



# **THE PROMISE AND PERILS OF RESEARCHING SENSITIVE ISSUES**

University of York | 20 November 2018

## *Welcome to The Promise and Perils of Researching Sensitive Issues*

**W**e are delighted to be able to welcome you to today's symposium. This event would not have been possible without the generous grant from the British Sociological Association's Postgraduate Forum Regional Event Fund, and support from both DaCNet: Interdisciplinary Death & Culture Research, the Department of Sociology, and the Research Centre for Social Sciences (ReCSS), based at the University of York.

Sensitivity is a complex and expansive term and research concerning sensitive or emotionally demanding issues is vital but challenging work in which the onus of care is placed directly on the researcher. It is a necessary aspect of care which is present within all research - yet, little in the way of literature is devoted to its exploration.

The aim of this symposium and the proposed volume (please see the call for papers at the end of this programme) is to collect and engage with a diverse and rich range of voices from across disciplines; so that we are able to critically reflect on both the challenges and rewards of doing sensitive research. We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for being a part of today's symposium; one which we hope will lead to a wealth of ongoing dialogues.

With warmest wishes,

*Dan & Matt*

## Programme:

09:00 Registration

09:20 Welcome

### SESSION I - SENSITIVITY AS DATA

09:30 Jamie Khoo (University of York), *Beauty and the Hidden Beasts: The potential for healing in the unexpected discussion of sensitive issues in interviews.*

09:50 Adnan Mouhiddin (University of Surrey), *Attach or Detach: Emotions and researching devastated communities.*

10:10 Carol Robinson (University of York), *Ethically Important Moments as data in Researching Responses to Death and Dying in Prison.*

10:30 Questions

### SESSION II - COPING & SURVIVAL

10:50 Katie Deverell (University of Westminster), *Sex, Death and Housework: Reflections on researching sensitive topics.*

11:10 Ada Achinanya (University of Sheffield), *Exploring Women's Experiences with Infertility: The unspoken vulnerabilities.*

11:30 Questions

11:50 Break

12:10 Keynote address, Donna Poade (University of Exeter)

13:00 Lunch

### SESSION III - MARGINALISATION & VOICE

13:40 Christina Carmichael (University of East Anglia), *Accessing, Engaging and Representing Marginalised 'Voices': Reflections from a homelessness research study.*

- 14:00 Louise Isham (University of Birmingham), *Reflections on Engaging with an Advisory Network in the Context of a 'Sensitive' Research Study*
- 14:20 Christine Jackson-Taylor (University of York), *Responsibility to Participants and Self.*
- 14:40 Questions
- 15:00 Break

#### SESSION IV - THE PLACE OF THE RESEARCHER

- 15:20 Vivian Asimos (Durham University), *'I Felt Her in My Throat': Problematizing anthropological approaches of extraordinary experiences of death.*
- 15:40 Chloe Gott (University of Kent), *Crying in the Library: The implications of doing traumatic research in public and private.*
- 16:00 Elspeth Wilson (Trinity College Dublin), *The Researcher in the Research: Managing emotions and expectations within feminist research practice.*
- 16:20 Questions

#### SESSION V - EMOTION WORK, LABOUR & SENSITIVITY

- 16:40 Sharon Mallon (Open University), *What is Sensitive about Sensitive Research? The sensitive researcher's perspective.*
- 17:00 Vicky Meaby (Durham University), *Walking an Ethical Tightrope: Exploring loss with young people who offend.*
- 17:20 Rodica Arpasanu (Manchester Metropolitan University), *Emotional Geographies: Reflections on the challenges inherited in conducting in depth qualitative research on mortality in the context of death tourism.*
- 17:40 Questions
- 17:55 Closing remarks

# SESSION

# I

*Sensitivity as Data*

09:30

## *Beauty and the Hidden Beasts: The potential for healing in the unexpected discussion of sensitive issues in interviews*

**Jamie Khoo (University of York)**

**W**ritings and guides on methodology offer advice for addressing sensitive issues in focus groups and interviews.<sup>1</sup> What is less frequently discussed is how to respond to sensitive issues when they arise unexpectedly during interviews. In the group and individual interviews I conducted with women about feminine body and beauty ideals, I had anticipated dealing with certain sensitive issues around eating disorders or body shaming. What I did not expect were discussions of other difficult and emotionally harrowing issues such as marital abuse, fractured familial relationships, bullying and chronic illness which eventually formed a more significant part of these discussions. I found that these interviews become safe spaces for sharing these sensitive stories; they offer a place for these difficult narratives to not only be finally told but also heard and honoured. This paper explores the potential that these interview safe spaces have for healing traumatic histories and experiences: I offer examples of how these 'beauty stories' are shared within my interviews, and how they ultimately allow for the discussion of more sensitive and difficult issues that might otherwise be rarely talked about.

