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# Qualitative migration research ethics: a roadmap for migration scholars

Qualitative  
migration  
research ethics

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – This article aims to set a roadmap for an ethical programme, which we call “qualitative migration research ethics” (QMRE). It is a scoping review that maps current ethical challenges that migration scholars often face and provide guidance, while acknowledging the fact that many researchers deal with ethical issues on a case-by-case basis.

**Design/methodology/approach** – By connecting three lines of debates – ethics in social sciences, in qualitative research and in migration studies – this article addresses the following core questions: What are the particular ethical dilemmas in qualitative migration research (QMR)? How do migration researchers deal with these ethical dilemmas? What is the role of universal ethical codes of conduct and case-by-case ethical considerations in dealing with particular situations?

**Findings** – This review demonstrates that special aspects of migration research context, e.g. participants’ mobility, potential vulnerability and migration as a politicized issue as well as the flexible and exploratory nature of qualitative research require particular ethical awareness that cannot be sufficiently addressed by standardized guidelines.

**Originality/value** – It proposes that efforts to raise ethical awareness must go beyond researchers’ ethical confessions or blind adherence to pre-fixed guidance. Researchers must have critical “ethical radar” before, during and after their fieldwork; not only while working on extreme and vulnerable cases but also while doing all kind of research regardless of the level of vulnerability. Last but not least, this article claims the need for including critical ethical consciousness substantially in higher education programmes at the very beginning of the research career.

**Keywords** Migration studies, Qualitative research, Ethics, Positionality, Reflexivity

**Paper type** Research paper

## 1. Introduction: why do we need an ethical programme for conducting qualitative migration research?

An ethical debate linking qualitative research and migration research is a recent area of reflection, directly related to the development of migration studies and the emerging complex and often unpredictable legal, political and social agenda on migration dynamics and governance. The first works on qualitative migration research ethics (QMRE) tend to have a certain “ethical biographical character”. A general trend today is the shared recognition that ethical issues may arise unexpectedly during the research process and are often not anticipated. These signals not only the need to shape the contours of the QMRE programme but also to try to go beyond the view of ethical thinking as an ad hoc activity for most migration scholars. This leads us to claim the need to recognize the cross-cutting nature of this substantial area of research, beginning in research design going ahead during the fieldwork and continuing during the dissemination process.

As already put forward in Zapata-Barrero and Yalaz (2018), the research context is key for the development of qualitative migration research (QMR), as it often involves being in contact with people who have experienced the migratory process in general with diverse live experiences ranging from a wholesome and friendly process to a more misfortunate migratory process and even more traumatic ones due to external forces such as war, climate-change, abuse and even torture. A QMRE programme requires ethical virtues, such as empathy but not only,



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other aspects would be to understand psychological and cognitive realities of displacements, while understanding the individuals being studied may have serious negative pictures, history of mistrust of the environment, a survival logic of mobility, etc. Most of the ethical cases also confirm what [Düvell and Triandafyllidou \(2010\)](#) pointed out some years ago: researchers rarely discuss where they should draw the ethical lines. These questions now need to be considered as key-issues belonging to the same research design process: How do we ethically carry QR with migrants? How do we solve particular ethical situations and dilemmas? How do we identify and manage ethical risks in conducting QMR? What has to be the reference framework for assessing ethical risks? Do these ethical considerations affect the quality and objectivity of the research? Are universal ethical codes of conduct applied to QMR enough for dealing with particular situations? These are the main questions that this first literature addresses. QMRE can be considered as a clustered “ethical radar alert” that the researcher must always have in the research process. The particular purpose of this scoping review is to identify the first patterns of this emerging debate and to map a framework for ethical scrutiny of QMR.

The literature review shows that QMRE is multilayered ([Vervliet et al., 2015](#)). This perspective goes against the assumption that there is just one way to deal with ethical challenges and defends a pluralist view on how to solve ethical dilemmas. This is probably related to the fact that most of the works of this recent literature place this ethical thinking within situational (and relational) ethics ([Hammersley and Traianou, 2012](#); [Mauthner et al., 2002](#); [Reid et al., 2018](#)) and even ethics of care ([Wiles, 2012](#)). This allows us to emphasize that when applied to migration research ethical thinking is a “moment-to-moment” decision-making process ([Kaukko et al., 2017](#)), always dependent on the specific contextual circumstances, personal perspectives of the participants and the typology of migration we are collecting.

