Framework for Research Ethics and Evaluation: Justification and Guidelines

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These guidelines were produced in the context of the Gender-Crisis Prevention and Recovery Project (G-CPR). The Global Initiative for Gender, Crisis Prevention and Recovery is a UNDP supported project, which is being incubated by the Social Science Research Council.[1]

These guidelines and other information supportive of feminist research can be found at www.palgrave.com/methodology/doingfeministresearch, a link associated with Doing Feminist Research in Political and Social Sciences (Palgrave 2010), *co-authored with Jacqui True.*

Abstract

This document provides guidelines for a feminist research ethics. These guidelines are intended to help *researchers* consider the ethics of their research and *reviewers* – prospective funders, the researcher's own ethical review committee, an outside ethical review committee, or a publication outlet concerned about the research ethics of the scholarship it publishes – to consider the ethics of research. The guidelines are broad in order to be relevant to a broad range of research designs and contexts. They are also specific, in order to promote rich and careful reflection on the ethical dimensions of research in the social sciences. Section 1 describes the context in which these guidelines were developed. Section 2 describes the theoretical and methodological background to the development of these guidelines. Section 3 provides the guidelines themselves. Section 4 outlines how a reviewer may apply them.

1. Introduction

Given the pressing need for scholarship on gender in crisis and post-crisis contexts, there is an equally pressing need for methodological and ethical rigor in research design and practice. Already, research has made it possible to improve policies and practices related to responses to conflict and disaster.[2] By developing and disseminating methodologically and ethically rigorous research practices and findings, the G-CPR can contribute in significant ways not only *to research* on gender in crisis-prevention, crisis, and post-crisis contexts, including militarized conflict, deadly ethnic riots, and natural disaster, but also *to policy-relevant understandings* of effects of all of the dimensions of power at work in these contexts. With better research we can improve our understanding of the causes and consequences of conflict, improve our policies and practices for mitigating and redressing harm from conflict and crisis, and validate or modify those policies and practices that are working well.[3]

The ethical challenges posed by social science research in the area of gender and crisis are ever changing. Questions differ. Questions change. Contexts differ. Contexts change. Researchers develop new methods. They adopt and adapt familiar methods for new contexts and questions. Researchers work in new partnerships across continents and across disciplines. Establish researchers work in partnership with graduate student researchers or nonacademic researchers. All of these ways in which the context of social science research is and will continue to be dynamic suggest that in order to guide social science research on gender and crisis and on gender in crisis settings, we need methodological and ethical principles that provide not only a minimum standard for ethical research, but also guidance in assessing research design, anticipating difficult dilemmas, and thinking through unanticipated dilemmas.

1.1. Contexts of crisis and recovery

While every context is particular, we can learn from the similarities and distinctiveness of each crisis and post-crisis context some general considerations that should inform methodologically rigorous and ethical reflection. Most obviously, the people living in conflict and disaster contexts have more vulnerabilities than are generally found in non-conflict, disaster-free zones. They have fewer economic resources to cope with any given problem. Frequently, their social networks and support structures have been disrupted to a degree that they are no longer able to rely on friends and family for assistance. The activities of local institutions may be disrupted or overwhelmed to the same effect. There are often continuing dangers in these areas, ranging from continuing violence to sickness and disease to abandoned munitions. Given the vulnerabilities of these populations and the related risks and uncertainties associated with conducting research in

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[2] Carrie Y. Barron Ausbrooks, Edith J. Barrett, and Maria Martinez-Cosio, "Ethical Issues in Disaster Research: Lessons from Hurricane Katrina," *Population Research and Policy Review* 28, no. 1 (2009).

[3] See for example Malathi de Alwis and Jennifer Hyndman, "Capacity-Building in Conflict Zones: A Feminist Analysis of Humanitarian Assistance in Sri Lanka," *on file with Brooke Ackerly* (2002).

these contexts, special attention must be given to the ethics of research design and methods. Given the importance of gender in affecting survival and recovery,[4] guidelines must be made more explicit in regards to how to evaluate research designs such that they reflect cutting edge methodological and ethical discussions among researchers in these areas of expertise.

Today there are many areas of critical concern for which feminist scholarship offers the highest standard of methodological and ethical reflection. These relate to the questions we study and the way we study them. Regarding the questions we study, survival in conflict, post-conflict, disaster, and post-disaster recovery is gendered. Who survives and how they survive, who is hurt and how they are hurt, are gendered. The most rigorous methods for research in this area are feminist because academic feminism's analytical tools help us see problems of conflict, disaster and recovery in their social, political, and economic complexity.

1.2. GCPR's GENDER Methodology Project

In order to enhance research capacity in gender and conflict, the G-CPR will encourage discussion of the importance of these methods and ethical standards and to educate researchers in their use, mentor some researchers in the application of these methods and standards to their own research projects, evaluate existing research proposals against these standards, and provide a venue for global discussion of and dissemination of these standards to researchers and institutional review boards. This is a tall order. The GENDER Methodology Project intends to meet that tall order with a multi-stage project for Global, Ethics and Necessary methodology made available through Dissemination, Evaluation, and Resources.

The Framework for Research Ethics Evaluation (FREE) for the G-CPR sets out 1) guidelines for working through ethical and methodological dilemmas, 2) minimum ethical and methodological considerations, and 3) governance practices to assure on-going attention to ethical considerations. Other aspects of the GENDER Methodology Project include online resource materials and mentoring.

2. Intellectual background for the Framework for Research Ethics and Evaluation

The principal influences on our methodological and ethical reflection on research are four-fold:

> 1) the post World War II development of ethical research standards and guidelines by governments, funding organizations, and universities around the world, (and the challenges for those in social sciences and humanities of having

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[4] Eric Neumayer and Thomas Plümper, "The Gendered Nature of Natural Disasters: The Impact of Catastrophic Events on the Gender Gap in Life Expectancy, 1981-2002," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 97, no. 3 (2007).

their research reviewed from that particular ethical perspective which has a particular history and politics)

2) post-colonial critiques of the research practices of academics from the global north,

3) feminist theoretically informed methodological innovation that provides among other things a feminist lens for thinking about the ways in which gender renders the theoretical notion of an autonomous agent as either vulnerable in need of paternalistic protection or able to freely consent to participate in research as too narrow a conception of human agency, and

4) the insights from the researchers and activists already engaged in this work regarding the importance of research with social value, a feminist analysis of power, and the knowledge of grassroots, indigenous, activist and local communities.

These four factors affect our ethical reflections about research on gender in the following ways. The first is to avoid egregious violations of ethics by being attentive to all forms of power dynamics and the potential for abuse of authority and hierarchies. The second is to enable social and behavioral researchers to work on questions of gender and insecurity in ways that are methodologically most appropriate for their question. The third is to do so in a way that draws insights from feminist theory about freedom. The fourth is methodologically important for the development of a research ethics. The research ethics proposed here is a feminist, grounded research ethic. While the first three are essential dimensions of a research ethic that is attentive to power in research, they are dimensions which anticipate that historical experiences of ethics and justice may recur and therefore research ethics must attend to them. However, research ethics emerge in practice in ways that do not map neatly onto historical injustices. Consequently, a research ethics must be dynamic, developed using a methodology that is continually attentive to the potential for seemingly non-hierarchical relationships to become hierarchical, and for hierarchies to become exploitable.[5]

In order to build capacity in G-CPR research, the GENDER Methodology Project will build capacity in the methods that are globally recognized by academics as the most methodologically rigorous for the study of gender, conflict, natural disaster, crisis prevention, and recovery. Further, it will be a site where the complexity of research challenges of this work will be discussed and from which innovations are expected to emerge. While G-CPR research does not need to be "feminist," the insights from feminist scholarship on gender are the most methodological rigorous for the research questions related to G-CPR. Although some political actors may treat "feminism" as a political tool, for academics, it is a research tool, one that yields variables that are appropriately theorized, measures that are accurately operationalized, and, consequently, scholarship that can

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[5] Brooke A. Ackerly and Jacqui True, *Doing Feminist Research in Political and Social Science* (Palgrave, 2010), Brooke A. Ackerly, *Universal Human Rights in a World of Difference* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

withstand the rigorous scrutiny of peer review by feminists and non-feminists alike. Rigorous peer-review is the highest standard of evaluation of academic research.

2.1. Ethical review committees and institutional review boards (IRBs)[6]

The history of research conducted on and with human subjects is marked by repeated ethical lapses. Wide ranging ethical lapses from the infamous medical experimentation on prisoners and concentration camp inmates by the Nazis and the American syphilis study at Tuskegee prompted the development of international and national guidelines to define the conduct of ethical research in a way that protects the people who participate in research.[7] Note, that most narratives about how we came to have ethical review boards do not include reflection on the violence against slave and Third World women in colonial and post-colonial contexts that were often part of medical research.

These guidelines have continued to develop as new dilemmas and problems have come to light. Researchers and ethicists alike continue to debate, for example, how best to continue to support patients who help to test the efficacy of new AIDS treatments once the clinical trial comes to an end, given that many of participants in pharmaceutical trials are located in the global South where appropriate treatment might not be available except in the clinical trial.[8]   Rather than incremental improvement based on lessons learned from mistakes committed in the past,[9] the GENDER Methodology Project offers a more proactive approach to research ethics by incorporating the principles of feminist research that seek to redefine research subjects as participants with significant power and influence over the entire research enterprise.

Institutional Review Boards are an institutional response to the significant lapses in research ethics during the first part of the twentieth century. After the trial of Nazi medical officials who experimented on prisoners and inmates, the Nuremberg Code was promulgated in 1948, establishing international principles for ethical research involving human subjects, detailing the need for informed consent and the absence of coercion, the principle of beneficence (ensuring that the research benefits the person participating in it), and requirements that the research be comprised of valid and important scientific questions and methods.[10] Many countries adopted and adapted the Nuremberg Code into national research ethics laws. The Nuremberg Code was expanded and elaborated as part

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[6] The institutional response to ethical dilemmas in research that developed around the world described in this section include research ethics boards or committees, Institutional Review Boards, review standards, and review processes. These include international norms, association norms and guidelines, and national and local government regulations in many countries around the world.

[7] See for example Terri Kapsalis, "Mastering the Female Pelvis: Race and the Tools of Reproduction," in *Skin Deep, Spirit Strong: The Black Female Body in American Culture*, ed. Kimberly Wallace-Sanders (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2002).

