

M U N I

Ethics and reflexivity

CMAa11 Qualitative Research

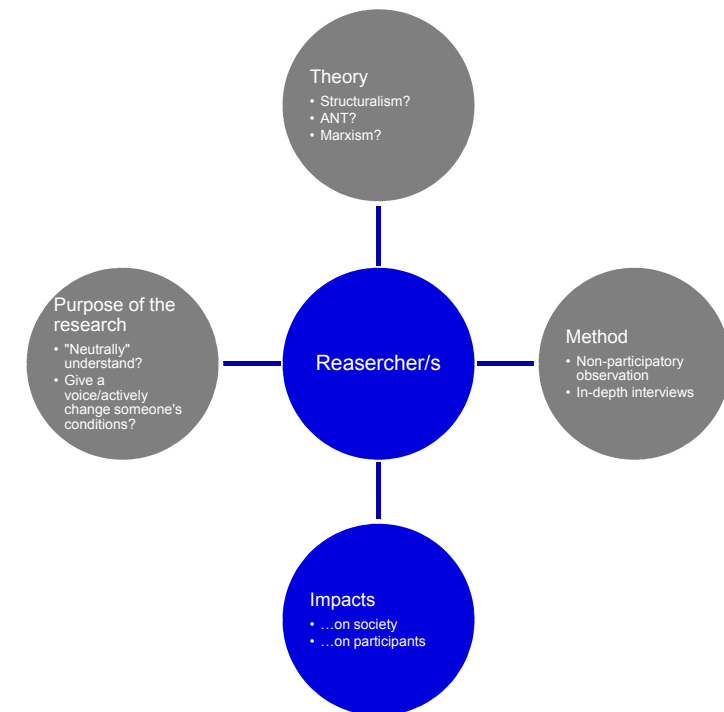
What will today's class be about?

Don't forget

- Reflexivity in research
- Ethics in research
 - General principles
 - Application
 - Familiarisation and signing of formal documents
 - Tips and tricks
- Now we're distributing your training interviews for feedback
- Please submit to target folder by 19. 11. the final version of the topic guide based on received feedback
- Class 20.11. is very important: reflection on the interviews

Research reflexivity

- ...engaging in self-reflection about who we are as researchers, how our subjectivities and biases guide and inform the research process, and how our worldview is shaped by the research we do and vice versa (Wilkinson, 1988)
- form of critical thinking that prompts us to consider the 'whys' and 'hows' of research, critically questioning the utility, ethics, and value of what, whom, and how we study (Willig, 2013).
- ...invites us to look 'inward' and 'outward', ...
- Reflexivity is not reflection
- Reflexivity -> increase quality, authenticity, credibility (=validity)



