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Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology

Ethical Guidelines for Good Practice in Cross-Cultural Research

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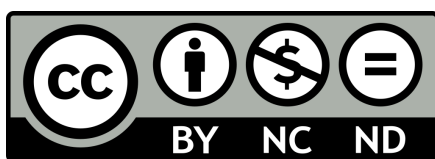
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1) Preamble

Researchers from the Department of Comparative Cultural Psychology (henceforth: “department”) are engaged in psychological research both in Leipzig and at a number of field sites all across the globe. The cross-cultural scope of the research conducted is crucial to the generation of important and valuable insights into uniquely human cultural diversity and the universal cognitive mechanisms that enable and constrain it. By their very nature, such insights could not be reached by studies conducted in a local setting alone. However, such cross-cultural research also creates a significantly wider range of ethical challenges than most local research. These not only relate to managing the impact that the researchers’ presence in the host community inevitably has, but also navigating the complexities of cultural divergences in outlooks on life and morality.

In order to adequately meet these challenges, the department has adopted the following set of ethical guidelines, to which all individual researchers associated with it must subscribe. The guidelines are intended to provide a practical framework to guide researchers and their associates in their decisions before, during and after the carrying out of studies, both internationally and locally. They are informed by a range of important previous contributions to research ethics, which have found their way into documents like the declaration of Helsinki, the various codes of conduct of large professional and research associations, and a steadily growing number of statements drawn up by indigenous rights groups.¹ This document is meant to complement rather

¹ See for example: Assembly of First Nations. Environmental Stewardship Unit (2009): *Ethics in*

than supersede these pre-existing codes, with a specific view to the complexities of cross-cultural work, which are not always fully captured in the broader, more general codes just mentioned.

The guidelines are also not meant to supersede or replace any locally applicable ethics review or licensing procedures. It is an important responsibility of researchers conducting studies abroad to ensure that they always obtain all the locally required ethical clearances by established review boards and/or government bodies in a timely and conscientious manner. To the contrary, these guidelines are meant to provide researchers further resources for improving their communication with local review boards and ensuring proper compliance with settled protocols even in more difficult situations.

That being said, the framework provided in these guidelines cannot aspire to provide ready-set decision procedures to be algorithmically applied for optimal results in each situation. No guideline can replace the use of good judgment by individuals faced with complex problem situations in varying social and cultural settings. However, by highlighting the core values to which the department is committed, and sketching some of their most pertinent applications, these guidelines can serve as an important aid in individual decision processes.

What is more, the considerations laid out within them can hopefully also help researchers communicate the ethical basis for their individual decisions more clearly to those involved or affected by their research. By creating a basis for increased trust in researchers both by participants and society at large, the guidelines play an important role in the department's commitment to establishing sustainable, meaningful and fair long-term collaborations with communities across the globe.

2) Guiding Principles

As noted, the range of ethical issues raised in the context of cross-cultural research is very broad, spanning a wide array of questions in study design and execution. What is more, issues will vary quite broadly from field site to field site, and may indeed also evolve over time, with the adoption of new methods and research paradigms, or the establishment of new field sites. For this reason, the aim of these guidelines cannot be to develop detailed and specific regulations on the resolution of ethical problems in a way that delivers straightforward recommendations for every situation. Instead, these guidelines are organised around a set of guiding principles, which all researchers involved at the department are required to commit to.²

First Nations Research, and Health Research Council of New Zealand. (2016): *Te Ara Tika. Guidelines for Māori research ethics*. See also Tunón et al 2016 for a helpful overview over various codes pertaining to indigenous rights in research ethics.

² The selection and formulation of principles is closely modelled after the Principlist approach to

The department commits to the following principles to guide its research practice:

NONMALEFICENCE – Do no harm.

BENEFICENCE – Do good for others whenever possible.

JUSTICE – Treat others fairly and equitably.

RESPECT FOR AUTONOMY – Respect others as autonomous beings endowed with human dignity, capable and entitled to make their own decisions.

VERACITY – Do not lie to or otherwise deceive others, nor unduly retain information from them that they have a right to know.

FIDELITY – Make sure you keep your word, both by doing your utmost to keep your promises and by not making promises you will not be able to keep.

2.1 What are principles?

Ethical principles, by their nature, pick out features in virtue of which the acts can either be right or wrong. Since they do so at a somewhat general level, their **implementation in individual cases requires the use of ethical judgment**. This means that researchers will need to make their own responsible decisions in reaching concrete solutions to ethical problem situations, ideally in concert with their colleagues and the communities they work with. The principles outlined here are to serve as guides in these ethical decision processes, focusing attention on the ethically salient considerations, and pointing towards the fundamental values that underly them.

On this understanding, **there can be conflicts of principles**. In such situations, the course of action that is required all-things-considered can be one that is contrary to one principle. For example, it may sometimes be necessary to forgo benefits to some people or groups because (only) delivering these benefits to them may be unjust. Other times, proper respect for others' autonomous decisions will require us to allow them to pursue courses of action that will lead to them incurring some harm. Finally, sometimes circumstances may even lead to an ethical requirement not to tell the truth, for example if doing so risks exposing others to great harm.

Such conflicts of principles will have to **be resolved by the exercise of good ethical judgment** by individuals and/or groups. There are no strict hierarchies between the principles – sometimes respect for autonomy may outweigh nonmaleficence, while at other times the requirements of nonmaleficence can justify somewhat paternalistic, that is, autonomy-infringing action. The possibility of principles being outweighed does not mean that they are merely aspirational, however. They do not only mark out an action

as something that would simply be advantageous or kind to perform. It is ethically obligatory to perform an action required by an ethical principle, unless some other ethically relevant factors speak against it.

2.2 *Why principles?*

In the fields of bioethics and medical ethics, the last few decades have seen the kind of pluralistic, principle-based approach become the predominant theoretical framework.³ There are good reasons for this, and these reasons readily transfer to the context of the ethics of intercultural research.

First of all, a principle-based approach provides **guidance in ethical thought without pressing it in an overly rigid corset** of concrete regulations aspiring to cover all eventualities. In this way, it does justice to the complexity of ethical problems faced in cross-cultural research, as well as to their evolving nature. Guidelines based on principles retain at least some relevance in face of new and unforeseen problem situations, as the principles provide the basic resources for their resolution.

Second, the principle-based approach is a **good fit for the specific challenges raised by the cultural diversity of ethical views**. These challenges are obviously of great importance in the context of intercultural research. As a pluralist account, the principle-based approach makes room for the idea that acting ethically requires taking account of a diverse class of considerations that can sometimes stand in tension with one another. Furthermore, the generality of the principles allows for different ways of *specifying* them – though the underlying values remain the same, different interpretations of these values will yield differing specific requirements in action if one is to respect and protect them.⁴ Take justice: in some cultures, justice is taken to require treating all people in the same way. Other cultures take just action to consist in giving everyone what is due to them, which can vary significantly with their social standing.

A principle-based approach can thus describe differences in descriptive ethical outlook as diverging attempts to capture the same objective ethical truth codified in the core principles. While this by itself does of course not get us any closer to the resolution of such disagreements, it at least allows us to **conceptualize disagreement on matters of ethics in a way that does not rule out one view as fundamentally misguided to begin with**. At the same time, it still does not require us to give up the fundamental normative ethical commitments that are necessary to give an overarching justificatory structure to individual recommendations. It points the way to a resolution: identifying different takes on the same fundamental principles that underly disagreement, in order to then either reach a justified verdict for one or the other, or to develop a policy for action that is consistent with both interpretations. As such, we take the principle-based framework to be the best choice for reaching well-grounded practice recommendations for intercultural research.

³ See paradigmatically Beauchamp and Childress 2012.

⁴ On the method of specification, see Beauchamp and Childress 2012 and Gordon 2011.

Summary:

- Principles guide ethical deliberation by identifying ethically salient aspects of actions.
- Principles are not absolute – they can come into conflict with one another and must be weighed against each other in such situations.
- Principles have a claim to universality but allow for culturally specific interpretations.

3) Minimizing Harm to Participants

A **core ethical responsibility for researchers** is to ensure that the carrying out of their projects will **not lead to undue physical or psychological harms to participants**, their communities, or others. Paradigm cases of unethical research, like the Tuskegee Syphilis Study or the Stanford Prison Experiment, stand out because of the grievous harms participants suffered during their duration.

While gross violations such as the ones just mentioned are of course the most problematic, it should be noted that **harms come in various degrees** and extend far beyond such egregious cases. Even minor inconveniences such as loss of time or opportunity count as (correspondingly minor) harms to individuals or groups. **Anything that makes a person or group worse off constitutes a harm to that person or group** and as such must be taken into ethical consideration by researchers. The goal should be to avoid the infliction of harm through research wherever possible. This applies to the planning, execution and evaluation of studies, as well as for the whole duration of researchers' stays in host communities during fieldwork.

As with most forms of human interaction, carrying out a **study will always come with a certain degree of risk of harm**. Especially when it comes to psychological harm, it is not always possible to foresee how individuals react to certain circumstances, even if these appear perfectly innocent when viewed from the outside. As a result, a researcher's aim cannot realistically be to fully eliminate the possibility of harm occurring. However, researchers can and must do their utmost to ensure that their research project does not lead participants and their communities to be significantly worse off than they otherwise would be.

The **baseline for a level of acceptable risk** should thus be **what a person can expect in the regular interactions of their ordinary life**. Imposing any risks beyond this every-day level of risk requires serious justification in order to be considered ethically acceptable. That is, studies must be shown to be likely to provide the right kind of benefits to offset these risks of harms. The question of what kind of benefits can carry this justificatory weight will be discussed in a separate section.

Cross-cultural research, especially fieldwork in low-income settings, **involves unique potential risks** when compared to local studies. Beyond risks related to the carrying out of the study, the researcher's presence and behaviour in the host communities can have detrimental effects on their well-being, if not managed well. This section will deal with the direct risks of harm related to study execution, while the more indirect risks will be discussed in a subsequent section on proper community engagement.

3.1 Issues in Study Design – Framing and research questions.

Considerations of harm avoidance should be on researcher's minds from the very first steps in the conception of their projects. Most obviously, this relates to the methods employed. However, even the very selection and framing of research questions raises ethical issues.

