

The logo for the European Centre for Policy Research (ECPR), consisting of the lowercase letters 'ecpr' in white on a black rectangular background.

ecpr

The logo for IMISCOE (International Migration Institute for Social Cohesion and Order in Europe) and its sub-committee Meth@Mig. It features the text 'IMISCOE' in white on a blue background, and 'Meth@Mig' in blue on a white background.

IMISCOE  
Meth@Mig

# Ethical Issues in Migration Research

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Workshop co-organised by

ECPR Standing Group Migration and Ethnicity

&

IMISCOE Standing Committee Methodological Approaches and Tools in Migration Research

18 May 2022

# Speakers:



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Justyna Salamońska (Department of Management in Networked and Digital Societies, Kozminski University, Poland)

# Poll

Please answer the poll questions to get to know the workshop profile!

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# Workshop Programme

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- **Part I:** Presentation of ethical issues in social sciences and migration research
  - **Part II:** Small group discussions on case studies requiring ethical attention
  - **Part III:** Group discussion on case studies
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# What is Research Ethics?

- **Ethics** is a branch of philosophy, which is concerned with questions of morality.
- **Research ethics:** *the study of* what researchers ought and ought not to do, and how this should be decided.
  - **Ethical:** what is *good* or *right*
  - **Unethical:** what is *bad* or *wrong*



But who determines what is good/right and bad/wrong? And how?

# Different Approaches to Research Ethics:

- **Principalist approaches:**

- An action is right if it draws on ethical principles
- No deviation from ethical principles is acceptable
- Universal application of ethical principles
- **Respect for autonomy** (voluntariness, informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity); **Beneficence** (the responsibility to do good), **nonmaleficence** (the responsibility to avoid harm) and **justice** (benefits and burdens fairly distributed)

- **Situational approaches:**

- Case-by-case ethical decisions
  - no universal application
  - “ethics in practice” can divert from “ethics in principle”
  - unique solutions tailored according to individual cases
  - Reflexively responding to unexpected situations
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# Ethical Horror Stories

- ❖ 1939-45: Morally abhorrent research conducted by Nazi scientists
- ❖ 1963: Milgram's obedience to authority experiment
- ❖ 1932-1972: The Tuskegee syphilis study
- ❖ 1970: Laud Humphrey's study on homosexual behavior
- ❖ 1973: Zimbardo's Stanford prison experiment



Picture source: PrisonExp.org

# Key Principles of Research Ethics

● **Autonomy:** The ability of participants to be self-governing and to make informed decisions about participation in research.

- Informed consent
- Voluntary participation
- Confidentiality and Anonymity

● **Beneficence** (maximizing the benefits) and

● **Nonmaleficence** (avoiding harm)

- Positive benefit-to-risk ratio

● **Justice:**

- Fair distribution of benefits and burdens

David Turdon (1996, 96): “Researching other people’s suffering can only be justified if research explicitly aims at alleviating that suffering”

# Informed Consent and Voluntary Participation

- How much info is necessary for it to be informed?
  - How to prove consent? How to be sure it is voluntary? e.g. power asymmetries between researchers and vulnerable migrants, social pressure to participate (or not participate)
  - Informed consent in cross-cultural contexts? How to get individual consent in communitarian cultures? Culture of hospitality? How to translate the consent?
  - Withdrawal of informed consent: How? Until when?
  - Consent with minors and vulnerable participants
  - Consent in “street ethnography”?
    - Consent in covert research?
  - More structured consent in survey questionnaire
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# Informed Consent Form Example

[IRB Main](#) > [IRB Forms](#) > IRB Sample Consent Form

## Sample Consent Form

[~~Note~~ that this is a *sample* and should be altered to accurately reflect your *individual* study]

School, Leisure, and Work Time Study Consent Form

You are being asked to take part in a research study of how college students with jobs manage their school, leisure and work time. We are asking you to take part because you signed up at the SUSAN web site for this study. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study.

**What the study is about:** The purpose of this study is to learn how students who have paid jobs manage their class work. You must be working at least 10 hours a week for pay to take part in this study.

**What we will ask you to do:** If you agree to be in this study, we will conduct an interview with you. The interview will include questions about your job, the hours you work, how much you earn, the number of classes you take at Cornell, how much you study, social and leisure activities, your health and well-being, and how much you sleep. The interview will take about 30 minutes to complete. With your permission, we would also like to tape-record the interview.