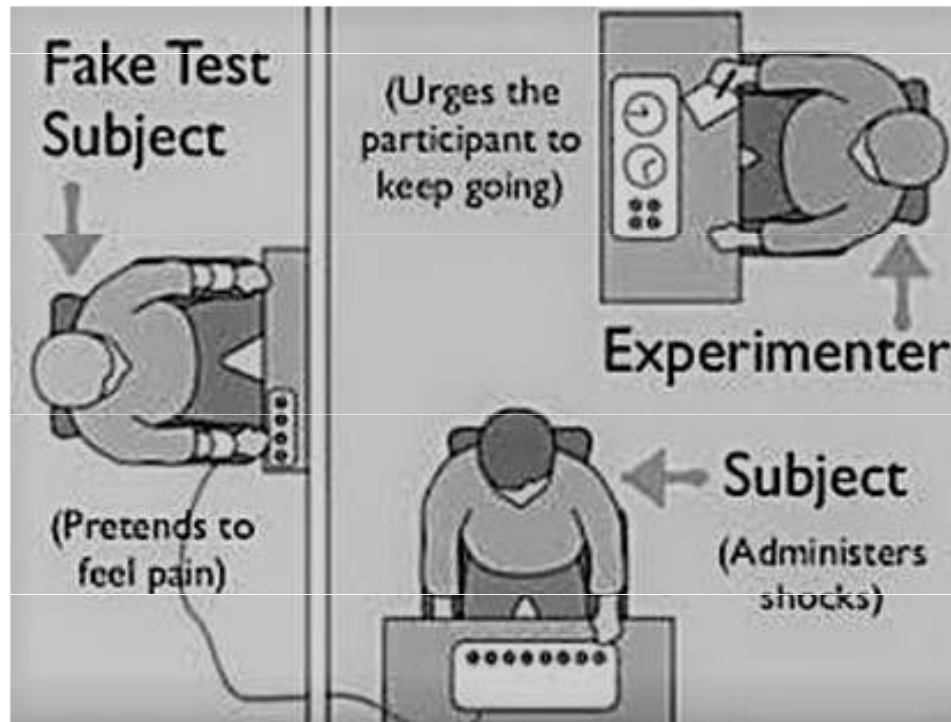
Ethics

Generally

- A set of principles and techniques to ensure the safe handling of research participants. The aim is to prevent harm and to ensure and care for the health and welfare of direct and indirect participants.
- It addresses the moral side of research.
- Sign of professional status: expertise -> accountability -> trust
- Ethical rules and requirements x legal requirements.

The Milgram experiment

Example for discussion



- 1960s by American social psychologist **Stanley Milgram**
- **Obedience** to authority
- Participation in „learning experiment“
- Instructed to **follow the experimenter's instructions** and electrically shock the "student",:
 - 30 to 420 volt
 - „Student“: plea for release, complain about a heart condition, bang on the wall, silence.
 - **Experimenter prompts**: Please continue, The experiment requires that you continue it is absolutely essential that you continue, You have no other choice, you must go on
 - „Teachers“: They expressed concern, expressed unwillingness to continue to participate
- After the experiment: mainly focused on calming the subjects down before sending them on their way
- Result: **High percentage of participants continued to shock the "student"** at dangerously high levels even when they expressed concern

How and why (possibly) you can cause the harm?



- You know what you want to „find out“ (you are informed) -> confusion, disappointment
- You know the limits of research (it's not a magic tool)
- You have the „final word“ (what the steps of the research will be, what will be the interpretation, who will have a voice)
- You are representative of the institution
- You are seen as an expert (privileged status)
- You listen (you have information)

=> you hold power and can consciously or unconsciously abuse it

Ethical principles

- Basic principles (embedded in codes of ethics, guidelines, informed consents):
 - "No harm,,
 - Voluntary participation
 - Confidentiality
 - Anonymity
- Reactions to ethical misconduct in natural and social science research (e.g. Milgram experiment, Stanford experiment)

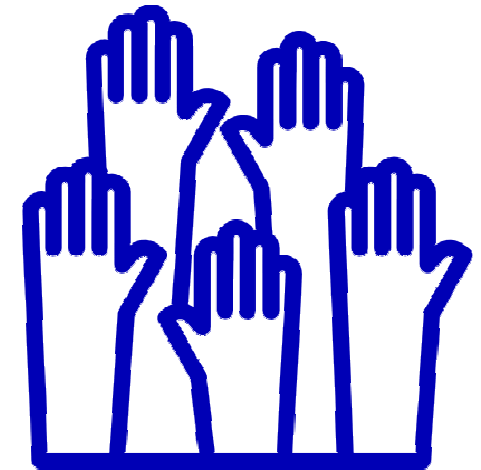
„No harm“

- A description of **all possible threats** arising from participation, procedures to avoid and minimize them and their application
 - Risk of **physical harm**?
 - Risk of **psychological harm**?
 - Risk of **data misuse/leak**?
 - **Procedures to limit them**
- **Clearly separate** the description of **risks from** the discussion of **rewards** for research (indirect pressure)



Voluntary participation

- Consent to participation and terms of research
- Eliminating of direct or indirect pressure
- Knowledge about research
 - Purpose
 - Terms and Conditions
 - Process
 - Ensuring security (possible threats and their elimination)
 - Reward
 - Use of data
 - Data storage
- Possibility to revoke (at any time up to the "point of irreversibility") without negative consequences, without justification
 - Consent to participate
 - Consent to the use of data
 - "Testimony" (specific question, larger units)
- Confirmation typically formal (informed consent form) but also repeatedly before the research
- Contact information (research team, person in charge of the organisation)