[8] Tessa Tan Torres Edejer, "North-South Research Partnerships: The Ethics of Carrying out Research in Developing Countries," *BMJ* 319, no. 7207 (1999).

[9] Solomon R. Benatar and Peter A. Singer, "A New Look at International Research Ethics," *BMJ* 321, no. 7264 (2000).

[10] The Nuremberg Code, http://ohsr.od.nih.gov/guidelines/nuremberg.html.

of the subsequent Helsinki Declaration,[11] adopted in 1964 and modified six times through 2008, though provisions within newer versions of Helsinki Declaration have been controversial and have not received full support from all countries around the world.[12]

Neither the Nuremburg nor the Helsinki documents are codified international law; rather, they are declarations of principles which are reliant on their incorporation into national laws in order to become enforceable. Many countries have national or nationally mandated institution-based ethics boards which review proposed research, evaluate research protocol against a set of principles more or less similar to those contained within the Helsinki Declaration, and approve or disapprove the application for research. In the United States, these principles are referred to as the Common Rule, a set of laws codified in the Department of Health and Human Services Title 45 CFR 46. The regulations in the Common Rule apply to government-funded research, but most US university-based review boards require that all research, regardless of funding source, abide by these regulations at minimum. Other countries have similar regulations that may differ as to their specifics but are, in spirit, somewhat comparable. There are substantial differences between countries regarding details such as if placebo use is ever acceptable, or how the ethics of studies which involve deception are evaluated, but the principles of informed consent and beneficence, among others, are nearly universal in government-inspired research boards. How to engage these cross-cultural and cross-national differences is an important topic in all discussions of ethical research.[13]

Additionally, different countries have different ways of organizing institutional ethical review. It may be handled at the national level or within institutions guided by national standards or national interpretations of international standards. It may also be guided by community standards.[14]

Certain contemporary social processes have pushed the application of review practices that were developed for medical research to research in the social sciences and humanities. Will van den Hoonaard identifies three contemporary pressures.[15] The first is an increase in privacy protection and attention to confidentiality juxtaposed with a public concern for hidden problems such as child abuse. The second comes from within disciplines themselves. This change also has two forces, the use of qualitative research in fields that did not formerly use these methods and the scrutiny by research ethics review

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[11] World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki, http://www.wma.net/e/policy/b3.htm
[12] http://www.wma.net/en/20activities/10ethics/10helsinki/index.html, last accessed October 25, 2009. See Lurie, P. & Greco D.B. "US Exceptionalism Comes to Research Ethics." *The Lancet*, 365, no. 9471, 1617.
[13] Nicholas A. Christakis, "Ethics Are Local: Engaging Cross-Cultural Variation in the Ethics for Clinical Research," *Social Science and Medicine* 35, no. 9 (1992).
[14] The 2009 version of the list is kept by the Office of Human Resource Protections at http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/international/HSPCompilation.pdf. See also Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, [1998] 1999)..
[15] This paragraph draws on and develops the insights of van den Hoonaard Brenda Louw and Rina Delport, "Contextual Challenges in South Africa: The Role of a Reserach Ethics Committee," *Journal of Academic Ethics* 4, no. Spring (2009).

boards with a biomedical frame of reference.[16] This frame of reference is incompatible with ethnographic methods and community based partnerships. Not only formal guidelines, but also informal heuristics result in research review boards' discouraging certain methodological choices.[17] Consequently, social science researchers are increasingly relying on the interview as the method of gathering qualitative data because it is a tool that most approximates the biomedical frame of reference.[18] Third, increased pressure within certain disciplines to use quantitative methods to evaluate qualitative data and the availability of software to enable the coding and analysis of large amounts of qualitative data in the form of text has also contributed to the increased use of the interview tool.

Those social and behavioral researchers who resist these trends, who want to do qualitative research that relies on a broad range of fieldwork tools, or who want to work in partnership with their research subject-participants, face two challenges from review boards. Research ethics review boards push hard on qualitative methods using guidelines ill-suited to this research and do not push hard enough on the appropriate ethical issues that qualitative research certainly raises.[19] G-CPR's Framework for Research Ethics Evaluation (FREE) broadens the range of methods appropriate to social scientific research by clarifying what rigorous ethical review requires of such methods and deepens the standards of review based on the expectation of a broader range of ethical challenges than most IRBs anticipate.

As a signal to the transformative (but not revolutionary) approach that this framework relies upon, the framework refers not to "human subjects" which is a term which objectifies the subject and relies on a specific epistemology. Rather the guidelines refer to "subject-participants" which is a term which accommodates a wider range of epistemological perspectives and broadens the tools of ethical reflection about the researchers' relationship to all participants in their research project.[20] Other participants in research – translators and interpreters, research assistants, etc. – are essential to much researcher and many of the ethical considerations of the guidelines apply to all participants, not just subject-participants.

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[16] Ibid, Elisabeth Jean Wood, "Field Research During War: Ethical Dilemmas," in *New Perspectives in Political Ethnography*, ed. Lauren Joseph, Matthew Mahler, and Javier Auyero (New York: Springer, 2007).

[17] Johannes Iemke Bakker, "Out of the Clash of Hermeneutic Rules Comes Ethical Decision Making: But Does It?," *Journal of Academic Ethics* 4, no. Spring (2009).

[18] Louw and Delport, "Contextual Challenges in South Africa: The Role of a Reserach Ethics Committee," 263-64.

[19] Lauren K. Collogan, Farris K. Tuma, and Alan R. Fleischman, "Research with Victims of Disaster: Institutional Review Board Considerations," *IRB: Ethics & Human Research* 26, no. 4 (2004), Robert J. P. Hauck, "Protecting Human Research Participants, IRBs, and Political Science Redux: Editor's Introduction," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 41, no. 03 (2008), Mitchell A. Seligson, "Human Subjects Protection and Large-N Research: When Exempt Is Non-Exempt and Research Is Non-Research," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 41, no. 03 (2008), Dvora Yanow and Peregrine Schwartz-Shea, "Reforming Institutional Review Board Policy: Issues in Implementation and Field Research," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 41, no. 03 (2008), H. Strydom, "Ethical Aspects of Research in the Social Sciences and Human Services," in *Research at Grass Roots: For the Social Sciences and Human Services Professions*, ed. A. S. de Vos (Pretoria: Van Schaik, 2002).

[20] For a development of the concept of subject-participant and its use in a feminist research ethic see Ackerly and True, *Doing Feminist Research in Political and Social Science*.

2.2. Insights from indigenous and post-colonial perspectives

The authority to make claims about standards for research is itself a terrain of political dispute. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, article 11, section 2 states, "States shall provide redress through effective mechanisms, which may include restitution, developed in conjunction with indigenous peoples, with respect to their cultural, intellectual, religious and spiritual property taken without their free, prior and informed consent or in violation of their laws, traditions and customs."[21] The research implications of this political achievement is the recognition that even in 2007 when the convention was adopted, it was important to reinforce the basic minimum standard of free, prior and informed consent by explicitly articulating that it applied to indigenous people. As complicated as consent is, and problematic as the notion of freedom on which consent rests is, all research ethics must make free, prior and informed consent a cornerstone of the minimal ethical research standard and be clear about the politics and ethical dilemmas associated with arguing that any individual, despite being a member of one group or another cannot or should not consent.

No amount of careful attention to difference and to complexity of particular contests preclude us from setting baseline protocols that affirm that respectful relationships of researchers with indigenous peoples and communities are the foundation of community research and that free, prior, and informed consent is a basic minimum protocol for exhibiting such respect.

However, free, prior, and informed consent is not the only ethical implication of indigenous struggles over research. "Without full Indigenous self-determination in the research process and full control over the finished datasets and maps, inadvertent or unintended consequences become more likely. These consequences may include geographic data being used by government forces against Indigenous peoples and their collective lands, even if they participated themselves in acquiring the data. They may include the increased privatization or allotment of Native lands in the name of building economic stability" or become victims of geopiracy and biopiracy.[22] Contemporary excitement about the potential to combine technological mapping and indigenous knowledge needs to be accompanied by reflective attention to the ethical dilemmas potentially raised when using these technologies. Those involved in this research are aware that "the recent International Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage which supports the inventorying of intangible heritage, raises sharp ethical issues for those involved in geo-referencing peoples' knowledge and values."[23]

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[21]United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/declaration.html.

[22] Renee Pualani Louis and Zoltán Grossman, "Discussion Paper on Research and Indigenous Peoples," in *Association of American Geographers* (2009), 2.

[23] Giacomo Rambaldi et al., "Practical Ethics for Pgis Practitioners, Facilitators, Technology Intermediaries and Researchers," *Participatory Learning and Action* 54, no. April 2006 (2006): 107. The UNESCO *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* entered into force on April 20, 2006 after ratification by thirty States. http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001325/132540e.pdf.

It may be that such collaboration between researchers and subjects, community leaders of communities of potential subjects, or relief workers who may be gatekeepers for research with potential subjects are not plausible. However, historical and on-going experience with the exploitative potential of research means that ethical research in contexts that provoke vulnerability with people who have structurally very limited capacity to change the political, social and economic circumstances in which they live, work, play and pray. Reflections on the persistence of injustice in research with indigenous populations makes clear that all ethical frameworks for research must treat free, prior, informed consent and the ethical obligation to studied populations as central concerns in evaluating the entire research project from question generation, to research design, to the circulation of findings.

There may be many reasons why even these basic minimums of consent and responsiveness cannot be met for a given project in a conflict or crisis setting. However history and ethics place the burden of justifying deviation from these practices on the researcher.

2.3. Insights from feminism

Because the most rigorous methods require us to pay careful attention to the ways in which researchers interact with participants in their research studies, good research requires considering all of the hierarchies of the research context.[24] Reflecting on theories of freedom and agency encourages us to consider how the research design can both avoid exploiting and contribute to mitigating these hierarchies. This may require some exposition. The characterization of freedom as the essential quality of an autonomous person, and of consent or refusal as the essential act of a free person is a misguided common place concept in political theory, law, and research ethics guidelines. From birth we are all vulnerable and dependent. With maturity we gain interdependence with the rest of our community, the boundaries of which can be broadly and narrowly understood. For all humans, vulnerability and interdependence vary over the life course. True, political theory and law have sought to characterize the human or the legal subject as someone autonomous as opposed to dependent, and if dependent, vulnerable. However, the reality is that, even when laws construct the legal subject in that way (as the Common Rule guidelines do), this dichotomous way of understanding individuality and humanity is inappropriate. Our research and our lived experience show us otherwise.