*Jamie Khoo is a PhD Student at the Centre for Women's Studies, University of York who is currently in her writing up year. Her research explores women's responses to body and beauty ideals. Before commencing her PhD at York, she worked for a decade as a journalist and writer in Kuala Lumpur writing for publications including the Malaysian editions of Elle, Time Out and Harpers Bazaar. She has also written for various online blogs including Huffington Post UK, calm.com, elephant journal, the Be You Media Group and maintains her own website, a beauty full mind.*

09:50 *Attach or Detach:  
Emotions and researching  
devastated communities*

**Adnan Mouhiddin (University of Surrey)**

**E**motions experienced in research are an essential part of the research. They are embedded in the research process and the data generation. They involve not only the emotions of the researcher, but also those of the communities or individuals we aim to research. While more attention is paid to the emotions of the participants due to ethical concerns, researchers and their emotions in the process of the research can also be exposed to distress, traumas and other implications. Researchers who investigated and researched on tragic events such as the Holocaust and September 11 were subject to vicarious traumas. In addition, listening to the participants' testimonies and accounts describing harrowing events may cause the researcher to lose their sense of the reality and therefore failing to put their daily problems and those of people around them in context. Drawing from my experience as a Syrian who is and has been conducting various research projects involving his Syrian community, this paper will explore coping mechanisms that will not only maintain the wellbeing of the researcher, but also convert the involvement of emotions to a powerful mean of growth and data generation.

*Adnan Mouhiddin is a PhD researcher at the University of Surrey, undertaking funded research on community solutions to youth offending in Syria, his home country. His research explores whether the Syrian community can take on a role which can rehabilitate young people and prevent them from engaging in crime. Adnan is a qualified restorative justice associate practitioner and a panel member with Camden Youth Offending Services (YOS) in London. He is also a board member of the Syria Legal Network.*

# 10:10 *Ethically Important Moments as Data in Researching Responses to Death and Dying in Prison*

**Carol Robinson (University of York)**

**T**he dissonance between ‘paper ethics’ and ‘real world research’ in prison research is widely recognized.<sup>2</sup> Prison researchers are encouraged to use reflexivity to address ethical dilemmas that arise, prioritizing the protection of prisoners as vulnerable participants.<sup>3</sup> In undertaking a study of the impact on prison regimes, culture and relationships of deaths from natural causes, the complexity of ensuring an ethical approach to the evolving dilemmas of fieldwork is increased by the sensitivity of the subject matter.

This paper describes the challenges experienced in conducting sensitive research in a prison setting, focusing on the difficult decisions necessitated by the responsibility to protect participants. It considers in particular difficulties around issues such as anonymity, confidentiality, consent and autonomy. It suggests some refinements to common assumptions about participants’ interests in prison research.

Using Guillemin and Gillam’s (2004) concept of ‘ethically important moments’,<sup>4</sup> it will be suggested that far from being challenges to overcome, the ethical issues associated with doing sensitive research can themselves be data, revealing in this instance important aspects of prison culture and relationships.

*Carol Robinson is an Economic Social Research Council funded research student based in the Department of Sociology at the University of York. Her interest in the criminal justice system originates in voluntary roles with the Youth Offending Team (2005–2007), as a prison visitor at HMP and YOI Askham Grange (2004–2007). Since 2010 she has worked part-time as a prison chaplain in high security, medium secure and open prisons, offering pastoral care and worship for both prisoners and prison staff. She has a particular interest in how prisons function and in prison cultures.*

# SESSION

# II

*Coping & survival*

10:50 *Sex, Death and Housework:  
reflections on researching  
sensitive topics*

**Katie Deverell (University of Westminster)**

**T**his paper will draw on my experiences as a researcher conducting qualitative research on a range of sensitive issues: including sex, sexuality, death, sweating and cleaning. I am keen to explore the impact of researching these more intimate and personal topics on both the researcher and participants; considering both emotions and roles. Reflecting on the research process itself, I will explore how it can become a vehicle for connection and personal change, as well as highlighting the impact of different research locations.