### Risks and benefits:

There is the risk that you may find some of the questions about your job conditions to be sensitive. [Note: For studies posing no specific risks, use the IRB standard minimal risk statement, "I do not anticipate any risks to you participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life."]

There are no benefits to you. Cornell is a very demanding place to be a student and we hope to learn more about students who work while earning degrees.

**Compensation:** You may earn extra credit if you are taking a class that offers credit for research studies. The class instructor will assign credit according to class policy. If you wish, you may earn \$3 instead of extra credit.

**Your answers will be confidential.** The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we make public we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be kept in a locked file; only the researchers will have access to the records. If we tape-record the interview, we will destroy the tape after it has been transcribed, which we anticipate will be within two months of its taping.

**Taking part is voluntary:** Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may skip any ~~questions~~ that you do not want to answer. If you decide not to take part or to skip some of the questions, it will not affect your current or future relationship with Cornell University. If you decide to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time.

**If you have questions:** The researchers conducting this study are Randy Jackson and Prof. Simon ~~Cowell~~. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Randy Jackson at randy@blabmail.com or at 1-800-555-4365. You can reach Prof. ~~Cowell~~ at meanguy@abbey.uk or 1-800-555-4365, ext. 1000. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 607-255-5138 or access their website at <http://www.irb.cornell.edu>. You may also report your concerns or complaints anonymously through ~~Ethicspoint~~ ([www.hotline.cornell.edu](http://www.hotline.cornell.edu)) or by calling toll free at 1-866-293-3077. ~~Ethicspoint~~ is an independent organization that serves as a liaison between the University and the person bringing the complaint so that anonymity can be ensured.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

**Statement of Consent:** I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

Your Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_

In addition to agreeing to participate, I also consent to having the interview tape-recorded.

Your Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of person obtaining consent \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name of person obtaining consent \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

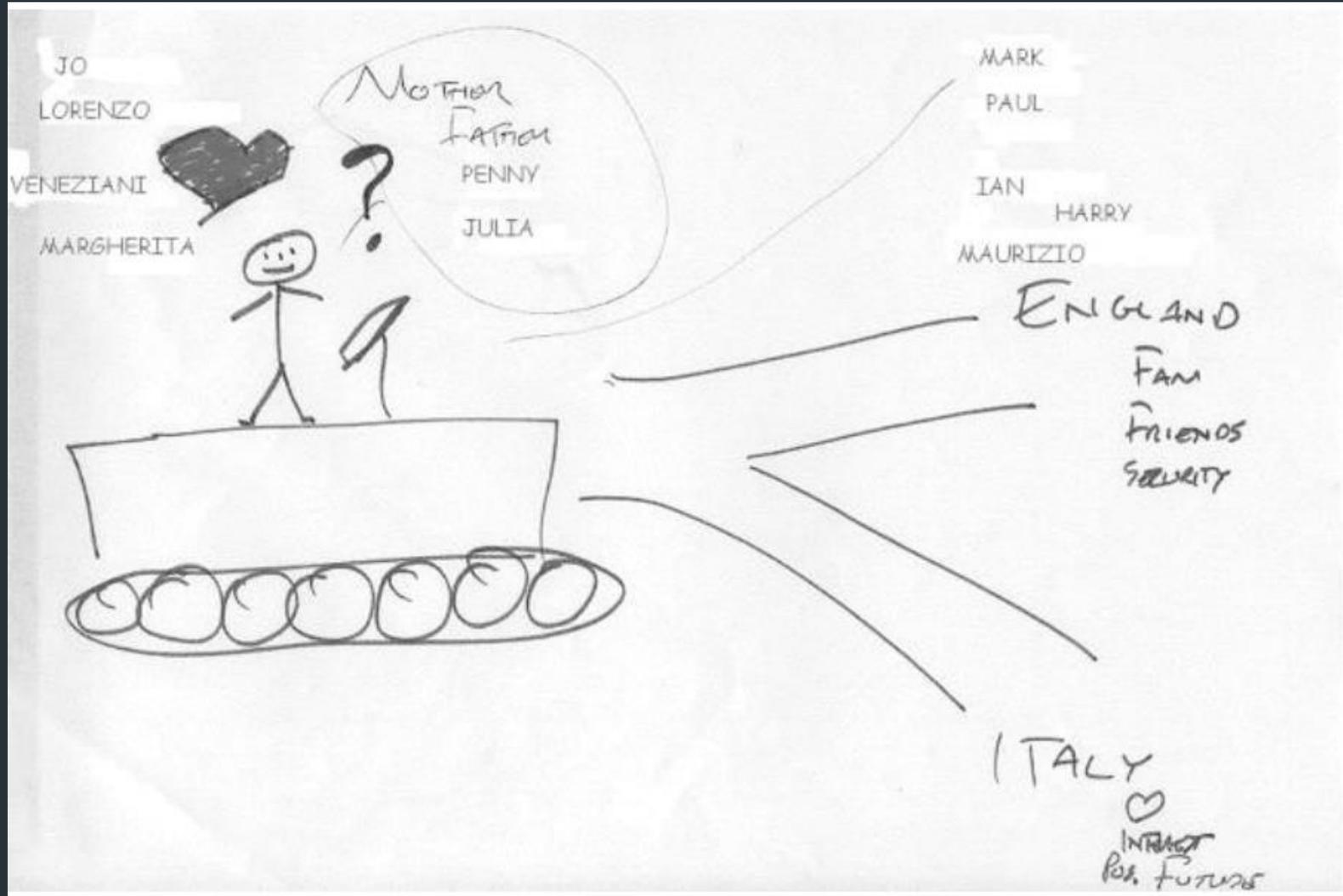
*This consent form will be kept by the researcher for at least three years beyond the end of the study and was approved by the IRB on [date].*