By its nature, cross-cultural research involves the collection of data from individuals stemming from two or more cultural backgrounds to then compare these data. Often, the comparison will be one between the culture the researchers themselves appertain to with a culture in an economically less developed part of the world. In such situations, researchers must **keep in mind the significant differences in economic and political power** between average individuals belonging to these cultures, differences that are to a large part product of historic injustices and that are to a significant degree still perpetuated to this day. These power differentials are furthermore still encoded in racist systemic structures as well as individual racist beliefs (both explicit and implicit) across the globe.

When researchers inquire into cultural differences, they should be aware of the ways in which these circumstances can be of ethical relevance to their projects. A crucial aspect here are conceptual choices that need to be made in the **definition and operationalization of culture**. The question of how to define the cultural groups to be compared (by nationality, ethnicity, religion, etc.) is not only important for the scientific value of studies, but also ethically relevant.⁵ When defining groups for comparisons, researchers must take due care not to brush over the large degree of variation that exists in individuals and sub-groups of the groups considered.

Results obtained on the basis of overly broad or otherwise unsuitable distinctions can easily lend themselves to perniciously simplistic interpretations, which can in turn be used to justify **stereotypes of cultural differences** that do not have any basis in fact. Historically, such (mis-) interpretations of cross-cultural research have been employed in support of a range of racist policies and views.

Researchers must be aware of these **potential dangers of misinterpretations** when designing their studies and do their utmost to avoid them. To do so, they must take particular care to thoroughly question the assumptions that guide their definitions and operationalizations, and to design their studies with a view to allow for a nuanced

⁵ See Ferrero & Pettifor 2012 and especially Matsumoto & Jones 2009.

interpretation of their findings. In this context, obtaining insights from individuals familiar with the groups to be studied is imperative, including at the earliest stages of study design. For example, a community's cultural self-classification may differ from that of ethnographers – a pure reliance on the latter in study design thus risks being problematic from both a scientific and ethical point of view. Another way this required nuance can be achieved is by jettisoning the overarching classification of cohesive “cultures” altogether, and instead adopting a more multi-dimensional picture. Cultural differences can be observed, recorded, and analysed without first classifying rigid lines of division.

Beyond the study conception, these risks of misinterpretation and abuse of results also generate follow-on duties for the proper interpretation and publication of results by researchers, which will be discussed later in section 10.2.

3.2 Issues in Study Design - Methods

Researchers must also take great care to consider the possible effects that the methods they employ can have on the well-being of the participants.

Methods that can lead to participants incurring any kind of **physical harm are generally strongly discouraged** by the department and must only be used as a last resort. Studies that involve methods such as the administration of drugs or studies that require participants to undergo some other sort of medical or physical intervention (including vigorous physical exercise) are subject to a particularly stringent justification if they are to be considered ethical. As such, they must not be carried out unless signed off by a professional medical ethics board in addition to the department's usual procedures.

The **possible psychological harms to participants are wide-ranging** and not always as easy to foresee – even methods such as a simple interview can lead to harm to participants. In order to give some orientation, a (non-exhaustive) list of common direct harmful effects of psychological studies is provided below.

Examples of Psychologically Harmful Effects of Research Interventions

- Stress through repetitive or prolonged testing
- Distress caused by unfamiliar procedures, or procedures perceived to be physically or spiritually harmful or otherwise inappropriate or taboo.
- Distress caused by the breaching of sensitive topics (including, but not limited to, religion and experiences of violence or abuse and sexuality)
- Feelings of stigmatization
- Feelings of powerlessness or inferiority with respect to researchers
- Negative self-labelling (participants coming to believe they are somehow deficient or not normal, e.g. because they were unable to complete a task)
- Social disadvantages such as public humiliation or ridicule as a result of performance in an experiment
- “Normalising” unhelpful behaviours through their explicit elicitation in an experimental setting (e.g. coaxing participants to be more competitive than they would usually be)

It is the researcher’s **responsibility to identify the risk of** the abovementioned and other **psychological harms**. To do so accurately, it is especially important to keep an open mind about what individuals might consider distressing or otherwise uncomfortable. Here, consideration should be placed especially on **culturally contingent factors**: while the researcher might consider a pulse monitor operating via a simple armband to be absolutely innocuous, participants in a study in Papua New Guinea actually found its application so distressing that the study set-up had to be changed on the spot to account for this. To avoid such situations, researchers should always consult with persons with high familiarity with the host community (ideally locals) to identify potential culturally specific risks.

To minimize identified risks of harm researchers should pursue two complementary strategies. **The first priority should be harm avoidance**. When a certain risk related to a method is identified, researchers must carefully consider alternative methods. To find suitable alternatives, it can again be helpful to consult other researchers who have experience in cross-cultural fieldwork, as well as persons familiar with the host culture.

Where harm avoidance is not feasible, **possibilities for harm mitigation must be thoroughly explored**. Whenever the materialisation of some potential harm cannot be avoided, steps must be undertaken to at least lessen the negative impact of the intervention. For example, where studies aim to first induce a certain degree of negative attitudes or emotions in participants to then test their effects on certain kinds of cognitive performance, a good possibility for harm mitigation is to conclude each session with an attempt to induce a counteractive positive emotion or feeling. If a study begins by

showing the participant a video aimed at eliciting disgust, the negative effects can at least partially be counteracted by concluding the session with a video aimed at eliciting joy and sympathy. Similarly, studies requiring difficult cognitive tasks, failure at which can leave participants feeling deflated about their shortcomings, can be “padded” with easier tasks to reduce these effects.

Another factor that is frequently underestimated is the importance the right experimental set-up can have for preventing the abovementioned **risks of stigmatization or public humiliation for “bad” performance in cognitive tasks**. Researchers should ensure that the experiment is not only protected from sight but also that audio cues that may signal successfully completed tasks cannot be overheard from the outside. Finally, the community may be collectively reminded that participants are not to share their results.

These are of course only some selective examples of harm mitigation strategies. How to best mitigate harm will always depend on the details of the study. When researchers make the decision to go through with a study involving potentially risky procedures, it is their ethical responsibility to dedicate time and effort to developing efficient mitigation strategies for the specific study design they ultimately opt for. In this context it is also important to note that **consent from research participants does not absolve researchers from their obligation to protect them** as far as possible against the potentially harmful effects of research. It is not enough to reduce a risk of harm to a level at which participants are likely to consent to participation (possibly in conjunction with benefits offered for it). If there are ways to reduce the risk of harm beyond the level of risk sufficient to get participants to freely consent, researchers are ethically required to make use of them, at least as far as this is consistent with the success of the study.

3.3 Protection of Vulnerable Participants

When conducting **research involving participants who are particularly vulnerable**, especially children and people living with disabilities, **special care must be taken** in the planning stages to minimize any risk of harm. Research methods must be made sure to be appropriate to the participants’ unique capabilities and vulnerabilities. Before planning any research involving vulnerable groups, **researchers should seek advice from colleagues with experience** in such research and/or pedagogy, in order to adapt their designs to the particular needs of the vulnerable group. For research taking place in institutions such as nurseries or schools, researchers should closely consult with pedagogical staff on how to best create a safe and rewarding atmosphere for children.

Researchers and research assistants involved in such research must also be instructed and trained to take great care in looking for potential signs of distress in their vulnerable participants, who may not be able to communicate their discomfort clearly by themselves. When a vulnerable participant shows any such signs, or if there is any other reason for a suspicion that the participant may not be fully at ease with the proceedings, testing should be suspended immediately.

3.4 Reacting to Unforeseen Harms During the Study Period

However meticulously planned a study may be, there is always the possibility of things going wrong along the way. Participants may show themselves to suffer from unanticipated distress, and certain methods may have unexpected effects on individuals or the host community as a whole. For this reason, it is important that researchers retain a level of flexibility in the carrying out of their studies, and that they be aware that **unforeseen circumstances may make it mandatory to modify, suspend, or even altogether abandon a study** in order to prevent harm to participants and/or communities.

To react to such developments in a timely fashion, it is crucial that researchers foster an **atmosphere of respect and openness**, and regularly check with participants regarding their perception of the study procedures. Only if participants feel free to communicate their feelings and concerns will researchers be able to get the full picture of how participation in the study affects their well-being. Participants should also be regularly reminded that they are free to withdraw from the study without any repercussions.

It may be worth considering integrating **regular evaluations of participants' experiences** during data collection. These evaluations may be informal, as long as researchers make proper use of available opportunities to check in with participants.

3.5 Strategies for Mitigation of Power Imbalances

One important potential source of discomfort for participants in cross-cultural studies can be a feeling of inferiority or powerlessness with respect to the researchers. Important **power imbalances exist between researchers and participants** with regards to resources like money, education, and social status. There are also differences in physique and appearances that can undergird power differentials. For examples, European and North American researchers conducting research in Central Africa, Asia, or Pacific islands will often find themselves significantly taller than their research participants.

It is thus a largely unavoidable fact that researchers will often find themselves in a position of (perceived) power over their participants. This can lead to a **feeling of discomfort that is intrinsically harmful, as well as pernicious indirect effects**. For example, individuals intimidated by their perceived powerlessness may be more likely to consent to procedures against their considered preferences, as well as also being less likely to come forward with their own worries, complaints, or criticisms.

While these power differentials and their potential negative effects cannot be completely avoided, researchers can and must do their best to modulate their behaviour and demeanour to **mitigate the participant's perception of powerlessness** and/or inferiority in comparison to them. Perhaps the most important factor in this is the community engagement of researchers as a whole (which is discussed in Section 5). If researchers integrate into the community in a respectful and appropriate manner, this

can mitigate the negative effect of both perceived and real power differentials in the execution of studies.

However, there are a number of more explicit steps that can be taken to make participants feel at ease specifically during procedures related to data gathering. **Researchers should treat participants respectfully yet not too formally**, with the aim of creating a relaxed and accommodating atmosphere. The success of this endeavour also hinges on general features of the way in which researchers present themselves, including such things as their general demeanour and choice of clothing.

Furthermore, it should be ensured that **the interviews and experiments are conducted in a setting familiar and not intimidating to participants**. Here, the personal make-up of the group performing the experiments or interviews can also play a role. Participants may feel more at ease when the research team includes members who share their gender, cultural background, etc., or when such people are at least present during data collection. Again, a thorough deliberation involving cultural informants should be conducted in order to find arrangements that are best suited to creating an accommodating atmosphere for participants.