Using some examples, I will share some of the practical dilemmas I have experienced, including: Gaining access; Building trust and rapport; establishing and maintaining boundaries; Presenting and disseminating sensitive research; Differing research aims and the importance of self-care and supervision.

As managers of research I feel we have an equally important 'responsibility to ensure the physical, social and psychological well-being of researchers' and I will share some experiences of managing and supervising those researching sensitive topics. With the digital age come new opportunities for access, networking and impact, yet also challenges around boundaries and confidentiality. I would like to raise some questions about current practice in this area and how people best feel these situations are managed.

*Dr Katie Deverell is a Visiting Lecturer in Event Design and Management at the University of Westminster. Her career began investigating young people's experiences of sex and she spent ten years in sexuality and HIV related research. Her first monograph was published in 2001 as 'Sex, Work and Professionalism: Working in HIV/AIDS'. Since 2010 she has worked as a ceremony designer helping to create and deliver many funerals. With Chantal Laws she has produced the chapter, 'Events Management for the End of Life' which will appear in a forthcoming collection.*

# 11:10 *Exploring Women's Experiences with Infertility: The unspoken vulnerabilities*

**Ada Achinanya (University of Sheffield)**

**S**tatement of Purpose: Infertility (childlessness) increases the risk of psychological distress and marital conflict in Nigeria. The treatment for infertility can further pose some distress on infertile women in this setting. The aim of this study was to explore the experiences, social support behaviours and treatment funding patterns of these women.

**Method:** This qualitative study involved semi-structured interviews from 30 infertile women seeking treatment in a public fertility clinic in Nigeria.

**Findings:** Women shared their experiences on stigma, regrets (e.g. abortions), physical abuse they experienced and suicidal thoughts in the event of a failed treatment cycle. Some women reported a lack of financial and emotional support from their partners and families, while a few had to fund the treatment themselves.

**Reflection:** During the interviews, most women were moved to tears when discussing their experiences. Some were quite disheartening, while others were quite violent. Although these stories provided great depth to my research, listening to them every day took its toll on me, and it was quite difficult to provide hope in a potentially hopeless situation. Additionally, having to listen to them over again during the transcription process was probably even more traumatic.

*Ada Achinanya is a doctoral researcher in the Academic Unit of Reproductive & Developmental Medicine at the University of Sheffield. She is interested in the psychosocial aspects of infertility and assisted reproductive treatment (ART) in the developing world. More specifically, her work examines infertility-related stress and the affordability of assisted reproduction in high and low-middle income countries.*

12:10 *Keynote address*

## **Donna Poade (University of Exeter)**

In her keynote address today, Donna will share her experiences and reflections associated with her research journey in dark tourism research. She will highlight the emotional highs and lows of the research and the impact this had on her both personally and professionally. Her contribution aims to raise awareness of the importance of wellbeing for all people connected to a research process including researchers and supervisory and support teams. She emphasizes the need to incorporate a wellbeing philosophy into institutional and ethical frameworks.



*Dr Donna Poade is a Lecturer in Management at the University of Exeter and has a special academic expertise in dark tourism, the phenomenon of travel to visitor sites associated with death and suffering alongside a keen interest in research methods and methodology, specifically when researching sensitive issues. She is also the founder of The Academic Woman – a platform dedicated to the personal and professional development of women in academia. Donna also has a background in industry and is an advocate of ethical business practices within tourism related enterprises. She enjoys travelling and lived in Canada for many years working in the tourism industry. Donna can often be found reading, particularly by the sea in her home coastal town.*