## 2. What has been discussed so far?

QMRE is about raising ethical awareness on how we collect data and relate with participants. The distinction arises from what it is also particular in migration research: its specific context. Reviewing the emerging literature allows us to identify some patterns. First, there is an obvious relationship between ethical reflexivity and studying migrants lived experience either during their migratory or integration processes. This probably becomes more visible when we deal with the so called hard-to-reach migration populations, related to extreme discrimination, vulnerability, inequality and power relations (involving sometimes exploitation and domination), but also physical gender and sexual violence in refugee camps for instance, as so many works show ([Allotey and Manderson, 2003](#); [Birman, 2006](#); [Block et al., 2013](#); [Clark-Kazak, 2017](#); [Krause, 2017](#); [Siegel and Wildt, 2016](#); [Van Liempt and Bilger, 2009](#)). This also suggests that it can be misleading to generalize when we speak about QMRE, since migration studies is a broad area of research covering a large array of topics, not always related to hard situations of exclusion and vulnerability. Second, thinking ethically is always a balancing exercise between the quality and objectivity of the research on the one hand and fulfillment of the three main ethical universal provisos, on the other: do no harm, respect autonomy and respect and ensure equitable sharing of benefits ([Flick, 2018](#), among others). Third, and as a correlate of the two former literature patterns, ethical considerations on how one conducts QMR combine positionality and reflexivity. Formulating this idea in a more straightforward way, nothing goes in doing QMR. In other words, QMR is not “ethically-free”. We need to ethically self-regulate our research behavior. This is why we conceive this article as a framework identifying the main lines for a more articulated guideline that may regulate (and stimulate) such an ethical research behavior. The value of this article lies less in its innovative contribution but rather more on its scoping review of the ethical challenges involved in qualitative migration research. This is why we seek to offer a critical reflection and guidance on the ethical issues involved in qualitative migration research and how to solve them.

These premises lead us to stress one of the golden rules of QMRE: “any research decision is an ethical decision”. To speak about research ethics is to speak about researchers’ responsibilities toward information collection and production and how one relates with participants. This is why the first QMRE literature is reluctant to blindly follow abstract principles without considering the context. We may find the distinctive features of QMRE while deepening this first dissatisfaction about the application of abstract ethical principles. Our intention is not to promote a single research approach or best practice, but rather to encourage further discussion and attention to the ways we collect, produce and use data-information that become at some point knowledge.

Finally, let us also underline what the literature usually calls “ethical conundrums” or “unresolved dilemmas”. The first is the research and engagement nexus. It suggests that migration research is not a value-free activity. It refers to conscious social and political engagements. This focus reflects a balancing between risks of harm and benefits for participants (whether the potential social, political, legal benefits for participants outweigh the potential social, political and legal harm). The particularities of migrants are certainly due to their specific legal environment. In other words, to interview an irregular migrant may potentially be very dangerous for that person in certain countries, such as Italy. This first review of the literature shows that much of the works are mostly focused on the specificity of target groups under research, mainly related to children and refugees, and they share the view of these particular trajectories and subjectivities.

Considering now the second ethical conundrum, when incorporating an ethical reflection, one necessarily sees knowledge production not as an end in itself but a mediator with some other public goals (Boswell, 2009). An ethical reflection on migration research necessarily goes beyond the simply knowledge-based approach and invites us to think about the value-relevant knowledge we may produce for public use.

What we may infer is that both ethical conundrums are directly related to one of the most important parts of research design. Thinking beyond the research arena implies thinking about the social and political impact of the research, about the influence our research may have on social change and on the impact it may have in modifying particular migrant circumstances. In other words, it is a combination of engagement and public mindedness (the two ethical conundrums).

Let us end this first outline by pointing out the need of working the link between ethics and ideology. This nexus is probably invisible in the current emerging QMRE literature, but it becomes more visible when the research is carried at the meso level with NGOs and CSOs and even political parties. For instance, consider that we are conducting research on xenophobic political parties, which may involve interviewing and carrying out participant observation with extremists with anti-migrant agendas. This is an excellent environment where ethics meets ideology. These ideological ethical considerations can also come when you realize someone is not telling the truth and manipulating the migration-related reality.