Summary:

- Harm (i.e. any negative effect of research on others) must be avoided where possible and mitigated as far as possible where not.
- Researchers must thoroughly consider harm avoidance and mitigation before the study, focusing on:
 - Research questions/framing and potential abuse or misinterpretation
 - Choice of methods and research settings
 - Time for community engagement and strategies for mitigation of power imbalances
 - Potential vulnerabilities of participants, especially children
- Researchers must be prepared for unforeseen harms materializing during the carrying out of the study:
 - Engage in regular evaluations of participants' experiences
 - Consider preparing backup plans for certain methods

4) Deception and Debriefing

At times, researchers may choose to adopt methods that require them to misrepresent the aims of a study to participants in order to test a given hypothesis. As part of this, they may have to withhold relevant information to participants or even resort to outright lies about what is being tested and how. **Studies that involve such deception of participants** present particularly pressing ethical challenges. Most straightforwardly,

they **involve a direct violation of the requirement of veracity or truth-keeping**. Furthermore, lying to participants exposes them to important psychological risks. Where participants are deceived with regards to the aim of the study or what is being tested, they are more likely to experience a variety of negative emotions as a result. For example, they might feel stupid, disappointed, or angry at being taken advantage of.⁶ The use of deceptive techniques can also undermine participants' and communities' trust in the researchers or more direly, the scientific process in general.

In fact, the majority of studies involving psychological experiments will require researchers to at least keep some information from participants in order to not undermine their scientific aims, as full disclosure will usually lead to unwelcome distorting effects. **The issues discussed in the following are therefore widely applicable**, which is why it is all the more important that researchers keep them firmly in view when designing their studies.⁷

4.1 Justification of Studies Involving Deception

Given the requirement of veracity, **studies that involve an element of deception are subject to more stringent justification conditions** than ones allowing for full disclosure of all facts. The more information must be withheld or misrepresented, the more convincing the justification that must be provided for the study to be considered ethical.

Before planning a study requiring any kind of deception of participants, researchers must therefore **closely consider the relation of costs and benefits**: do the benefits of carrying out the study in this way really outweigh the ethical costs and risks related to the deception of participants? In any case, researchers should always carefully explore whether the aims of the study cannot be reached by alternative methods not involving use of deception.

In some situations, it may be appropriate to conclude that the importance of the research aims is sufficient for carrying out the study, and that these aims can only be met by a design involving deception of participants. In such situations, researchers must aim to plan the study in a way to **reduce the deception of participants to a minimum, and to efficiently mitigate the accompanying harms** that may result. Researchers must make sure to provide participants with as much relevant information about the study beforehand as possible, keeping lies to the minimum required as far as the study design allows. Participants must also be given a thorough debriefing after the experiment, which is crucial to mitigate the harms that may arise out of deceptions.

⁶ See the results reported in Baumrind 1985.

⁷ Kron 1998.

4.2 Content of a Debriefing Statement

In order to make sure to cover their bases and debrief participants in the best possible manner, **researchers must draw up a comprehensive debriefing statement**, to be closely followed in every debriefing session⁸. In doing so, researchers should draw on the experiences of both experienced colleagues and persons familiar with the host culture.

A debriefing session must provide participants with a **full explanation of the details of the study** – including the hypothesis being tested, how the data procured relates to this hypothesis, and why it was necessary to use deception to procure that data. Researchers should make sure to use lay terms and avoid the use of unfamiliar jargon.

Beyond clarifying the content and justification of the deception, **the debriefing statement should also underscore** that the fact deception was used does in no way entail a lack of **respect for the participant by the researchers**. The participants should again be explicitly thanked for participating in the study, thereby contributing to scientific progress. It should further be clearly emphasized that the success of the deception did not depend on the gullibility of the participant, but rather the experience and skill of the experimenter. In this context, participants can be assured that almost nobody else (including participants in other cultures, and participants with high levels of education) ever “see through the ruse” in these kinds of studies. Finally, participants must be explicitly reminded that they can withdraw their consent for the use of their data at any point during the research process, including after the completion of the experiment.

4.3 Formalities of a Debriefing Meeting

Literate participants should be provided with a physical copy of the debriefing statement. However, it is crucial that **both literate and illiterate participants are actively offered a full oral debriefing**, potentially also employing graphical aids that the participants can keep and share after debriefing. In the oral debriefing, researchers should make sure to carefully go through the points outlined in the debriefing statement, while also explicitly inviting further questions and discussions from participants. The **dialogical nature of a debriefing meeting** is crucial to convey that the researchers do not view the participants as mere tools to be manipulated in the generation of data but respect them as individuals and only reluctantly resorted to deception. Where translators and interpreters are used, the debriefing statement should be thoroughly discussed and, if necessary, adapted before the first participant is debriefed. If possible, it may be a good idea to first carry out a “mock debriefing” with a test participant to verify whether the required information is brought across in a clear enough fashion.

Planning and carrying out debriefing meetings in this fashion **requires time and effort**. This time and effort, however, is something that researchers owe their

⁸ For empirical results underlining the importance of debriefing, see Greenspan and Loftus 2021.

participants whenever they decide it is necessary to go through with studies involving deception, as a simple matter of consequence from the obligations of veracity and non-maleficence they owe participants in the first place.

4.4 Deception Outside the Study Context

The abovementioned standards of justification and operationalisation only apply to deception that is necessary within the context of a study, relating to what is being tested and how. They do not extend to deception related to studies, but outside the context of the study itself. For example, researchers must respect **strictest requirements of veracity when it comes to recruitment of participants**. Under no circumstances should they lie or omit information about studies to increase the likelihood of individuals deciding to participate. This also relates to studies where the use of deception is ultimately given green light. Participants have a right to know what will happen to them during the study, how their data will be used, as well as a right to find out (through debriefing) which exact questions are to be answered by the study.

Summary:

- Communities and individuals must never be deceived into participation in a study – all information relevant to their decision must be shared.
- Studies involving deception of participants (including withholding information regarding its aims) must be well-justified to be ethically permissible.
- Deception must always be kept to the minimum possible.
- Participants of a study involving deception must be properly debriefed, which requires prior planning, time and effort:
 - Drawing up a comprehensive debriefing statement to be shared
 - Offering full debriefing meetings to all participants, and actively encouraging them to avail themselves of the offer
 - Designing debriefing meetings as dialogical, facilitating questions, and considering the involvement of trusted third parties in them

5) Policies for Proper Community Engagement

While the specifics of the studies carried out in the context of intercultural fieldwork present a number of ethical challenges, many other **ethical challenges arise simply as a result of the researchers' presence in host communities** during fieldwork. Perhaps most importantly, researchers' presence at, and interaction with the local communities can lead to harm if not managed well. However, researchers must also consider the impact of their presence on the autonomy of the individuals and communities.

5.1 Safeguarding the Health of Communities

One of the most drastic ways in which a researcher's mere presence can cause harm to a host community is through the introduction of various diseases. Besides obvious risks such as deadly viruses like Covid-19, introducing even seemingly harmless diseases like common colds or flus can have devastating downstream effects, especially in communities with relatively little outside contact. It is therefore paramount that every member of the research team take **thorough precautions against the introduction of diseases** before the start of the project. This of course includes all the necessary vaccinations and tests, to be determined by an experienced healthcare professional.

Safeguards should also be kept up for the duration of the studies. For example, a researcher may need to leave the host community for a time to travel within the host country, or even internationally. Plans should be made ahead of time to ensure any necessary re-testing is performed before returning to the host community in such situations, and that these procedures are performed competently and thoroughly.

Researchers should of course take steps to safeguard their own health, which beyond taking vaccinations may include taking a supply of pharmaceuticals to be used both for prevention and treatment of acute conditions, such as antimalarials, painkillers etc, as well as protective equipment such as masks, mosquito nets, and disinfectant. Sometimes, locals will approach researchers with requests to share these resources when they themselves have an acute healthcare need. While researchers can consider sharing medical resources such as the abovementioned protective equipment with communities, great care must be taken when it comes to requests for pharmaceuticals. **Under no circumstances should pharmaceuticals be shared with members of the communities unless at the instruction of a qualified doctor familiar with the specific situation of the local community.** In medical emergencies, the opinion of such a doctor should be urgently obtained if at all possible. Researchers should carefully seek information about potential health risks of interventions ahead of time and establish contact with suitable healthcare professionals. When in doubt, the opinions of further healthcare professionals, both locally and in Germany, may have to be obtained.

5.2 Showing Appropriate Respect for the Host Community

For the duration of their stay, **researchers are guests in the host community**, as is most obviously reflected in the fact that they need the community's permission to even be

there. They must show awareness of this at all times and adapt their behaviour accordingly. Most crucially this involves respecting the individual and collective preferences, projects and commitments of the community and the individuals that are part of it.

While the focus of a researcher will quite naturally fall mostly on their project and the necessities of its completion, it is important to remember that the priorities of community members might differ from theirs. Researchers must make sure not to take up any attitude of entitlement, but instead **respect the community's time, attention, and other resources**. These are the community's to manage as they see fit, which means that consideration, patience and flexibility will likely be required on the part of the researchers.

This is especially pertinent when it comes to interaction with gatekeepers (such as chiefs or elders) who might have the power to compel community members to give up their time to the researchers. Researchers must **resist the urge to influence gatekeepers** to “override” the priorities of individual community members – it is incumbent on them to show the appropriate respect for these priorities by not attempting to circumvent them.

There are furthermore some **simple tokens of respect** that can be performed in a day-to-day-context. A friendly greeting, a “how are you”, and an expression genuine interest in the daily lives and projects of community members can already go a long way to establish a respectful relationship. It should strongly be considered to reserve several days at the start of a field season exclusively for greeting the community, scheduling the start of data collection only after this. This can help researchers gain a better understanding of the community, its current routines, priorities, and challenges, which will help them act in an appropriately respectful manner throughout their stay. It is also by itself a sign of respect that will be appreciated by the host community.

