust** the pace of the interview, **allow** silence and pauses,
- **give** them **time** to collect themselves and to decide if they want to continue with the interview,
- **suggest** taking a break,
- **postpone** a topic (a question),
- **stop** the research activity and **reschedule**,
- **check** if they want you to contact someone on their behalf (Kavanaugh & Ayres 1998).

If the research activity turns out to be too painful or significantly negatively influences the participant, **end** it and **consider** resigning from engaging this person.

**Do not take on** the therapist's role even when you feel this is what a participant wants or expects you to do.

**Remember** that there is no one-size-fits-all way to react to intense emotions shown by research participants. Your response should always **depend** on the context of a particular interaction and your understanding of the situation.

**Consider** adapting to your study the distress protocol created by Burke Draucker et al. (2009: 349) to “help interviewers determine when such distress exceeded what would be

normally expected during an interview on a sensitive topic and might signal an adverse reaction.”

### 3) Referring research participants to services of care and support

Before the research, **collect** referral information about reliable services of care and support (see examples in the *Tip box* below) that are available to persons participating in your study and can provide them with crisis intervention (immediate, short-term assistance) and support addressing the long-term effects of victimisation.

TIP: Examples of services and possible service providers	
SCOPE OF SERVICES	SERVICE PROVIDERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counselling and emotional support</li> <li>• Personal safety</li> <li>• Legal support</li> <li>• Coping with psychological consequences of victimisation</li> <li>• Coping with physical consequences of victimisation</li> <li>• Coping with social consequences of victimisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crisis intervention centres</li> <li>• Hotlines</li> <li>• Crisis lines</li> <li>• Non-governmental organisations</li> <li>• Victim support groups</li> <li>• Self-help groups</li> <li>• Social service institutions</li> <li>• Health institutions</li> <li>• Information centres</li> </ul>

**Prepare** a concise but comprehensive document that presents the referral information about accessible services available through different delivery channels (e.g. face-to-face, online, telephone), free of charge and ensuring appropriate, high-quality, non-judgmental assistance.

Before starting the research activity, **share** this information with participants, preferably in written form, if having such a copy is safe for respondents. **Be ready to remind** them about available services when necessary, at the end of and after the research activity.

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## 5. GIVING BACK TO RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Lesson author	Katarzyna Struzińska
Related lessons	<i>Part I</i> , lessons 1–2; <i>Part II</i> , lessons 2–4

### MAIN ADDRESSEES

- Researchers
- Principal investigators
- Research teams

### CHALLENGE

Showing research participants gratitude and providing them with benefits for participation in the study

### BASELINE

According to the ethical standard of beneficence, conducting research should “do good” or even bring certain benefits that outweigh any potential risks or harms connected to it (Israel & Hay 2006: 99). Giving back to research participants can take both tangible (e.g. financial) and intangible forms. Benefits offered to respondents must be “as direct, immediate and concrete as possible” (Aronson Fontes 2004: 164). Researchers should be creative and aim to profit, in various ways, persons and institutions participating in their study, their immediate communities, and the broader society.

### MAIN STEPS

- 1) Consider if you should provide research participants with any monetary incentives.  
⇒ **Financial benefits**
- 2) Decide about ways in which your research will benefit participants in non-monetary ways. ⇒ **Non-financial benefits**

### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

#### 1) Financial benefits

**Consider carefully if research participation** should be connected with any monetary benefits. **Reflect** on the possible advantages, for instance, encouraging more persons to participate in your study, improving the situation of respondents from disadvantaged backgrounds, and risks associated with incentives, such as the possibility of skewing the sample of respondents and their motivation. **Discuss** your preference with the ethics review body of your institution and/or senior and experienced researchers.

If you decide to use financial incentives, **remember** that equal benefits should be given to each participant. **Check** if you have enough resources in your project budgets to fund them.





In the case of research with victims/survivors of gender-based violence, **be mindful** about selecting material incentives that do not put them at any risk, e.g. from their abusers. **Remember** that it is better to choose incentives in a form that cannot be tracked back and disclose one’s participation in your study (e.g. cash, gift cards).

**TIP: Compensation**

**Be aware** that financial compensation is not the same as material incentives for encouraging respondents or expressing gratitude for their participation. You **should** always **aim to compensate** a research participant who incurred costs (e.g. travel expenses, loss of daily pay due to absence from work, childcare costs) because of taking part in your study.

## 2) Non-financial benefits

The non-monetary benefits of participating in the study can be as important, if not more significant, for your respondent as the financial ones. **Consider** the situation and characteristics of the respondents you will reach out to. **Reflect** on forms in which you can give back to persons, institutions, and communities participating in your study. **Think** of direct and indirect forms of expressing reciprocity and gratitude that you can implement (see the *Tip box* below for ideas).

<b>TIP: Ideas for giving back to research participants</b>		
<b>Victims/survivors of gender-based violence</b>	<b>Direct benefits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing a comfortable and safe opportunity to share experiences with a respectful, non-judgmental, open and attentive listener</li> <li>• Providing referral information about available services of care and support</li> <li>• Organising access to the relevant services of care and support</li> <li>• Informing about possibilities of changing the participant’s current situation</li> <li>• Expressing genuine gratitude, e.g. by sending a thank you note that points out the link between participation in the research and potential societal change to which it contributes</li> </ul>
	<b>Indirect benefits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting organisation, programme or care service to which you refer participants of your research (not only financially, but also with your time, expertise, and work)</li> <li>• Organising free, online or offline, events addressed to communities or institutions where the research is conducted</li> <li>• Engaging in advocacy</li> </ul>

