



Deliverable D1.2

# The ethics of doing research on gendered power hierarchies



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## 1. Executive Summary

The present document **constitutes Deliverable 1.2 / The ethics of doing research on gendered power hierarchies**. It is the second deliverable of Work Package 1 “Synchronisation: Transformative Theory & Methodology”, which is part of the larger REWIRING (Realising girls’ and women’s inclusion, representation, and empowerment) project that aims to identify the structural root causes of gendered power hierarchies and create sustainable change to prevent and reverse existing gender inequalities.

The overall goal of the WP1 is to establish a Theory and Methods Innovation Lab, within which the foundations are laid for a context- and crisis-sensitive, systematic analysis of dynamics of intersectional gendered power hierarchies and an assessment of the effectiveness and unwanted effects of law and policies. WP1 has two main objectives:

- To develop an interdisciplinary and culturally sensitive theoretical framework for analysis and practical recommendations for addressing intersectional gender power hierarchies.
- **To review ethical issues in producing and disseminating data on vulnerable and exploited groups.**

**The overall objective of this paper is:**

- To evaluate the ethical implications of the REWIRING project based on contemporary ethics standards in research within the field of gender and a critical view of the literature.

**The target audience of this paper consists of:**

- Policymakers and other societal stakeholders (e.g., NGOs, companies) around the world who will consider using our transformative gender equality approach to fight gender inequality and follow ethical standards relevant to targeting gender inequalities.
- People working in institutions with an interest in reducing gender inequality.
- Researchers in universities and other institutions interested in reducing gender inequality, including – but explicitly not limited to – people involved in the REWIRING project.

## The structure of this paper is as follows:

The present deliverable is not a standard guide to ethical requirements for research on gender power hierarchies that the project must comply with—please see Deliverable D 10.1; WP 10: Ethical requirements for details. Taking Deliverable D 10.1 as a starting point, this working paper will provide an overview of the scientific debates on the ethics of researching gendered power hierarchies. In other words, considering the standard guidelines that research must achieve, this working paper develops and discusses the scientific debates that already exist in fields such as psychology, law, and media sciences when applying research ethics.

- Section 1 **briefly describes WP1** and its main objectives as well as this **deliverable D1.2**
- Section 2 briefly introduces the entire **REWIRING project** and its framework.
- Section 3 presents a **conceptualization of ethical research** that involves understanding **gender in the power hierarchy** and its intersectional nature alongside other identity axes.
- Section 4 problematizes some **ethical debates in research** on gender in power hierarchies.
- Finally, Section 5 highlights some ethical approaches and recommendations for **addressing androcentric, binary, and colonial biases** in research and increasing its **transparency and scientific standards**.

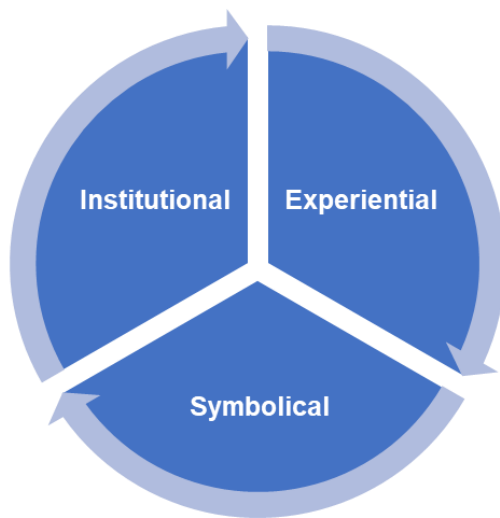
## 2. Introduction to the Project and Framework

The first section of this paper provides a general introduction to the RE-WIRING project.

The name “RE-WIRING” stems from the goal to “re-wire” institutions to achieve gender equality. Given the urgency for a shift from being gendered (or gender-blind/gender-neutral) institutions to gender-sensitive and transformative ones, this project focuses on the fundamental rethinking and 're-wiring' of existing institutional approaches and systems. In our definition, “Institutions” include not only governments and other public bodies but also companies, banks, social partners, health institutions, schools and academia, and other private social constellations, including, for instance, women’s organizations and religious groups. The RE-WIRING project goes beyond existing doctrinal and policy transformative equality approaches (e.g. EIGE, 2015; Fredman et al., 2016; OECD, 2021) by taking a holistic, multidisciplinary approach. This approach is based on the groundwork laid within the Utrecht University interdisciplinary research platform for Gender, Diversity & Global Justice.

REWIRING, therefore, presents a novel three-dimensional framework that builds upon the premise that effective transformation and women’s empowerment can only come about when simultaneous action is taken on institutional, experiential, and symbolical levels:

**Figure 1.** Illustration of the Three Analytical Levels.



**Institutional:**

What are the responses to inequality and exclusion on the institutional level, including laws and policies?

**Experiential:**

How do women and girls and (non-)dominant group members experience the many forms of inequality in social institutions such as the workplace, educational settings, the family, etc.? And how do they experience institutional measures aimed at correcting these inequalities?

**Symbolical:**

How are women and girls and (non-)dominant groups and their societal roles represented in the linguistic, narrative, and visual structures that shape society?

This three-dimensional approach considers three highly relevant factors: intersectionality, culture, and crises.

**RE-WIRING’s ambition is to:**

- **Advance scientific theorization and knowledge** of the gendered power relations across the political, social, economic, and cultural spheres and the key underlying intersectional dynamics and causal mechanisms that shape them;

- **Develop innovative tools and practical solutions** by empirically elaborating sets of actions that not only target women and girls but engage relevant actors and stakeholders to improve political, social, economic, and cultural empowerment and increase sustainability and social resilience.

The main research question and objectives of RE-WIRING are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1**

| How can gendered, intersectional inequalities in the areas of socialization, education, work, laws and policies, politics, business, and media (including in their decision-making), be systemically changed in the institutional, experiential, and symbolical realms of society in Europe and (South) Africa, to bring about the sustainable inclusion, representation and empowerment of girls and women? |   |                         |
|--|---|-------------------------|
| Aim  | Objectives  | WP                      |
| Advance scientific theorization and knowledge of gendered power hierarchies  | RO1 Assess key concepts and develop a novel, interdisciplinary theoretical framework for an intersectional and cross-cultural Transformative Equality Approach                | WP1                     |
|  | RO2 Develop a systematic and in-depth understanding of the root causes of gendered power hierarchies, including relevant contextual, cultural, and crisis factors and impacts | WP2, WP3, WP4, WP5, WP6 |
|  | RO3 Analyze the role of education and the media in perpetuating or challenging harmful gender stereotypes   | WP3, WP5                |
| Develop innovative tools and practical solutions to improve the political, social, economic, and cultural empowerment of women and girls   | IO1 Co-create and validate interventions with diverse stakeholders at several geographical and political levels and establish a stakeholder network                           | WP2, WP3, WP4, WP8      |
|  | IO2 Identify and test practical tools and innovative solutions for mainstreaming gender-transformative equality in society and institutional settings                         | WP2, WP3, WP4, WP5      |
|  | IO3 Synthesize findings into tangible policy recommendations for targeted and pragmatic programs that contribute to SDG 5 for the empowerment of women and girls              | WP2, WP3, WP4, WP5, WP7 |