5.3 Finding the Appropriate Level of Involvement

In an ideal situation, the researcher's stay in the host community represents a pleasant addition to community life, while neither their presence, nor their subsequent absence, has lasting negative effects. Of course, it is **impossible for researchers to take up a role of completely detached observers** that do not themselves influence life in the community at all. For research to be successful, the community's time, attention, and infrastructures will have to be shared by researchers to some extent. What is more, researchers are themselves human beings with their own social and material needs, which will naturally lead to interaction with community members beyond the context of data collection. Finally, the community itself may not even wish for the research team to fully detach themselves from their lives and daily routines. Some communities might in fact desire a substantial amount of integration, leading them to view attempts by researchers to distance themselves in a negative light.

There are thus various reasons speaking in favour of involvement with the host community. However, there are **risks of excessive involvement** as well. If the community comes to rely on the researcher's financial or material contributions, their technical support or their expertise, the end of a research project can leave them in a problematic situation. Even during the stay, researcher's behaviour might raise expectations in the community that they later cannot reasonably meet. This can not only lead to a deterioration of the relationship between researchers and community, but also to harm to community members if the community comes to rely on assistance from researchers that they cannot ultimately receive. What is more, selective involvement can raise issues of impartiality.

A **fine balance therefore needs to be struck** by researchers. On the one hand, researchers should always aim to benefit the community, and show respect for their values and projects by participating in community life. On the other hands, they should seek to minimize the potential harms that involvement can bring.

When researchers are asked by members of the community to participate in certain events, to take on a specific role during meetings, allow them use of some technical equipment, or for financial assistance, they should be aware of the **lasting impact of these decisions to acquiesce or deny requests**. For these reasons, such decisions should not be rushed, but instead if at all possible, always be made in concert with the project lead and the rest of the research team, and representatives of the community where appropriate.

Most crucially, members of the research team must **refrain from personal gifts of money or goods** that are not either part of planned community and participant remunerations or tokens of respect and/or gratitude for individuals who have gone out of their way to help researchers, e.g. families who hosted them in their home. Ill-advised individual gifts can constitute a kind of favouritism that can not only lead to intra-community strife, but also have long-term detrimental effects on the relationship between the community and researchers. Note that helping individuals in situations of acute need (e.g. by providing medical assistance or food and water when needed) does of course not count as gift-giving in this sense and is therefore not subject to this requirement.

5.4 Respecting Locally Embraced Norms

Part of what it means to behave in the respectful manner appropriate for guests in foreign communities is to **adapt one's behaviour to the locally accepted norms**. Researchers must make sure not to publicly flout or challenge norms, or otherwise act in ways that shows a disrespect for them.

This can raise serious challenges, as norms that are embraced by communities might be contrary to the researcher's ethical sensibilities. For example, blanket prohibitions against homosexuality or premarital sex are still embraced and enforced in many parts of the world. However, it should be noted that the kind of **tolerance appropriate for**

researchers as guests in a community does not require them to accept these norms. They need not change their mind that such a prohibition is deeply mistaken, even when applied exclusively to the internal regulation of behaviour between members of the community. Nor does it preclude wishing that these norms would change or require researchers to adapt their behaviour in any way in private spaces.

However, there are still good **reasons not to openly challenge even norms perceived to be mistaken** from the position of a guest that the researchers find themselves in. First, there are autonomy-related considerations that can speak against external intervention even in cases of ethically problematic norms. Communities have a right to organise their life by themselves, including questions of which norms to uphold and enforce. Of course, this right is not absolute and needs to be balanced with the ethical considerations that may speak in favour of change in norm systems – sometimes, it may be appropriate for some actors (international organisations and other states, for example), to intervene in a community’s affairs, in order to end practices considered ethically acceptable by the majority of that community – by sanctions and boycotts, for example.

The more important reason for researchers to refrain from challenging norms during stays at field sites is related to the role of the researchers in the community. In their position as guests, **researchers are simply not well-placed to successfully effect change by flouting norms or aggressively challenging them publicly.** More likely than not, doing so will only lead to conflict between researchers and community, especially since this kind of behaviour can be perceived as exhibiting an objectionable kind of “ethical imperialism”.⁹ The most sustainable ethical change is usually one that grows from within a community.

Unfortunately, adapting their behaviour to local norms **will sometimes come at considerable cost to individual researchers.** Especially when it comes to norms covering fields such as sexual or gender identity, refraining from flouting them may be very difficult. This is a problem that is best tackled before the beginning of a potential stay in the field. Researchers should be well briefed and thoroughly consider the potential repercussions of spending time with a community whose ethical outlook may differ quite substantially from theirs. When an honest and realistic self-assessment leads to the conclusion that conflict may result, perhaps fieldwork in this project is unfortunately simply not a good fit for this particular person.

In rare situations, however, individual researchers may feel like they cannot in good conscience stay completely silent with regards to some culturally sanctioned actions that they perceive to be ethically problematic. In such cases, they must not take action on their own accord, but instead bring the matter to the research team. Then, the team can collectively consider **options for bringing forward the matter for discussion with the host community in a respectful manner,** with the aim of facilitating an exchange of views that can serve as a basis for ethical reflection for both the researchers and the community.

⁹ Newton 1990.

Researchers may also sometimes be approached by community members and asked for their opinions on ethical matters. While researchers need not disguise or hide their own ethical views in such discussions, it is crucial to keep in mind the various power imbalances that exist between researchers and host community and proceed with an appropriate level of caution and restraint. Researchers must make sure to emphasize that their psychological and other academic expertise does not translate to ethical expertise. A genuine **willingness to approach intercultural discussions of ethical questions with an open mind**, carefully entertaining the justifications put forward by one's interlocutor, and interpreting them as charitably as possible, all can help make such conversations a success, improving the chances of ethical learning on both sides.

5.5 Showing Appropriate Respect for Individuals

The required respect in the interaction with the community as a whole of course also entails a respectful attitude towards the individuals that are part of it. Interaction between researchers and members of the community is not limited to study contexts. For the duration of their stay, researchers and community members will interact in a variety of ways. Most importantly, researchers must **refrain from any kind of harassment, bullying intimidation or violence**.

A considerate and respectful attitude towards community members in all interactions is crucial for upholding a positive relationship between the community and researchers. If a researcher witnesses another member of the research team, or a contractor in their employ, engage in the abovementioned kinds of abuse, these **violations must be immediately brought to the attention of the project lead**, so that appropriate measures can be taken to mend the relationship.

5.6 Policy on Romantic Involvement

An impartial treatment of the members of the host community, as well as avoidance of any conflict with the community, are core ethical responsibilities of researchers engaging in intercultural fieldwork. What is more, important power imbalances often exist between researchers and locals, bringing with them a risk of (sometimes unwitting) exploitation. For these reasons, **romantic involvement of researchers with a member of the host community is not ethically acceptable** for the duration of a research stay. This restriction includes local contractors. If a researcher should find themselves developing a romantic interest in a community member, they must refrain from acting upon it until their research stay is completed. If this proves not to be feasible, the situation must be brought to the attention of the project lead, so that a solution can be found. This will most likely involve removing the researcher in question from any work with the community.

5.7 Challenges of Work with Communities with Little Outside Contact

Most of the abovementioned points of ethically relevant risks related to researcher's interaction with the host community become much more salient and pressing when considering work with communities that do not frequently have contact with outsiders. The **serious risks of disruption in such more isolated communities** are not always easy to foresee and calculate beforehand, and therefore warrant particular caution.

Introduction of new technologies, cultural practices and knowledge can cause great changes in such communities, which sometimes can destabilize existing social structures. This, in conjunction with the aforementioned risks of introduction of diseases, have led to substantial population crashes in a number of communities as a result of contact by researchers in the past.¹⁰ As a general rule, **the less contact the community had with the outside world, the greater the risk of disruption** that a research project conducted in their community can have.

For these reasons, research in communities with little outside contact requires both a significantly more pressing justification, and more extensive and careful prior planning. Both requirements vary with the level of isolation of, and thus risk to, the community in question. In any case, significant gains in knowledge and potential benefits to the community itself must very clearly be shown for such research to be justifiable. **Planning of such projects must involve input from and exchange with additional stakeholders** like local governments, indigenous rights organisations, as well as other experts.

Risks and benefits must be thoroughly considered, and **long-term strategies of impact assessment and harm mitigation must be implemented**, ideally in cooperation with these other stakeholders. History has shown that even when initial contact is well-organized and sufficient medical and other precautions are taken, the community can still suffer great harms when researchers leave them even for a relatively short period of time afterwards.¹¹

Establishing (or intensifying) contact with remote communities is an act which **imparts long-term responsibilities** on the party doing so. This is something that researchers must keep in mind when planning projects in such contexts. These projects should only be undertaken if it can be assured that these responsibilities are honoured to the fullest extent possible, ideally in cooperation with other stakeholders.

Summary:

- Researchers must take all indicated medical precautions against the introduction of diseases in host communities.
- Researchers must be mindful of their position as guest and not take up a position of entitlement with regards to the community's time and attention.

¹⁰ Ortiz-Prado et al. 2021

¹¹ Compare the case of the Yora mentioned in Walker and Hill 2015.

- As guests, researchers must not openly flaunt culturally prevalent ethical and societal norms, though they are not required to personally accept them.
- In certain circumstances researchers may engage in discussion of ethical issues with community members – such discussion must always be open, respectful, and free from imposition of power.
- Researchers must behave respectfully towards all members of host communities and refrain from any kind of harassment, bullying, intimidation or violence.
- Researchers must avoid all romantic involvement with members of the host community and local contractors.
- Research in communities with little outside contact is generally discouraged as it requires special justification and extensive preparation.

6) Ensuring Benefits of Research and Seeking Their Fair Distribution

The previous sections have laid out various ways in which research activities in the context of intercultural fieldwork stand to negatively affect study participants, as well as host communities and their members. As was repeatedly stressed, these ethically relevant risks put a justificatory burden on those planning such research projects. As such, **a research project should only be carried out if the expected benefits can be shown to be outweigh these risks**. This balance of risks and benefits must always be clearly communicated to the community.

What is more, **it must be ensured that the research project does not amount to exploitation**: benefits must not exclusively or predominantly accrue to only some groups, especially not only the researchers themselves, or groups that they themselves appertain to, such as the scientific community. The community whose participation in the research enables the results must themselves profit from the research project in a tangible way. What constitutes such a tangible benefit depends on the specific context and on the needs of the community in question. Close consultations with community members and/or others familiar with community life is thus of great importance.¹²

6.1 Progress in Science

The most obvious benefit that research in cross-cultural psychology yields is of a scientific nature, as **cross-cultural research generates important insights** into human cognitive capacities, cultural diversity, and the way both of these develop and interact.