Confidentiality

- The principle of "non-disclosure":
 - non-disclosure without active consent or disclosure on participant's side
 - disclosure only to a narrowly specified group of
- In the case of FG, full assurance cannot be given
- The research team commits, other participant(s) are strongly requested
 - Not to disclose anything that the other participant did not actively disclose during the FG or that could be harmful to him/her
 - Not to disclose FG content outside the meeting
- Keeping very restricted access to the research area and non-anonymised data:
 - Legally
 - Physically
 - Digitally

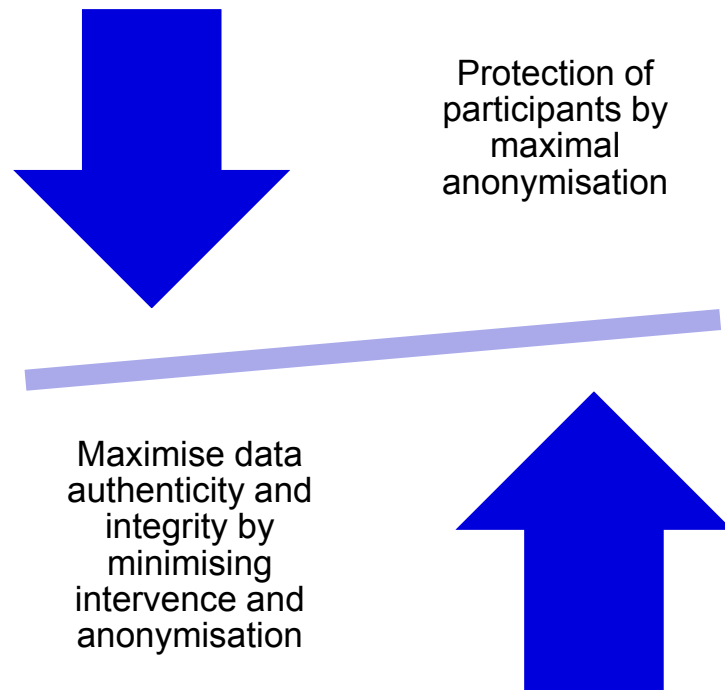


Anonymity

- Masking the identity of participants
- Allows to work with data without breaking confidentiality and minimizes harm
- The researcher is obliged to anonymize, participants at their discretion
- Procedures
 - During the realization
 - Nicknames
 - Required information by questionnaire or in advance
 - After realization
 - Anonymisation of identity (of participants, other persons mentioned)
 - Anonymisation of data content
- Sometimes cannot be guaranteed (public figures/top management positions)
 - Individual arrangement
 - Consider just paraphrasing
 - Authorize data (can also be used in general)
- Limits can be specified:
 - Full anonymisation x partial anonymisation
 - Illegal or life-threatening situations



Anonymisation procedure



Views on anonymisation

- **Maximum** by default:
 - e.g. British Sociological Association (BSA)
 - Aim: To protect participants from intended and unintended consequences
- **According to the wishes** of the participants:
 - e.g. Canadian Sociological Association (CSA)
 - Goal: recognition and empowerment, decrease paternalization, objectification

Anonymisation procedure

What is commonly subject of anonymisation

- People's names
- Places
- Religious or cultural background
- Occupation/Education
- Family/others relationships
- ...

People's names

- The most common form/target of anonymization
- The usual way:
 - **Alternative names**: it's good to ask or give a choice
 - **Nicknames**
 - **Impersonal labels**: „Participant 1“, „P1“, „1:“
Impersonal and messy
 - **Substitution by socio-demographic data** : „Female, 55 years,,
- Sometimes **participants require/prefer to be named**
 - inform that there are possible unintended consequences
 - inform about the necessity not to comply (anonymity of others, vulnerable people)

Anonymisation procedure

Places

- Contextualise, but in combination with other data can break anonymity
- The usual way:
 - Reduce specificity:
 - Argentina -> South American country
 - Brno -> Regional town, Large/ medium-sized city
 - Media Studies and Journalism -> Study programme at the Faculty of Social Studies, MUNI
 - University Hospital Brno -> Hospital in Brno, Hospital 1
 - Not to mention
 - "In my home country, in [the name of the country], people are not so open..."