TIP: Ideas for giving back to research participants		
Respondents in the participatory research	Direct benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing training and opportunities to acquire new knowledge and skills</li> <li>• Sharing authorship of research results and outputs</li> <li>• Expressing genuine gratitude</li> </ul>
	Indirect benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Giving voice to groups that are often marginalised and empowering them to take their own actions</li> </ul>
Institutions and communities	Direct benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Giving feedback</li> <li>• Sharing data, research findings and outputs</li> <li>• Formulating recommendations on necessary changes, policies or actions</li> <li>• Expressing genuine gratitude</li> <li>• Acknowledging the institution or community's input in research</li> <li>• Creating tools to tackle gender-based violence</li> </ul>
	Indirect benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public sharing of research experiences, lessons learned and inspiring practices</li> <li>• Broadening knowledge about gender-based violence and contributing to its eradication</li> <li>• Using research findings for societal change</li> </ul>

If you conduct research with groups of participants that are “powerful or unpleasant” (Israel & Hay 2006: 103), e.g. perpetrators of gender-based violence, carefully **consider** whether you should and can give back to the research participants, and if yes, which forms it will take. **Remember** that your decision about how to benefit such participants might be incompatible with or even contrary to their vision and potentially cause some resistance.

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## **PART III. RESEARCHERS**

**By Janina Czapska**



## 1. TRAINING ON ETHICAL PRINCIPLES, PROCEDURES AND MECHANISMS

Lesson author	Janina Czapska
Related lessons	<i>Part I</i> , lessons 1–3, 5; <i>Part II</i> , lessons 1–4; <i>Part IV</i> , lessons 2, 4

### MAIN ADDRESSEES

- Research teams
- Principle investigators
- Research project coordinators

### CHALLENGE

Consolidating the awareness of the joint responsibility for ethics and integrity in international research teams

### BASELINE

Partners in the international research teams should know the legal and ethical rules stemming from national and supranational regulations and consider their experiences from previous research projects. Still, this knowledge does not always constitute a sufficient basis for the proper functioning of the team for at least three reasons. Firstly, ethical conduct cannot be limited to compliance with specific legal regulations (Allen & Israel 2018). Reflective derivation of ethical principles from specific regulations and concretisation of the universal principles into specific rules need interpretation within a particular culture or organisation. Secondly, in international projects, additional dedicated regulations, for instance, funding and consortium agreements or guidelines created for the study in question, can regulate ethics rules and may require specific training for researchers joining a new organisational environment. Finally, the ALLEA Code (2023: 6) assumes that universities and research organisations are responsible for researchers' training and does not highlight that in international projects, the guidelines for researchers who work together for a limited time may differ significantly.

### MAIN STEPS

- 1) Consider the content and organisational aspects of training on research ethics for your team. ⇒ **Creation of the training program**
- 2) Organise the training on research ethics for your team. ⇒ **Implementation of the training program**



## RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

### 1) Creation of the training program

Conducting social research by a consortium comprising multiple national teams involves fulfilling various institutional, national, and international ethics rules, meeting the universal research ethics standards and sharing the responsibility for the collaborative work.

**Consider** what ethical problems, decisions, mechanisms and procedures should be included in the training. **Take into account:** (1) when such training should take place, (2) should it be repeated, (3) who should participate in this training, (4) whether one general training is enough or specific training activities dedicated to different topics are needed.

**Ask** researchers for their needs. **Be open** to their proposals and **note** any ethics-related issues they flag.

**Coordinate** and **guide** the process of establishing resources tailored for the training program that responds to your research team's specific requirements.

**Create** a training scenario that includes space for discussions about ethical issues that seem to be the most ambiguous and causing the most disputes in the practice.

### 2) Implementation of the training program

**Hold** the planned training on the research ethics for your team.

**Ask** for training participants' feedback. **Facilitate** discussions among research team members regarding their needs and expectations.

**Be ready to organise** further *ad hoc* workshops, briefings, and training sessions on specific ethics-related topics when such a need emerges and at the request of team members.

**Document** the conducted training in a form accessible for instructors and participants to come back to clarify a particular situation, to prepare an agreement with the participant, or in any other case when reconstructing the specific rules will be useful.

#### TIP: How should persons be educated about ethics and integrity in social research?

- Hella von Unger (2016) proposes to draw on experimental learning, locate the training on ethics in the methodology context, and acknowledge multiple possible responses to the ethical quandaries.
- Allen & Israel (2018: 276–300) offer more detailed information about the evolution of the education approach to research ethics.
- Research teams must remember that maintaining ethical principles is ongoing throughout the research project.

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## 2. CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN RESEARCH TEAMS AND BETWEEN RESEARCHERS AND RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS

Lesson author	Janina Czapska
Related lessons	<i>Part I</i> , lessons 3, 5; <i>Part IV</i> , lesson 4

### ADDRESSEES

- Research teams
- Principal investigators
- Research project coordinators

### CHALLENGE

Preventing and resolving conflicts that appear in international research teams as well as between researchers and research institutions, especially when studying gender-based violence

### BASELINE

Research teams cannot be understood as stable and largely predictable groups. Formal documents regulating research projects (e.g., grant, consortium or cooperation agreements) refer to the relations between the researchers to a minimal extent and focus mainly on the basic conditions framing the internal cooperation. This formal component must be supplemented by leadership and management styles used within the project team that play a significant role in creating an environment of trust-based and effective cooperation. Furthermore, the fact that research team members come from different national contexts as well as legal and organisational cultures and have varying experiences and teamwork habits stemming from previous projects shape their behaviours towards and relations with research partners. All these factors, combined with the project-related situational variables, affect the group dynamics to varying degrees and contribute to the possible emergence of conflicts within the research team as a social group with unique features.