Is it possible to think about human agency in a more nuanced way, a feminist way, and *not* commit the egregious ethical violations or even mild ethical missteps that others have made? Yes, absolutely. Ethical reflection is not dependent on the notion of the individual as autonomous. In fact, an inaccurate characterization of the human condition is a poor foundation for ethical reflection. Rather, ethical reflection is about responsibility and humility. Ethical reflection in research is about the researcher developing and maintaining an ethical compass that informs and guides her decisions in anticipated and unanticipated dilemmas of research.

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[24] Ackerly and True, *Doing Feminist Research in Political and Social Science*.

Brooke Ackerly and Jacqui True have described the feminist theoretically informed methodological innovation as that of a feminist research ethic.[25] A Feminist Research Ethic is a meta-methodology, a methodology that guides all other methodological choices from deciding on a research question, to data collection techniques, to publication decisions. The four dimensions of this "meta-methodology" are 1) attention to power, particularly the way in which those with the power to say what is "true" have so much power that we don't even see them exercise it unless we look for it; 2) attention to boundaries and the ways in which we construct them all the time in order to simplify the world we see and are trying to understand; 3) attention to relationships, including of course the relationships between researcher and subject-participant, but also the relationships among research team members, among subject-participants, between a subject-participant and her community (our considerations of what relationships are important should not be bounded); and 4) the practice of self-reflexivity, always willingly revisiting our prior reflections on power, boundaries and relationships, always remembering to redirect our critical reflection on others' choices back at our own choices, approaching the responsibilities of ethical scholarship with humility.[26]

This general outline of a feminist research ethic is based in the theoretical and activist reflections of certain critical forms of social criticism[27] and has been developed through reflection on feminist research practices that go by many names, including transnational and global feminism.[28] It provides among other things a lens for thinking about the ways in which the notion of an autonomous agent as either vulnerably in need of paternalistic protection or able to consent to participate in research is too narrow a conception of human agency for the study of questions related to gender, and gender in contexts of crisis more acutely.

When we consider gender centrally in our study of any research question, we notice that 1) power functions in ways that often render its own exercise invisible. We notice that the acceptance of gender norms is a way of perpetuating gender hierarchy. We notice that 2) researchers also participate in the construction of boundaries that conceal the exercise of power. Researchers can do this inadvertently. If researchers cannot design a research project in a way that trains local women as paraprofessionals to disseminate health messages while gathering health data because in the view of an ethical review board that would be making a "vulnerable" woman more vulnerable (defying community norms by leaving her family *bari* in Bangladesh), then our research would actual maintain her

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[25] Brooke A. Ackerly and Jacqui True, "Reflexivity in Practice: Power and Ethics in Feminist Research on International Relations," *International Studies Review* (2009), Ackerly and True, *Doing Feminist Research in Political and Social Science*.

[26] Brooke A. Ackerly, "Feminist Methodological Reflection," in *Qualitative Methods in International Relations: A Pluralist Guide (Research Methods)*, ed. Audie Klotz and Deepa Prakash (2008), Ackerly, *Universal Human Rights in a World of Difference*.

[27] Brooke A. Ackerly, *Political Theory and Feminist Social Criticism*, Contemporary Political Theory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[28] For a review of these literatures see Ackerly, "Feminist Methodological Reflection.", Ackerly and True, "Reflexivity in Practice: Power and Ethics in Feminist Research on International Relations.", ———, *Doing Feminist Research in Political and Social Science*, Brooke A. Ackerly and Katy Attanasi, "Global Feminisms: Theory and Ethics for Studying Gendered Injustice," *New Political Science* 31, no. 4 (2009).

vulnerability. If we hire urban Masters students to gather our data from rural women, then we are contributing to a view of village women as objects of study not agents of change in their own lives. Researchers must be able to design research projects in ethical ways that attend to hierarchy without exploiting hierarchies. When researchers attend to gender we notice that 3) our research and our presence as researchers can change relationships among community members, potentially challenging or reinforcing hierarchies. A priori there is nothing more ethical in one or the other. Through ongoing conversation and imagination, researchers need to reflect on all of the relationships affected by our research. Reflection in this way will do some of the work that the risk and benefit analysis familiar to IRB processes promise to accomplish, but it will do more as well and enable us to interpret the risks and benefits of research in the lives of subject-participants and all stakeholders in our research.

The FREE uses a feminist research ethic to guide the *researcher* to draft, revise, and deploy general guidelines, minimum reflections, and research governance and to guide the *reviewer* in assessing these.

2.4. Insights from researchers and activists in the field of gender, crisis prevention, and recovery

Given the political nature of its sponsors and the political contexts in which G-CPR researchers' work, the credibility of its scholarship rests on its academic integrity and its commitment to global, not imposed, standards, such that research governance in the G-CPR refers not only to the process of research oversight, but also to the processes of reviewing and maintaining its own evaluative framework and process (this Framework for Research Ethics and Evaluation). These processes voice and learn from conflicting views but de-legitimate conflicts of interest.[29]

This legitimacy can be maintained through the G-CPR researchers who are expected to use the *academic* language (including "feminism") most appropriate to their project. However, the FREE review process will also respect that in certain contexts the academic language of feminism is politically untenable. G-CPR will encourage the academic use of feminist theory and methods without discouraging projects that use the insights but not the jargon of that scholarship.

This legitimacy can be further enhanced, and the likelihood of research coming to completion and yielding research of social value greatly increased, if activists (which are not the same as community leaders) are part of research design at, and informing, every stage of the process.[30] While we can learn much from small, innovative initiatives by grassroots and indigenous women, it is important to recognize that grassroots and indigenous women's initiatives, particularly in the area of disaster resilience "have been sustained, diversified and scaled up over a ten-year period…[G]rassroots and indigenous women have large organized constituencies and are eager to share information and

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[29] On the importance of having conflicting views be adjudicated publicly with legitimate deliberative spaces see Brooke A. Ackerly, ""How Does Change Happen?" Deliberation and Difficulty," *Hypatia* 22, no. 4 (2007).
[30] http://www.disasterwatch.net/

technical skills and to transfer successful practices through learning exchanges"[31] and academic researchers have the potential to serve as important partners it that.

3. *Framework for Research Ethics and Evaluation*

The following paragraphs describe the broad concerns of ethical review, the challenges for applying these in conflict, post-conflict, or disaster contexts, giving particular attention to the ways in which gender and gendered power dynamics require careful ethical reflection. Each research proposal should address ethical issues related to research. Ethical reflection cannot be left for later consideration. Ethical reflection is an essential dimension of good research design.

These guidelines are intended to help *researchers* consider the ethics of their research and *reviewers* (be they prospective funders, the researcher's own ethical review committee, an outside ethical review committee, or a publication outlet concerned about the research ethics of the scholarship it publishes) to consider the ethics of research. The guidelines are broad in order to be relevant to a broad range of research designs and contexts. They are also specific, in order to promote rich and careful reflection on the ethical dimensions of research in the social sciences.

While it is important to think critically about how the institutional ethical review process has been politicized to protect certain interests and vulnerable groups and not others, to focus on certain ethical questions and not others, these guidelines are intended to work within and transform, but not to revolutionize dominant frameworks for thinking about research ethics. With such a revolution might be tempting, in the near term it would be merely an academic enterprise. In the present, researchers and reviewers can use these guidelines to conform better to existing research norms and to develop these such that the norms themselves do not come to undermined quality ethical research in the social sciences.

3.1. Collaboration and Partnership

> *Research should be designed in a collaborative partnership among those with local knowledge, those with methodological expertise, and those in the position to build and sustain capacity for research across the globe, particularly for capacity close to the sites of research.*

Transinstitutional and transnational collaboration is a valuable way of building a research team because it allows for local control of knowledge, mutual capacity building, and sharing of comparative strengths. Foreign "researchers should engage in partnership with national or international research institutions as relevant and appropriate. Such collaboration should contribute to developing the capacity for researchers and [field level]

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[31] http://www.groots.org/news/4-08-provention_forum.html last accessed October 24, 2009. On file with Brooke Ackerly.

policy makers to become equal partners in the research enterprise."[32] Partnership development prior to developing the research design is foundational to a successful relationship. Collaboration during the earliest stages of research increase the likelihood that the partnership will be mutually beneficial and that the research design – including all elements from question to methods, to informed consent procedures, to confidentiality practices, to dissemination – will be feasible and lead to credible results.[33]

Field research often requires collaboration with researchers from other institutions, or, in the case of community-based participatory research, members of the community. IRB rules are generally quite strict about who can conduct research on human subject-participants. Generally, all people who will interact with human beings for research purposes must complete an IRB training module (at many US universities, this module is the CITI online training course, which requires people to read about the history of and regulations pertaining to research on human subject-participants and then pass a multiple-choice quiz). In addition, ethics boards must be informed of which researchers will be working on any given project. Collaborative projects are generally reviewed by the ethics boards of each researcher at their home institution or national review board depending on the country.

These rules make it difficult to collaborate with people who either lack any institutional affiliation or whose institutions do not have the capacities to form ethics boards as required by US federal law. Local guidance and expertise is absolutely necessary for expatriate researchers working in conflict and disaster zones, and many commentators say that such guidance is necessary even when conducting more prosaic research.[34] While a guide or logistics support person might not interact with subject-participants, a translator certainly would. Such contexts may not have functional government-authorized research ethics committees.[35] Further, any combination of bias, corruption, and bureaucracy may preclude timely and appropriate guidance from such sources. Collaboration with organizations whose representatives will not directly interact with subject-participants does not require the approval of a separate research ethics board but generally does require a letter of cooperation stating the terms of cooperation.

There is a great deal more to ethical collaboration than simply ensuring that all partners are protected and monitored by an ethics board. Researchers must consider both the power they bring to a situation and their situatedness and perspective when interacting with others.[36] There is significant danger of a "scientific colonialism,"[37] particularly when

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[32] Nathan Ford et al., "Ethics of Conducting Research in Conflict Settings," *Conflict and Health* 3, no. 1 (2009): 7.

[33] See also Carol M. Musil et al., "Considerations for Preparing Collaborative International Research: A Ugandan Experience," *Applied Nursing Research* 17, no. 3 (2004). and Ackerly and True, *Doing Feminist Research in Political and Social Science*.