### **3. Ethical issues at different research stages**

After mapping the particularities of QMRE, let us now go into identifying ethical challenges at different research stages: before, during and after fieldwork. Our objective is not to provide an all-inclusive list of ethical challenges in the field. This would not be feasible considering the fact that each research is unique and requires tailored ethical attention. But this may help to develop critical ethical consciousness.

#### *3.1 Before the fieldwork*

The selection of certain topics, framing research questions and conceptual choices and their definitions have significant effects on the research process and its outputs. The research

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design, even before having a contact with participants, includes various ethical dilemmas. These dilemmas are more pronounced in research with migrants, who often occupy precarious positions in their host societies and live at the edge of political, social or economic discrimination. When human suffering in any form is at the core of what is being studied, academic sophistication is necessary but not a sufficient condition that justifies the research. As David Turton argues, researching other people's sufferings can only be justified if the research explicitly aims at alleviating that suffering (Turton, 1996, p. 96; cited in Jacobsen and Landau, 2003).

Knowledge production in migration research cannot be isolated from the current political conflicts and controversies. In this sense, migration research is often a double-edge sword: developing rigorous knowledge that is intended to guide relevant actors to improve migrants' vulnerabilities comes at the risk of being used and abused by anti-migrant forces. For instance, studying undocumented migrants is an ethical question in itself (Düvell *et al.*, 2010). Researchers face the dilemma of producing societal benefits while carrying the risk of making the sensitive knowledge available for states and their security agents. Therefore, even selecting a research topic in migration studies brings up complex ethical questions.

Theoretical and conceptual choices, categories and their definitions matter. They shape the overall research perspective and therefore conclusions. Migration scholars often criticize the use of national and ethnic lenses to conceptualize migration and migration-related processes. Yet, ethical issues involved in "methodological nationalism" and "methodological ethnicity" are often overlooked. Methodological nationalism assumes a "supposedly natural congruence between national, territorial, political, cultural and social boundaries" (Dahinden, 2016, p. 3). Ethnic groups are perceived as "logical" units of analysis under methodological nationalism (Glick Schiller, 2008, p. 3). In this logic, migration-related differences are naturalized and normalized. The category of migrants assumes their inherent and eternal difference from the host-society and is understood as a problematic "exception to the rule of sedentariness within the boundaries of the nation-state" (Wimmer and Schiller, 2003, p. 585). In this sense, the nation-state vision of society is likely to suffer from describing migrants "as political security risks, as culturally others, as socially marginal, and as an exception to the rule of territorial confinement" (Wimmer and Schiller, 2003, p. 599).

While the usage of the category of migrants within the paradigm of methodological nationalism involves ethical issues, abandoning this category may turn a blind eye to existing sufferings, social inequalities and discriminatory processes. As the French context shows "choosing not to use ethnic and racial categories" in social scientific research will carry the risk of "remain(ing) ignorant of discriminatory processes, in order to support a colorblind society" (Amiraux and Simon, 2006, p. 204). Classifying the ethnic groups under study is a necessary tool for constructing equal opportunity policies and fighting against discrimination and racism (Jacobs, 2018, pp. 135–136).

Classification and categorization of ethnic groups must be a critical and self-conscious process. The category of migration intersects with other categories such as gender, social class, education and age. Exploring the dynamics of this intersection may provide a better analytical tool than solely relying on migrants as unit of analysis. This critical and self-reflexive stance toward our categories not only would help us produce rigorous analyses but contribute to the ethical self-consciousness that we develop throughout the research.

### *3.2 During the fieldwork*

Research ethics during qualitative fieldworks include various issues such as entry to the field, recruitment of participants, the role of gate keepers and key informants; potential power asymmetries and their consequences; autonomy of participants, voluntary participation and informed consent; confidentiality and anonymity; research transparency and trust; and

potential harms, risks and benefits. These ethical issues become even more pressing when participants are migrants who try to establish new lives in often unwelcoming host societies. Pre-given ethical prescriptions, while providing some standard for good research practices, are often far from addressing the complex ethical issues emerging during the fieldwork. Therefore, ethical research becomes the one that is capable of evaluating each research instance from an ethical lens, reflexively responding to unexpected situations and developing a critical ethical consciousness.