# SESSION

# III

*Marginalisation & voice*

13:40

## *Accessing, Engaging and Representing Marginalised 'Voices': Reflections from a homelessness research study*

**Christina Carmichael (University of East Anglia)**

People who are experiencing homelessness are some of the most marginalised and stigmatised in our population and are poorly represented in public and policy discourses. Many of them also experience poor mental health and dependency, and their lives are often characterised by trauma, abuse or exploitation. Researchers who wish to give 'voice' to homeless people need to be aware of these issues while at the same time avoiding making assumptions about the causes of homelessness, the intentions or hopes of participants, or what might constitute sensitive issues for them. This extends beyond research being conducted in line with ethical guidelines and involves ongoing reflection on ethical practice and the researcher's duty of care. This paper offers a reflexive account of interview-based research conducted with individuals experiencing homelessness which was part of a broader doctoral research study on homelessness in the context of post-2010 'austerity'. It considers (a) issues around the research engagement, particularly with regards to the role played by gatekeepers in identifying 'appropriate' participants, (b) issues raised within the interviews including the participant-researcher relationship, and (c) reflections on my own position as a researcher, and the validity of my interpretation of the data.

*Christina Carmichael is a PhD Research Student in the School of Social Work at the University of East Anglia working under the supervision of Professor Jonathan Dickens and Professor Gillian Schofield. She holds a BSc in Social Anthropology from Brunel University, and a MRes in Social Science Research Methods. Her current research focuses on how homelessness is being experienced and managed in the context of post-2010 austerity measures, and draws on qualitative interview data with a combination of homelessness practitioners and service users.*

## 14:00 *Reflections on Engaging with an Advisory Network in the Context of a ‘Sensitive’ Research Study*

**Louise Isham (University of Birmingham)**

**T**his presentation surfaces issues about the often-used but widely under-reported practice of working with advisory fora. I critically reflect on my experiences working with an advisory network when co-designing a research study about a ‘sensitive’ subject: the experiences and needs of family carers affected by violent, abusive or harmful behaviour instigated by the older person for whom they care. I will discuss: 1) How the network evolved as a matter of ethical and pragmatic choices. 2) Potential issues when discussing sensitive issues ‘outside’ of the participatory or participant context and, 3) Practical and epistemic issues involved in (not) ‘taking’ advice. I suggest that although sensitive research is more conventionally aligned with more ‘radical’ forms of participatory practice, advisory networks can present a useful and sometimes more appropriate form of inclusion and engagement for some advisors and for some types of research study. The presentation may of interest to a wide range of academic and practice-based health and social care staff and, in particular, those who plan (and are required) to use advisory fora in their work.

*Louise is a researcher and social worker whose interests focus on inter-personal violence and abuse and the impact of health and socio-health inequalities over the life course. Louise has worked on research projects exploring inter-professional child safeguarding practice and co-production research with ‘vulnerable’ or marginalised children. Her PhD investigated family carers’ experiences of abusive or harmful behaviour instigated by the older person for whom they care.*

## 14:20 *Responsibility to participants and self*

### **Christine Jackson-Taylor (University of York)**

**M**y PhD research focuses on the comforts and conflicts experienced by LGBTQ women who have a faith or religion. Some of my participants' stories tell of very difficult battles, disclosing histories of mental health difficulties, emotionally abusive relationships and suicidal thoughts. While it had been anticipated that these issues could feature in my participants' stories, and were addressed through the ethics process, being presented with these stories feels very different in the 'real world' than they do on paper.

Having conducted the first phase of my fieldwork, this paper will reflect on some of my own experiences and emotions as an early career researcher who has never been in the field before. While my employment history, luckily, gave me a grounding in some of the skills I would need, I would like to discuss the extent to which we can be 'trained' to deal with sensitive issues within our own research. So much more than an ethical tick box exercise, safeguarding both ourselves and our participants takes very considered and in depth emotional and professional work. Protecting our participants from harm is paramount in any social research, but what about protecting yourself?