[34] Daniel P. Aldrich, "The 800-Pound Gaijin in the Room: Strategies and Tactics for Conducting Fieldwork in Japan and Abroad," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 42, no. 02 (2009).

[35] Khabir Ahmad, "Developing Countries Need Effective Ethics Review Committees," *The Lancet* 362, no. 9384 (2003).

[36] A. B. Zwi et al., "Placing Ethics in the Centre: Negotiating New Spaces for Ethical Research in Conflict Situations," *Global Public Health* 1, no. 3 (2006).

individuals and organizations from the global North conduct research in the global South, but also when one portion of the team has control over any piece of the project – such as access to, and interpretation of, data. Indeed, there are claims made in the medical literature that some projects are conducted in the global South (with full IRB supervision) that would never be allowed if the same protocol were followed in the global North.[38] The vast majority of resources for conducting research go to researchers from the global North (it would seem reasonable to assume that the majority of resources for training new resources go to citizens of the global North). Massive inequalities and power differentials are already built into the research system. The researcher, at the very least, must seek to avoid exploiting these inequalities.

One of the G-CPR goals is to build local capacity for research such that these disparities are eliminated over time.[39] A feminist research ethic guides the researcher in thinking through these hierarchies and their potential for exploitation.[40]

Consider the following important means by which this goal can be achieved.   First, collaboration should not be limited simply to hiring local university students or other local people to provide data collection and translation services. By the time a project is at the stage of identifying research assistants of this type, the overall goals, research questions, and methods generally have already been identified. In truly collaborative research, goals, research questions, and methods are all open for negotiation and discussion. By the time a researcher is ready to apply for ethics board oversight, there should be solid evidence of deep and careful collaboration in the conceptualization and design of the project. The best types of collaboration are such that all parties involved put significant effort into the process and see commensurate benefit. This approach transforms the standard "do no harm" principle and argues that research participants should have a chance to benefit not just from the results which may eventually be published but also from the actual conduct of research.[41] Collaborators should negotiate in advance which partners are responsible for which responsibilities, who would have rights to use the data once collected, how any analysis would be completed, and who would have access to it as well as the rights and responsibilities in regards to the write-up and delivery of results.[42]   When collaboration of this type is difficult because of the nature of the research, organizations which provide logistical support or legal cover should be compensated in some form for their effort, either by skilled or technical work provided by the researcher, a monetary donation, or some

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[37] Edejer, "North-South Research Partnerships: The Ethics of Carrying out Research in Developing Countries."
[38] Marcia Angell, "The Ethics of Clinical Research in the Third World," *New England Journal of Medicine* 337, no. 12 (1997).
[39] Benatar and Singer, "A New Look at International Research Ethics."
[40] For more on a feminist research ethic and the situatedness of the researcher see Ackerly and True, *Doing Feminist Research in Political and Social Science*.
[41] Catriona Mackenzie, Christopher McDowell, and Eileen Pittaway, "Beyond 'Do No Harm': The Challenge of Constructing Ethical Relationships in Refugee Research," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 20, no. 2 (2007).
[42] Edejer, "North-South Research Partnerships: The Ethics of Carrying out Research in Developing Countries.", Ann C. Macaulay et al., "Participatory Research Maximises Community and Lay Involvement," *BMJ* 319, no. 7212 (1999), Benatar and Singer, "A New Look at International Research Ethics."

other mutually agreeable method.[43]   The researchers' own ethics statement and a memo of understanding can clarify commitments and shared understandings. Because there can be personnel changes during research, these should be documents not verbal agreements and should be part of the project's documentation.

This type of collaboration can also have other advantages, including improving the overall quality of the research,[44] enhancing safety for all participants,[45] and navigating logistical hurdles. Such collaborations take time and relationships to develop and thus will be more likely if funding for preliminary research and project development is available.

A key principle in ethical collaborations is that the partner which may be more resource-rich does what is possible to ensure that those partners with fewer resources are left with something beyond the experience gained from the conduct of the research itself when the collaboration comes to an end. Such ethical collaboration mandates that people with high levels of expertise attempt to build local capacity, perhaps by mentoring key staff members of a host organization, or by providing skills-training workshops to local practitioners, or through some other method.[46]   It is frequently the case that local scholars already will be working on similar questions by the time expatriate researchers arrive in the field,[47] and to ignore or otherwise devalue their work disrespects both their local expertise and the efforts they are expending to improve their societies. The FREE process and the G-CPR more generally seek to work in ways that are sensitive and responsive to this dynamic, mitigating its exploitable hierarchies where possible.

Research collaboration does create additional ethical challenges that must be addressed adequately by the researcher. For example, how will all research team members (including local gatekeepers and translators) continue to be held accountable to principles of confidentiality once the project ends? Furthermore, how is confidentiality potentially breached when both the research team member and subject-participant know each other?[48] In the midst of ethnic or other sorts of social strife, how might sectarian tensions develop between members of the research team and between the research team and the

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[43] Dorothea Hilhorst and Bram Jansen, "Fieldwork in Hazardous Areas," (Wageningen University, Disaster Studies, 2005), Elisabeth Levy Paluck, "Methods and Ethics with Research Teams and NGOs: Comparing Experiences across the Border of Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo <Draft>," in *Doing Research in Difficult Situations*, ed. John C. King, et al. (2008).
[44] Barbara L. Paterson, David Gregory, and Sally Thorne, "A Protocol for Researcher Safety," *Qualitative Health Research* 9, no. 2 (1999), Julie Mertus, "Maintenance of Personal Security: Ethical and Operational Issues," in *Surviving Field Research: Working in Violent and Difficult Situations*, ed. Chandra Lekha Sriram, et al. (New York: Routledge, 2009), Anna Sampaio and Hermanas En La Lucha, "Transnational Feminisms in a New Global Matrix," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 6, no. 2 (2004).
[45] Elisabeth Jean Wood, "The Ethical Challenges of Field Research in Conflict Zones," *Qualitative Sociology* 29, no. 3 (2006).
[46] Paluck, "Methods and Ethics with Research Teams and NGOs: Comparing Experiences across the Border of Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo <Draft>."
[47] Sophia Buranakul et al., "The Asian Tsunami, Academics and Academic Research," *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 26, no. 2 (2005).
[48] Karen Jacobsen and Loren B. Landau, "The Dual Imperative in Refugee Research: Some Methodological and Ethical Considerations in Social Science Research on Forced Migration," *Disasters* 27, no. 3 (2003).

general public?[49] If team members have some autonomy in identifying potential research participants, what are the chances that they will "stack the deck" as it were, with people of their own choosing?[50] After the project comes to an end, what happens if some of the people involved use the data or analysis to further an unjust agenda? Adequate training and supervision might overcome some of these challenges, but some risks will always be present.

At a minimum, the researcher needs to have sources for local knowledge, such as a local advisory board. Whether from the country or not, class, gender and ethnicity (among other social markers of power) create differences that affect what is knowable to a researcher. Researchers need to be explicit about how their research design confronts these challenges.

At a minimum, the proposal should include
- the reasoning for working or not working in a partnership
- an advisory board that includes appropriate local expertise. The proposal should list members and the reason for the inclusion of each on the project's team of advisors (TOA).

In the case of collaboration, the proposal should specify
- the relevance of the project for the host institution.
- the relevance of the project for the community partners.
- the approval and review processes for each partner.

Considerations for reviewers and researchers
- Where collaboration is a key dimension of the research design, as in participatory action research, does the proposal demonstrate solid evidence of deep and careful collaboration in the conceptualization and design of the project? The best types of collaboration are such that all parties involved both put significant effort (sacrifice) into the process and see equal benefit.
- Are there clear responsibilities for all collaborators?
- Are there clear articulations of entitlement to use the raw data and findings of the research? For example, participants may collaborate in data collection and analyze the data separately. Will collaborators enhance the capacity of each other to do this and to do so ethically?
- Are there clear articulations of authorship and other recognition associated with the research?
- How has the collaboration attended to differences in resources and capacity building of all research participants and collaborators? How has the collaboration dealt with difficulties in communication?

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[49] Ibid, Paluck, "Methods and Ethics with Research Teams and NGOs: Comparing Experiences across the Border of Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo <Draft>."
[50] Paluck, "Methods and Ethics with Research Teams and NGOs: Comparing Experiences across the Border of Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo <Draft>.", Katie Ellis, "Isolation and Companionship: Disability in Australian (Post) Colonial Cinema," *Wagadu* 7, no. Intersecting Gender and Disability Perspectives in Rethinking Postcolonial Identities (2007).

3.2. Participant engagement

> *Research participants, and most importantly subject-participants, must not only be fully informed about the purpose, methods and intended possible uses of the research, but also be able to inform all dimensions of research design in a way and degree that is appropriate to the specific project. The proposal shall stipulate the processes by which this occurred and the sources of "authority" for "community" or participant views. Where this is not part of the research design, as may often be the case, the researcher should address this. Lack of participant consultation needs to be explained.*

Research has shown that it is important to "respect the community's values, culture, traditions, and social practices."[51] On this view, when possible, researchers – foreign and national – "should involve the community in the design and implementation of research through a consultative process and share fairly any financial and other rewards of the research."[52] Where this is not possible, and it often will not be possible in conflict settings, researchers should explain why in the particular settings of this research, such consultation is not possible. For example, in conflict settings this may be due to breakdown in traditional community structures.

However, when doing research on gender, while it is important to respect a community's values, culture, tradition, and social practices, it is not always ethically correct to capitulate to these. For example, gender hierarchies might mean women's interests were inadequately considered in a community consultative process that followed local hierarchies.

The reasons for *not* consulting with the community can be varied. Researchers should reflect on whether and how to respectfully engage with subject-participants and their communities. Forefront in their minds in this reflection should be the social value of the research to the subject-participants, to their communities, and to those at risk of similar vulnerabilities.

Reviewers and researchers should ask
- Does the project reflect on the (local) community, organizational, and other dimensions of context in appropriate ways?
- Has the author drawn on appropriate resources for assessing risk in the contexts of research?[53]

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[51] Ford et al., "Ethics of Conducting Research in Conflict Settings," 7.
[52] Ibid.
[53] See the Office of the United Nations Security Operations (UNSECOORD) which continually develops systems for staff security and offers country assessments with materials that researchers might use to develop their own safety assessments and precautions.