A smooth entry to the field is the first condition to succeed with empirically grounded qualitative research that includes human participants. Achieving a representative sample is not only a scientific concern but also becomes an ethical challenge in QMR, since sloppy sampling strategies carry a high risk of recruiting the most available and accessible participants while leaving the most vulnerable and hard-to-reach ones outside. Therefore, ethical issues do not only require protection of participants from potential harms but also include the researchers' responsibility to enable the participation of those disadvantaged groups that can easily be overlooked and stay out of the research.

Snowball sampling and the sampling through gatekeepers are often seen as remedies for reaching out-of-radar populations. Yet, these traditionally adopted sampling strategies pose further ethical challenges, when the targeted population is vulnerable migrants (Dahinden and Efionayi-Mäder, 2009; Jacobsen and Landau, 2003). First, both snowball sampling and gatekeepers can end up with biased selection of participants. Snowball sampling already has a bad fame for producing homogeneous samples depending on the researchers' entry point. Gatekeepers may mediate the participant selection process in different respects and may have an unexpected control over the research process. Power relations between the gatekeepers and the rest of the group can result in pressure to participate (or not participate) and can influence the authenticity of responses. This gives extra responsibility to migration researchers to ethically reconsider their sampling strategies. Second, confidentiality and anonymity can become problematical issues in such sampling strategies. The breach of confidentiality can become particularly problematical in the case of migrants, especially when they have precarious legal status. Third, snowball sampling is particularly challenging for highly mobile populations, since the participants might not know the exact names and contact information of their acquaintances (Dahinden and Efionayi-Mäder, 2009).

One of the key pillars of ethical research is ensuring voluntary and informed participation. Informed consent draws on the principle of respecting people's decision-making autonomy. While informed consent looks like a straight-forward issue at first sight, it includes many intriguing questions such as how to ensure that the consent is voluntary, how much information to give for participants to be informed, how to prove the consent if written-consent is not available and how to gain consent in "street ethnography" type of research (Shaw, 2008).

QMRE shows that the standard interpretation of informed consent is not sufficient while working with migrants. Different cultural understandings and language barriers between the researcher and participants can pose important challenges to the process of informed participation (Hunter-Adams and Rother, 2017; Watkins *et al.*, 2012). Even though "getting lost in translation" can be alleviated through translators, the cultural differences in understanding and interpreting informed consent still confront migration researchers. Existing research already documents the Eurocentrism in informed-consent and its problematical interpretation in in group-oriented societies (Ijsselmuiden and Faden, 1992). Cultural norms of hospitality may promote apparent consent without true voluntariness (Akesson *et al.*, 2018).

As many ethical guidelines point out the asymmetrical position between researchers and participants put the voluntariness of informed consent at risk. This ethical problem is further pronounced in research with migrants. Migration scholars such as Hugman (2011) and

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Mackenzie *et al.* (2007) criticize individualistic and liberal notions of autonomy that informs research ethics and propose the idea of “relational autonomy”. In this point of view, autonomy is “a socially acquired capacity” (Mackenzie *et al.*, 2007, p. 310). Traumatic experiences of vulnerable migrants and/or their non-Western background do not take away their competences to understand the principle of giving and withdrawing consent. Yet, the stark power differentials and the extreme conditions that these migrants are living may force them to consent the research (Hugman *et al.*, 2011, p. 1278). The issue of voluntary participation becomes even further complicated when researchers’ requests for participation creates illusion of some sort of assistance to their desperate situations. Therefore, continuous ethical relationship that spans the entire research process and afterward becomes an important part of QMRE.

Anonymity and confidentiality are other pillars of research ethics. Confidentiality means not disclosing the identity of who has taken part in research and not disseminating the specific data that can help identify the participants unless they specifically prefer to be identified. It is acknowledged that under certain circumstances researchers may need to breach confidentiality intentionally. Intentional breach of confidentiality stems from either a legal duty to disclose crime-related information or a moral duty to disclose information for protecting participants who are being victims of a crime (Wiles *et al.*, 2008). Regardless of its causes, breaching confidentiality deliberately is a highly contested topic and researchers can take different positions depending on their epistemological perspectives and their personal values (Surmiak, 2019). The issue becomes particularly controversial in research with undocumented migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers who live in precarious legal status. In this respect, migration researchers may encounter instances where “law-first” perspectives come into conflict with “ethic-first” perspectives where researchers hold an ethical course of action at the cost of defying a court order or engaging in civil disobedience (Lowman and Palys, 2014).