*Christine is a PhD student from the Department of Sociology at the University of York. She holds a BA(Hons) in Sociology and an MA in Modern History. Christine worked at the University of Bradford, providing support and advice to students with extenuating circumstances and potential breaches of assessment. While working at the University of Bradford, Christine completed a PG Diploma in Social Research Methods and commenced her PhD study at the University of York. Her research focuses on the lived experiences of LGBTQ women who are religious*

# SESSION IV

*Place of the Researcher*

15:20

*'I felt her in my throat':  
problematizing anthropological  
approaches of extraordinary  
experiences of death*

**Vivian Asimos (Durham University)**

**I**n the summer of 2017, I sat with a participant during a project of an anthropological study of a single person's worldview. Unexpectedly, the interview turned to discuss the participant's relationship with death. This particular experience involves an intimacy with the Other Side, often involving touch, similar to psychometry. This brought up an issue with anthropological methods and the ability for the researcher to take seriously the beliefs and extraordinary experiences of our participants. Edith Turner's famous essay "The Reality of Spirits" exemplifies the inner struggle of the anthropologist who is faced with extraordinary experiences while attempting to maintain a "scientific" approach to the study. When the experience involves a connection to death, and one which the participant was hesitate to discuss, the issue becomes much more obvious. This paper seeks to unravel the problematic side of anthropological analysis when it comes to attempting to discuss, without explaining away, the very real experiences of our participants. This particular problem was compounded due to the intimate relationship between myself and the participant, who is my own mother.

*Vivian Asimos is a PhD student at Durham University, studying virtual storytelling as contemporary mythology. She is the founder of (and admittedly online worker on) the Religion and Popular Culture Podcast, hosted on her website [god-mode.org](http://god-mode.org)*

15:40 *Crying in the library: the implications of doing traumatic research in public and private*

**Chloe Gott (University of Kent)**

**T**he impact of traumatic work on the researcher has been a key concern of my thesis, which represents the first extensive analysis of an oral history project taken with survivors of the Magdalene laundries. My research deals explicitly with personal narratives of trauma, including accounts of institutional violence, as well as physical and sexual abuse. They frequently provoke strong reactions in me, from deep sadness, to distressing anger, to guilt at the level of emotionality I display in an academic environment. Learning to manage these emotions and make them a productive part of my research has been both an incredibly valuable and difficult experience.

This paper will draw on specific examples from my research to demonstrate the complex nature of doing work such as this, and the ways in which it has influenced my methodologies and theoretical framing of the project. Using extracts from the oral history project, I will think about how emotionality impacts on my work, as well as how displaying emotion in ‘professional’ settings is perceived, and the ways in which this is a deeply gendered interaction. Lastly, I will consider practical strategies for doing this work, and think about how we can better understand the impact of traumatic research on the researcher.

*Chloe Gott is a PhD candidate at the University of Kent. Her research focuses the experiences of women who were incarcerated in Magdalene laundries in twentieth century Ireland, exploring the nature of these experiences through the words of the women themselves. More broadly, she is interested in the intersections of religion with gender, class and sexuality; the implications of carceral religious institutions; and the ways in which we engage with traumatic narratives, as researchers.*

16:00

## *The Researcher in the Research: Managing emotions and expectations within feminist research practice*

**Elsbeth Wilson (Trinity College Dublin)**

**D**rawing on my recent research amongst users of long-acting reversible contraception I would like to present a paper examining how to deal with the emotions and ethics arising from having both insider and outsider status as a researcher. I made it clear to participants that I am a former LARC user, thereby helping me to gain their trust and giving me insider status. However, my participants also asked things of me that I could not always provide as they saw me as knowledgeable about LARC. For example, several people tried to participate who did not qualify for the research sample as they lived outside the UK and did not use the NHS. They had distressing experiences that they wanted to share and were disappointed at not to be able to participate. By using autoethnography and examining my place within the research I hoped to conduct honest, ethical research but this can only take you so far when working with participants who are often distressed. I want to explore how to provide benefit for participants who may feel let down by medical care whilst dealing with being potentially the only outlet participants available for participants to express their frustration and pain.

*Elsbeth Wilson is an early career researcher at Trinity College Dublin in the Department of Social Work and Social Policy. She is working on the qualitative arm of a study examining what influences fatality risk amongst people who use opioid substitution treatment in Dublin. Her research interests focus on medical anthropology and public health, particularly around gender and sexuality. She hopes to go on to do a PhD looking at criminal transmission of HIV and how this particularly impacts certain groups such as sex workers and people of colour.*

# SESSION

# V

*Emotion Work, Labour  
& Sensitivity*

## 16:40 *What is sensitive about sensitive research? The sensitive researcher's perspective*

**Sharon Mallon (Open University)**

**E**xact definitions vary, but sensitive topics are conventionally thought of as those that are personal, stigmatised or taboo in nature. Researchers undertaking these studies are often encouraged to undertake a reflexive or reciprocal approach, thus involving them evermore directly in the research encounter. However, there is little published work that explores the emotions of these researchers, or what they consider to be particularly sensitive about the research.