3.3. Social Value and Beneficence

> *The social value of the research should be clear. Researchers should reflect on the necessity of conducting the research and on the feasibility of the research being completed and disseminated.*

When we consider the social value of research on gender and crisis, conflict, or disaster, it is not always obvious to whom the social value of the research accrues. In much social science research, the beneficiaries are not necessarily the subject-participants, certainly it is hard to consider benefits accruing to those who have died. However, every project should have a clear articulation of its social value and its beneficiaries. Articulating this benefit – even if it is to the organization that is the gatekeeper who has facilitated the research – does not undermine the academic credibility of the project as "objective".[54]

The social value can be in terms of policy impact, improved knowledge leading to improved and more appropriate services or other resources. However, due to the transients of social science contexts generally, and conflict and disaster context specifically, those who benefit from these secondary impacts of the research may not be the subject-participants. A good ethical proposal will recognize these issues and consider their ethical implications.

Given the history of research conducted most famously in German concentration camps and in the American South (Tuskegee), and less famously on slaves[55] and women in the Global South and indigenous communities, in which research subjects were experimented on at considerable cost to their well-being, research conducted under the auspices of an Institutional Review Board must now incorporate the principle of beneficence, meaning that the people who undertake the risks associated with research must also have a reasonable chance of benefiting from it. In contexts like certain types of medical trials, where new pharmaceutical treatments are being tested to see if they are effective against specific diseases, this calculus is relatively straightforward, for only people who have such diseases would participate in the trial. In much social science research, the benefit of the research to the participants and to society as a whole is not nearly so direct or neatly ascertained and this is an area where IRBs continue to reflect, though the Helsinki Declaration is clear that a researcher's first obligation is unequivocally to the well-being of the individual subject-participant above any potential benefit to society.[56]

The principle of beneficence may also be even more problematic in particularly unstable areas such as war and disaster zones. Risks are often greater in these contexts[57] and potential benefits may be more tenuous as the context quickly shifts. It is extremely

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[54] For more on gatekeepers and facilitators see Ackerly and True, *Doing Feminist Research in Political and Social Science*.

[55] Kapsalis, "Mastering the Female Pelvis: Race and the Tools of Reproduction."

[56] Angell, "The Ethics of Clinical Research in the Third World."

[57] Barron Ausbrooks, Barrett, and Martinez-Cosio, "Ethical Issues in Disaster Research: Lessons from Hurricane Katrina."

difficult to calculate how to balance risk and benefit in conflict and disaster zones[58] or in the aftermath of other traumatic events.[59]   For example, collecting testimony from women who have been raped may help to build a case against the people who urged soldiers to use rape as a weapon of war, help to create better programs to help women recover from sexual violence, and help to create policies and laws that promote the increasingly widespread recognition of the rights of women, but the research in and of itself can accomplish none of these things.[60] Considerable political will, among other things, will have to exist to bring the potential benefits to fruition. Aside from potential psychological benefit from telling their stories, the women in question risk potential psychological distress and the possibility of reprisal for exposing the violence, and potentially the people who committed it, which they experienced; there is little direct benefit to such subject participants. The mere potential for benefit and in the face of considerable personal risk can be somewhat mitigated if, for example, the research is completed as part of a larger initiative to support these women's recovery from violence or as part of a project to evaluate an existing initiative. Regardless, the complexities of trying to apply a strict interpretation of the beneficence standard are difficult indeed, though care must be taken to delink the intervention or program with the research, such that people are not obligated to participate in the research even if they receive services.[61] Further, it is difficult to compare risk and risk assessment across projects, review boards, and national jurisdictions, let alone to establish metrics for determining how much risk is acceptable for a given project.[62] However, every researcher can and should reflect on the potential harms and benefits to the study participants, perhaps working in community and other local partnership to assess those harms relative to the benefits.

In the specific example of research in a context of disaster recovery or where international or national legal cases may go forward, it may be appropriate to do research using materials produced by others in the context of their service-provision or legal work.

Researchers and reviewers should assess
- the extent to which the research broadens understanding of the gendered power relations, interests, and contradictions underlying the conflict or crisis. Does the

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[58] Lauren K. Collogan et al., "Ethical Issues Pertaining to Research in the Aftermath of Disaster," *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 17, no. 5 (2004).; Collogan, Tuma, and Fleischman, "Research with Victims of Disaster: Institutional Review Board Considerations."; Jacobsen and Landau, "The Dual Imperative in Refugee Research: Some Methodological and Ethical Considerations in Social Science Research on Forced Migration."; Jennifer M. Knack et al., "Opportunities and Challenges for Studying Disaster Survivors," *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy* 6, no. 1 (2006).; Ellis, "Isolation and Companionship: Disability in Australian (Post) Colonial Cinema."

[59] Elana Newman, Elizabeth Risch, and Nancy Kassam-Adams, "Ethical Issues in Trauma-Related Research: A Review," *Journal of Empirical Research on Human Research Ethics* 1, no. 3 (2006).

[60] Further, in conflict sites, there may be things that are "known" – such as the role of certain political actors in certain violent practices – but were these to be documented by research, additional harms or retribution may be expected to be brought on subject-participants.

[61] Athula Sumathipala and Sisira Siribaddana, "Research and Clinical Ethics after the Tsunami: Sri Lanka," *The Lancet* 366, no. 9495 (2005).

[62] Loretta M. Kopelman, "Minimal Risk as an International Ethical Standard in Research," *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 29, no. 3 (2004), Hauck, "Protecting Human Research Participants, IRBs, and Political Science Redux: Editor's Introduction."

researcher look for the ways that other forms of power relations and other boundaries depend on gendered power?
- the degree to which the research examines the conditions giving rise to crisis with a view to identifying the changes required for gender equitable recovery.
- the openings provided by the research for making participants' gendered experiences and conditions of crisis more known to those with the power to effect change.
- the potential for the research to generate increased understanding of these dynamics that can be used towards the goal of working out appropriate strategies for gender and social justice.
- the scope for using the research to strengthen alliances among different constituencies in the push towards gender and social justice.

Additionally researchers and reviewers should ask
- Is the research question important and appropriate to the context? Will it contribute to insights that make the costs and risks seem worth it? Is it done in a way that is sensitive to the suffering of potential research subject-participants?
- How does the researcher reflect on the benefit of her or his research? There are many possible "right" answers. Researchers may reflect on policy implications, community benefits, donor insights leading to potential future funding, subject-participant benefits, research-team member training, and mentoring. This last is particularly interesting when team members are part of the community of study.

3.4. Quality research design

Research should be designed so as to ensure its quality and credibility.

Good research design increases the likelihood that the findings will be socially valuable. Many of the dynamic dimensions of research in crisis affected settings risk rendering the findings less credible. The research design should anticipate that risk and researchers should describe how their research design anticipates that likelihood. Depending on the research, this may mean triangulating from multiple methods, working in multiple sites, or a willingness to switch between comparison across time to comparison across context, for example.

Given that the probability of any benefit accruing to participants or society generally depends on a successful project, asking participants to take risks that may not lead to at least reliable findings (if not tangible benefits) is unacceptable. For example, a non-representative sampling design in many types of studies limits the generalizability of any conclusions, which in turn limits the utility of the research. With such a flawed research design the risk that people assume in volunteering to participate in the research project

and the time they sacrifice to do so may have little chance of contributing to knowledge that would affect their circumstances or those of others in like circumstances.[63]

Feminist research in conflict and disaster affected contexts seeks to move the world towards a more just future. If researchers are motivated in part by their interest in addressing such injustice, then their methods must be unimpeachable. Inevitably there will be people who dislike a researcher's conclusions and will seek to discredit the process by which they were generated. Only by ensuring the highest possible design quality can research maximize the probability that arguments for social change that are informed by research can be defended against those who would seek to discredit them.[64]

Reviewers and researchers should ask
- What is the quality of the research design?
- Did the researcher use the best available resources for developing her question, research design, methods, and planned methods of analysis?
- How has the researcher considered the ways in which gender may affect the research process?
- Did the researcher deploy a feminist research ethic in anticipating moments in research that will require further reflection?[65]
- How does the research deal with language diversity, translation (which is written and planned), and interpretation (which is oral, spontaneous, and live)?

3.5. Risk and safety

> *Researchers should assess the risk to participants and the likelihood that the research can be completed against the possible social value and value to the participants of the research.*

One of the primary tasks of any research ethics process is to keep participants safe from physical, psychological, and other types of harm. IRBs carefully screen the proposed research protocol to ensure that research activities represent minimal risks to potential subject-participants. The circumstances of conflict and disaster zones, and the risks inherent to living and working in these zones, are not perhaps as evident to ethics boards unfamiliar with unstable regions, focusing as they do primarily on the research act itself and less so the circumstances in which it takes place. Those circumstances require review as well. For example, asking community members to attend a community meeting may

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[63] Jacobsen and Landau, "The Dual Imperative in Refugee Research: Some Methodological and Ethical Considerations in Social Science Research on Forced Migration."

[64] M. Smyth and G. Robinson, eds., *Researching Violently Divided Societies: Ethical and Methodological Issues* (London: Pluto Press, 2001).

[65] Brooke A. Ackerly, "Women's Organizations and Global Governance: The Need for Diversity in Global Civil Society," in *Global Governance / Global Government: Power and Possibility in an Evolving World System*, ed. Luis Cabrera (Forthcoming).

expose them to mortar or sniper fire or a concealed bomb.[66] Asking village leaders to travel to a central town to discuss post-conflict recovery may expose them to hidden land mines or rebel attacks on the road. Epidemics of cholera and other diseases, damaged infrastructure and buildings, and potential social unrest pose dangers to people after disasters like earthquakes have taken place. Researchers must provide an account of how they have acquired their knowledge of the situation on the ground and how it has influenced their research design.

Once there is IRB approval, the situation may change very quickly. Given that approval of a project is typically valid for one year, the IRB may not have any mechanism for revisiting their risk assessment short of an adverse incident report received from the researcher, by which time it will have been too late to ensure the safety of participants, or the organizations and communities that are the contexts of given research. The FREE expects a local advisory board for each project of this sort and a process of timely response to the reporting of adverse conditions and effects.

An area of safety often overlooked by IRBs (though potentially not in the UK[67]) is the safety of the researchers themselves.[68] In the context of research conducted across national borders, the safety of both expatriate and local researchers must be assured.[69] While presumably many security measures that ensure the safety of research participants will also serve to protect researchers, specific consideration should be taken for this group as well. Researchers may experience psychological distress related to the nature of the data they collect.[70] In war zones, expatriate researchers might be targets of kidnapping or other attacks. Similarly, local researchers may become targets because of their involvement in the project.