### 3. Setting the Stage

### 3.1 How we define ethical research: What is ethics in research, and why is it important?

The importance of gender research in addressing the under-representation of women in institutions and combating gender violence is undeniable. It plays a crucial role in eradicating misogyny, addressing sexual violence, preventing and reversing inequalities, and promoting inclusion, representation, and empowerment of girls and women. In addition, it contributes to a better understanding of the root causes of power hierarchies and gender gaps in the political, social, economic, and cultural spheres. Thus, institutions and research organizations setting standards for research ethics should consider normative paradigms of the ethics of care, allowing for research that explores gender from an institutional, experiential, and symbolic perspective, unpacking the emotional and societal complexities of how minoritized groups and individuals experience the many forms of inequality, ways to address inequalities, and the representation of minoritized groups and individuals in society.

In most disciplinary fields, ethical research typically concerns the comfort and transparency of study goals and methods offered to study participants and relates to issues such as seeking informed consent, the avoidance of harm, ensuring privacy and confidentiality, the avoidance of deception, and the contrast or cohesion between dutifully following process and procedure (Jeanes, 2017). Critical to ethical research is doing no harm to participants in research. The ethos of protecting participants in research can be traced to medical research, specifically the World Medical Association, and the adoption of the Helsinki Declaration in 1964. The Declaration adopted, in essence, is the guiding principle of the Hippocratic Oath, espousing the belief that “First, do no harm” (*Primum, non nocere*) (Peters, 2020). The principles of medical research were, therefore, to protect life, health, dignity, integrity, right to self-determination, privacy, and confidentiality of personal information of research subjects (The World Medical Association, Inc., 1964). Other disciplines followed this suit, with countries, research councils, and societies adopting similar ethical standards.

This medical framing of research poses certain challenges for research in the social sciences, humanities, and other non-science disciplines as opposed to the disciplines of science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and medicine (STEMM). As Jeanes (2017) argues, this reliance on an inflexible approach to ethics requires researchers to follow rationalised universal rules that fail to grasp the nuances that often research, and researchers encounter. Research in non-STEMM disciplines invariably involves understanding the social world of participants (Bryman et al., 2007). The social world, therefore, concerns society and



all its complexity, such as the ‘vulnerabilities’ of research participants (Boden et al., 2009), and what is considered ‘vulnerable’ also depends on the socio-cultural context in which the study is conducted. For example, in South Africa, the South African National Health Research Ethics Council considers any person older than 65 as a vulnerable population group (National Health Research Ethics Council, 2011), whereas in the UK, ‘vulnerable’ is defined in different ways and arises as a result of being in an abusive relationship, vulnerability due to age, potential marginalisation, disability, and disadvantageous power relationships within personal and professional roles (UKRI, 2023).

The framing of ethics, particularly from a STEMM approach (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics areas) has a regulative effect on ethics governing research practice (Halse & Honey, 2007), which may in turn lead to silencing voices and exclusion in research (Brewis & Wray-Bliss, 2008; Ferdinand et al., 2007; Jeanes, 2017). This is because the framing of research ethics is gendered within the power hierarchies of disciplines, and STEMM disciplines remain a male-dominated space (Fagan & Teasdale, 2021; Bilimoria et al., 2014). For example, in the European Union (EU), there is an unprecedented shortage of women in STEM fields. Women comprise 52% of the European population and most of the EU's tertiary graduates, accounting for only 2 in 5 scientists and engineers (European Commission, 2022). The gender gap widens as seniority levels increase, with women representing only 17.9% of professors in engineering and technology fields, while only 10.7% of patent applications were filed by women between 2015 and 2018 (European Commission, 2021). Thus, in research and academic work, there is horizontal and vertical occupational gender segregation, with women concentrated at the lowest levels of organisational hierarchies (vertical) and an overrepresentation of women in stereotypically female careers, such as care in the health sector (Johnston, 2019). As Acker (1990) argues, organisations are gendered, and academia and disciplines are gendered hierarchies of power, therefore it will also affect the ethics of gender power hierarchies’ research.

Research ethics may be wrongly considered part of regulating gender research to conform to masculine paradigms of research. In other words, if the framing of research design, the types of questions that can be asked, who is included or excluded, and what methods of research are deemed valid according to masculine STEMM paradigms, then this lends itself to the exclusion of gender research or blocks research leading to conclusions against the current state of gender relations. For example, gender research often involves sensitive topics such as interviewing friends about sexual relationships, discussing motherhood and work–life balance, and exploring death or gender-based violence where harm may be unavoidable (Jeanes, 2017). Should the researchers, because of the research ethical protocol

of ‘doing no harm’, not undertake research with individuals who have experienced gender-based violence? Are we silencing their voices or potentially re-traumatising victims of gender-based violence? Such important issues are the focal points of the RE-WIRING project, and in our research, we are sensitive to the comfort needs of participants who experience sexual harassment in the workplace. Should the researchers not investigate sexual harassment in the workplace to avoid the risk of harming the research participants? How would we otherwise aim to improve understanding of gender-based violence and seek ways to address it?

When conducting research with individuals who have experienced gender-based violence, it is crucial to properly select and train the people who will conduct the research. The recruitment process must be refined to incorporate the assessment of psychological well-being and resilience, as is done in the research of a qualitative (e.g., interviews) but also more quantitative (e.g., survey measurements) nature. Researchers may also have been victims of such violence. Providing them with support systems should, therefore, be vital (Navarro-Mantas & Ozemela, 2019). Planning adequate training for researchers should be thus a central aspect of the investigation and adapted to the contexts and characteristics of the communities being investigated, especially those most vulnerable and less studied (e.g., ethnic populations and indigenous women). Such training will undoubtedly enhance data quality and accuracy in estimating the prevalence of violence against women (Navarro-Mantas & Ozemela, 2019). Support options and assurance of safety without traumatising for the women interviewed are paramount for ethical research (Ellsberg & Heise, 2007). Furthermore, it is crucial to involve psychologists competent in helping victims of violence both during training and fieldwork (Navarro-Mantas & Ozemela, 2019). The planning of methods and strategies for disseminating research results must be also carefully considered. These results should be conveyed through participatory workshops and various dissemination programmes within communities, in collaboration with local stakeholders (Ellsberg & Heise, 2007).