This paper will report on a roundtable convened with twelve qualitative health researchers who had been involved in undertaking sensitive research across a variety of areas. It will explore the issue of sensitivity from their perspective, examining what the concept meant to them, how it had influenced their approach to fieldwork and how they responded to it within the reality of the interview setting. There will be a particular focus on how they came to reflect upon the particular sensitivities of their research topic and how their personal experiences of the issue intersected with that of their participants to shape the overall encounter. It will conclude by arguing that sensitive research is uniquely challenging in ways the literature currently fails to fully acknowledge.

*Dr Sharon Mallon is a Mental Health Lecturer at the Open University. She was awarded her PhD in 2010 for a qualitative study of young adults' suicides from the perspective of their friends. Since then her research interests have continued to focus on suicide prevention and postvention. She has published widely in national and international journals, including a novel, feminist sociological analysis of female suicide. She has strong interest in the emotional impact of researching sensitive subjects on researchers, and has written a chapter on the emotions of researching suicide for a forthcoming book entitled Lessons from the Field.*

17:00 *Walking an ethical tightrope,  
exploring loss with young people  
who offend*

**Vicky Meaby (Durham University)**

**L**inks between young people's offending behaviour and adverse life situations have been widely researched within criminology, but investigation into the relationship between loss and offending is limited,<sup>5</sup> especially in community youth justice. Little is known about the impact of loss upon offending behaviours, or how children who offend feel, think or respond to loss. This talk will share insight from my PhD research, which used O'Neill's methodological concept of ethno-mimesis (a fusion of arts based enquiry, storytelling and ethnography) alongside Constructivist Grounded Theory to explore loss in the lives of young people who offend.<sup>6</sup> In particular I will share some of the ethical dilemmas that arose as I undertook this research, and how young people's stories caused me to reflect upon my own positionality as both a researcher and as a practitioner. Finally, I will discuss the 'emotional work' fieldwork with marginalised and vulnerable young people entailed,<sup>7</sup> and how my own 'performed identities' as researcher, teacher, young people's advocate and 'safeguarder' merged and blurred as I reacted and responded to the stories and actions of each young person I met.<sup>8</sup>

*A teacher by trade, Vicky has worked in education in various guises since 2005. Inspiration for her PhD stemmed from her work as education lead for a North East Youth Offending Team (YOT), where she became struck by young people's stories of loss. Vicky's PhD sought to investigate whether loss and offending were intertwined or incidental, and to work out whether we need to be working differently to better help young people and support their desistance from crime. She is currently 'writing up' and hoping to submit very soon. Vicky also works part time as a community learning tutor.*

17:20

*Emotional geographies: reflections on the challenges inherited in conducting in-depth qualitative research on mortality in the context of death tourism.*

**Rodica Arpasanu (Manchester Metropolitan University)**

When carrying out sensitive research, the quality of data gathered relies on the ability of the researcher to establish rapport with participant, built through personal involvement and reciprocity. While the emotional involvement of the participants is generally well addressed in various disciplines, researchers' emotional experiences in the field have been so far less documented. Although researchers often render themselves vulnerable when disclosing their intimate selves to participants to build trust and establish rapport.

In this paper, the author reflect on the challenges and the impact of 'emotional labour' inherited in conducting fieldwork investigating mortality in the context of death tourism as part of her PhD research. This paper also observes and reflects on the absence of suitable mechanisms within formal academic structures, to manage and provide adequate support for researchers. There is also limited the willingness of researchers to explore their emotional experiences in the field and their impact on the personal and professional lives within the published word.

This work seeks to contribute to those efforts made in the sociology, human geography and death related studies to acknowledge the value of researcher's emotional work when conducting sensitive research and highlights the need to build suitable support mechanisms within the research community.