Equitable treatment for expatriate and local researchers in regards to ensuring their safety can be difficult to achieve. The responsibilities of the team leader (or, alternately, the person who pays the salaries of team members) and his or her institution in regards to local researchers should be specified in advance of the start of project activities. For example, if a home university will pay a ransom for a faculty member who is kidnapped in course of performing approved research, will they also pay the ransom for a person locally hired by the faculty member? Who is responsible for paying medical bills or supporting the family should a local researcher be injured or killed? Should violence break out in an area, how will project leaders attempt to guarantee the safety of local staff? Are such promises realistic, and will the resources to do as promised be easily and readily available?

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[66] Jonathan Goodhand, "Research in Conflict Zones: Ethics and Accountability," *Forced Migration Review* 8, no. 4 (2000).
[67] Jenny Hughes, "Ethical Cleansing? The Process of Gaining 'Ethical Approval' for a New Research Project Exploring Performance in Place of War," *Research in Drama Education* 10, no. 2 (2005).
[68] Paterson, Gregory, and Thorne, "A Protocol for Researcher Safety."
[69] Hilhorst and Jansen, "Fieldwork in Hazardous Areas."; Paluck, "Methods and Ethics with Research Teams and NGOs: Comparing Experiences across the Border of Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo <Draft>."
[70] Paluck, "Methods and Ethics with Research Teams and NGOs: Comparing Experiences across the Border of Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo <Draft>."

In the quest to reduce or eliminate risks, review committees may inadvertently strip both researchers and research participants of their agency to be sacrificial agents of change. There are people, researchers and research participants alike, who might voluntarily accept a higher level of risk to themselves in order to achieve a potentially beneficial outcome. A monocular focus by a review board to reduce risk precludes this type of sacrificial involvement. Extreme caution must be taken to ensure that no one is being coerced, intentionally or unintentionally, to take risks to themselves. The feminist perspective enables us to move away from the dichotomous construction of subject participants and researchers as either consenting or vulnerable, invites us to inform such decisions with a more complicated and nuanced understanding of power dynamics, and opens up a range of other considerations in addition to power including the range of relationships of researchers and subject participants in their communities.

Researchers and reviewers should ask
- Is the study part of a larger project of support for the participant subjects?
- Does the study attend to the potential risks to the researchers and participants associated with the project?

3.6. Informed consent

> *Researchers should use local knowledge and partnership to design recruitment procedures and procedures for ensuring free, prior, and informed consent that are most appropriate to the context and participants.*

In the current era of research ethics, the core consideration of ethical research processes is informed consent, the process by which prospective subject-participants are informed by the researcher about 1) the nature of the research, 2) any risks and benefits which might result from their participation, 3) their rights to refuse to participate or to end their participation without penalty, and 4) the means by which they can contact the researcher and his or her ethics oversight body. After a potential participant is made aware of these, they can either consent or decline to participate. Studies which may involve deception or non-public observation (such that participants cannot give fully informed consent) require very careful consideration.

At the core of the informed consent procedure in research ethics is the informed consent document (ICD) which specifies the ways in which the researcher will obtain free, prior, and informed consent form research subjects. Researchers prepare a document outlining all the points in the preceding paragraph and submit it to the review board for approval. Once approved, a potential participant must sign the ICD to indicate their consent to participate in the research process; participants are given a copy to keep while the researcher must maintain archives of the signed documents. Anecdotally, the ICD is the single more scrutinized document in research ethics. Given all the requirements mandated by review boards, they often are two to three pages long (perhaps longer for medical research) with multiple paragraphs. A good IRB can encourage the ICD to be written in a

language and at a reading level appropriate for the expected subject participant and context. There are procedures to waive requirements to have a signed ICD in order to move forward with the research, usually when the participants' signature would be the only direct evidence linking them with participation in the research project, but also when the research subject-participant is an "expert" and not a member of a vulnerable group.

A feminist research ethic should be concerned if the quest for a signature on an informed consent document supplants the need for an adequate informed consent process.[71] It does not take a feminist lens to be concerned about such similar trends in field work.[72] Several studies have found that people do not adequately read ICDs.[73] Given these shortcomings of the ICD, the research protocol should include a practice that focuses on carefully explaining to participants the contents of the ICD, asking them if they have any questions, answering any questions, and then inviting them to consent to participate by signing the document. This procedure is certainly more consistent with the intent of the informed consent process than simply obtaining a signed document and should be used even in contexts in which the research design is determined not to require an ICD.

Additionally, when working in local partnership the team can design a consent process that is most likely to conform to the goal of free, prior, and informed consent and that respects the power dynamics in which the prospective subject-participant negotiates such important choices. This means that researchers and reviewers should be sensitive to contexts in which people who are unable to read or write may be asked to participate in the research, and where a signed document is not a culturally appropriate means by which to communicate or conduct business.

The proposal should contain
- an informed consent plan. The plan should specify what the researcher will communicate to the subject-participants and members of the research team regarding:
  - the nature and purpose of the research,
  - any risks and benefits which might result from participation,
  - participant rights to refuse to participate or to end their participation without penalty,
  - the means by which the researcher will attempt to ensure participants' confidentiality and privacy, any limits to confidentiality and privacy, how the collected information will be used, and how long the information will be kept,
  - the means by which participants can contact the researcher

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[71] Collogan et al., "Ethical Issues Pertaining to Research in the Aftermath of Disaster.", Elana Newman and Danny G. Kaloupek, "The Risks and Benefits of Participating in Trauma-Focused Research Studies," *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 17, no. 5 (2004).

[72] Ahmad, "Developing Countries Need Effective Ethics Review Committees."

[73] Marie-Andrée Jacob, "Form-Made Persons: Consent Forms as Consent's Blind Spot," *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 30, no. 2 (2007), M. Kirsch, "The Myth of Informed Consent," *The American Journal of Gastroenterology* 95, no. 3 (2000), B. Lorenzen, C. E. Melby, and B. Earles, "Using Principles of Health Literacy to Enhance the Informed Consent Process," *AORN journal* 88, no. 1 (2008).

- o the means by which participants can contact the authority providing ethical oversight of the research
- o the means by which a participant can either consent or decline to participate
- o the means by which a participant can opt out after the research has begun
- o the means by which a participant can be informed of the research findings or other dimensions of the project

The proposal should specify
- a process for obtaining participant consent. This may include pre-interview email communication, oral exposition of the content of the document, a group discussion prior to seeking individual consent.
- a process in the spirit of informed consent and one that is sensitive to the ways in which agency can be compromised in ways that are not overtly observable.
- a process that is sensitive to the context, abilities, and demands on the subject participants and research team members.

3.7. Vulnerability

> *Researchers should respect local and historical causes of vulnerability and respect those power dynamics without contributing to them by undermining the agency of vulnerable populations.*

Each oversight body that uses consent and vulnerability as the cornerstone of its research ethics specifies certain groups as "vulnerable." IRB practice in the United States has declared certain groups of people as vulnerable requiring extra protections during the research process. People with developmental disabilities and children may not fully understand what is being asked of them and be able to weigh potential risks and benefits associated with research participation, so they are accorded special participation. Minors in the US are asked for assent rather than consent until they are at a legal age for consent. Prisoners may be vulnerable to unintended coercive pressures to participate—for example, should the researcher promise a reward of material aid for a non-imprisoned family member, or a sum of money unreasonable in the prison economy—and IRBs require special precautions for them as well. Finally, pregnant women are medically vulnerable in ways that non-pregnant women are not, and special precautions must be taken to ensure the health of mother and fetus/child as well. Other countries have different lists of people who qualify for special consideration—for example, Canada, New Zealand, Australia give special consideration in ethics applications for research conducted with indigenous groups, which are a way of being responsive to the ways in which indigenous peoples have been marginalized in the past and wish to remain in control of their cultural heritage.

Carol Levine suggests that beyond definitions codified in law, the use of vulnerability in the context of research ethics has become almost so broad as to be meaningless. She advocates respecting the lawful definitions of the term rather than their

continual expansion in multiple research contexts.[74] By contrast, the feminist approach would suggest that we challenge the constellation of the following concepts: vulnerability, consent, and agency.

In the context of violent conflict and disasters, large numbers of people experience highly traumatic events. There may be a tendency among researchers in such contexts to treat survivors, or even the general population, as being sufficiently traumatized such that their decision-making capacities are reduced. However, according to several studies, most people with post-traumatic stress do not have reduced decision-making capacities[75] and should not be treated differently than people who have not experienced a similar traumatic event. Yet there are exceptions; one study suggests that certain individuals with severe PTSD may indeed have reduced decision-making capacity[76] and therefore would require additional protection. Researchers should be trained to identify vulnerable persons and design their informed consent and assent procedures responsively.[77]

The proposal should specify
- how the research project conceptualizes vulnerability, consent and agency of subject-participants and other research participants.
- how the research design mitigates the potential for the power associated with hierarchies to be exploited through research.

3.8. Participant recruitment

Participants should be recruited using methods that ensure both the credibility of the research and the security of the participants.

IRBs examine a researcher's plan to recruit participants to his or her project with several points of concern in mind. First, the recruitment materials (advertisements, invitation letters, telephone scripts, and the like) and any incentives to participate must not be coercive or misleading, creating pressure for a person to participate when she or he otherwise would choose not to. In contexts of financial duress, the use of monetary compensation may be appropriate, but the project should demonstrate some reflection on

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[74] Carol Levine, "The Concept of Vulnerability in Disaster Research," *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 17, no. 5 (2004).

[75] Collogan et al., "Ethical Issues Pertaining to Research in the Aftermath of Disaster."; Donald L. Rosenstein, "Decision-Making Capacity and Disaster Research," *Journal of traumatic stress* 17, no. 5 (2004).; Levine, "The Concept of Vulnerability in Disaster Research."; Newman and Kaloupek, "The Risks and Benefits of Participating in Trauma-Focused Research Studies."; Newman, Risch, and Kassam-Adams, "Ethical Issues in Trauma-Related Research: A Review."

[76] C. R. Marmar, D. S. Weiss, and R. S. Pynoos, "Dynamic Psychotherapy of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder," in *Neurobiological and Clinical Consequences of Stress: From Normal Adaptation to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Edited By* ed. Matthew J. Friedman, D S Charney, and A Y Deutch (Philadelphia: Lippincott-Raven, 1995).