From an ethic of care approach, we can give voice to unrepresented groups by normative research. The ethics of gender research should consider the ethics of care as safeguarding participants and researchers where emotions and societal complexities are considered in their entirety (Jeanes, 2017). The ethics of care draws on the psychological research of Gilligan (1977; 1982) who found that social scientists would study men and generalise the findings to women. Thus, in the RE-WIRING project, the ethics of care is to provide women, girls, and minoritized individuals and groups a voice, *an empowering voice*, with a moral and goodness responsibility by researchers to help women, girls, and minoritized individuals and

groups, ensuring no harm and meeting the obligations and responsibility of a transformative equality approach.

### 3.2 Research ethics in hierarchies of power: Why gender matters?

Social psychology has theorized how social structure is a complex phenomenon that occurs in various forms and levels. Social groups are organised in hierarchies in relation to each other, and both implicitly and explicitly, individuals within these groups are assigned a rank based on the power they possess (Rucker et al., 2018). Considering *Social Dominance Theory*, societies are organised in a hierarchical manner where some groups are the holders of status and power over others who are not (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). This theory suggests that this grouping based on social hierarchy is not simply the result of individual differences, but is deeply rooted in social systems, institutions, and ideologies. For example, sexist ideologies maintain and perpetuate gender-based discrimination and unequal treatment between men and women (Pratto & Walker, 2004). Thus, this asymmetry of power establishes at least two groups, the disadvantaged (e.g. women) and the privileged and thus advantaged (e.g. men) (Major, 1994). Therefore, a key aspect of social hierarchy is inequality. The inequality inherent in hierarchies tends to endure because most hierarchies are characterised by policies, practices, and processes that reinforce the existing hierarchy (Magee & Galinsky, 2008).

Research in any scientific domain has not escaped the influence of the existing social hierarchy. In the case of traditional psychology, it has been pointed to by feminism agenda and community psychology as playing a justifying role in maintaining the established social system (e.g., institutions) by attributing to minority groups the deficiencies responsible for their own marginalization (Fine & Gordon, 1991; Mulvey, 1988; Paradis, 2000). This problem is rooted in the cultural bias that assumes that the representative category of a person is that of a white, privileged male (Hegarty & Buechel, 2006). In the field of psychology, the use of convenience samples composed largely of this specific population has been observed (McHugh et al., 1986). For example, an analysis of outlets published by most prominent journals in psychology has shown that 96% of studies attempted to build theory based on empirical observations from participants who come from countries representing a mere 12% of the world's population (Arnett, 2008, see also: Rad et al. 2018). While these samples may not meet research standards, such as validity or generalisability of results to other populations, they also raise questions about scientific ethics. In contrast, feminist psychologists

have studied aspects of women's lives that have been ignored by traditional research (Grossman et al., 1997; Reyes et al., 2017). Still, research on gender roles, attitudes, and ideologies did not begin in earnest until the 1970s, making it a young science (Rudman & Glick, 2021).

In an effort to make research more inclusive, studies began to incorporate the socio-demographic variable of gender (e.g., Gender: male or female). Although current ethical standards recommend adopting these practices (American Psychological Association, 2010), in addition, other dimensions, such as social class, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, or non-normative gender identities, have been ignored. This is because most of the research has been conducted in so-called WEIRD societies (Western, educated, industrialised, wealthy democracies; Henrich et al., 2010) with predominantly white heterosexual and cisgender participants (see Gilligan, 1982). Excluding diverse and intersection identities from our search goes against the most recent ethical recommendations and perpetuates a biased perspective of the social world, influenced by privileged groups in power.

For all these reasons, it is crucial to incorporate this understanding of power hierarchies into gender research, linking individual and social levels of analysis and a feminist theory approach that includes concepts such as "intersectionality" (Crenshaw, 1989), which refers to how other identities, such as race and sexuality, interact with gender. Another important component is understanding gender as a multifaceted spectrum instead of binary construct (Hyde et al., 2019; Morgenroth & Ryan, 2021). In addition to that, a decolonial analysis contributes to the shaping of social and institutional factors, towards more fair migration policies and practices that affect refugee claimants and migrants (Savaş & Dutt, 2023). This decolonial perspective considers that the regions from which migrants are forced to displace are exploited by the Global North, as well in ethnic conflicts generated by colonialist powers. Thus, an intersectional, non-binary and decolonial ethic promotes a deeper understanding of gendered power hierarchies and other axes of oppression when doing research. In this way, the influence of power hierarchy on research can be countered by adopting an intersectional perspective, a decolonial and non-binary lens. Thus, the nature of the research conducted by the RE-WIRING project, the treatment of data, and even how the findings are transmitted to society for application in public and social policies, must be oriented in the service of minority groups and social change. Ethical research must incorporate this approach as an integral part of the RE-WIRING project and any other projects studying gendered power hierarchies.

### 3.3 Research ethics and intersectionality: Why do other identities matter as well?

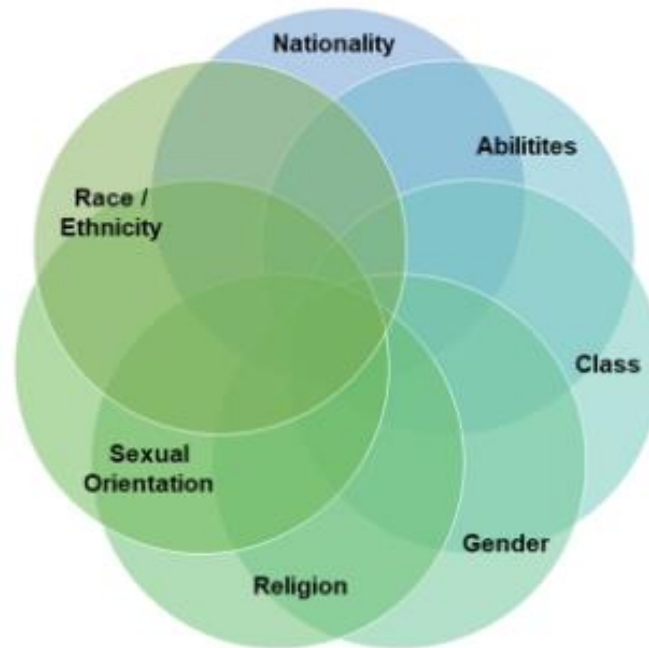
The goal of the RE-WIRING project is to prevent and reverse inequalities, promote inclusion, representation, and empowerment of girls and women. However, the inequalities affecting women extend beyond narrowly defined gender categories. Crenshaw (1989; 1991) defined intersectional identity as the various ways in which different identities overlap and create unique cases and experiences of inequality and power hierarchies. It is therefore necessary to adopt an intersectional lens because gender marginalization cannot be considered in isolation (Hall, 2022; Pandey et al., 2022). It is thus vital to take the whole picture of individuals' characteristics and identities into account (e.g., ability, age, gender identity, immigrant status, race and/or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, social class).