The title of the study should appear at the top of every page.

# Confidentiality and Anonymity

- Confidentiality is operationalized through anonymizing research participants and location.
- Two types of breaches of confidentiality:
  - Intentional: legal frameworks, moral values
    - Under a serious crime, life-threatening circumstance, to protect participant's wellbeing.
    - No clear guideline for when to do it.
    - Particularly problematical for research in politicized/criminalized topics such as undocumented migration, human smuggling etc.
  - Unintentional:
    - Qualitative Research is particularly susceptible, since small numbers and in-depth descriptions make it easier to identify the participants.
    - It can happen in focus group studies, snowball sampling, working with gatekeepers, key participants, and translators.
    - New technologies, cloud-storage systems, and new challenges to confidentiality
    - Open science calls and challenges of data transparency.
    - State agencies subpoena power that might force researchers disclose their data before the court.

# Confidentiality and Anonymity



# Benefits and Risks

## ●Benefits:

- Competing individual, social, institutional interests?
- How to return the benefits to highly mobile participants?

## ●Risks:

- When “do not harm” is not enough.
- Risk of stigmatization of already vulnerable and politicized populations
- Individual participation >> unintended risks for the community
- From *passive* protection to actively *enabling* participation

# Possible Mitigation Strategies:

- Alternative ways of collecting informed consent tailored to context and cultural norms.
- Training researchers for dealing with participants' emotional burden and psychological stress during the data collection.
- Developing careful and effective anonymization strategies and becoming familiar with cybersecurity, encryption, and issues of privacy at the age of digital data.
- Getting legal help about possible subpoena orders.
- Providing alternative ways of support the vulnerable participants e.g. compiling list of available resources and centers.



*You know many of the organizations came to the refugee camp and they see the refugees in many ways as the monkeys ... like a monkey in a cage ... and then they thought that if we show this monkey to ... the big countries of power like the EU [European Union], they will have a lot of money and it will benefit us [the non government organizations] ... They documented things [stories] of the women that is oppressed, then when they get money they use some for the refugees but mostly they use for themselves. (Discussion with a refugee men's group, Thai-Burma border, 2009)*

# Ethical Dilemmas in Qualitative Research

- Various tensions between procedural research ethics and qualitative research.
  - Flexible and responsive nature of qualitative research designs: problem of anticipating ethical problems at the outset.
  - In-depth knowledge: Problem of over-intrusiveness
  - Long duration of fieldwork: Faking friendship?
  - Emphasis on human experiences and perceptions: problem of creating emotional stress and undue burden
  - Small-N and in-depth study: problem of ensuring anonymity and confidentiality

# Ethical Dilemmas in Quantitative Research

- Issue of informed consent - some survey researchers provide detailed list of what respondents should know before participating in a survey
- Form of consent depends on the survey mode (face-to-face, telephone, online....)
- Persuasion to take part and incentives for participants
- Asking questions (to members of vulnerable populations)
- Sources of bias
- Responsibilities not only to research subjects but also interviewers (e.g. personal safety, training) and general public (e.g. reporting on sources of error)

# Case Studies

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# Small group discussions: Case Studies

**Case study A:** *Who are migrants with irregular status in Europe (countries of origin, socio-demographic characteristics, etc)?*

Study design will involve a survey data collection (structured interviews). The survey will target migrants, aged 15 to 80, who do not hold regular status in destination countries. This survey will involve a sample of 200 individuals using snowballing sampling strategy.