Conflicts can take many forms. Task-related conflicts are likely resolvable based on the formal norms of the project. Process conflicts concerning roles, responsibilities and schedules could probably be resolved with the help of the organisational norms and management style used in the project. However, relationship conflicts, which involve perceived incompatibilities of personalities and interpersonal interactions, require other methods irreducible to organisational norms in the project. Similar problems can occur in the case of mixed conflicts (for more information about conflicts from a conflict management perspective, see O'Neil et al. 2018). Similar conflicts can arise between researchers and the institutions where they conduct their studies. Nevertheless, there is one important difference – the institutions' motivation may stem from a reluctance to study gender-based violence (cf. *Institutional Misuse of Ethics as a Specific Challenge in Researching Gender-Based Violence* in this *Inventory*). Those problems faced by researchers could be solved,





depending on the specific situation, by the project coordinator or relevant conflict resolution advisory body.

## MAIN STEPS

- 1) Establish organisational principles regarding teamwork and internal dispute resolution. ⇒ **Collecting information about existing rules**
- 2) Discuss possible ways of action in case of unforeseen conflicts in the project team. ⇒ **Searching for ideas**
- 3) Prepare the preferred mechanism of internal proceedings. ⇒ **Establishing internal procedures**

## RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

### 1) Collecting information about existing rules

**Prepare** easy-to-read information about the project and funding organisation's documentation presenting official procedures and **make** it available to all research team members.

**Be ready to answer** research team members' questions and **explain** anything that needs clarification.

### 2) Searching for ideas

**Check** with team members the procedures and regulations that are in use at their institutions or were used by them in previous research projects. **Treat** this information **as a background** for creating proposals of conflict resolution measures for your research team.

**Discuss** with team members the additional internal support procedures for resolving conflicts they consider necessary.

**Find out** what solutions can be adapted to fit your research team and its members best. **Avoid** common repression strategies such as nonaction, administrative orbiting or secrecy (Bacal 2004).

### 3) Establishing internal procedure

**Write down** the internal procedure agreed upon with the research team clearly and concisely. **Inform** team members where this document can be found.

#### TIP: Create a conflict resolution advisory group

Allow the members of the research team to choose from among themselves an internal advisory group comprising trusted persons and respected authorities. In the case of a conflict between the team members, each party can ask members of the group for an individual conversation or the organisation of the conflict-resolution session with the other party. The mediation rules and procedures can be used for conducting conflict-resolution sessions. The advisory group can also use one of the strategies for resolving conflicts in research teams (cf., for example, Fonkubierta-Rodríguez et al. 2022)

**Establish** any internal support mechanisms, bodies, or platforms the internal procedure foresees (cf. *Tip box* above).

**Ensure** that assistance of this support mechanism, body or platform is readily available throughout the project.

**Be flexible** and **adjust** the procedures and ways of assisting the dynamically changing needs of your research team whenever necessary.

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### 3. CLARIFICATION OF THE RESEARCHER'S ROLE

Lesson author	Janina Czapska
Related lessons	<i>Part I</i> , lessons 3, 5; <i>Part II</i> , lessons 3–5; <i>Part III</i> , lesson 4; <i>Part IV</i> , lessons 1, 5

#### MAIN ADDRESSEES

- Research teams
- Principal investigators
- Research projects coordinators

#### CHALLENGE

Maximising the researchers' well-being by clarifying their role in research on gender-based violence

#### BASELINE

The physical, emotional, and ethical risks during the research activities constantly intersect and can feed into each other. Researchers' well-being and mental state can interact with and result in the emergence of ethical dilemmas during the fieldwork. For example, a researcher's emotional distress can be caused by not knowing how to behave when faced with challenging ethical issues.

A set of rules for specific studies shapes the researcher's behaviour. The researchers' knowledge of such rules is usually ensured through training provided by research institutions or principal investigators (cf. lesson 1 in this part) and research guidelines. Considerations of the researcher's role in sensitive research developed in the medical sciences have often been transferred into the social sciences. Nevertheless, more and more social researchers focus on the development of ethical and methodological approaches, rules and principles specific to gender-based violence studies.

#### MAIN STEPS

- 1) Help researchers to find their own answers to specific ethics-related dilemmas. ⇨ **Creation of tools for explaining key aspects of the researcher's role**
- 2) Make the tools permanently available to researchers. ⇨ **Providing ongoing support for researchers**

#### RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- 1) **Creation of tools for explaining key aspects of the researcher's role**

**Discuss** with research team members what essential rules should shape the researcher's role in your project (see the *Tip box* below for ideas). **Compare** the formulated proposals



with standards from relevant literature and the experiences of other researchers in the studied field.

#### TIP: Examples of rules shaping the researcher's role

- There are no measures that are guaranteed to be effective. The context in which researchers operate significantly influences actions to be taken.
- As a rule, the researcher must make decisions in the field.
  - The researcher has the right to leave a fieldwork situation, including the online one, as felt or considered necessary.
  - Researchers can share their own experiences with participants. Still, they must remember that participants, unlike researchers, do not have to maintain confidentiality.
- Informed consent is invaluable for researchers.
  - The participant may forget the terms included in their informed consent or simply ignore them, but researchers must consider the informed consent during the entire research.
  - Informed consent helps researchers to set boundaries in a dynamic situation of qualitative research.
  - Informed consent can solve many questions and doubts presented by research participants.

**Decide** which standards and principles will inform your research project. **Reflect** on the ethical basis of the chosen rules.

**Prepare** an optimal tool for presenting each rule. **Include** explanations, key challenges and frequently asked questions. **Be creative** and **do not limit yourself** to writing down guidelines and procedures; **consider** more user-friendly ways of presenting information, such as short videos, podcasts, infographics or interactive presentations.