Religious or cultural background

- In some cases it can be very important for understanding motivations and depth of experience, but it can also break anonymity
- The usual way:
 - Reduce specificity (but do not change the church or faith):
 - Specific church -> "Christian faith, hijab, crucifix -> scarf, symbol
 - Interviewer: You have very strong family values. That comes through.
 - George: Yeah.
 - Linda: Mm.
 - Int: Do you have religious beliefs as well?
 - George: Oh yeah, we're [specified faith].
 - Linda: Yes, yes.
 - George: My [relative's] a [religious leader]. So, yeah.
 - Int: And does this influence your approach, do you think?
 - Linda: Ah, saying about the [place of worship] now. We take David to the [place of worship] as well. And the first day we took David to [place of worship] [...] I gave him the candle, David, and he went like this [miming clenching hand around candle] [...] The other time when we lit a candle and gave it to him,

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Anonymisation procedure

Occupation/Education

- One of the **main socio-demographic information**
- Important for **assessing competence, social status**
- The usual way:
 - **Reduce specificity:**
 - Soloist of the National Philharmonic Orchestra -> Vocalist, Cultural worker, Artist
 - Promoted microbiologist -> Educated in the field of biology
 - **Not to mention** (almost impossible in a conversation about a job)
 - "When I was working as a [job], I had very good conditions..."

Family/others relationships

- People also perceive themselves through **belonging to someone**
- **Mostly** without too much specification, **unproblematic:** „As his mother I know ...“; „My husband is very good in“
- In some cases it may be problematic:
 - Gay parenthood (illegal in some countries) -> „step-parent“; „adopted child“
 - References to ethnicity
 - Rare Characteristics: Disease, twin, sect membership...
 - > Not to mention unless it's the main point of the story
- **Anonymisation can disempower and make minorities invisible**

Anonymisation procedure (summary + extra)

Common ways

- Do not mention **at all**
- Do not mention **in combination with other information**
- **Reduce** the level of **specificity**
 - Fake names, nicknames
 - 28 years -> 18 - 30 years, "middle age,,
 - Brno -> "regional city", "big city,,
- **Paraphrase**
 - Rodrigo said that ...
- **Quote with care**
 - "There's always drugs being sold at [name of club]".

Special procedures (smokescreen strategy)

- **Changing gender**: suitable for tokenized collectives
- **Creating fictional personas**:
 - Proxy nickname
 - Complex fictional personas (multiple "fake" characteristics)

Informed consent

Generally

- Formal acknowledgement of familiarity with the terms and conditions of the research (informal version = verbal consent)
- All important information and conditions of research, but...
 - as short as possible
 - as simple as possible (occasionally needing modification)
- In the case of vulnerable persons, the caretaker confirms (if possible, always by themselves)
 - Children
 - Institutionalized persons
 - Elderly/ill persons
- Will you be sending it in advance or showing up on site?



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INFORMED CONSENT WITH PARTICIPATING IN A RESEARCH

The research in which you are participating as a respondent is a part of a **research course provided by Masaryk University called "CMAa11 Qualitative Research"** (further referred to as "Course").

Information about the Course research:

- In the Course we train conducting research interviews.
- We can collect written notes, take photos, and take audio and video recordings of matters related to the research topic (Life experience of international students in Brno). In particular, it will be:
 - Speeches related to the topic
 - Field notes (the researcher's own thoughts, surrounding circumstances,...)
 - Basic socio-demographic information (gender, age, study/education)
- Any data we collect or any information you share with us in the interviews or otherwise during their research work might be used only for the purpose of the Course.
- The Course is **exclusively educational**, and data acquired in it are not going to be used for any other purposes that are not directly connected to the Course.
- All non-anonymized data acquired will be deleted immediately after anonymization procedure. The data, including field notes and recorded interviews or their transcriptions, will not be published.
- All the data will be protected from being accessed by anyone outside of the Course.
- You hold rights to know how the data acquired from you were used.