While women are the disadvantaged group when compared to men, not all women are equally disadvantaged at all times - other characteristics such as race, gender identity, sexual orientation, class, or abilities can further impact their situation and access to resources (e.g., Chapman & Benis, 2017). Moreover, under certain circumstances or in specific contexts, some men can also be more disadvantaged than some women, for instance, when Black men are compared to white women in predominantly white spaces (McCabe, 2009). Intersectionality, as theorized by Crenshaw and many others, is therefore key to any research framework, allowing for a more nuanced account of the complexities of how gender is bound up with diverse and multiple forms of social identity and power and privilege. Taking an intersectional lens to understand gendered power hierarchies thus also means that the picture considered is way more complex than a man-woman distinction suggests and that the context, across different spaces and times, also matters (Haq, 2013).

It is also important that the intersectional lens also incorporates identities and experiences that emerge in contexts that do not take place in WEIRD / Global North regions. Thus, RE-WIRING will also advance research by incorporating intersectional identity perspectives from the Global South. One context considered in particular is the context of South Africa, a country with an appalling history of discrimination during colonialism and apartheid.

**Figure 2.** Illustration of Intersectionality.





### 3.4 Research ethics and Human Agency Perspective

The RE-WIRING project takes on a human agency perspective, meaning that it focuses on the idea that all humans are (at times) vulnerable and lack power, but they also have agency and power to bring about change. This outlook opposes a deficiency perspective, which views girls and women from different backgrounds as lacking something and thus being in a disadvantaged position. This project turns away from approaching girls and women as ‘vulnerable’ or as (merely) ‘victims’ requiring protection, and rather looks at how people become vulnerabilised, what fundamental inequality structures should be addressed, which processes keep people in privileged or vulnerabilising positions, and what avenues and (potential) strengths exist for change. This means that instead of focusing only on the so-called ‘victims’, this project also takes into consideration the people, institutions, and processes that victimise, and who profit from this victimisation, and how this can be changed institutionally, experientially, and symbolically. Rather than putting emphasis on lack of power, we look at how power is neutralised or disabled, by which institutions, processes, and by whom, as well as what conditions and actions allow (re-) empowerment. We challenge the idea that ‘women need fixing’ and put an emphasis on transformative equality. We believe that change and women empowerment require agency and emancipation by all humans alike,



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including men. This RE-WIRING transformative equality approach will be also specifically aimed at men's and non-binary engagement as crucial in moving towards gender equality (Kosakowska-Berezecka et al., 2020).

Considering all these arguments, research focusing on ethical power hierarchies goes beyond the disadvantage or vulnerability of minority groups, in this case women and girls. To do so, social institutional power structures need to be pointed out and reversed, and other advantaged groups need to be made aware of their transformative role in the face of inequalities. Therefore, the perspective of human agency is also central to the research carried out by the RE-WIRING project.

## 4. Current Scientific Debates on the Ethics of Research on Gendered Power Hierarchies

### 4.1 Binary gender mismeasures

An ethical issue that can emerge for researchers focused on studying gender is how to capture data that is fully inclusive of identities and to undertake analysis with an intersectional lens. Recent gender research understands gender as a continuum, that is, men and women do not clearly fall into two distinct categories (Hyde, 2019). Therefore, ignoring this aspect could have implications for survey design (i.e., which gender-based categories are included in the data collection), data analysis (e.g., what is the proportion men, women, or non-binary people and what is the comparison point in the analyses) or reporting research findings. Furthermore, there is an issue of anonymity, confidentiality, and data protection. For example, a participant who identifies as non-binary, may have concerns about potential identification if there are other data identifiers such as leadership role, employment sector, etc. Thus, researchers must pay due regard to the ethics of care when reporting the research findings.

Although social sciences research has made efforts to include gender as a dimension variable, most Western research has assumed gender as a binary social identity consisting of two discrete categories: women and men. This essentialist view of gender has led to the experiences and rights of transgender and non-binary people being ignored, that is, people who experience gender differently from the binary gender/sex they were assigned at birth and/or have gender identities that fall outside of the traditional binary (e.g., gender fluid; Factor & Rothblum, 2008; Tate et al., 2013). Gender is conceptualised as a multifaceted

spectrum (e.g., APA, 2015; Hyde et al., 2019). Therefore, measuring gender as a binary construct does not represent social scientists' current understanding of gender.

An implication of using binary gender measures is that it may violate ethical principles related to avoidance of harm, integrity, and respect for the people who are part of the research (Cameron & Stinson, 2019). For example, finding a gender-binary question in a survey may negate the identity of some participants (Hyde, 2019). Research that uses this type of measurement perpetuates transphobic discrimination as well as power hierarchies. Moreover, ignoring responses or mismeasuring gender can threaten the validity of the research (Cameron & Stinson, 2019). When non-normative gender identities are excluded from the research process, the obtained findings lack insight and representation of individuals with other gender identities, such as transgender or non-binary gender identities (Nowakowski et al., 2016). Consequently, ignoring their voices and systematically excluding the experiences and realities of certain subgroups of society. In line with this, researchers need to respect gender identity, recognise gender as a non-binary construct, and replace binary measures with more accurate, non-binary ones.

## 4.2 (Dis)advantaged points of view

In order to do transformative research, it is crucial to point out the different power groups that are part of the hierarchy. Considering that those who hold power can be conceptualised as advantaged groups and those who do not hold power as disadvantaged groups, both groups can be agents of change. This is closely linked to the perspective of human agency as well as the role of allies in social change.

In the context of researching gender power hierarchies, alliances between groups of the same or different status are key to increasing the power of change. For example, men, who belong to a more advantaged and powerful group than women, can serve as allies of the feminist movement (Radke et al., 2020; Subašić et al., 2018). This is because, in addition to experiencing the consequences of gender inequality, they might also integrate the values of feminism as a mechanism to support gender equality (e.g., supporting collective actions towards gender equality). While it is important to note that an intersectional, decolonial and non-binary view of men (e.g., migrant, low socio-economic status, transmen) complicates the position of power they hold, researching their role is useful for transforming institutions but also the way we do research. However, keeping in mind that the perspective of an advantaged group cannot neglect the views of minorities on this challenge.



For members of disadvantaged groups, in the case of gender inequality, men's solidarity can have positive consequences for women if it leads to their empowerment; however, paternalistic support could represent an obstacle to social change (Estevan-Reina et al., 2020). It is therefore crucial that when advantaged groups join with disadvantaged groups, they share an egalitarian motivation and recognise the disadvantage of the disadvantaged as illegitimate (Becker et al., 2013; Droogendyk et al., 2016; Estevan-Reina, et al 2020).