## 2) Providing ongoing support for researchers

**Ensure** that the tools you created for researchers are stored in a convenient location and always accessible.

**Provide** researchers with opportunities, for instance, communication platforms, helpdesks, briefings or training, to prepare for difficult situations (e.g., learning to manage their emotions, detect signs of aggression, de-escalate emotionally charged and risky situations), exchange experiences and report needs.

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## 4. RESEARCHERS' REFLEXIVITY AND USE OF THE MULTI-POSITIONALITY CONCEPT

Lesson author	Janina Czapska
Related lessons	<i>Part II</i> , lesson 3; <i>Part III</i> , lesson 5

### MAIN ADDRESSEES

- Research teams
- Principal investigators

### CHALLENGE

Maximising the quality of research and researchers' well-being by making researchers reflect on their role in the project on gender-based violence

### BASELINE

Although ethical codes protect both the researcher and the participant, in practice, ethical consideration rarely includes the research's impact on the researcher and the problems it might bring up (Fenge et al. 2019). Assistance for researchers studying gender-based violence must go beyond the limited provisions of the ethical codes and guidelines.

According to Ryan (2015: 2), research activity "should be understood in terms of the dynamic rhythms of multi-positionalities." Researchers bring to the research process their backgrounds, relationship to the topic under study, experience, and any previous roles such as activist, social worker, nurse, counsellor, etc. Some of these components have strong ethical connotations with "social justice", "inequality", or "guilt." Hence, when they occur, the ethical dilemmas become more probable. Researchers' reflection on their "position" in the study and a more extensive understanding of their role is required. The multi-positionality approach gives them a holistic view of their complex roles.

Researchers and research participants also negotiate multi-positionalities during the research process. Not just the researcher-participant but also various other possible relationships between them, for instance, stranger-stranger, friend-friend, and guest-host, can play a significant role in their interactions (Cartwright & Limandri 1997).

### MAIN STEPS

- 1) Prepare the scenario for the multi-positionality workshop to inspire research team members' reflection on the potential and experienced problems. ⇒ **Planning the workshop on the multi-positionality**
- 2) Conduct workshops for researchers to minimise risks related to multi-positioning. ⇒ **Taking care of researchers throughout the research process**

## RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

### 1) Planning the workshop on the multi-positionality

**Prepare** a scenario for a reflective role-playing workshop.

**Explain** the concept of multi-positionality and find examples (cf. *Tip box* below) to demonstrate its usefulness in research on gender-based violence.

#### TIP: Example possible to be discussed during the workshop

One meaningful way for researchers to help themselves is to clarify the difference between therapy and research (Sammut-Scerri & Abela 2012). The distinction reflects the different goals of the therapeutic and research encounters. Therapy depends on longer-term contact and is meant to facilitate change. Research is mainly aimed at gaining information. As a researcher, one can provide various types of information but should not take over responsibility for the participants' needs. It is better to suggest the available support options to research participants but not specify which would be the best in a given situation. The researcher is not responsible for making any final decisions for participants; for example, seeking help from a psychotherapist on their behalf or reporting sexual harassment they experienced to a responsible person in the institution.

**Dedicate** extra time to clarify problems connected with the researchers' multi-positionality in research on gender-based violence.

**Point out** the need for the researcher's conscious self-placement on the insider–outsider relationship continuum concerning the specific topic or community.

**Emphasise** the process of negotiating positions in interactions between the researcher and the participant.

### 2) Taking care of researchers throughout the research process

**Hold** workshops on multi-positionality that include role-playing to clarify problems and practice optimal solutions.

**Discuss** with researchers topic-related problems, concerns and knowledge gaps they recognise.

**Provide** continuous assistance to researchers by supplementing the workshops' scenarios with further experiences and expectations.

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## 5. RESEARCHERS' DIFFICULT EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES

Lesson author	Janina Czapska
Related lessons	<i>Part I</i> , lessons 3, 5; <i>Part II</i> , lessons 3–4; <i>Part III</i> , lesson 4

### MAIN ADDRESSEES

- Research teams
- Principal investigators
- Research project coordinators

### CHALLENGE

Dealing with the severe psychological effects that research on gender-based violence may have on researchers

### BASELINE

Conducting empirical research, especially on topics such as gender-based violence, can cause severe psychological effects on a researcher. Institutions, principal investigators and research teams can develop many methods, both individual and collective, to protect researchers.

One of the possible individual measures is writing reflective notes to recapture conducted research activities. Descriptions of people, places, situations, conversations, events, emotions and reflections can be helpful for researchers to identify areas of their vulnerability, anxiety, prejudices and biases during all stages of fieldwork (Sherry 2013). The reflective notes, as well as detailed transcripts of the research activities, are also helpful supervision tools to ensure ethical considerations and dilemmas are addressed in the research process.

Furthermore, broader support measures can also be used to minimise distress and promote researchers' well-being, particularly supervision of the research process and de-briefing with the principal investigators or other research team members in different forms. From many solutions proposed in the literature, one idea is guiding the lesson: "traditional dyadic model of mentoring should be replaced with a network of multiple mentors" (Eigi et al. 2018: 13). The critical recommended measure is to hold regular meetings in the non-hierarchical group (create "safe spaces").

### MAIN STEPS

- 1) Review methods used in the project to support researchers in quantitative and qualitative research. ⇒ **Map the available assistance forms**
- 2) Consider establishing additional solutions for helping researchers under challenging situations. ⇒ **Organise a safe space for researchers**



## RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

### 1) Map the available assistance forms

**Diagnose** what forms of assistance members of your research teams use to support qualitative and quantitative researchers who find themselves in difficult situations.

**Evaluate** existing forms from the perspective of their ethical relevance. **Ask** research team members about their expectations and perceived not-yet-realised needs.