Not all breaches of confidentiality are intentional. Sometimes researchers unintentionally disclose information that can reveal the identity of participants. Qualitative research faces greater risk of unintentionally revealing participants’ identities, considering its in-depth and detailed data and small number of cases (Webster *et al.*, 2014). Not only vulnerable migrants, but also migrant elites, relevant stakeholders and NGOs can be exposed to risks of identification because of the small numbers of the potential participants.

The other pillar of QMRE is researchers’ duty of balancing the risk of harm against the potential for benefits. While “do not harm” is a golden rule of research ethics, migration scholars argue that it is insufficient (Block *et al.*, 2013; Hugman *et al.*, 2011; Mackenzie *et al.*, 2007; Pittaway *et al.*, 2010). First, blindly following procedural no harm procedures can still cause harm to sensitive populations, if researchers do not critically evaluate the rising ethical issues. The research by Akesson *et al.* (2018) shows that blindly following formal procedures of confidentiality and privacy in “often crowded and watchful refugee settings” can pose higher risks to the participants, since “the act of entering a private space with a research participant can be a very visible and public act” (p. 30). Secondly, “do not harm” procedure, while passively protecting participants, it does not contribute to *enable* participation of vulnerable and hard-to-reach populations. In this respect, migration researchers have the ethical duty of not only protect but also empower migrants to enable their participation in research.

Fair distribution of risks and benefits is another issue that particularly challenges migration researchers. The ethical principle of *justice* poses the questions of who will carry the research’s burden and who will benefit from the research. As Leaning (2001) states high levels of fluidity and mobility of migrant participants reduce their chances of directly benefitting from the research. In other words, when the research is completed and has an impact on the policymaking, the very participants of the research may no longer be residing

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in the research's locality. If there is such a risk, migration researchers must inform the participants about not being able to benefit from the research directly.

### 3.3 *After the fieldwork*

Ethical issues do not end with the fieldwork. The stages of analysis and interpretation of data and dissemination of findings have their own ethical issues in QMR. It is often stated that "all representations are partial, partisan, and problematic" (Goodall, 2000, p. 55 cited in Dávila, 2014). In other words, representations only partially tell the truth, are always mediated by researchers' interpretative authority and can never guarantee how they will be understood by different audiences. That is why there has been increasing scholarly attention on the "ethics of representation" (Pickering and Kara, 2017). Beyond these general problems, representations pose some specific ethical challenges for QMR. Researchers working on politicized topics such as migration have further ethical duties which demand that their representations would not cause harm on the lives of participants. Migration researchers need to evaluate their findings critically and be aware that the way they represent their findings can fuel anti-migrant rhetoric or even reinforce security or reactive policies. QMR can do more harm than benefit if the research output perpetuates stereotypes and render migrant groups essentialized, homogenized, timeless and voiceless. Linking migration to security threats, crime, welfare sponges and/or non-integrable groups would make migrants' lives even harder.

At the post-fieldwork stage, connecting back with participants and taking their feedback on findings support the ethical values of respect and reciprocity. Sharing the results with people whom helped to produce them is a way of "giving back" to the community under the study. Researchers must be ready to hear about the disagreements and critical opinions raised by the participants. In case of the rapid and significant change in the field context or plans for new uses of the data, researchers would need to re-seek participants' informed consent in the post-field period (Knott, 2019). Evidently, seeking re-consent has a short time limit. Once the research is published and publicly available, post-fieldwork consent confirmation will not be possible. Migration researchers face some additional challenges when they intend to engage back with their participants, because of the participants' potential mobility. When migration researchers return to the field, there is a high chance that their participants already moved to somewhere else. Therefore, migration researchers must inform their participants about the risk of not being able to engage back.

As ethical guidelines instruct, migration researchers are also responsible for securely protecting and archiving the data. Data protection becomes a more complex issue in cross-border research, as different legal systems might have different regulations. Data protection also poses new challenges in the context of online cloud storage. Data encryption as well as online storage in secure servers becomes important ethical practices.

Recently, there has been an increasing demand -especially by the funders- to provide open data access. Promotion of data sharing intends to ensure research transparency, to avoid duplication of research efforts and to achieve better value for research funding (Wiles *et al.*, 2008, p. 88). However, data sharing raises important ethical challenges for QMR. First, small sample size and in-depth accounts put confidentiality at risk, even though data is fully anonymized. Second, not having the control of how the data will be used in the future, by whom and for which purposes challenges the initial informed consent. The politicized nature of migration issues and the sensitivity of migration research data elevate the significance of these ethical concerns.