For these reasons, transformative and ethical research on gender hierarchies must take both points of view into account. Especially given the mobilising potential of the advantaged groups in our society, it is important whether how it is exercised is in harmony with the preferences of the disadvantaged groups.

### 4.3 The role of language and terminology

Language has a lot of impact on gender power hierarchies when it comes to communicating and maintaining inequality, by legitimizing group hierarchies and enforcing group norms (Cervone et al., 2020; Formanowicz & Hansen, 2022). According to Formanowicz and Hansen (2022), language plays a role via two separate paths, namely by increasing gender stereotypical associations and by maintaining gender hierarchy. Both paths rely on rather subtle cues in language, such as androcentric language (e.g., masculine generics that includes masculine versions of occupations such as *fireman* as general occupational titles, Szesny et al., 2016), word order (e.g., when men or masculine names or titles are mentioned before women or feminine names or titles, as in *Romeo and Juliet*, Hegarty et al., 2011; when graphs present data on more powerful groups (men) before data on weaker groups (women), Hegarty et al., 2010), or paternalistic language (e.g., when titles or words pertaining to women use a belittling version, as in *waiter and waitress*, Lakoff, 1973). Consequently, it is favorable that research project communication is aware of the subtle linguistic biases that contribute to gendered power hierarchies as much as possible.

Language does not only matter when communicating findings, but also when research itself is conducted. When creating a survey in line with ethical standards, it is vital to make every respondent feel respected. That is why focusing on inclusive language in research is important. Attention to inclusive language is especially required for researchers who conduct their research in a strongly-gendered language. Gendered languages are characterized by the fact that they assign nouns to distinct sex-based categories (Jakiela & Ozier, 2019). One such example is the Polish language in which not only pronouns and nouns are gendered

but also adjectives and verbs hint at the gender of the person they are referring to (Kielkiewicz-Janowiak, 2019). Gender-exclusive language violates the feelings of belonging of excluded groups, leads to feelings of ostracism, and results in emotional disengagement (Rosenberger & Claypool, 2023; Stout & Dasgupta, 2011). It is this important that gender researchers pay close attention to using language that allows not only for women participants to feel included, but also for non-binary ones. Heteronormativity - the assumption that heterosexuality as the human default gender orientation - also leads to the exclusion and ignorance of individuals with other sexual orientations and contributes to gendered power hierarchies (Boyer & Lorenz, 2020; Habarth, 2015; Ferrari et al., 2021). For the well-being of research participants, it is thus important to be vigilant on whether questions in a survey assume participants' heterosexuality. Lastly, another language error we recommend avoiding is the confusion of biological sex and participants' gender identity (Borna & White, 2003; Torgrimson & Minson, 2005). While sex depicts the biological categories of "male" and "female", gender depicts individuals' identification with social constructs such as - but not limited to - the categories man or woman (Borna & White, 2003). It is important to note that these two concepts cannot be used interchangeably. If, for example, participants indicate that they identify as a woman, there is no reason to assume that their sex is female and that they can be referred to as female participants.

#### **4.4 Extractivism, ethical dumping and race/ethnicity-based ethical challenges to gender cross-cultural research**

In order to challenge the prevalent cultural bias in research predominantly situated in the Western world (commonly known as WEIRD countries - Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic), the social sciences have exhibited a noteworthy interest in cross-cultural studies over the past decades (Brosch et al., 2020). While it is methodologically certain that findings from these studies contribute to the generalizability of results across diverse cultural contexts, ethical considerations must guide our approach to data extraction from non-WEIRD communities. Focusing on cross-cultural gender research, gender research conducted cross-culturally runs the risk of being viewed from an ethnocentric and androcentric perspective, as contemporary gender theories have been built on data collected primarily in the Western cultural context (Safdar & Kosakowska-Berezecka, 2015).

These communities often consist of indigenous populations, residents of low-income countries in the global South, or individuals marginalized within postcolonial settings. These circumstances create power differentials between researchers and participants (Whiteford & Trotter, 2008). Some of the unethical practices may manifest as extractivism or ethical

dumping. Extractive research occurs when a researcher selects a study community and collects data solely to advance their own scientific or professional goals, without benefiting the community (Broesch et al., 2020). On the other hand, with the increasing globalization of research activities, there is a growing risk of European organizations, operating outside the EU, conducting ethically sensitive research in ways that would not be accepted in Europe. This phenomenon is referred to as ethical dumping (European Commission, 2018). Ethical dumping refers to applying practices that would be ethically questionable in Europe to other low-income countries where there may be a lack of a strong legal framework and mechanisms for ethical compliance. These include conducting research without ethical approval or insurance for harm that may occur during the study in vulnerable populations, exporting data without local authorisation, or ignoring privacy concerns (European Commission, 2018). This not only presents methodological issues but can also harm the participants involved. Overcoming explicit and implicit power differentials necessitates involving communities in the research design, data collection, and the dissemination of findings. Navigating these ethical challenges is crucial to ensuring equitable and respectful research practices.

Exploring different contexts puts the race or ethnicity of the people involved in the research at the centre. For example, collecting intersectional data often involves questions of race, ethnicity, or migrant status in a survey. The collection of race, ethnicity, and nationality remains a sensitive issue. In some countries, it is ethical and legitimate to include such questions in the survey design (e.g. the USA, UK, and South Africa), while in other countries (e.g. France), it is illegal. Even the phraseology of the question can be problematic. For example, in Estonia, the term nationality has ethnic connotations; in Germany, racial and ethnic origins are operationalised as migration; and in Sweden, race is not used as the term as it is considered to be closely linked to racism, and ethnic origin (*etniskt ursprung*) is a more accepted phrasing (Farkas, 2017). Even where data collection on race and/or ethnicity is allowed, the design of the survey question is problematic as race or ethnic categorisations may vary across countries. For example, in the USA, there are five minimum race categories (White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander) according to the national census data, while in South Africa, the national census includes categories of Black African, Coloured, White and Indian/Asian. The inclusion of the word 'Coloured' would be offensive to an American audience, while in South Africa it is a race category in legislation (e.g. Employment Equity Act, 1998) and controversially a term used during apartheid.