I read the text above and understood its message. I agree with participating in the mentioned research project and I understand that I can decline the consent, or freely and without disclosing the reason withdraw from attending.

At the same time I agree to providing my personal data in the interview, as well as my contact data I shared for the sake of the Course research.

I agree / do not agree with above outlined use of data acquired from me (including personal data). (Circle the chosen variant.)

I was informed that

- I hold the right to ask for the access to my personal data, their correction or deletion, or to restrict their usage, I hold the right to object against the usage of my personal data
- I hold the right to file a complaint to the appropriate institution in case I suspect my data is being used against the law;
- I hold the right to withdraw the consent at any time, without any sanction, and I can do that by sending an email to mnovotna@fss.muni.cz, or by contacting the personal data administrator. The lawfulness of data processing before revoking the consent is not affected

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Data storage

Principles

– Safe storage:

- data on the device **only for as long as necessary**
- **anonymization** where possible
- **backups** where necessary (not for all)
- **many copies** (pay attention to storage + folder)
- **double storage** (e.g., storage + folder)
- **only for as long as necessary: delete after anonymization/after the end of the project**



Guide

Category	Internal Data	Discrete Data	Sensitive Data
Internal Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data is intended only for a generally defined group of persons (e.g., project collaborators, institution employees, etc.). However, they do not require special regulation or protection (by law, contract, etc.). Disclosure outside the group will not cause direct damage (financial, moral, legal, etc.). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data is intended exclusively for the internal needs of a precisely defined group of persons (e.g., an employee and his/her immediate superior, an employee of the HR department and a job applicant, a group of IT system administrators with administrator rights to it). They require regulation or protection by their nature; typically, the data is protected by law or under a contract/license (for example, personal data of persons, data covered by trade secrets, etc.). Making available outside a given group of people is likely to cause harm (financial, moral, legal, etc.). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data is strictly intended only for a precisely defined group of people (e.g., a healthcare professional and his patient, project leaders with a security clearance of a certain level, etc.). They require special regulation or special protection by their nature; typically, the data is strictly protected by law or by contract/license (for example, precious data covered by trade secrets, sensitive personal data, etc.). Disclosure outside the given group of authorized persons is likely to cause large-scale damage (financial, moral, legal, etc.) with serious/irreversible consequences. <i>In practice, little data will fall into this category; most will fall into the category of discrete data at most.</i>
Discrete Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal correspondence; minutes of meetings; internal regulations and rules; internal work plans, notes, etc.; unfinished/unpublished research reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> economic and personal data; personal data of students/employees/collaborators...; identification card numbers, identification numbers, etc.; credit card numbers; valuable research data (providing, for example, a competitive advantage) or data containing otherwise sensitive information; extensive collections of internal data; access data (e.g., passwords or encryption keys) to minor systems and internal data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> health data, sensitive personal data; precious research data (providing, e.g., a unique and challenging to repeat competitive advantage) or research data containing highly confidential data; extensive collections of discrete data; access data (e.g., passwords or encryption keys) to essential systems and data of the discrete or sensitive category.
Sensitive Data			

EPOSITORY TYPE	USAGE			
	Public Data	Internal Data	Discrete Data	Sensitive Data
Portable Media	appropriate	possible ^{1/}	inappropriate ^{2/}	inappropriate
Local Storage in Computers	appropriate	appropriate	appropriate ^{1/}	inappropriate ^{3/}
Local Storage in Mobile Devices	appropriate	appropriate ^{4/}	possible ^{5/}	inappropriate ^{3/}
Network and Cloud Storage ICS	appropriate	appropriate	appropriate	appropriate ^{6/}
Storage IS MUNI	appropriate	appropriate	appropriate	appropriate ^{6/}
Storage CESNET	appropriate	appropriate	appropriate	appropriate ^{6/}
External Storage with MUNI Contract – OSes, OneDrive, SharePoint	appropriate	appropriate	appropriate ^{1/}	possible ^{7/}
External Storage with MUNI Contract – Google Workspace for Education ^{8/}	appropriate	appropriate	inappropriate ^{2/}	inappropriate
External Storage with MUNI Contract – Grammarly	appropriate	appropriate	inappropriate	inappropriate
External Storage without MUNI Contract – Public Google / Microsoft / Dropbox...	appropriate	inappropriate	inappropriate	inappropriate