[77] Rosenstein, "Decision-Making Capacity and Disaster Research.";Barron Ausbrooks, Barrett, and Martinez-Cosio, "Ethical Issues in Disaster Research: Lessons from Hurricane Katrina."; Collogan et al., "Ethical Issues Pertaining to Research in the Aftermath of Disaster."

potential of financial remuneration to be coercive. Second, the review board must ensure that one population (eg, a single racial group) does not bear the risk of the research when other people may benefit from it. People from a range of affiliations or identity groups must have an equitable chance of being asked to participate in the research.

The standard IRB approach does not recognize that, in some contexts, it may be dangerous to a prospect participant even to be asked to participate in a research project. This consideration moves beyond the standard concerns of equitable opportunity and non-coercion. An expatriate researcher with a different skin color from the subject population is very visible when she or he knocks on doors to get people to participate in a survey. In a small town, the activities of a local resident newly hired as a research participant can be quite visible. In conflict zones, it may not matter if a person consented to participate in the research project; suspicion can fall on him or her simply for being asked. Observers cannot easily tell the difference between a refusal to participate and actual participation. The dangers of asking people to participate in a research project in these circumstances must be well understood and mitigated as much as possible.

In most research contexts, a single entity that monitors the number of times a specific population is being targeted for participation in a research project does not exist, particularly in areas where a researcher's home university is the IRB of record. As a result, people living in disaster zones report feeling overburdened by the number of researchers asking them to participate frequently in research projects.[78] The most accessible populations are most often approached by multiple researchers. This behavior contradicts principles that all people who are directly connected to the research in question should have equal opportunities to participate in that research[79] and it adds an additional ethical consideration, the burden on the population. To overcome this problem, some have suggested that review boards be convened specifically for the disaster or conflict context in question in order to help coordinate researchers across institutions and manage the burden that is placed on the people who live in these places.[80] This was accomplished in Oklahoma City after the bombing of the Murrah Federal Building there in 1995.[81] The proposed FERB structure follows this model.

The proposal should outline procedures by which participants will be recruited and their confidentiality and that of their data protected. This applies not only to what they say but also to their relationships (sometimes it is necessary to keep private a companion or child who is with them), to their medical conditions (in offering medical assistance or other

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[78] Alan R. Fleischman and Emily B. Wood, "Ethical Issues in Research Involving Victims of Terror," *Journal of Urban Health* 79, no. 3 (2002).
[79] Barron Ausbrooks, Barrett, and Martinez-Cosio, "Ethical Issues in Disaster Research: Lessons from Hurricane Katrina."
[80] Ibid.; Fleischman and Wood, "Ethical Issues in Research Involving Victims of Terror."; Sumathipala and Siribaddana, "Research and Clinical Ethics after the Tsunami: Sri Lanka."
[81] Collogan et al., "Ethical Issues Pertaining to Research in the Aftermath of Disaster."; C. S. North, B. Pfefferbaum, and P. Tucker, "Ethical and Methodological Issues in Academic Mental Health Research in Populations Affected by Disasters: The Oklahoma City Experience Relevant to September 11, 2001," *CNS spectrums* 7, no. 8 (2002).; Newman, Risch, and Kassam-Adams, "Ethical Issues in Trauma-Related Research: A Review."

services which may be appropriate protocol associated with vulnerable populations, their accessing those services must also be confidential if necessary). Local partnerships can help identify the dimensions of confidentiality and design appropriate procedures for assuring confidentiality.

The proposal should specify
- how research team members will be recruited.
- how subject-participants will be recruited.

3.9. Confidentiality and data security

Researchers should create research protocols not only to ensure the confidentiality of the participants and their data during the process of field research, but also to ensure that related research activities such as the methods of disseminating findings, or the fact that some local research team members will remain in the community do not compromise that confidentiality.

The standard ethical review committee approach places significant emphasis on maintaining the confidentiality of research subjects. As a general rule, any personally identifiable information, which includes names, addresses, identification number (social security numbers, passports numbers, and the like), voice recordings, and images, must be closely protected. Whenever possible, confidentiality guidelines require that identifiable information should be kept separately from data collected from the research participant, and that it should be difficult for an uninformed person to connect the identifiable information to the responses. As part of the informed consent process, potential research participants must be told that the researcher will protect their confidentiality but that total confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. This reflects realities that a researcher's data is subject to accidental loss, theft, or subpoena, search, or seizure by government agencies. IRBs require that researchers inform their participants about the information that will be collected about them, the intended uses for the identifying information, and how long it will be kept until it is destroyed. Researchers must not simply maintain personally identifiable information once it is no longer necessary for the project at hand; they must have a continuing need for the specific information.

IRBs are also becoming increasingly conscious about data security issues, particularly as researchers frequently have digital copies of data which may be easily transportable—and lost or stolen—on portable computers and portable storage media such as external hard drives or flash disks. Best practices for digital data security include encrypting files where possible, using file-level passwords, and requiring a password or fingerprint scan to access the drive or computer system where the data are stored. For paper-based and other forms of data, there must be physical protections in place—for example, locked filing cabinets in locked offices in locked buildings—in order to minimize the possibility of the data being lost or stolen.

Given the sensitivity of many conflict and post-conflict research contexts, these practices should be the absolute minimums that are offered to protect research participants and their data. Information collected in research on human rights violations, for example, could include the recording of a victim's description of a particular event. If this information were to fall into the wrong hands, this could have catastrophic consequences for the victim should the perpetrators find their activities exposed. Similarly, a particularly repressive government (or rebel faction) may be interested in what people have told the researcher and may seize the data with negative consequences for the participant if he or she can be identified.[82] What the standard IRB approach fails to appreciate is that there are many times in which data and the researcher are in transition from one location to another, or that researchers working away from their home bases may have limited opportunities to secure their data, occasionally leading to unintended security breaches, including loss or exposure in natural disaster,[83] theft from seemingly locked hotel rooms, from luggage during inspection at a customs checkpoint or roadblock, or in a mugging.

Research plans for conflict and disaster zones should include detailed information from researchers about how they plan to secure their data, minimize their data's vulnerability, and institute procedures that make it difficult for unauthorized people who may access the data to link responses to specific individuals. J. Christopher Kovats-Bernat documents how he hid scraps of paper in his boots, memorized field notes rather than writing them down, and used other difficult means to ensure the security of his data.[84] Elisabeth Wood used "nearly illegible shorthand," did not document names, and chose not to record interviews to protect her research participants.[85] All researchers owe their research participants similar levels of dedication.

Similarly, the list of personally identifiable information used by the standard IRB approach is insufficient to protect highly vulnerable persons. For example, investigators inquiring into human rights violations in contexts experiencing relatively low levels of conflict, such as a small number of death squads assassinating local leaders and intimidating local residents, may collect eye witness accounts about events in the area. Even if those investigators redact names of people and places and dates, delete audio recordings once transcription is complete, and avoid collecting pictures or videos of their informants, the events they describe in any report may enable the death squads to identify the community in which the events took place, or even the person or people likely to have witnessed them, and take revenge accordingly.[86] Revealing any specific data, even if paraphrased with appropriate pseudonyms, potentially puts research participants (or

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[82] Goodhand, "Research in Conflict Zones: Ethics and Accountability."
[83] Barron Ausbrooks, Barrett, and Martinez-Cosio, "Ethical Issues in Disaster Research: Lessons from Hurricane Katrina."
[84] J. Christopher Kovats-Bernat, "Negotiating Dangerous Fields: Pragmatic Strategies for Fieldwork Amid Violence and Terror," *American Anthropologist* 104, no. 1 (2002).
[85] Wood, "The Ethical Challenges of Field Research in Conflict Zones."
[86] Goodhand, "Research in Conflict Zones: Ethics and Accountability."; Zwi et al., "Placing Ethics in the Centre: Negotiating New Spaces for Ethical Research in Conflict Situations."

uninvolved people who are mistakenly believed to have been participants) in harm's way.[87] As such, the researcher should report to the FERB the extent of their efforts to disguise the identity of individuals described in any of their work. Researchers should work closely with the advisory committee to consider how specific depictions may or may not pose risks to the persons involved.

Very often the stories a researcher may hear while conducting research in conflict and disaster zones may seem quite useful in exposing human rights abuses or galvanizing social action to stop them. Research participants may feel that their story deserves to be told to the world. Unfortunately, measures to protect a person's confidentiality frequently strip them of their agency to make decisions about the information they may or may not wish to share with the world.[88] Research participants, fully aware of the risks inherent in making their stories and potentially their identities known, sometimes believe that telling their story will have beneficial results and are willing to shoulder the inherent risk.

However, such requests are made at a moment in time. Conditions change. The circumstances of these story-tellers change. Some details that seemed unimportant at one time became identifying later.

Ethical research respects the decision making and agency of all participants and has a process for reviewing participant requests to waive confidentiality.

The proposal should specify
- how the researcher will handle confidentiality and the security of confidentiality.
- how the researcher will handle the security of data, minimizing its vulnerability, making it difficult to access or to decode if compromised.
- how the researcher will report ideas for security of data and personnel developed in the field.
- how long and why identifying information will be maintained.
- procedures for reviewing materials before circulation among colleagues (made easy and worrisome by the internet), posting on websites, and publication to assure that no confidential material accidentally gets circulated in drafts or final products.
- how confidentiality and data security will be maintained after the research team disbands.

3.10. Privacy and abuse

Research designs need to be prepared to protect privacy and to report human rights violations in ways that protect that privacy.

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[87] Paluck, "Methods and Ethics with Research Teams and NGOs: Comparing Experiences across the Border of Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo <Draft>."
[88] Wood, "The Ethical Challenges of Field Research in Conflict Zones."

As we have seen above, closely related to confidentiality (the security of data) is the idea of privacy (the protection of the identities of the people who have participated in the research process). Again, the standard ethical review committee approach requires that researchers protect the privacy of research participants, though US law provides certain exceptions when that privacy must be broken. In situations where a researcher suspects abuse or that a participant may be a danger to himself, herself, or other people, the researcher is obligated to inform local authorities. Participants are notified of this obligation on the informed consent document. This procedure is ethically and legally straightforward for research conducted in the US but is more problematic for other locations. In many contexts there may not be a reliable authority.