**Formulate** needed revisions and additions to forms of assistance existing in the research team and **implement** them.

### 2) Organise a safe space for researchers

**Provide** researchers **access** to a safe space by giving them the possibility to participate in optional online support meetings (cf. *Tip box* below).

#### TIP: Researchers' safe space

The safe space for researchers, e.g., an online helpdesk or “safety room”, should be designed as a combination of peer network and expert support (Eigi et al. 2018). It could be seen as a source of feedback, information, and assistance. The safe spaces can help exchange experiences and deal with team members' ongoing difficulties. The group discussion can also benefit its members by allowing them to reflect on problems and ethical dilemmas, explore power dynamics within the research process and understand their own positionality.

**Ensure** that online support meetings help solve ethical dilemmas and that inviting relevant professionals, peers, and people suggested by the researcher is possible. **Set safeguards** to make sure that issues discussed at these meetings are kept confidential.

**Organise** these support meetings regularly and **care** for their continuity. **Establish** a team responsible for the organisation of the online support meetings. This team should consist of people responsible for research ethics in your project. **Guarantee** researchers easy access to meeting organisers.

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## **PART IV. DATA**

**By Ewa Radomska**



## 1. LEGAL REGULATIONS AS STARTING POINT

Lesson author	Ewa Radomska
Related lessons	<i>Part I</i> , lesson 1; <i>Part III</i> , lesson 3; <i>Part IV</i> , lessons 2–5

### MAIN ADDRESSEES

- Research teams
- Principal investigators
- Research project coordinators

### CHALLENGE

Going beyond mere legal compliance in setting rules for data collection and management

### BASELINE

Due to the personal and sensitive nature of the data collected during research on gender-based violence and the fact that analysing and using such data involves risks to the well-being and safety of the subjects who provided the data, gender-based violence researchers face a much more complex legal and ethical landscape than other researchers.

According to critical data management principles, people working with data should always follow the law. However, they should remember that the law is just a minimum bar. In addition to laws that provide a legal framework for protecting individuals in data collection and processing, other normative guidelines can influence decision-making by people dealing with data (e.g. principles providing guidance for interpreting the data law). Thus, researchers should collect and use data in accordance with all applicable regulatory instruments (including guidelines, recommendations, codes and other tools) and adequate research ethics principles.

In the appropriate data collection, processing, usage and storage for gender-based violence research, possible ethical challenges include but are not limited to (1) security and responsible stewardship, curation and preservation of data, (2) accountability in data practices and systems, and (3) publishing policy. These challenges have increased the demand for practices that ensure data is gathered, stored, and used consistently with the critical standards of research ethics (cf. lesson 1 in *Part I*). As a result, mainly on the grounds of data science, data ethics (see, e.g., Tranberg et al. 2018; Vallor 2018) has developed that does not replace but rather complements and supports relevant legal instruments, such as data protection and privacy laws.



## MAIN STEPS

- 1) Determine what data regulations apply to your research. ⇒ **Data regulations**
- 2) Identify ethical challenges associated with data practices. ⇒ **Data ethics**
- 3) Establish policies and procedures for data management and protection. ⇒ **Data ethical framework**

## RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

### 1) Data regulations

**Make a list** of all (not only legal) regulations or specific provisions concerning data applicable to your research project. **Pay particular attention** to data protection, privacy and human rights legislation.

**Respect** the principles and values on which data protection and privacy laws are based.

**Be aware** of other regulatory instruments, particularly those that may be useful when researching gender-based violence.

### 2) Data ethics

**Determine** what ethically significant benefits and harms are connected to all data practices.

**Create** ethical guidelines on working with data for all research team members.

**Promote** exploration of ethical dilemmas regarding data collection, processing, sharing, and storage.

Whenever possible, **strive** to make research data available in Open Access.

### 3) Data ethical framework

**Create** a *Data management plan* to ensure trustworthy stewardship of data at various stages of the research process, which considers data generation, collection, processing, curation, storage, access, sharing, archiving and disposal.

**Establish** a transparent, fair publishing policy that considers the security rules for presenting the results of gender-based violence data analysis.

**Create and implement** a data protection policy to safeguard the rights of those whose personal data is being processed during the research.

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## 2. ENSURING DATA CONFIDENTIALITY

Lesson author	Ewa Radomska
Related lessons	<i>Part I</i> , lesson 5; <i>Part II</i> , lessons 2–3; <i>Part IV</i> , lessons 1, 3

### MAIN ADDRESSEES

- Researchers
- Research teams
- Principal investigators
- Research project coordinators

### CHALLENGE

Establishing rules and mechanisms to protect against (1) disclosure of information and personal data collected during the research and (2) re-identification of research participants based on published data

### BASELINE

The obligation to ensure the confidentiality of data stems from the ethical standard of respect for individuals, including their right to control the information they provide and protect their privacy. Maintaining data confidentiality requires safeguarding the information that the respondent has disclosed to the researcher in a relationship of trust and with the expectation that it will not be disclosed to others, except in cases and ways for which consent has been given.

In gender-based violence research, the usual concerns related to confidentiality are augmented by a variety of fears associated with the safety of research participants (cf. lessons 2 and 3 in *Part II*) and the conflicts between their right to confidentiality and possible legal obligations of researchers (Israel & Hay 2006: 81–82; cf. lesson 5 in *Part I*). Hence, gender-based violence researchers should be exceptionally accurate about the guarantees offered to research participants.

A researcher seeking to maintain data confidentiality may resort to various methodological and legal measures (Hammersley & Traianou 2012: 123). Anonymisation and pseudonymisation (cf. *Tip box*, p. 73) are standard practices employed by social researchers to protect the privacy of study participants. These strategies may also protect respondents from harm that could result from disclosing the information they provide. The anonymisation of quantitative data is usually more straightforward than the pseudonymisation of qualitative data. The need to protect confidentiality applies not only to the data collection but also to the data storage (see next lesson in this part).