<https://it.muni.cz/en/overviews/recommendations-for-the-usage-of-storages>

Research Commitment Agreement

- Formal confirmation of qualifications to conduct research
- Legally binding definition of responsibilities in research:
 - Researcher
 - Institution

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RESEARCH COMMITMENT AGREEMENT

Name and surname:

Student ID number (UČO):

(referred to as "Researcher")

The researcher confirms by his/her signature that he/she has been informed of the ethical rules to which he/she accepts in relation to the research named below.

The research in which the researcher participates is of an exclusively scientific nature and is part of the training conducted within the CMAa11 Qualitative Research course at the Department of Media Studies, Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University (referred to as Research).

The researcher agrees to:

- the research data it comes into contact with as part of the Research will not be used for commercial or other purposes unrelated to the Research;
- protect information about respondents that could violate respondents' personal rights and not disclose it to persons not involved in this Research;
- prevent such inappropriate use of data and information that would be contrary to the previous two points;
- truthfully inform respondents to the Research about their rights and the nature of the Research, in accordance with their signed informed consent;
- no research data will be published outside of the purposes related to the training delivered in the course;
- non-anonymised and anonymised data will be protected (by a double barrier) from access by anyone outside the research team (i.e. outside the circle of persons who have signed this Research Commitment Agreement)

I declare that I have read the whole of the above text and understand its meaning.

Researcher:

Name and surname: Signature:

In Date:

Research team supervisor:

Name and surname: Signature:

In Date:

The Research Commitment Agreement exists in two copies, one of which belongs to the Researcher and the other is kept by the Department of Media Studies of the Faculty of Social Sciences MU in accordance with the current legislation on the protection of personal data.

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Reciprocity

- Prevents exploitation, strengthens rapport, reduces power inequality
- How can you make the research more reciprocal?
 - Give a reward (money)
 - Give advice/information (something you know)
 - Share your experience/ (therapy!)
 - Let them decide (location, session, don't push, ask for interpretation, consultation)
 - Maintain the relationship



How to be more sure that you do ethical research?

- Consult with:

- your notes/diary
- colleagues (colleagues in some field)
- your supervisor
- formal documents (regulations, law, Codes of Ethics, ...)
- literature
- ethical experts (ethicists)
- participants (if appropriate)



- Be **pre-cautious** (where you see no danger, act as if the danger is small, etc.)
- Always keep in mind that **people are diverse**
- **Don't be afraid to admit you don't know** or can't do something
- **Respect ≠ Complicity:**

- Situations where someone says (or does) things contrary to your or general moral values or the law
 - Letting the person know you are aware of this (and forwards pointing out that you do not approve of this (but that you think it is important that this voice be examined))
 - Engage in polite discussion
 - In extreme cases, you may have the need to report



Exercise 1: Breaking the anonymity

- Ricardo was researching flows of money from migrants living in the EU to West Africa (remittances) in order to understand how much was being sent and why. After assuring participants that their anonymity and privacy would be protected, he completed 22 in-depth semi-structured interviews with migrants.
- Ricardo made an error early on in his research by not immediately anonymizing his respondents and replacing their actual names with numerical identifiers or pseudonyms.
- A problem then arose when Ricardo sent a journal article out for review that contained the actual names of his respondents. This was a clear breach of ethical good practice.

Exercise 2: Obtaining informed consent

- Sometimes it is not possible or practical to obtain informed consent e.g. hidden research in a public place.
- How do you decide whether to get it?