Further, caution is appropriate. Mandated reporting to local authorities, especially in situations of conflict, may put the people involved (even the person being abused) at extreme risk if the political dynamics of the context are not well understood. In addition, conflict and post-conflict contexts frequently lack anything close to adequate due process, and penalties for certain crimes may be extreme (human rights violations in and of themselves) for potential perpetrators, though not revealing the abuse (doing nothing) in order to shield the perpetrator from a dysfunctional justice system or horrific punishment is also ethically intolerable in that it allows abuse to continue. Reliance on a project-specific advisory body to provide guidance to navigate these dilemmas is helpful. Such situations must be managed for the best interests of the research participants.[89]

It is expected that the researcher will consult the local advisory board on whether to report discovered abuse, other illegal behavior, or human rights violations and on appropriate course of action if not reporting.

Considerations for reviewers and researchers:
- Where preliminary research indicates that abuse, illegal behavior, or human rights violations are expected, the proposal should indicate that the researcher has developed a draft plan for how to report such problems while protecting the privacy of participants.
- How will confidentiality and the privacy of participants and the data they provide be maintained after the research team disbands, particularly when some research team members are local?

3.11. Identity politics, group dynamics, individual authority and imperial hang-over

The research design should reflect awareness of the social, economic, and political power dynamics operating in a context and should not exacerbate these, particularly those power dynamics associated with the power of knowledge and research.

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[89] World Health Organization, "Who Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Researching, Documenting and Monitoring Sexual Violence in Emergencies," (Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization, 2007).

The ways in which we do research suffer from a colonial and imperial historical legacy and from the recent experiences of subject communities with researchers (from their own countries and from outside). These legacies create profound ethical questions that not only may have concrete manifestations in research questions and design, but also preface these. Further, differences and power dynamics conditioned by historical imperialisms and imperialisms in research are not the only sources of difference in research. Cultural and socio-economic contexts of both researchers and respondents vary in terms of how vulnerabilities are perceived, for example in child labor, sex economies, refugee-populated settings. Communities may prioritize certain vulnerabilities over others. For example, refugee communities (who are vulnerable and marginalized) may themselves overlook gender as it is perceived 'less important' than other issues. Women within these communities may have the same perception as well. Researchers should consider gender as a crucial component to their context, even when the communities of study do not.

Considerations for reviewers and researchers:
- How has the historical legacy of colonialism and imperialism affected the expectations of subject-participants and influenced the research design?
- How has more recent experience of subject populations with academic researchers affected the expectations of subject-participants and influenced the research design?

3.12. Anticipated and unanticipated effects

> *Because research in these contexts is unpredictable, the researcher must demonstrate an ability to think through research dilemmas with an ethical lens that affirms the other research commitments.*

The possibility for negative effects due to involvement in research exists in all projects. Most protocols require that the researcher identify potential effects of participation in the research, assess the likelihood of these consequences, and design an adequate response to them. For unanticipated effects, IRBs have "adverse event" reporting procedures that require a researcher to monitor participants' reactions to the research, to document any reactions which are harmful to the participant, and to notify the IRB of the harm. Depending on the nature of the event, the project may have to suspend activities temporarily or permanently or have to revise protocols to better ensure participant safety. Anticipating potential negative reactions and other problems, researchers and IRBs can establish "red lines" which, if crossed, would trigger automatic review of the situation, a tool which is useful in rapidly changing contexts where a researcher's perception can easily become clouded by circumstances and fatigue.[90]

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[90] David Romano, "Conducting Research in the Middle East's Conflict Zones," *PS: Political Science & Politics* 39, no. 03 (2006). Circumstances might include the increased attachment that comes with building relationships and the lapse in judgment that comes with the stress of working long hours under stressful conditions.

A situation may develop over the course of a research project in which the researcher may have little guidance for assessing an appropriate response (the situation may or may not fall under the purview of a research ethics committee). Best practices indicate that the researcher should have a set of local experts to whom to turn for advice and guidance regarding how best to resolve these complex questions. The literature on humanitarian aid has developed a set of set of principles for monitoring and responding to unintended effects which researchers may adapt.[91]

People who have experienced war or trauma may react poorly to questions around their experiences.[92] Standard IRB practice includes identifying potential reactions in the research and outlining appropriate responses on the part of the researcher. Many sources suggest that researchers should have access to local, culturally appropriate resources to help research participants who experience distress as a result of their participation.[93] The research plan should be transparent about who is responsible for paying any monetary costs associated with the use of such resources.

As mentioned in 3.7, previous research has indicated that very few people experience negative effects from participating in research about traumatic experiences they have had.[94] However, even the possibility for a small number of negative effects demands preparation on the part of the researcher. At the same time, participant distress upon recalling memories of traumatic events which they experienced should not be perceived as retraumatization or revictimization but as "reactivation or exacerbation of residual stress-related symptoms precipitated by stimuli" which can relatively easily be minimized through an appropriate response.[95] Indeed, several studies indicate that when people who have experienced traumatic events participate in research about that event and their reactions to it, they tend to have positive reactions with fewer visits to doctors and better school and workplace performance.[96] However, any potential benefit may depend on the specific research methodology rather than simply the act of participating in research.[97]

Dealing with participant distress requires some discernment and flexibility. Some means of granting research participants discretion to maintain their agency while the researcher does what she or he can to guarantee the participant's safety is important.

Reviewers and researchers should ask

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[91] Goodhand, "Research in Conflict Zones: Ethics and Accountability."

[92] Newman and Kaloupek, "The Risks and Benefits of Participating in Trauma-Focused Research Studies."

[93] Newman, Risch, and Kassam-Adams, "Ethical Issues in Trauma-Related Research: A Review."

[94] Joseph A. Boscarino et al., "Adverse Reactions Associated with Studying Persons Recently Exposed to Mass Urban Disaster," *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 192, no. 8 (2004).; Newman and Kaloupek, "The Risks and Benefits of Participating in Trauma-Focused Research Studies."; Zwi et al., "Placing Ethics in the Centre: Negotiating New Spaces for Ethical Research in Conflict Situations."

[95] Collogan, Tuma, and Fleischman, "Research with Victims of Disaster: Institutional Review Board Considerations.", page 10.

[96] Knack et al., "Opportunities and Challenges for Studying Disaster Survivors."; Newman and Kaloupek, "The Risks and Benefits of Participating in Trauma-Focused Research Studies."

[97] Newman, Risch, and Kassam-Adams, "Ethical Issues in Trauma-Related Research: A Review."

- Does the researcher demonstrate an ability to think through unanticipated methodological or ethical challenges?
- Does the project anticipate, reflect on, and attend to researcher safety in locally and appropriate ways?[98]
- What kind of support will the research team provide participants?

The proposal should specify
- the anticipated effects of the research on participants.
- how and when the researcher will report unanticipated effects of the research on participants.
- how and under what conditions the researcher expects to seek the advice of her or his advisory board.
- how long after the research the researcher will monitor for these effects.

3.13. Governance

Research design should include research governance.

Research governance refers to the leadership and accountability procedures of the research design. These procedures govern the relationships of the participants in the research across all roles and stipulate mechanisms of accountability. These may include reporting adverse effects on participants, misconduct of research team members, human rights violations observed, and others. Any oversight body that may provide a context for research governance should really be considered a back stop for the researcher's own research governance practices. Proposals should specify these.

The proposal should specify
- the researchers' process for soliciting the advice of the team of advisors and how the researcher will report revealed problems related to research ethics even when these are due to unanticipated challenges.

The proposal should include
- a copy of the researcher's Ethics Statement?[99]

Researchers and reviewers should ask
- Does the proposal specify its mechanisms for revisiting its risk assessment procedures short of adverse events reporting?
- Does the proposal specify the adverse events reporting procedures for harm to participants?
- Does the proposal specify the adverse events reporting procedures for harm to the communities or organizations facilitating the research?

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[98] Mertus, "Maintenance of Personal Security: Ethical and Operational Issues."
[99] See for example
http://sitemason.vanderbilt.edu/files/dCXSUg/GFC%20Research%20statement%205%206%2009.pdf.

- Does the proposal specify locally appropriate and available support for subject-participants?
- Does the proposal specify the researcher's intent to report unanticipated ethical dilemmas and the mechanisms by which the researcher, research team members and subject-participants will do so?

In the case of collaboration, the proposal should specify
- how the responsibilities of each partner are determined and how the partners are sharing in the work and recognition of the collaboration.
- the proposal should specify processes for reflecting on the collaboration itself so that challenges among researchers in the field do not jeopardize the investment in the research.
- the procedures for dealing with change. Even the best planned collaborations with long-time partners can be difficult when any manner of changes in the circumstances of either partner or changes in the challenges of the project change the nature of the communication and collaboration. Of course, the specifics of these cannot be anticipated. Does the collaborative proposal convey an awareness of this potential eventuality by establishing governance practices that can be responsive?

4. *Reviewer guidelines*

The FREE is committed to an ethical review process that is attentive to three concerns that generated its demand. The first is to avoid egregious violations of ethics by being attentive to all forms of power dynamics and the potential for abuse of authority and hierarchies. The second is to enable social and behavioral researchers to work on questions of gender and insecurity in ways that are methodologically most appropriate for their question. The third is to do so in a way that draws from feminist insights about freedom.[100]

Each researcher should demonstrate having reflected on the implications of power (particularly the power of making knowledge claims), boundaries, and relationships in her or his proposal. As reviewers evaluate a given application, they should seek evidence in the proposal of reflection about power, boundaries, and relationships in each of the stages of research.
- Participants include subject-participants, research assistant-participants, coders, translators, gatekeepers, facilitators, drivers, etc. Reviewers need to consider the ethical dimensions of each participant's role in the project and the researcher's attention to these.
- Reviewers should respect the political and social reasons why any nation has developed a particular concern about the ethics of research with a particular group (women, children, indigenous people, certain ethnic groups, prisoners) and think in locally sensitive ways about how a given project should attend to these.

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[100] Quoted from the Introduction above.

- Reviewers should delink agency and vulnerability. Being vulnerable does not by definition compromise one's decision-making capacity.
- Reviewers should attend to the degree of cultural respect, attention to diversity, and attention to gender diversity the researcher exhibits throughout the application.
- Reviewers should reflect on the meaning of benefit and risk in the context of the research in question.
- As needed reviewers should consult local and topical experts.
- As needed reviewers should consult for translation and back translation of all research tools.

As reviewers evaluate a given researcher's ability to use a feminist research ethic, she or he should probe the proposal for evidence of the researcher's ability to revisit and self-reflect in response to unanticipated ethical dilemmas.

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