In the case of European Union legislation, the principle of “integrity and confidentiality” enshrined in Article 4 of the General Data Protection Regulation (EU 2016) is particularly worth highlighting. This article states that personal data should be “processed in a manner that ensures appropriate security [...], including protection against unauthorised or unlawful





processing and against accidental loss, destruction or damage, using appropriate technical or organisational measures". Furthermore, it is also worth noting the World Health Organization's (2001: 11) recommendations for research on violence against women emphasizing that protecting confidentiality is essential to ensure not only the safety of research participants but also the quality of the data.

## MAIN STEPS

- 1) Define the scope of data confidentiality. ⇨ **Rules**
- 2) Choose how to ensure data confidentiality. ⇨ **Measures**
- 3) Make sure that research team members follow the established rules and apply the adopted measures to ensure data confidentiality. ⇨ **Policy**

## RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

### 1) Rules

**Learn** about privacy and data confidentiality laws that apply to your research.

**Determine** the scope of data and information covered by confidentiality.

**Be aware** that there may be situations where the authorities or media representatives pressure you to disclose data, sometimes resorting to relevant legal actions.

**Remember** that the legal obligation to disclose information does not mean such disclosure is ethically acceptable.

### 2) Measures

**Develop** a series of methodological and organisational precautions for collecting, analysing and storing data to maintain confidentiality (see *Tip box* below).

#### TIP: Data confidentiality checklist

(Based on ICPSR n.d. and Safe Online 2023)

- Review the research process to assess the risk of disclosure
- Check each dataset for direct and indirect identifiers
- Anonymise or pseudonymise data
- Determine who will have access to the data
- Use encryption or password to secure access to data
- Establish a confidentiality policy

**Identify** all variables and information in the data that could compromise the confidentiality of respondents (so-called identifiers).

When conducting field research, **keep confidential** any data you are recording (e.g. do not allow others to read your field notes and transcripts or listen to recordings).



**Ensure** that documents, data storage devices and computer files containing data collected in the field are described by codes unrelated to the study participants.

**Decide** if your data needs to be anonymised or pseudonymised (cf. *Tip box* below). To anonymise data, **remove** or **hide** identifiers; if necessary and possible, change the data configuration as well. To pseudonymise data, **assign** pseudonyms to persons and information.

#### TIP: Differences between anonymisation and pseudonymisation

Pseudonymisation of data, in contrast to anonymisation, can be reversed. Pseudonymisation involves pseudonyms being used in place of identifiable persons and information. On the other hand, anonymisation can be achieved through several techniques, such as removing personal identifiers, using identifier ranges (e.g. age range), or aggregation (information is viewed as totals).

**Remember** that adequately anonymised or pseudonymised data helps to guarantee that research participants will not be re-identified by persons who have access to context information (e.g. other research participants, supervisors, colleagues).

When conducting quantitative research, **apply** appropriate **measures** to counteract potential attempts or opportunities to reveal personal information, including modifying individual data records (e.g. removing individual identifiers) or the entire database (e.g. using statistical methods to disguise or conceal the identities of individuals) and restricting access to data.

**Ensure** that the data are processed securely, preventing re-identification of research participants.

### 3) Policy

**Be careful** about to whom and what data you disclose. **Remember** that data confidentiality can be violated by providing contextual information about research participants.

**Consider** both confidentiality to the external world (external confidentiality) and confidentiality of respondents to other participants in the same organisation or group (internal confidentiality). **Check** if data is anonymised or pseudonymised before sharing it with other researchers.

To enable possible review of the data pseudonymisation or anonymisation, **track** pseudonymisation and anonymisation processes.

To prevent unauthorised access or disclosure, **establish** suitable procedures to safeguard and secure the data collected (cf. next lesson in this part).

**Establish** clear rules for publishing and presenting the collected data and research findings to ensure the confidentiality of the information provided by research participants and prevent accidental identifying data disclosure.

**Inform** research participants of any breaches of data confidentiality and the steps you took to mitigate such incidents.



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### 3. ENSURING SECURE STORAGE AND PROTECTION OF DATA

Lesson author	Ewa Radomska
Related lessons	<i>Part II</i> , lesson 3; <i>Part IV</i> , lessons 1–2

#### MAIN ADDRESSEES

- Researchers
- Research teams
- Principal investigators
- Research project coordinators

#### CHALLENGE

Establishing the principles and measures to prevent unauthorised access to data and protect the rights and freedoms of data subjects

#### BASELINE

There are specific data protection requirements that all researchers must follow by law. In the case of the European Union (2016), they are defined in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). However, there are also additional issues regarding the management of data gathered by gender-based violence researchers, particularly concerning data storage, that go beyond the scope of legal regulations (Westmarland & Bows 2019: 31–32). Most of them are related to the need to respect the standard of confidentiality (see previous lesson in this part).

Article 5 of GDPR points out seven critical principles related to the processing of personal data:

- principle of lawfulness, fairness and transparency,
- principle of purpose limitation,
- principle of data minimisation,
- principle of accuracy,
- principle of storage limitation,
- principle of integrity and confidentiality,
- principle of accountability.

According to the principle of storage limitation, personal data shall be “kept in a form which permits identification of data subjects for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which the personal data are processed.” Such data “may be stored for longer periods insofar as the personal data will be processed solely for archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes.”