In addition, research in social sciences (e.g., psychology) has often demonstrated a lack of ethnocultural and racial responsiveness when it treats race, ethnicity, or culture as 'nuisance

variables' (Hall, Yip, & Zarate, 2016). Researchers may attempt to "control" for race or ethnicity or hold them constant, eliminating "extraneous" variability to strictly define the influence of a single variable on the phenomenon. Alternatively, researchers may aggregate all groups without taking heterogeneity into account. For example, a common practice in some research conducted in the USA is to categorize African American and Latino populations homogeneously as Black, a way of aggregating data that ignores the heterogeneity of their experiences. Both approaches lead to an oversimplification of the experience. Sue (1999) argued that the selective enforcement of the principles of scientific psychology contribute to and perpetuate ethnic and racial bias. Specifically, while internal and external validity are both important principles of psychological science, Sue argued that psychology has emphasized internal validity to the detriment of external validity. Furthermore, the emphasis on internal validity is more difficult to achieve in ethnic minority research because of the lack of cross-validation, cultural equivalence, or norming of many psychological measures and principles across diverse populations.

To mitigate the potential for imperialist practices, where research aims to standardize measurement and cross-cultural analysis, a critical and decolonial perspective must be adopted in the research process. This approach ensures that our research respects the diversity of cultures and avoids imposing Western norms on non-WEIRD communities. Through an interdisciplinary and diverse team of researchers from the Global North and non-Weird communities, with a rich experience of conducting research across the cultures, it should act as a peer reviewers and reflexive research practices, process and impact.

## 4.5 The ethics of researching the symbolic aspects: Media, art and representation

In terms of universal and normative criteria for ethical considerations in research with human participants, the focus on the symbolic aspects of change, that is, the analysis of media, art and representation, does not require any direct scope for ethical authorisation, as the material is in the public domain and open for public consumption. Part of the media analysis itself will be how power is in unquestioned representations of gender and gender binaries, also linked to other forms of inequality, that are popularised in public and social media. Most likely, there is no material that requires informed consent or any other normative ethical commitments, such as a commitment to anonymity and confidentiality, as the material is already in the public domain. However, some recommendations and approaches may be to work through copyright issues in relation to the reproduction of any publications related to our analyses in RE-WIRING project.

Given that many research projects, including the RE-WIRING project, work within feminist epistemological, ontological, and methodological framework, ethical commitments in research must go well beyond normative ethical considerations, as one must be aware of the politics of all aspects of research, from conceptualisation to dissemination and all stages in between. In fact, it has increased the application of rigid and disciplinary ethical procedures, diluting it into a normative system of ticked boxes. This is experienced by feminist scholars who engage with sexuality and other 'sensitive' issues of inequality and violence as a policing of critical and non-normative research (e.g. Posel & Ross, 2014). The result of these narrow understandings of what it means to do ethical research has become a focus on instrumental and technicist measures of what counts as ethical research, rather than more reflexive engagement.

From a feminist, decolonial, postcolonial, indigenous, feminist, new materialist and other bodies of critical thought, we need to be critically vigilant about the politics of the research process and its outcomes. It is prominent to recognize that mainstream research practice, including much feminist research, has remained locked into colonialist and patriarchal logics (Tuhiwai Smith, 2022), in which the postcolonial feminist critique of the problematic representation of subalternity by privileged researchers (Spivak, 1988), resulting in misrepresentations and epistemological violence (Mahmood, 2001).

The dominant vocabularies of empirical research, shows up the assumed authority and privilege of the researcher, 'doing' research 'on' the 'subjects' of research. Richa Nagar (2013, p. 3) sums this up:

When the structure of knowledge production largely disallows research subjects from interrogating, evaluating, or dislodging the knowledge produced by the academic expert, the status of academic researcher as the 'true intellectual thinker' remains undisturbed, along with the hierarchies that elevate theory, research, and academic knowledge production to a higher plane than method, community-based dialog, and non-conventional academic writing.

One way in which feminist scholars have attempted to engage an ethics that is overtly working with the politics of research, is through the methodological imperative of reflexivity which has been viewed as key in pursuing an ethical engagement. However, feminist and critical researchers are increasingly dubious about reflexivity at both epistemological and methodological levels. At the methodological level, scholars are increasingly arguing that we



need to go beyond the descriptive formula of reflexivity, which too often devolves to a simple listing of the researcher and/or participants of a study as subjects of privilege or marginality, across markers of difference and subjugations, such as race, class, gender, sexuality, age, dis/abled bodies/minds, and so on (Pillow, 2003; Lenz Taguchi, 2013; Bozalek & Zembylas, 2017). Scholars are also concerned that reflexivity does not become an end, devolving to what may become a self-indulgent emphasis on the researcher alone. Gore (2018, p. 115) for example, argues that “our task as feminist scholars is not simply to recognise our own subject positions, voices, differences, and privileges but also to consider how to use these insights in engaged, practical ways to work across difference”. This requires paying “careful attention to power and positionality when rooted in alternative ways of (un)knowing and practices of feminist solidarity offers a way of navigating the reflexive morass and of *ensuring that reflexivity does not displace a focus on the untold*, that is, on *the voices of the disenfranchised, the oppressed or the marginalised*” (2018, p. 116, emphasis added).

Further, at an epistemological and ontological level, post-qualitative researchers are pointing to the imperative of an alternative ethico-onto-epistemology (Barad, 2007) that is not founded on the binary of researcher-participant and that actively disrupts the “disembodied conquering gaze from nowhere”, the “god trick” that Donna Haraway (1988, p. 581) elaborated on in arguing for situated knowledges. Importantly, the call for acknowledging knowledge as always situated is not only about critiquing empiricist notions of neutrality and objectivity but is a call for researchers to be responsible for “truth claims”. The notion of reflexivity, which continues to hinge around a researcher that is separate from the researched, has been increasingly questioned. Authors working with qualitative reflexive methodologies are increasingly asserting the complexity of dealing with reflexivity, arguing, after Spivak, for a “vigilance from within” (Pillow, 2003, p. 177). Such a vigilance is also concerned with rethinking habitual practices and methodologies of research to resist the extractivism and representational nature of much research, even critical and feminist research. Feminist scholars, particularly inspired by decolonial and indigenous feminism as well as new materialist and post-humanist thinking, have increasingly turned towards participatory, dialogical ways of making knowledge and prioritizing embodied, relational, and active-participatory encounters, while also destabilising the authority of particular kinds of knowledges and the erasure of others. Thinking with art and activism has also been viewed as valuable in feminist scholarship for a form of just scholarship that values situated and diverse knowledges. One emergent post-qualitative engagement in this respect has been ‘research-creation’ (Manning, 2016; Truman & Springgay, 2015, 2016; Truman, 2022), viewed as a participatory transdisciplinary collaboration between those working with different knowledges, engaging at and creativity, what has been seen as ‘world-making’. We

also acknowledge that such research-creations are not only about making knowledge but about symbolic change.