Once the research is completed and publicly disseminated, researchers would have even less control over how the information is used (or mis-used). Politicized topics such as migration attract even more audience. Results of migration research do not exclusively stay



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in academic surroundings. Today, journalists are more interested in reporting about migration research than before. Yet, it is already known that media reporting often tries to have a hook for the audience by favoring negative and distorted representation of migration issues, as opposed to providing thorough and complex perspectives. [Düvell et al. \(2010, p. 235\)](#) report that QMR tends to receive relatively little negative media attention, as journalists are more eager to quote statistics and quantify the social phenomena. Yet, qualitative migration researchers still need to be careful in their engagement with media.

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#### 4. Conclusion

There has been a rising interest in ethical issues in all fields of social research. This is particularly evident in the rapid growth of procedural research ethics including an unprecedented expansion of research ethics boards, ethical codes and guidelines and standardized ethics-checks requirements by the funding agencies. While these ethical guidelines and codes take different perspectives depending on their area of expertise, they all identify important and hard-to-question ethical principles such as respect for *autonomy* of participants (the importance of voluntariness, informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity), *beneficence* (the responsibility to do good), *nonmaleficence* (the responsibility to avoid harm) and *justice* (the importance of the benefits and burdens of research being distributed equally).

Despite the prevalence of standardized ethics regulations and reviews, there have been increasing concerns and doubts about their role in the field of qualitative research ([de Laine, 2000](#); [Lincoln and Guba, 1989](#); [Lincoln and Tierney, 2004](#); [Mauthner et al., 2002](#)). Fixed ethical rules are often found unsuitable to the flexible and responsive practice of qualitative research ([Webster et al., 2014](#); [Wiles, 2012](#)). As qualitative researchers make their decisions dynamically and respond to emerging situations, many new ethical dilemmas can arise that cannot be predicted at the outset. Therefore, ethical dilemmas are thought to be situational and contextual, that cannot be addressed by pre-fixed answers, but requires researchers' active ethical consciousness and "continuous moral responsibility" ([Ryen, 2016](#), pp. 133–134). The formalized guidelines may become insensitive to "the inherent nature of tensions, fluidity, and uncertainty of ethical issues arising from qualitative research" ([Aluwihare-Samaranayake, 2012](#), p. 66; also in [Denzin and Giardina, 2007](#)). Blind adherence to pre-given ethical codes are thought to harm especially some areas of qualitative research, as they become off limits, e.g. investigative/covert research, studies of illegal activities, vulnerable groups or publicly accountable elites ([Shaw, 2008](#)). Therefore, the ethics of qualitative research designs is considered to pose distinctive demands and special considerations.

This article has shown how much we need distinctive ethical considerations that go beyond pre-fixed and standardized guidelines for migration studies. The European Commission's *Guidance note—Research on refugees, asylum seekers and migrants (2014)* points out that "Research on refugees, asylum seekers and migrants concerns a *particularly vulnerable group* which needs *particular safeguards* in terms of research ethics". The standardized guidelines may be either too broad to address the specific ethical challenges stemming from this vulnerability or may even misguide the researchers when they do not properly address to the specificities of migration research contexts. The qualitative migration researcher must actively engage in ethical considerations and make decisions at all stages of their research. The much politicized nature of migration in today's world gives extra responsibility to researchers to consider how their research topics and questions will influence the public and political debates and whether the produced knowledge may be used and abused by the anti-migrant forces. Standard ethics guidelines on confidentiality and anonymity may become insufficient and sometimes misleading as researchers deal with unpredictable ethical challenges of migration research. Special research settings such as

refugee camps or detention centers may make the act of entering in a private conversation potentially dangerous for some participants (Akesson *et al.*, 2018). Different languages and cultural backgrounds may make the informed consent procedures more complicated for migration researchers. Returning the benefits of the research to the participants becomes more challenging in the case of mobile populations. For these reasons among others, it becomes an important task to explore particular ethical characteristics of QMR and last but not least, to include it as compulsory dimension to be covered by graduate programmes. Young scholars must be aware of the ethical implications of their research. The early they develop their critical ethical consciousness, the better for the ethical requirements of QMR. As we put forward at the outset: “any research decision is an ethical decision”.

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