## MAIN STEPS

- 1) Establish the most important rules. ⇨ **Principles**
- 2) Make a list of requirements. ⇨ **Measures**
- 3) Make sure that established rules and requirements will be followed. ⇨ **Procedures**

## RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

### 1) Principles

**Check** if and what data protection regulations, including data storage, apply to your research project.

**Establish** the most important rules that should be followed by those responsible for storing and sharing data. **Pay special attention** to protecting personal data (see *Tip box* below).

#### TIP: Definition of personal data

(Based on EU 2016)

According to Article 4 of GDPR, personal data means “any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person (*data subject*) [...] who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person.”

For personal data, **apply** the principle of data minimisation (cf. *Tip box* below); **retain** and **share** only necessary data.

#### TIP: Principle of data minimisation

(Based on EU 2016)

According to Article 5 of GDPR, personal data shall be “adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary in relation to the purposes for which they are processed (*data minimisation*).”

### 2) Measures

**Create** a detailed list of all the measures that need to be taken to ensure the security and protection of the data collected.

**Guarantee** technical, organisational and administrative security measures to prevent unauthorised access to data, especially personal data (see *Tip box* below for recommendations).

**TIP: How to properly secure research data that contains personal data?**

(Based on University of Amsterdam n.d.)

- Separate contact details from research data
- Anonymise or pseudonymise your data as soon as possible
- Choose a safe place to store the data
- Do not store confidential and sensitive information using public cloud storage services (such as Dropbox or Google Drive)
- Remember about the physical security of research data (e.g. security of the computer or other device on which data is stored)
- Use encryption or passwords to secure access to data
- Determine who has access to the storage space

**Ensure** organisational solutions to protect the rights and freedoms of data subjects (cf. *Tip box* below).

**TIP: Rights concerning personal data**

(Based on University of Cambridge n.d.)

- Right to be informed about how their personal data will be used
- Right of access to their personal data
- Right to have their inaccurate personal data rectified
- Right to have their personal data erased when appropriate (right to be forgotten)
- Right to restrict the processing of their personal data pending its verification or correction
- Right to receive copies of their personal data (right to data portability)
- Right to object to processing their personal data for research purposes where that research is not in the public interest

### 3) Procedures

**Find out** whether your institution has a data protection policy and which units are responsible for protecting personal data.

**Establish** procedures for accessing, processing, sharing and storing the data during and after the research project. **Collect** information on those who access, process and use personal data.

**Create** protocols for data storage based on which safety and quality assessments can be performed.

**Note** and **report** any established data storage and protection policy violations to the relevant subject, for instance, the principal investigator, research project coordinator, or data protection unit at your institution.



**Introduce** procedures that can be followed in case of violation of the rights and freedoms of data subjects.

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## 4. RESOLVING CONCERNS ABOUT RESEARCH DATA AND RESULTS OWNERSHIP

Lesson author	Ewa Radomska
Related lessons	<i>Part I</i> , lesson 3; <i>Part III</i> , lesson 2; <i>Part IV</i> , lessons 2–3, 5

### MAIN ADDRESSEES

- Research teams
- Principal investigators
- Research project coordinators

### CHALLENGE

Preventing destructive conflicts over research data and results ownership

### BASELINE

Data and results ownership can cause conflicts between research team members. Such conflicts may stem from different views on who should get credit for research results or become a co-author of publications (cf. next lesson in this part). For instance, researchers lower in the scientific hierarchy often feel that their superiors marginalise their contribution, which can result in resentment and uncooperativeness (Shonk 2023). Conflicts over research data can also arise from disagreements over who can access and use the data and on what terms (see lessons 2 and 3 in this part).

Claims for data and results ownership assume that data and results are property types. Yet, according to the dominant view in legal theory, also including the European legal framework (Pearce 2018), rights to data (as well as to results) cannot be treated as property rights. Many legal scholars claim that “current legal frameworks and the idea of data ownership are incompatible” (Hummel et al. 2021: 548). The key reason they are critical of data ownership is that, unless data is kept secret, it can be duplicated and used by many people simultaneously.

Legal frameworks that govern research data and results, including data protection and contract laws, do not specify to whom they are originally ascribed. Furthermore, intellectual property law (including copyright law) – that regulates non-rival and non-excludable resources – also cannot constitute a general framework for data and results ownership, mainly because intellectual property protection is tied to the act of creation while data and results drawn from them are usually not created by their “owners” (Hummel et al. 2021).

Most calls for data (as well as for results) ownership oscillate between demanding new forms of ownership (cf., e.g., Piasecki & Cheah 2022) and shifting focus towards the effects that data ownership is expected to have in reality. The latter indicates that what is initially referred to as data and results ownership concerns primarily gaining and maintaining control over the data. Data ownership can be a proxy for certain rights – a conceptually open



“bundle of rights” such as access, use and management of data, the right to data revenues and the prohibition of harmful use (Hummel et al. 2021).

Since data and the results drawn from them affect data subjects’ lives, rights and freedoms, the dispute over ownership concerns much more than just data. Consequently, effective data management is not only the management of the data resources but “societal resources of justice, privacy, self-determination, fairness, inclusion, and the like” (Hummel et al. 2021: 551). The fact that data and results do not straightforwardly fall under the categories of property and ownership should not prevent researchers from engaging in debates over who should have rights to research data and results and under what conditions.

Uncertainty around data and results ownership creates additional difficulties when establishing expectations for sharing credit within the research teams and rules on who can access and use data and on what terms (see lessons 2 and 3 in this part). According to Bennet and Gadlin (2012: 772), articulating how recognition and credit should be shared among research team members at an early stage of the collaborative work “can save many hours or even days of arguments and discontent should a disagreement about sharing credit emerge later.” They recommend “creating an environment in which respectful disagreement can occur, productive discussion around difference is fostered, and all the while conflict and negative emotion is contained can lead to enhanced shared learning” (Bennet & Gadlin 2012: 773).