One of the main objectives of the RE-WIRING project is to work with and promote art and cultural and aesthetic representation in a way that alters normative gender and gender binaries, in their relation to other forms of inequality, and that opens up alternative imaginaries for the representation and experience of gender and the human being in general. Also, the ethics and politics of the process as well as the product of the exhibitions. It is therefore important to promote early career artists and those from marginalised communities as examples of efforts to pursue ethical academic practice in the field.

## 4.6 Research journals as gendered spaces and biased by WEIRD societies

Research of a qualitative or ethnographic nature, or research involving personal networks, is often viewed as subjective and unscientific (Brewis, 2014), and researchers struggle to publish their research in top ranked journals, often a necessary criterion for career progression (Jeanes, 2017). Journals can also be considered gendered spaces, with most top ranked journals are edited by men (Miller and McTavish, 2011; Spender, 2013). For example, in the business and management discipline, according to the UK Chartered Association of Business Schools (CABS) ranking list of journals (1 being low and 4 the highest), journals publishing in the area of gender studies are ranked relatively low compared to other journals, with the highest ranked journal in the area of gender studies, *Gender, Work & Organization*, being ranked as 3. For academics publishing in gender and management studies, the scope for publishing in high ranked journals is a struggle with career implications (Spender, 2013).

On the other hand, research journals with a high impact factor and in English often have a lack of diversity in their samples. That is, samples characterised by WEIRD countries, mainly the US, and described by US scientists (Cheek, 2017). In addition, research that employs other populations is pushed to include it in its title, leading to lower citations and, therefore, lower impact (Kahalon et al., 2021). This bias, therefore, threatens the representativeness of the findings and the understanding of experiences in other cultural contexts and is maintained by the editorial structure itself.

## 5. Towards Ethical Research: Recommendations and Approaches to consider

Feminist scientists have characterized the structure of conventional research as exploitative (Grossman et al., 1997). Research is considered exploitative when the interests of the researcher alone influence every stage of the research process, from the formulation of the research question to the collection of data, writing up, and dissemination of results. The research process resembles a colonial economy when researchers enter the participants' environment uninvited, extract a resource called data, process that resource into a product called theory, and use that product exclusively for their own purposes such as extractive research. In contrast, changing the exploitative aspects of the traditional model has the potential to generate research that champions the interests of marginalized people and advocates for change in an oppressive social system with a potential for impactful research.

It is crucial to overcome androcentrism that characterizes research that does not put gender as a continuum measurement variable to consider. Furthermore, given the complex framework of the power hierarchies that characterize contemporary societies, it is important to adopt a lens that can capture the different points of view (i.e., both the advantaged and disadvantaged) and always at the service of the groups with less power. (e.g., working-class people, migrant people, or people who do not conform to their assigned gender). In addition to this, we do not consider that doing science based on these ethical values is less reliable or less valid, even so, planning transparent, open research that has the potential to be replicated in different populations of interest must be something to achieve. For all these reasons, below we mention some approaches to consider at all stages of the research process.

### 5.1 Gender Perspective

Taking a gendered approach to researching power hierarchies means addressing and overcoming androcentric bias (i.e., viewing the world and social relations solely from a hegemonic male point of view). The main benefit of a gendered approach is to overcome gender-blind research, research that does not take gender into account as a significant category for the approach and interpretation of research problems (Ferrer-Pérez, 2019). The gender perspective implies a critical, explanatory, and alternative view that derives from feminism and promotes an analytical framework that addresses gender-based inequalities. In its final stage, it promotes gender-sensitive research and results for the promotion of public policies (Biglia & Vergés, 2016; EIGE, 2018).



Applying a gender or feminist perspective can be done in at least two ways. By carrying out research that takes the category of gender in a systemic way, placing the power relations constructed between men and women at the centre of the research process, or by taking it into account as a variable that can affect the objectives of the study even if it is not the focus of the study (Caprile, 2012; European Commission, 2004, 2009). In addition, given the richness of research into gendered hierarchies of power, gender-sensitive research must expand gender in a non-binary way. In this way, the perspective in which research is done is also intersectional, taking into account the gender identities, socio-economic status or race/ethnicity to which the women who participate in the research carried out by the RE-WIRING or other gender-focused project belong.

## 5.2 Decolonial Perspective

Any research project that works across different geopolitical contexts and with partners from both global Northern and Southern contexts should especially ethically be attuned to the transnational politics of research. It is important to be of histories of academic imperialism where Southern knowledge has been marginalized and devalued (for example, Connell, 2007), while Southern spaces and people have been viewed as offering fieldwork possibilities and data while primarily building and augmenting Northern careers (for example, Shefer & Hearn, 2022). Such logics of extractivist and representational research, that results in practices of exploitation while also reflecting and reproducing global inequalities are often located in habits of 'well-meaning' patronage. The power relations endemic in such practices of apparent care and collaboration are frequently invisible and overlooked. Our project has taken particular care and interest in surfacing such concerns and being vigilant to avoid inadvertently reproducing these in our modes of engagement with each other and in the project's research methodologies.

Researchers should strive to conduct and disseminate their work in a way that promotes the well-being of racial and ethnic, sexual and gender, and any other minorities. The American Psychological Association (APA; 2019) encourages researchers to identify and reduce the negative effects of racial and ethnocultural bias in their work. Differences related to racial or ethnic backgrounds should be inspected but not overinterpreted. Diversifying research samples is a crucial step for enhancing methodological thoroughness and external validity. Researchers should also remember about detailed descriptions of their samples as it allows for awareness of generalizability to racial and ethnocultural groups. Importantly, ample descriptive information (such as socioeconomic status, language, religion, etc. should be collected and reported on as they provide contextual data on race and related constructs.

Community-based participatory research (CBPR) could be a way to conduct research in a racially and ethnoculturally responsive manner as it puts emphasis on the significance of the community's involvement and partnership in conducting research (Israel et al., 1998).

### 5.3 Human Rights-Based Approach to Data (HRBAD)

Based on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, the approach to data collection and disaggregation provided by the HRBAD (2018) articulates a systematic way of data processing to leave no group behind with the main objective of practices in the use of data and statistics in accordance with international human rights standards and principles.

The HRBA is based on the fundamental principles of human rights:

- Universal, because they apply to all human beings.
- Indivisible, because they are all of equal importance and cannot be classified, whether economic, political, civil, cultural, or social.
- Inalienable, because they cannot be taken away.
- Interdependent, because they influence each other and cannot be fully enjoyed independently.

This approach has five main principles: participation, desegregation, self-identification, transparency, privacy, and accountability.