Just how much an individual research project contributes to progress in the field will of course depend heavily on its details. When designing research projects that require any kind of testing involving humans, and especially those requiring fieldwork in economically disadvantaged or politically underrepresented communities, the **prospects**

¹² For a helpful cooperative model of benefit sharing that takes into account the socially and culturally contingent nature of what constitutes a benefit, see Amugune and Otieno-Omutoko 2019.

for significant progress for the discipline must be clearly established ahead of time. To ensure this, researchers should not only rely on their own judgment and those of their immediate collaborators but seek the opinion of qualified colleagues at early stages of study design.

However, the nature of the insights generated also points towards important limitations of their value. The **results of the type of research conducted by the department are not usually directly applicable in the improvement of the lives of participants** and their communities. As such, they normally cannot be considered a direct benefit to them, as for example clinical research into treatment options for HIV/AIDS in Central Africa might.¹³

That is not to say that insights generated by this type of research may not still be of interest to the participants and communities themselves. Where direct benefit is possible, it should be pursued. Furthermore, even more theoretical insights might contribute to a greater self-understanding in a community. For these reasons, **communities should always be made an offer to be informed of the results of the research**, and for the results to be presented in a way that is both accessible and highlights those features of the results that are likely to be of interest to them. However, these kinds of benefits are comparatively small, and usually not by themselves enough to ensure that the involvement of communities is not exploitative to at least some degree.

6.2 Immediate Benefits of Participation

In some situations, participants can draw benefits from the immediate experience of participation in research. These can range from happiness about the fact that one has contributed to a worthwhile endeavour in supporting research (even if one does not benefit from the results oneself) to the enjoyment of participation in game-like experiments. Children in particular stand to profit from participation in well-designed studies this latter way. Researchers should be aware of these potential benefits and **aim to make participation as enjoyable and rewarding as possible, while also showing appreciation of the contribution to science made by participants.**

At the same time, there is also an acute **risk of overestimating these immediate benefits of participation**, especially from the researcher's self-interested perspective. More often than not, additional benefits beyond these immediate benefits have to be provided to justify the carrying out of a study.

6.3 Direct Remuneration and Community Compensation

In order to ensure that research does not amount to exploitation of the participants and their communities, **researchers will generally have to offer additional benefits to participants and the community** beyond the mere insight into the results of the study itself.

¹³ See also the discussion in Schoepf 2011.

The most obvious way to benefit participants and their communities is through direct material compensation, as is common practice for research conducted locally. However, in the context of cross-cultural fieldwork, **simply financially compensating participants for their time comes with significant challenges**. For one thing, it can give rise to problems regarding the fairness of the distribution of benefits and competition for access, which are discussed in the next subsection. Even more importantly, it can give the wrong impression about the nature of participation, insinuating a patron-client or employer-employee relationship. Both individuals and the community should be clear that participation in the study is voluntary, and that consent can be revoked at any point in time. Wherever possible, researchers should therefore opt for alternatives to individual monetary or other material rewards for participants that go beyond immediate and direct compensation for opportunity costs incurred through participation. Instead, **compensation at the community level is to be preferred**, as it is not subject to the abovementioned risks in the same way as individual rewards for participation.

On the community level, direct material benefits such as donations of food, various equipment such as water tanks, tools, or toys for children can serve as appropriate expressions of gratitude for the community's participation. **When choosing a potential community gift, close consultation with informants familiar with the needs and customs of the community should be sought**, to avoid breach of community protocols, giving of useless gifts and an untoward paternalism in one's assessment of what a community "really needs".

Sustainable, lasting benefits (such as sturdy water tanks) that can be serviced and maintained by the community on its own **are generally preferable to temporary, exhaustible and monopolizable benefits**. Donation of equipment that may quickly require maintenance by professionals that the community cannot easily get hold of after the departure of the researchers should be avoided unless arrangements for long-term maintenance can be made.

6.4 Ensuring a Fair Distribution of Benefits

Whatever the compensation that is offered to the community during fieldwork, **researchers have a responsibility to ensure that their gifts and donations benefit all parts of the community equally**, and that they do not contribute to competition and strife between groups.

Researchers should be aware that participation may be viewed as a valuable resource, access to which may be regulated and restricted by gatekeepers in the community without their knowledge. To **forestall any conflict due to envy and/or perceived favouritism**, researchers should avoid giving substantial material rewards for participation and provide additional community-level compensation that aims to benefit all members regardless of their participation.

The choice of community compensation should also be guided by considerations of fair distribution. Researchers should seek to **choose gifts such that they do not only end up in the hands of some parts of the community at the expense of others**. For example, donating a single device, to be installed at a community leader's residence, may lead to a situation in which this individual can control access to it. To prevent such situations, it should be considered whether there are alternative schemes for compensation that allow more fine-grained assignments of benefits, for example by providing separate goods to each clearly identifiable group, or even to each single household in the community.

It bears stressing again that what constitutes **an appropriate benefit to the community is not determined by what is enough to obtain consent** for a research stay from decision-makers in a community. Especially in communities where few individuals (elders, chiefs, etc.) have the authority to make decisions for a collective, it may be easier to convince these decision-makers through compensation that is more targeted at their specific desires than the good of the community as a whole. Any temptation to do so must be resisted. The aim of community compensation is not to simply secure access to the community, but to forestall the risk of exploitation. Only truly fair and equitable compensation serves this ethical goal.

6.5 Alternative Ways of Benefiting Host Communities

Beyond the giving of material or monetary gifts, the researcher's presence can be of value to the community in a variety of further ways. These can supplement direct compensation, though they are not usually enough to render it superfluous.

In some instances, researchers may be able to offer certain practical services. They can **allow temporary use of their technical equipment**, giving community members lifts in their cars, letting them use their satellite phones or making photocopies of documents like maps. In many communities, taking and printing pictures of individuals, families, or special events is also greatly appreciated. If researchers are planning to take this equipment back with them at the end of the project, the decision to offer such use must be well-considered, to ensure community members do not become reliant on equipment in a way that can later cause them harm or distress. **Clear boundaries and rules regarding the use of any equipment must also be established** ahead of time, to forestall conflict between community and researchers or between individual community members. Proactive, open and honest communication is key to avoiding potential conflict situations.

In certain situations, researchers may also be able to lend basic medical help to community members. Researchers may benefit the community by sharing medical equipment like first aid kits or protective equipment. When planning their trip, it may be worthwhile for researchers to anticipate this possibility and pack more than the bare minimum of such supplies that is needed for their personal use. As noted in Section 5.1 above, the sharing of medication, especially things such as antibiotics or antimalarials, carries important risks for individuals and communities. **Medication may only be**

shared under the explicit instruction of a medical professional familiar with the risks and needs specific to the community in question. When in doubt, researchers should err on the side of caution

6.6 Benefiting Communities through Participation

A further important resource that researchers can share with community members during their stays is their expertise. Through sharing certain skills and knowledge, researchers can have a lasting positive impact on communities. In making such offers, however, researchers must make sure not to take up a paternalistic role of teacher. Instead, both researchers and communities should conceive of the **researcher's stay as an opportunity for a mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge**. Researchers showing a genuine interest in learning some of the community's cultural knowledge and skills in exchange for their own can itself be a positive and empowering experience for all parties involved.

To encourage this sort of beneficial exchange, researchers should strongly consider leaving **room for the development of more open-ended community-guided research activities during a field stay**.¹⁴ By seeking guidance on what research-related activities could serve community interests and taking time to pursue them in collaboration with them, researchers can further facilitate exchanges of knowledge that benefit all parties. For example, some communities have collaborated with researchers in developing new ways to systematically collect and record history and knowledge, incorporating researchers in a facility akin to a chronicler.¹⁵ Especially in cases where the studies which researchers aim to conduct are geared to very specific goals, and/or are targeted only at specific groups within the host community (only children, for example), it can be **valuable and empowering if researchers show a more general interest in allowing community input to further research activities**. This also provides an opportunity to partially reverse an important power dynamic between researchers and community, as it allows community members to guide the researchers' attention to features of their culture and cognition that they deem important, not only those relevant to the study goals that drive the researchers' own interests.

Finally, researchers can and should **directly encourage community participation by involving community members in research activities**, in roles including those of research assistant, administrative assistant, and others. Greater direct involvement of community members in the research process does not only allow community collaborators to develop skills and potential further career opportunities, but importantly also allows for more opportunities of mutual learning while also naturally leading to a better focus on the community's needs during the research process. These benefits to

¹⁴ For outlines of the shape such activities can take, see Flicker, Travers, Guta, McDonald and Meagher 2007 and Collins, Clifasefi, Stanton et al. 2018

¹⁵ Francis 1992.

participation are not only limited to the local community. Collaboration with established research institutions and universities in the host country should additionally be considered as they can provide further opportunities for mutually beneficial exchange.

Summary:

- Researchers must make sure their research yields benefits that are commensurate to the risks and costs that participants undertake.
- Benefits must be distributed equally – production of knowledge may not be enough, especially if it is not of direct use to the participants' community.
- Direct compensation of participants is usually an option in local research but is inadvisable for many fieldwork contexts.
- Community compensation is generally appropriate, but care must be taken to choose gifts that create sustainable benefits to the community and that are not monopolizable or otherwise can contribute to intra-community strife.
- Researchers must closely consult with the community or those familiar with it to correctly and non-paternalistically assess the community's needs.
- Studies should be designed in a way that maximizes enjoyment and rewardingness of participation wherever possible.
- Researchers can sometimes benefit the community by sharing equipment or skills but must ensure not to allow dependencies or favouritism to develop.
- Allowing for community participation in the development of (some) research activities can create opportunities for mutually beneficial exchanges of knowledge.