*Rodica Arpasanu is a PhD student in Human Geography (supervisor: Craig Young) and associate lecturer at the Manchester Metropolitan University. Her PhD research explores cultural variations of contemporary expressions and encounters with mortality in the context of death tourism. Specifically, her research investigates if and how modern individuals engage with and reflect upon the idea of death (their own or others) while visiting sites of and associated with death, disaster and human tragedy.*

## Abstract notes:

- 1 Albrecht, Terrance L. , Gerianne M. Johnson, and Joseph B. Walther. 1993. "Understanding Communication Processes in Focus Groups." In *Successful Focus Groups: Advancing the State of the Art*, edited by D. L. Morgan, 51-64. Newbury Park: Sage Publications; Farquhar, Clare, and Rita Das. 1999. "Are Focus Groups Suitable for 'Sensitive' Topics?" In *Developing Focus Group Research*, edited by Rosaline S. Barbour and Jenny Kitzinger, 47-64. London: Sage Publications; Kitzinger, Jenny. 1994. "The Methodology of Focus Groups: the Importance of Interaction Between Research Participants." *Sociology of Health & Illness* 16 (1):103-121. doi: 10.1111/1467- 9566.ep11347023.
- 2 Armstrong, Ruth, Loraine Gelsthorpe and Ben Crewe, 'From paper ethics to real world research: supervising risk in research with the 'risky''. In: Winter, Aaron and Karen Lumsden (eds) *Reflexivity in Criminological Research: experiences with the powerful and the powerless* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014).
- 3 Moore, Linda and Azrini Wahidin, ' The Post-Corston Women's Penal 'Crisis' in England and Wales: exploring the failure of reform'. In: Moore, Linda, Phil Scraton and Azrini Wahidin (eds.) *Women's Imprisonment and the Case for Abolition: critical reflections on Corston ten years on* (Albington: Routledge, 2017).
- 4 Guillemin, Marilys and Lynn Gillam, 'Ethics, Reflexivity, and 'Ethically Important Moments' in Research, *Qualitative Inquiry* 10(2) (2004).
- 5 Murray, J. (2001) 'Loss as a universal concept: Review of the literature to identify common aspects of loss in diverse situations.', *Journal of Loss & Trauma*, 63, pp. 219–241. Vaswani, N. (2018) 'Beyond loss of liberty. How loss, bereavement and grief can affect young men's prison journeys.', in *Loss, dying and bereavement in the criminal justice system*. Oxon: Routledge.
- 6 O'Neill, M. et al. (2002) 'Renewed methodologies for social research: ethno-mimesis as performative praxis.', *The Sociological Review*, 50, pp. 69–88. Charmaz, K (2014) *Constructing grounded theory*. 2nd edn. London: Sage.
- 7 Fleetwood, J. (2009) 'Emotional work: ethnographic fieldwork in prisons in Ecuador.', *eSharp*, (Special Issue: Critical Issues in Researching Hidden Communities), pp. 28–50.
- 8 Goffman, E. (1990) *The presentation of self in everyday life*. London: Penguin Books.

# Call for papers

## *Edited volume: The Promise and Perils of Researching Sensitive Issues*

**Matt Coward & Daniel Robins (editors)**

Research concerning sensitive and emotionally demanding issues is vital but challenging work in which the onus of care tends to be placed directly on the researcher. These issues are diverse and may be internal or external, ethical or emotional, or concern the researcher or participant. It is the aim of this volume to collect the voices of a diverse range of researchers from across disciplines to critically reflect on the challenges and rewards of sensitive research. Issues may include, but are not limited to: abuse, atrocity, death, dying, gender, grief, loss, marginalisation, mental health, violence, racism(s), self-harm, sexuality, stigma, trauma and xenophobia(s). We welcome abstracts engaging with the above themes, but not limited to:

- Emotional labour and emotion work
- Facing emotions within research
- Responsibility to participant and self
- Sensitive methodologies
- The presentation of sensitive research
- Ethical issues associated with sensitive research
- The place of the researcher

We are particularly keen for authors to engage in self-reflexive dialogue in conjunction with sustained critical analysis.

Key information:

- Length: 5,000 words, excluding notes
- Citation style: Chicago 17th Edition (endnotes)

*Extended abstracts of up to 750 words as well as a biography of up to 100 words should be submitted to [rosii@york.ac.uk](mailto:rosii@york.ac.uk) by no later than 18 December 2018. You will be informed about the success of your abstract in January 2019.*



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