Maintaining productive disagreement is at the heart of professional practices that depend on creating new intellectual property (which, according to some, includes data and results). According to Gadlin (2017), in the case of research teams, a fundamental need is to provide proper communication channels, ensuring that researchers speak the same language (cf. lesson 3 in *Part I*).

## MAIN STEPS

- 1) Determine who owns the research data and results. ⇒ **Initial agreement**
- 2) Set rules for handling disputes over research data and results ownership. ⇒ **Productive disagreement**

## RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

### 1) Initial agreement

**Establish** rules for ownership of research data and results, in particular, rules for ownership of raw data (collected and/or generated during your research), processed data and data results.

**Determine** precisely which rights make up data and results ownership – consider, for instance, the right to use, share, transfer, manage, secure, access, process, and modify.

If possible, **ensure** that legal documents regulating research projects (e.g., grant, consortium or cooperation agreements) contain provisions on who will own the research results and data (including the owner’s rights).

Where possible (e.g., when the data or results take the form of a copyrighted work), **apply** intellectual property protection to datasets, databases and documents presenting the results (see *Tip box* below).

**TIP: Ways of ensuring maximum protection of data through intellectual property**

(Based on Glazer et al. 2017)

- Secure a clear and verifiable chain of title, whether the data was collected or generated internally (by members of the research team) or externally (by using third-party sources)
- Consider the scope and nature of protection that may be secured:
  - under the respective intellectual property regimes (e.g. by copyright),
  - under contract, for example, by ensuring that agreements include adequate safeguards against unauthorised use or disclosure,
  - by setting up internal procedures and introducing access and security controls.

**Establish** a publication policy, including clear rules on who can use and process data to create a publication and **define** the authorship criteria (see next lesson in this part).

**Remember** that all internal regulations and arrangements for the research project must follow applicable law.

**Ensure** that the adopted rules on data ownership, in particular the specific rights they set out, do not conflict with the data management policy created to ensure the confidentiality and security of the data (see lessons 2 and 3 in this part).

**Make** research team members **aware** that in the case of research on gender-based violence, accountability related to ownership of data and results is paramount.

## 2) Productive disagreement

**Create** the environment for a productive disagreement over research project results and data ownership. **Establish** proper organisational rules for team communication and internal dispute resolution before collecting data and generating results.

**Ensure** that at least one person will be responsible for clarifying concerns about data and results ownership that may arise among research team members. **Make sure** that such assistance will be readily available throughout the project.

If possible, **provide** internal procedures for resolving research team members' disputes over data and project results ownership. **Specify** which body or institution should be notified if the research team fails to resolve internal conflicts concerning data and results ownership.

**Find out** which units at your institution and team members' institutions can help resolve potential conflicts over data and results ownership.

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## 5. ESTABLISHING INCLUSIVE, EQUITABLE AND TAILORED AUTHORSHIP POLICY

Lesson author	Ewa Radomska
Related lessons	<i>Part I</i> , lessons 1–2; <i>Part III</i> , lesson 2; <i>Part IV</i> , lessons 1, 4

### MAIN ADDRESSEES

- Research teams
- Principal investigators
- Research project coordinators

### CHALLENGE

Establishing an authorship policy that creates transparent, clear and fair rules regarding who the author is, applies the principle of inclusiveness and considers the expectations of academia and publishers

### BASELINE

Distributing authorship opportunities among the members of research teams can pose a challenge, especially if the team is large and comprises many institutional partners. Factors contributing to this challenge include, in particular, (1) different disciplinary norms, (2) different institutional cultures, and (3) team members' different career statuses (Lewis et al. 2023).

Firstly, in interdisciplinary research, divergences in authorship rules typical for different scientific disciplines can cause misunderstandings. Secondly, if the team consists of researchers from various countries and institutions, meeting the expectations of all partners and researchers might become a serious obstacle to overcome. Finally, less experienced researchers may be unfamiliar with the publication practices, and it may be difficult for them to navigate authorship roles. Consequently, there is a growing appreciation of the importance of equity and inclusion in the publication process to promote scientific development and work satisfaction among all researchers (Lewis et al. 2023).

### MAIN STEPS

- 1) Discuss policy assumptions. ⇒ **Expectations**
- 2) Include different voices. ⇒ **Inclusiveness**
- 3) Establish clear criteria. ⇒ **Rules**



## RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

### 1) Expectations

**Check** if and what publication rules apply to your research team. If setting own joint publishing rules is possible, **give** everyone a chance to participate in developing the relevant policy.

**Discuss** the issue of authorship at the earliest possible stage in the research process. **Verify** with research team members which institutional authorship rules apply to them. **Ask** all researchers about their expectations regarding publications and authorship.

### 2) Inclusiveness

**Involve** young researchers in the processes of developing and authoring publications and **give** them the **opportunity to lead**.

When deciding whom to invite to write a publication, **try to include** researchers from diverse groups and backgrounds (e.g. different social groups) whenever possible; and when an international team conducts research, **try to include** researchers from various countries and cultures (e.g. national, ethnic, religious).

Properly **acknowledge** all contributors, including translators, research assistants, and any external organisations that helped you with the research, e.g. provided or analysed data.

### 3) Rules

**Clarify** the criteria of authorship and acknowledgement in your research project.

**Come up** with a solution to help research team members follow the process of preparing and authoring publications. For instance, **create** a list of all the project outputs that includes information on the contributions made by each person engaged with the particular item on the list.

**Remember** that conflicts around authorship may occur and, in advance, **prepare** procedures for solving them (cf. previous lesson in this part and lesson 2 in *Part III*).

**Consider** if the established rules and criteria can be used to exclude or obscure some authors' contributions. **Introduce** safeguards preventing research team members from misusing them.

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