7) Equitable Treatment, Non-Discrimination and Fair Pay

7.1 Non-Discrimination Policy

Whether in the field or in local research, researchers at the institute **must never engage in any form of discrimination**, be this based on categories of ethnicity, religion, age, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, educational background, disability, and familial status including pregnancy. Discrimination consists of acts, practices, or policies that put persons at an arbitrary disadvantage relative to others simply because of their membership in a salient social group such as the abovementioned.¹⁶

¹⁶ Altman 2020

The applications of this general requirement are varied and far-reaching. Most importantly, decisions regarding **hiring and other types of local co-operations must be exclusively based on the candidate's skill and fitness for the required task**. Equal opportunity must be given to applicants of all backgrounds, provided they have the necessary skill. Especially with regards to factors such as educational background, this may require more intense and careful screening of candidates, as skills such as proficiency in languages and translation need not necessarily correlate with formal education as strictly as researchers may expect.

A strict policy against discrimination of course also yields various **requirements for researchers in their day-to-day engagement with the community and the wider research team**. Researchers have a responsibility to make sure none of their interactions with community members, contractors, or team members are guided by prejudice or show favouritism along the lines of the various categories listed above.

Both within the host community and without, for genuine trust in researchers and the integrity of their research to be possible, **researchers must prove themselves to be open-minded, fair and impartial**. Living up to these virtues at all times is therefore a core responsibility for researchers conducting cross-cultural fieldwork.

7.2 Requirements Regarding Equitable Treatment

In many cases, **host communities may be split in various more or less clearly distinguishable groups or factions**, commonly (but not exclusively) along ethnic or religious lines. These internal divisions, which sometimes come with substantial inter-group rivalry or even conflict, are of great relevance for the appropriate behaviour of researchers working in such communities.

Researchers must do their utmost to **not stoke inter-group rivalries by engaging in any favouritism**, or actions easily interpretable as doing so. This relates most clearly to decisions on whom to hire and with which parts of the community to engage – by participating in events and ceremonies, for example. Researchers must do their utmost to split their time and resources as equitably as possible.

It also applies to the selection of participants in studies. As far as the scientific constraints of the study permit, **participants from all relevant groups should be allowed and encouraged to participate in studies**, especially in situations in which participation carries some benefit (even only reputational). Where study designs require restricting participation to certain subgroups, the reasoning behind this must be made as clear as possible to the community. Possibilities for add-on studies involving the excluded groups should be closely considered. In any case, **researchers should clearly communicate that their interest generally extends to the ways of life, skills, and particularities of all community members**, not just those that are the focus of the current study. One way of doing so might be by outlining possible avenues for future research that involves broader sections of the community.

It should be noted that equitable engagement might sometimes require the researchers to make “the first step” in **actively making an offer to disadvantaged groups to establish closer contact**. An overly passive stance can lead to a situation where closer contact is only established with dominant groups, since these will likely be in a better position to create engagement with guests such as researchers. In such cases, active effort on the researchers’ part will be required to engage with all parts of the community equitably.

7.3 Responsibilities to Contractors and Local Research Assistants

Any contractors or local research assistants in the institute’s employ must receive adequate and fair compensation for the work they do at field sites and beyond. What should be considered fair pay is not simply determined by what is commonly locally accepted. Instead, a **fair payment is one that does justice to the services rendered and allows the employee to provide for a dignified life for themselves and their family**, given both reasonable working hours and effort. For example, a research assistant’s salary may be modelled on the locally customary salary of an unspecialized teacher, as long as this ensures a comfortable and dignified life to the research assistant and their family. It should be noted that for some systematically underpaid professions or groups, genuinely fair pay for services may exceed what is locally customary.

If possible, **reasonable health care provisions must also be provided** to employees, especially with regards to health care risks related to the work. To forestall misunderstandings and guard against abuse, the details of such provisions must be made clear from the start, and explicit agreement to the conditions must be required from contractors and employees.

Paying above locally customary rates may bring its own challenges. It **underscores the importance of impartial and equitable hiring decisions**, since it might lead to (inter-group) competition for positions. Clear communication to the community regarding these decisions is key to forestall any form of conflict.

Summary:

- Researchers must never engage in any form of discrimination, be this based on categories of ethnicity, religion, age, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, educational background, disability, and familial status including pregnancy.
- Great care must be taken not to show favouritism to certain groups in a host community - consultation with those familiar with the community is key to identify groups and manage levels of involvement.
- Contractors and research assistants must receive fair pay that allows them to provide for a dignified life for themselves and their family, as well as reasonable health care provisions.

8) Informed Consent as A Cornerstone of Conscientious Research

As was already stressed before, in any kind of research involving human participants, obtaining **informed and valid consent of all those involved in the research is a prerequisite for ethical permissibility**. The consent requirement is binding upon researchers independently from any considerations regarding the balance of harms and benefits. If valid consent is not obtained, proceeding with a research project constitutes a violation of the participant's autonomy and is as such not ethically permissible, even if can unequivocally be shown to be highly beneficial.

This consent requirement also entails that **participants must be able to freely withdraw or modify their consent at any point**. As part of this, they are also entitled to ask for the deletion of any media or personal data that they have contributed through their participation, either in part or in full.¹⁷

Consent is subject to several important validity conditions. For research to be permissible, it is not enough to simply obtain any form of expression of consent – an individual's consent **must be well-informed and free from any invalidating form of duress or outside pressure**. It is the researcher's responsibility to ensure that all pertinent validity conditions are met – as the party obtaining consent, they have a duty of due diligence to verify that no invalidating factors like outside pressure obtain.

Besides these important requirements connected to the validity conditions of consent, researchers **must also ensure that their methods for obtaining consent are appropriate to the cultural expectations, customs and legal framework** in the community where research is conducted. This applies to both the general method of obtaining consent (in written form or through recorded verbal consent) and the details of the consent protocol, which will be outlined below.

8.1 Information Requirements for Valid Consent

The most important validity condition for consent in the context of participation in research is the information requirement. Candidates **must have sufficient understanding of all the aspects of a research project that are relevant to their decision regarding participation**. It is the researchers' responsibility to provide this information to them and to ensure their understanding before obtaining consent.

Making sure that this requirement is met requires a careful process of selecting, curating and processing information to be presented to the participants. For every study, **researchers must prepare an information sheet or consent form that offers a clear and understandable statement of all relevant aspects of the study**. This information sheet will then be either directly provided or read out to individuals as part of a comprehensive written or oral consent protocol, as outlined below.

¹⁷ For a fully developed argument to this point, see McConnell 2010

The following list provides an overview of potentially relevant considerations to be included in an information sheet. Not all of the mentioned items may be relevant to every study. **Which items of information must be included will depend on the nature of the research project.** If in doubt, it will usually be better to include a given piece of information, as long as it can be presented in a concise and understandable manner that does not distract from other core messages that are to be conveyed.

Examples of Relevant Considerations to be Included in an Information Sheet.

- The name and contact details of the Principal Investigator, including information on feasible ways to reach them (even after the end of data collection)
- The research goals served by the project and its expected benefits
- The type(s) of data to be collected
- The method(s) of collecting data
- Details of any risks associated with participation
- How much time the participant will likely have to commit
- Details of any compensation arrangements
- Their inalienable right to withdraw from the study and/or have their data deleted at any time with no adverse consequences
- Confidentiality and anonymity conditions associated with storing/processing of data
- Compliance of the research with any pertinent data protection laws
- Details regarding any withheld information and potential debriefing meetings
- How the results will be made available to the participants

The quality of an information sheet is not only determined by what information is provided, but also how this information is provided. Participants must not only be given the opportunity to simply receive information, but also to properly understand it.¹⁸ As such, the **language, structure, and presentation of the information must be clearly geared to facilitating understanding** by the specific group of participants in the study. The language should be as clear and accessible as possible, especially where participants have limited literacy. Short words and sentences, active voice, avoidance of technical terms and repetition and highlighting of key points are all recommended.

The information sheet must be **translated into the native language(s) of all potential participants by a competent translator** where necessary. Under no circumstance should a candidate make the decision to consent based on information presented in a language that they are not capable of speaking at a native level. Translations must also be counter-checked by individuals fluent in both the target language and a reference language like English, French or Spanish.

¹⁸ Cf. Bromwich 2014, Wilkenfeld 2019

For some studies, the success of a research project may require researchers to refrain from giving full information prior to data collection. As noted above in Section 4, the amount of deception employed in a study (as well as its duration) must always be kept to the absolute minimum. While researchers do not need to explicitly notify participants that the study they are enrolled in involves deception, the **information sheet must make clear if any information is withheld** for the sake of study success and clearly specify at which point the withheld information will be provided in a debriefing meeting.

To verify that an information sheet is written in a way that facilitates understanding, **it is highly recommendable to organize a comprehensibility check** before approaching any potential participants. In such a check, the information sheet would be presented to one or more test participants. These should share the native language and cultural background of the candidate pool for the study and be chosen with a view to potential challenges to comprehension in specific subsets of this pool. Checking the test participants' comprehension (either through a formal quiz or informally) can help identify potentially unclear sections of the information sheet and forestall certain misunderstandings during the actual study.

8.2 Autonomy Requirements for Consent

Besides having to be sufficiently informed, consent must also not be obtained through coercion or deception. The **requirement not to obtain consent through coercion is especially important**. Individuals must under no circumstances be put under any pressure to participate or to continue participation when they are considering withdrawing their consent. Doing so would violate their rights to personal autonomy.

It is crucial to keep in mind that **coercion may be inadvertent**. For example, offering disproportionate rewards for participation, or withholding rewards when a participant does not complete data collection can create undue pressure on an individual to consent, especially if that individual finds themselves in an economically disadvantaged situation. Researchers must also be aware of their position of authority (real or merely perceived), which may lead candidates to submit to what they take to be their will without any explicit exhortation to do so.

To counteract these tendencies, **researchers must repeatedly stress the voluntary nature of participation**, and design their compensation and community reward schemes with these risks to autonomy in mind. Furthermore, researchers must consider cultural obstacles in their design of the consent procedure. For example, in some cultures explicit refusal is discouraged by social codes and customs, whereas implicit refusal expressed by silence or inaction is perfectly acceptable.¹⁹ In such situations, instead of directly approaching individuals, researchers should consider a set-up where the research project's methods and aims are presented at a community meeting and individuals wanting to participate are then invited to actively step forward (either immediately or at a later point in time).

¹⁹ Cf. Benitez, Devaux and Dausset 2002: 1407.