- **Participation.** Researchers should be inclusive of data and research even if some population groups seem distant to them—such as marginalised groups—and should include human subjects and generate data by relevant population groups. This can be done by encouraging the participation of relevant population groups (e.g. migrant women or migrant men) and clearly communicating the participation process and results to them. In addition, ensure that the views of vulnerable or marginalised groups that are subject to discrimination are represented and maintain the knowledge base and institutional memory of information collected through participatory processes.
- **Disaggregation of data.** Disaggregated data are data that have been segmented by category (e.g. gender, age, race/ethnicity, or social class). This can reveal inequalities due to specific knowledge of the situation of vulnerable or marginalised groups and may be ignored in aggregated data. This provides more detailed data as opposed to using non-specific national averages to identify and understand inequalities.

In addition, these data need to be disaggregated based on international human rights law. To allow for disaggregation, alternative sampling to traditional sampling may be necessary.

- **Self-identification.** During data collection, populations of interest should self-identify, giving individuals choices and decisions concerning the disclosure of any information on their personal characteristics. So, it should be at the discretion of the individual how and what data on their personal characteristics they want to provide, and data collection activities should be carried out in accordance with the human rights principle of "do no harm".
- **Transparency.** Those conducting the research should provide the data in a clear, open, and accessible manner so that the research design and data collection methodology are known.
- **Privacy.** Disclosed data must be protected and kept private, maintaining the confidentiality of individuals' responses and personal information. This implies that data must be private and confidential, and unless personal permission is given, none of the individual's personal characteristics can be published or disseminated through robust protection mechanisms.
- **Accountability.** Data collectors are responsible for respecting human rights in their operations, and data should be used to hold states and other actors accountable for human rights issues.

## 5.4 Open Science and FAIR principles

Taking into account all the ethical recommendations mentioned above for the study of gender power hierarchies, this is not a handicap for doing open science research based on transparency. This is because there are some methodological risks that we need to be aware of in our practices as researchers.

In the case of quantitative research, the main methodological and statistical risks we can take are the inclusion of multiple measures or conditions and only presenting in our findings those where we have found significant results. These practices are called *p-hacking* and can increase the *Type 1 error*, that is, assuming that we have found an effect or an association between two variables when, in fact, we have not (Simmons et al., 2011). Furthermore, the statistical power we are looking at, namely the strength with which two variables are associated, must be prior planned in the research design. Along with this, *HARKING* (Hypothesizing After Results are Known, Kerr, 1998) is a practice that leads to the analysis of

data in different ways in order to show only those that are of interest to the researcher and ignoring other results.

To reduce this, some of the methodological recommendations may include greater transparency in the methodological description, in other words, setting out the number of participants, the variables, and the ways in which these variables will be analysed previously (Willis & Moya, 2017). Furthermore, researchers are encouraged to plan which statistical analyses will be used to test their hypotheses but also plan those that will be merely exploratory (Willis & Moya, 2017). To increase the transparency of research, we must make our science open, that is, publish publicly what our research design will be, including, for example, the sample size we will consider or the variables we will measure. This can be achieved if we pre-register our work using, for example, Open Science Framework ([osf.io](https://osf.io)) or [Aspredicted.org](https://aspredicted.org).

Another set of principles that aim to aid open science and collaboration is the *FAIR principles*. They consist of four basic principles: Findability (data and metadata should be easy to find), Accessibility (it needs to be clear how data can be accessed), Interoperability (data need to be integrated within other data), and Reuse of digital assets (data are reused, this is facilitated by good descriptions of data and metadata, also in order to conduct good replications; see <https://www.go-fair.org/fair-principles/> for more information). If we consider the broader implications of these principles through the lens of gender equality, several issues might arise, particularly when applying these principles without a conscious effort to address gender equality concerns:

- **Accessibility for Underrepresented Groups:** While the FAIR Principles advocate for data to be accessible, they may not sufficiently address the nuances of making data accessible to people with disabilities or those from underrepresented groups. This includes ensuring that digital platforms are designed with accessibility in mind, such as providing data in multiple formats to accommodate different needs.
- **Cultural Sensitivity and Data Sovereignty:** The principles emphasize the importance of data being reusable and interoperable, which can be in conflict with the cultural sensitivities and data sovereignty of indigenous populations and other marginalized groups. There's a risk of exploiting or misusing data pertaining to these communities' knowledge and traditions without their consent or equitable benefits.
- **Language Barriers:** The principles aim to make data findable and accessible, but they often do not account for language barriers that can exclude non-English speak-

ers and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Ensuring metadata, documentation, and research findings are available in multiple languages is crucial for truly inclusive data practices.

- **Economic Disparities:** The FAIR Principles encourage the availability and reusability of data, but they might not fully address the economic disparities that affect access to technology and the internet. Researchers and communities in lower-income countries or economically disadvantaged areas may find it challenging to participate in the digital research ecosystem on an equal footing.
- **Bias in Data and Algorithms:** When data is made interoperable and reusable, there's an inherent assumption that the data is neutral. However, datasets can contain biases that reflect historical inequalities or prejudices. If these biases are not addressed, they can be perpetuated and amplified through research and analysis, leading to outcomes that further entrench inequality.

Addressing these issues requires a concerted effort to integrate gender equality principles into the application of the FAIR Principles. This could involve developing guidelines that consider the needs and rights of diverse communities, promoting the inclusion of underrepresented groups in the creation and governance of digital resources, and ensuring equitable access to the benefits derived from data and research.

## 6. Conclusions

This paper provided a review of ethical issues relevant within the scope of doing research on gendered power hierarchies. Based on the issues reviewed, four main conclusions can be derived:

1. Gender is a spectrum and categorizing it based on the binary distinction of female and male is in fact limiting and not a reflection of everyone's experiences, especially when gendered power hierarchies are examined in an intersectional way.
2. Gender identity overlaps with other identities. Applying an intersectional lens can help to grasp the complexities of experienced inequalities and power hierarchies.
3. Within this gendered power hierarchy, girls and women are not considered powerless victims. Using a human agency perspective can help to identify leverage points for empowerment, including men's allyship.

4. Ethical gender research should provide research participants with a voice, empowering participants, so that research is not extractivist, representational and exploitative, but provides opportunities and a platform to transform thinking at institutional, experiential, and symbolical levels.

In line with these broad conclusions, this paper also elaborated on five recommendations for the RE-WIRING project:

1. Based on previous research, it is recommended that gender is treated and measured as a non-binary construct.
2. In order to change gendered power hierarchies, alliances matter. It is thus recommended to also incorporate and address advantaged groups that need to be mobilized.
3. Language plays an important role in the maintenance of gendered power hierarchies. It is recommended for researchers to make deliberate linguistic choices whenever they address participants as well as whenever they communicate about groups or their findings more generally.
4. It is important to reflect on ethnocentrism and to take non-WEIRD / Global South contexts into account to prevent imperialist and colonialist practices in research.
5. Ethical considerations also matter for the data itself. A human rights-based approach to data as well as open science practices and compliance with FAIR principles can facilitate ethical handling of data.



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