**Case study B:** *What are migrant everyday experiences of living without regular status in the destination countries?*

Study design will involve semi-structured interviewing and participant observation. Interviews will be collected with a snowball sample of 20 adult migrants, who do not hold regular status in the destination countries. Additionally study will involve participant observation carried out in places attended by migrants without regular status.

# Small group discussions

In order to proceed with this research project you need to receive an approval from the Ethics Committee at your institution. This approval requires answering a series of questions. In your discussion in small group please address all questions listed in the next slide. Please note down your answers. Select a representative from your small group who will report back conclusions of your discussions.

# Questions

1. Can you identify any particular ethical challenges relevant for studied group?
2. How will you identify and approach the participants to recruit them to your study?
3. How will you obtain the consent of participants?
4. Is there any reason to believe participants may not be able to give full informed consent? If yes, what steps do you propose to take to safeguard their interests?
5. If participants are under the responsibility or care of others (such as parents/carers) what plans do you have to obtain permission to approach the participants to take part in the study?
6. How will you make it clear to participants that they may withdraw consent to participate at any point during the research without penalty?
7. Detail any possible distress, discomfort, inconvenience or other adverse effects the participants may experience, including after the study, and how you will deal with this.
8. How will you maintain participant anonymity and confidentiality in collecting, analysing and writing up your data?
9. How will you store your data securely during and after the study?
10. Identify main ethical issues raised by your research and explain how you intend to manage these.

# Suggested Resources



# IMISCOE Standing Committee Meth@Mig

- Research promotion and publications
- Training
- Networking
- Join us:  
<https://www.imiscoe.org/research/standing-committees/methodological-approaches-and-tools-in-migration-research>
- Follow us on Twitter

The screenshot shows the IMISCOE website's navigation bar with links for 'about imiscoe', 'news', 'events', 'research', 'publications', and 'phd'. A search bar and a 'login' button are also present. Below the navigation bar, there are links for 'introduction', 'migration research hub', 'resoma', 'standing committees', 'research initiatives', and 'associations'. The main content area features a breadcrumb trail: 'Home > Research > Standing Committees > Methodological Approaches and Tools in Migration Research'. The title 'Standing Committee' is followed by the sub-header 'Methodological Approaches and Tools in Migration Research (Meth@Mig)'. The text describes the committee's role in providing a forum for discussing methodological approaches and tools in migration research. On the right side, there is a 'Meth@Mig News' section with a call for papers for a workshop titled 'Digitization of Migration Research Methods: Promises and Pitfalls', with a deadline of February 15, 2022.

The screenshot shows the Twitter profile for 'Methods in Migration Research (Meth@Mig - IMISCOE)'. The profile name is '@METHatMIG' and it is marked as 'Follows you'. The bio states: 'Methodological Approaches and Tools in Migration Research - @IMISCOE Standing Committee, discussing methods in the migration research community and beyond'. The profile includes a link to 'tinyurl.com/y9v8n92e' and notes it was 'Joined June 2020'. It has '1,700 Following' and '3,319 Followers'. Below the bio, it lists 'Followed by Sara Bojarczuk, Joanna Froehlich, and 120 others you follow'. The 'Tweets' tab is selected, showing a 'Pinned Tweet' from 'Methods in Migration Research (Meth@Mig) - @METHatMIG' dated 'Mar 11, 2021'. The tweet text reads: 'Interested in methods of migration research? Become a member of the @IMISCOE SC @METHatMIG !'.

# Disciplinary ethical guidelines

- **Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) *Framework for Research Ethics* (2012)**
  - **Market Research Society's *Code of Conduct* (2010)**
  - **British Psychological Association's *Code of Ethics and Conduct* (2009)**
  - **British Psychological Society - *Ethics Guidelines for Internet-mediated Research*. (2017)**
  - **British Sociological Association's *Statement of Ethical Practice* (2017) and **Digital Research Ethics Annexe****
  - **American Anthropological Association- *Statement on Ethics and Professional Responsibility* (2012)**
  - **American Political Science Association – *A Guide to Professional Ethics in Political Science* (2012)**
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# Research ethics guidelines at the EU level

- European Textbook on Ethics in Research (2010)
- Ethics for Researchers (2013)
- The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (2017)
- EC's Guidance note — Research on refugees, asylum seekers & migrants