8.3 Consent Protocols for Written Consent

When participants are literate and have a decent amount of familiarity with the process of entering into written contracts, the information sheet can be incorporated into a **comprehensive consent form for written consent**, which participants can give by providing their signature. The consent form should include a statement explicitly confirming that the participant has received and understood the relevant information. Again, it is the researcher's duty to ensure that participants have the required skills in literacy and understanding of the import of the process, as well as to arrange for alternative methods of obtaining consent where this is not the case.

In any case, **sufficient time must be given for potential participants to absorb and consider the information** provided to them before they are asked to make a decision regarding participation. To ensure that candidates take the time to read the document carefully, they should be explicitly directed to do so and ideally be provided with a fixed amount of time before they are allowed to hand in the signed document. Candidates must also be provided the **opportunity to ask questions about any of the contents of the consent form** and be actively encouraged to avail themselves of this chance. Having a member of the local community present as a liaison can help put candidates at ease and create an atmosphere more conducive to open questioning.

The consent form must be signed both by the participant and a member of the research team. **Participants must receive a copy of the consent form**, which should provide contact details of a senior member of the research team and an explicit encouragement to contact them in case of any questions regarding the research that may arise.

8.4 Consent Protocols for Oral Consent

Where sufficient literacy of candidates cannot be ensured, researchers must instead organise a **procedure for obtaining and recording oral consent from potential participants**. The details of this procedure should be established ahead of time in close cooperation with individuals familiar with the host community. When signing up potential participants in the field, it is important that researchers closely follow the agreed-upon protocol, and not deviate from it to save time or effort.

While the details of the procedure may be spelled out in different ways depending on conditions in the host community, a few elements are crucial and must always be followed. Most importantly, **the specifically drafted information document must be read out word for word** to all potential participants. Where appropriate, the reading can be supplemented with visual aids and/or live demonstrations of procedures related to the study.

Furthermore, the **oral giving of consent must be separately and reliably recorded for each individual**. Ideally, it should be recorded in audiovisual form – either through a video recording of the act of giving consent, or through an audio recording supplemented with photographic evidence.²⁰ If candidates are not comfortable with

²⁰ Benitez, Devaux and Dausset 2002 in fact require all three forms of medium.

being recorded even after reassurance about the limited and confidential nature of the recordings, researchers may also institute an alternative scheme where independent witnesses confirm the giving of oral consent.

As outlined above, the opportunity to ask questions, both during the procedure and retrospectively, must be given to individuals, explicitly encouraging them to avail themselves of it. Since illiterate participants do not have the opportunity to check individual points themselves by consulting their copy of the form at a later point in time, **a clear channel of communication for potential later clarifications regarding issues relevant to their consent must remain open** at the very least until the end of data collection.

8.5 Verifying the Validity of Consent

Researchers should be aware that for various reasons, **candidates may express a willingness to participate even though crucial validity conditions of consent are not actually met**. Some may be too embarrassed to admit that they fail to understand some pertinent piece of information, others may not want to defy (perceived) authority. This will likely happen more often than researchers expect. Empirical results show that in a wide range of studies, many competent adults fail to adequately understand pertinent pieces of information provided presented to them as part of the consent protocol related to their enrolment in a research project.²¹

To ensure that participants' consent is valid, **researchers have a responsibility to verify that consent is sufficiently voluntary and well-informed**. The giving of consent by candidates should be conceptualized as a dialogical procedure – just as candidates ask the researchers questions, the researchers should ensure that the core points are well understood.

Obtaining necessary consent should also be understood as a continuous process. If at any point during data collection researchers should experience doubt whether participants may be under misconceptions regarding the study and especially their rights in relation to it (most importantly, their right to withdraw), it is incumbent upon them to check and clarify.

Researchers should also at least **consider instituting more formal comprehension checks** at least from time to time. This not only ensures good comprehension by the participants, but also allows researchers to test and potentially re-calibrate their information and consent protocols.

8.6 Consent and Assent for the Participation of Children and other Individuals Who Cannot Themselves Consent

The requirement to obtain consent in research exists irrespective of the participant's age or competence. However, the correct way in which to seek this consent may vary with

²¹ See Flory, Wendler and Emanuel 2011 and Pietrzykowski and Smilowska 2021.

these factors. **For research involving children under 16 years of age, as well as adults with serious cognitive impairments, researchers must obtain consent from a parent or guardian**, since individuals from these groups may not have the faculties of understanding to be able to give valid consent on their own. Where guardianship is not legally codified, it may sometimes be hard for researchers to determine who has guardianship over a certain individual. In such situations, they should seek the help of informants familiar with the host culture. As a rule of thumb, researchers may orient themselves on the following: whoever is entitled to make unilateral medical decisions for that individual probably can be considered to have guardianship. The details of the consent procedure (written or oral consent) should be based on the abilities and desires of the guardian. In some situations, guardians can temporarily transmit their authority to third parties, e.g. school teachers. In such cases, however, explicit confirmation about this transfer from the guardian is necessary.

Beyond the consent of a guardian, it is furthermore **crucial that continuous assent from the participant without the ability to fully consent is also obtained** to ensure they are not made to participate against their will. Their assent must be continuously confirmed – researchers must pay attention to any signs of unwillingness to continue with data collection, be they verbal or non-verbal. In the case of work with very small children or adults with serious cognitive impairments, accurate monitoring of such signs may require the presence of a person familiar with that participants' idiosyncrasies, such as a member of their family.

Assent is similarly subject to an information requirement, though it is less demanding than the information requirement for consent. In addition to informing guardians, **researchers must therefore also provide an adapted and abridged briefing to all participants who cannot themselves consent**. The information included should contain the core points of what is presented to the guardians and should be presented in a way that is adapted specifically to the level of comprehension of the candidates.

8.7 Consent and Community Assent

It is sometimes argued that in communitarian cultures in which decisions are usually made at a collective rather than individual level, obtaining informed consent from individual participants is not only unnecessary, but culturally inappropriate. Community consent would thus be all that is required.²² This view, however, underestimates the value that personal autonomy has even in such cultural settings and leaves individuals open to exploitation.²³ As such, **obtaining individual consent is always a requirement** for the permissibility of research.

However, researchers can still do justice to the value that cultures ascribe to a more relational form of autonomy through collectively made decisions by **supplementing individual consent procedures with a community consultation**, in addition to the

²² Newton 1990

²³ Frimpong-Mansoh 2008, Friele 2012.

community-level consent that is of course required for the researcher's very presence in the community. A community consultation can consist in the presentation of information regarding the research to the community in a group setting, followed by a discussion in which community members can give input on the research project.²⁴ When the input is taken seriously, such a consultation at the community level can grant legitimacy to the research process and lead to a stronger sharing of responsibilities between researchers and community.

8.8 Consent Requirements Across Time

For research projects that require a substantial commitment of time, such as longitudinal studies, **researchers must aim to obtain renewed consent** from participants at pre-determined intervals. In such studies, proper appreciation of both the aims of research and what exactly is involved in participation may only become clear over a relatively long period of time. What is more, participants' individual situations may also change during the course of the study, meaning that requiring renewal is not only respectful but absolutely necessary for the validity of their consent.

Before concluding a field stay, **researchers should also consider making arrangements that allow them to obtain consent from participants in the future**. In some situations, researchers may later decide to use data or media collected in a way that differs from those to which participants have agreed as part of a consent procedure. For example, if audiovisual media that were collected to be used internally as part of a data analysis is later to be disseminated to other individuals or institutions, this requires separate consent from participants. This consent is subject to the same strict requirements as original consent and must therefore be obtained employing the same rigorous methodology outlined above.

Summary:

- All participants must individually give fully informed and uncoerced consent prior to any data collection.
- For written consent:
 - A comprehensive information sheet must be drawn up, including all relevant information (see box above).
 - Participants must be given sufficient time to read this form and ask questions, and then sign it.
- For oral consent:
 - A comprehensive information sheet must still be drawn up (as above).
 - This information must be given verbatim to the participants.

²⁴ Dickert and Sugarman 2005

- Participants must be given sufficient time to ask questions, and then give oral consent, which is either recorded on video (preferable) or confirmed by independent witnesses.
- Researchers have a responsibility to ensure sufficient understanding on the part of the consenting individuals – regular checks are advisable.
- Parents or suitable guardians must give consent for children and other individuals who cannot themselves consent – this does not, however, replace the (separate) requirement to continuously ensure these consented-for individuals show a desire to participate throughout.
- In some settings, individual consent may be complemented by (not superseded by) a community consultation.

9) Research in Non-Ideal Settings – Caution, Complicity and Responsibility

9.1 Problems with Systemic Wrongdoing

In many circumstances, research can be conducted only with the blessing and permission of gatekeepers. These include bodies such as national and regional governments and their agencies, but also local social structures and person of influence. While these gatekeeping mechanisms are usually efficient tools to ensure that communities' interests are respected, this dependence can also lead to ethical problems. **Sometimes, gatekeepers are themselves guilty of serious ethical violations, including infringements of human rights.** For example, researchers might want to conduct research in national parks managed by park authorities that are guilty of serious rights violations against communities living within its limits, sometimes culminating in complete displacement of these communities from their homes. Such situations raise a host of issues that researchers must factor into their decision on whether and how to proceed with their research projects.

Most importantly, it must be kept in mind that **the researchers' presence can benefit these guilty parties, and thereby contribute to the perpetuation of wrongdoing.** For one thing, the researcher's presence can create financial benefits for gatekeepers, through fees, taxes, and contribution to the local economy. For another, the researchers' presence can itself grant a certain kind of prestige and respectability to the gatekeepers in question and thereby have a kind of legitimizing influence.

Even in cases where the researchers' presence is unlikely to produce harm, relying on guilty gatekeepers can be morally problematic. The reason for this is that researchers also have justice-based **moral reasons to avoid complicity in injustices perpetrated by others** by profiting from them during the pursuit of their own research goals.

9.2 Avoiding and Mitigating Complicity

When launching new research projects, researchers must carefully consider the ethical risks of complicity with, or unwitting support to, serious ethical injustices by gatekeepers. If such risks cannot be avoided in a given context, this leads to a much stricter requirement of justification for the carrying out of the research project. **Research projects that can only be undertaken in a context of complicity with serious injustices should only be carried out in exceptional circumstances**, where the pursuit of the project can be shown to be of particular importance, and where the ethically problematic circumstances are fully and properly accounted for. As part of this, alternative ways of carrying out a project without cooperation with guilty parties must be thoroughly explored.

Where such projects are deemed justifiable, **researchers have a duty to carefully develop strategies for mitigating the harms** that their complicity might cause. This includes, for example, awareness and avoidance of situations in which gatekeepers might use their presence for the advancement of their prestige, such as photo opportunities or joint public presentations.

Furthermore, **researchers must strongly consider whether they are capable of making contributions to plans for effectively protecting and helping victimised groups** in the case of ongoing wrongdoing, or for developing plans for restitution and reparations in the case of wrongdoing in the recent past. Researchers that benefit from injustices incur responsibilities to the victims of these injustices - they should at least carefully weigh the options they have in employing this power to alleviate their situation.

Finally, research projects in ethically precarious circumstances should be accompanied by contingency plans for further deterioration of the situation. Ahead of their research stay, researchers should carefully explore if there are any options for conscientiously and safely reporting any violence or abuse that they become witness to. **In very rare circumstances, research teams may be required to suspend their activity in light of egregious wrongdoings**, for example if researchers become witness to a sudden outbreak of racially motivated violence.

Summary:

- Wherever possible, researchers should avoid making themselves complicit with gatekeepers (local authorities, government etc.) that are involved in serious rights violations.
- If access is only possible through such gatekeepers, a strong justification for research is needed. Researchers must furthermore do their utmost to distance themselves from the guilty parties.
- To mitigate the impact of complicity, researchers must consider contributing to efforts towards effectively protecting and helping victimised groups.

10) Publication, Data Protection and Confidentiality

10.1 Duties of Confidentiality and Data Protection

Participants in research have important rights regarding the information that they provide to researchers, either directly or through their participation in experiments. Researchers must ensure the **confidentiality of any information gathered**, as well as the anonymity of any data that is ultimately published.

Ensuring confidentiality not only means not actively divulging any information to third parties, but also **ensuring an appropriate level of protection of any records made, as well as the process of data collection itself**. Researchers should aim to structure their data collection processes in ways that ensure that third parties have no visual or auditory access. If no proper visual screening or protection against overhearing is possible, participants need to give their explicit consent to data being collected under these circumstances. Once the data is collected, physical records and devices containing data must be kept in a secure location, ensuring outside access is impossible. Careful consideration must also be given to the securing of digitally stored data against remote breach through third parties.

How strict these requirements of data protection turn out in individual cases will depend, amongst other things, on the nature of the data collected. **When conducting research into potentially sensitive topics such as religion, morality, political affiliation etc., researchers must take extra precautions** in the protection of data.

In many contexts, the handling of private data is regulated by codified data protection laws, such as the General Data Protection Regulation in the European Union. While researchers must of course make sure they comply with any locally applicable laws, they should be aware that **ethical responsibilities regarding confidentiality will regularly exceed what is required by law**. Less restrictive laws in countries in which research is conducted are by no means to be understood as opportunities to employ less strict measures of data protection. Participants entrust researchers with important information about them in the context of data collection. Researchers have a duty not to abuse that trust.

10.2 Data Protection and Sharing of Media

These **rights also extend to any media that might feature participants**. If researchers want to publish, publicly display, or otherwise share photos, videos, or audio recordings featuring identifiable participants, this is only permissible if their explicit and well-informed consent has been obtained ahead of time. This importantly includes the usage of video in public presentations and especially on social media. Researchers should note that sharing media featuring participants or their communities on the internet is not without its risks, since certain portrayals of communities may inadvertently feed into harmful cultural or racial stereotyping. For this reason, such sharing should only take

place after careful consideration and with full informed consent of all individuals portrayed.

Obtaining consent for the publication of media is also not without its challenges. **Participants should always be asked to consent to the public use of particular photos or videos**, and never be approached with a request for blanket consent to publication of media of a researcher's choosing. Great care must also be taken in explaining the consequences of publication of a certain piece of media on the internet, especially when it concerns communities with limited or no own internet experience. **The exact extent of public use must be clearly communicated** to participants for their consent to count as truly well-informed and therefore valid. Researchers must also make sure to explain that uploading a photo or video to the internet always means that it is principally possible for others to save, reproduce, and again share it without the original uploader's permission or knowledge, since this may not be obvious to all participants.

Where possible, alternative modes of illustration, such as abstract drawings based on photographs, should be considered to avoid the abovementioned challenges regarding the use of media featuring participants.

10.3 Duties not to Manufacture or Manipulate Data

As members of the scientific community, **researchers have a strict duty not to manufacture or manipulate data to generate publishable results**. The very integrity of the scientific process depends on that of the individuals contributing to it. It should be noted that undue manipulation of data need not take the shape of an intricate orchestrated ploy. Seemingly small, sometimes even unconscious choices on the part of researchers, such as a greater propensity to find reasons to exclude data points that do not support research hypotheses, may equally contribute to undermine the objectivity of the results. It is a researcher's responsibility to ensure the full objectivity and integrity of their results in light of these risks. Emerging methods such as preregistration may be useful tools in meeting this responsibility.²⁵

In the context of intercultural psychological research, the importance of a conscientious managing of data is further compounded. Researchers not only owe it to the scientific community to provide accurate results, they also **owe it to the communities they perform research in to portray them accurately**. As laid out above, this is especially salient in the light of the harm that inaccurate or stereotypical portrayal of cultures can have, and the unfortunate role contributions by members of the scientific community have historically had in the establishment of such portrayals.

Ironically, ethical concerns about the portrayal of communities might themselves create incentives to manipulate or over-correct data. This again underscores the **importance of taking great care in the framing of questions during study design** (as laid out in detail in section 3.2) for ensuring that both good scientific practice and the rights of the community portrayed are fully respected.

²⁵ Cf. Nosek, Ebersole et al. 2018

Correlative to duties not to inaccurately portray communities are **responsibilities to properly contextualise results** reached with regards to them. From early on in study design, researchers should be concerned about potential harmful misinterpretations of their findings by others. Even results based on well-framed research questions and conscientiously reached through careful research work may be open to wilful misreading by others. Researchers should consider pre-emptively addressing these potential misinterpretations in the publication and public presentation of their work, clarifying which conclusions are actually borne out by the data and which not.

Summary:

- It is the researcher's duty to ensure the confidentiality and security of any data collected – appropriate precautions should be taken both during data collection and in data storage afterwards.
- Public use of photos and videos, especially the publication on social media, are only acceptable if fully informed consent by all portrayed parties is obtained.
- Researchers working in cross-cultural psychology have a particularly strict responsibility for good scientific conduct, due to the risks involved in false portrayals of the communities studied.
- Research must make sure to properly contextualise their results in order to guard them against potentially harmful misinterpretations.

11) Finding Suitable Resolutions for Dilemmatic Situations

11.1 Dealing with Dilemmatic Situations

The aim of these guidelines is to outline important principles that can help guide responsible research, as well as to point to some of their most pertinent applications. However, this of course does not yield clear recommendations for action in all circumstances. In the context of their work, especially that involving intercultural fieldwork, **researchers are likely to find themselves in dilemmatic situations where different ethical considerations come into conflict**. For example, a researcher might be faced with an urgent request for help from a member of the host community, which can only be acceded to by breaking a prior agreement with a community leader.

Such dilemmatic situations **will eventually have to be resolved by considered ethical judgment**. There are no easily applicable decision procedures that will infallibly yield the correct resolutions of such problems, nor are there strict prioritisations between different principles that determine which of the conflicting principles should be

favoured. The ethically appropriate action will depend on the specifics of the context, which are highly variable, especially in the context of cross-cultural fieldwork.

Still, some general points on dealing with dilemmatic situations can be made. First, **researchers faced with such situations must seek input and advice from others whenever possible**. This is especially important in the context of cross-cultural fieldwork, in order to avoid potential misunderstandings and to do justice to cultural divergences in ethical perspective. Even in seemingly pressing situations, it will be often possible to consult with other members of the research team and/or the host community. For some serious matters, a fully-fledged community consultation may need to be organised. Of course, sometimes extremely urgent situations of emergency make consultations before acting impossible. In such circumstances, researchers must act on their own conscience. However, they can and should still seek to enter into dialogue with other team members and members of the community after the fact, to explain and evaluate the course of action they have taken and to potentially offer apologies and address remaining issues.

Secondly, when considering which course of action to take in a dilemmatic situation, there is at least **some general reason for researchers to favour the less interventive option**. For example, it will rarely be appropriate for researchers to actively intercede in personal conflicts between individual members of the host community, unless doing so is necessary to prevent a serious emergency, e.g. the death or grievous injury of a person. One reason for this is the special role that researchers have as guests in the community. Another reason consists in the complexities of the intercultural context. When dealing in such contexts, it is often especially easy to overlook a potential harmful downstream effect of a well-meaning intervention, and to overestimate the benefits an intervention might have. For these reasons, the **researchers are to be particularly concerned about be their duties of non-maleficence and respect for autonomy in dilemmatic situations**, while of course not ignoring any other relevant ethical considerations.

11.2 Interpersonal Conflicts Involving Researchers:

In the unfamiliar and at times stressful circumstances of intercultural fieldwork, conflicts within the research team are not uncommon. This may happen even if all the relevant precautions are taken. It is important for the well-being and proper functioning of the team that prolonged conflicts between researchers be resolved as soon as possible. **Any extended or serious conflicts between team members must be reported to the project lead**, so that some mediation or resolution can be sought.

Less frequently, researchers may become involved in conflicts with community members. In such situations, it is especially pressing to find quickly find an equitable resolution. If researchers have **any kind of dispute with a community member** or find themselves in a situation which they feel may soon escalate into open conflict, they must immediately **bring this to the attention of the rest of the research team**, which can then explore ways of solving the problem in constructive dialogue with the community. Even where immediate intervention ends up not being necessary, knowledge of any

actual or potential points of issue will help the team maintain a healthy relationship with the community, which is paramount for responsible and successful intercultural fieldwork.

Summary:

- In dilemmatic situations, researchers must use their considered ethical judgment to resolve conflicts of principles.
- Researchers faced with such situations must seek input and advice from other members of the research team as well as members of the host community whenever possible.
- Any extended or serious conflicts between team members or between team members and participants or the host community must be reported to the project lead, so that some mediation or resolution can be sought.

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