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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Conducting Fieldwork with San and Hadza (Post-) Hunter-Gatherer Communities in Africa: Regulatory and Ethical Issues

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Abstract

In this paper, we address some of the challenges and opportunities of conducting international research in psychology. We examine issues that arise from working in contexts that differ substantially from those in which most psychological research is still conducted. We take our experiences with Tanzanian and Namibian (post-) hunter-gatherers as a starting point for discussing regulatory and ethical issues. We have experienced a highly structured and regulated approach to research in Tanzania and a much less regulated situation in Namibia. We compare both and discuss conflicts that arise from differing demands of national regulations (or lack thereof) and funders or home institutions in the Global North. We focus on the special point of establishing informed consent. While the people we have worked with are not only often illiterate, they also have a very different background of experiences, which means that the translation of consent procedures is not sufficient, and other considerations need to come into play. We discuss cultural characteristics of hunter-gatherer groups, particularly norms related to individual autonomy, that convince us that our participants have the ability to consent nevertheless and compare this with the situation in other groups that we have worked with (for example, Indian farmers). However, we also reflect on ethical choices that become relevant in a digitalized world, particularly when working with children. We argue that an understanding of cultural models and norms is necessary to design and conduct meaningful psychological research and enable us to interpret findings correctly. We suggest to include communities that researchers work with into the research process wherever possible, to aim for long-term commitment and to cultivate an ethical stance regarding research, already in students that become involved in research projects.

Keywords Research ethics · Informed consent · Post-forager · Small-scale societies · Non-WEIRD · Research with children

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Historically, psychological theorizing has relied on data from a few Western Educated Industrialized Rich and Democratic (WEIRD; Henrich et al., 2010) societies which have shaped research in terms of the questions asked, the methods used, and the conclusions drawn. For instance, Arnett (2008) reported that almost none of the papers published in major journals of the American Psychological Association between 2003 and 2007 were authored by African authors or even contained African samples. The observation that more than 70% of the publications were rooted in only 5% of the global population led him (Arnett, 2008) to demand more diversity in the field. While this has become more visible as a topic of discussion during the last years, some researchers' solutions to this challenge seem superficial and undifferentiated, for example, by labeling research on the "neglected 95%" (Arnett, 2008) as "non-WEIRD," as though this was a homogeneous group. Objectively, there has been little change in publication statistics compared to the ones reported by Arnett in 2008, as there were still less than 1% African authors and samples in the same journals between 2014 and 2018 (Thalmayer et al., 2021).

The legacy of anthropology is different. In contrast to psychologists and their research, working internationally has always been a part of anthropologists' identity, as initially, the discipline required a geographically and culturally remote "field." For this reason, we are addressing working with (post-)hunter-gatherer societies from both a psychological and an anthropological point of view. Anthropology with its long tradition in international research has many insights to offer for psychologists striving for internationalization. In particular, researchers have contended with the legacy of colonialism and exploitation of Indigenous[1] and non-Western subjects for research purposes in diverse ways, a recognition of the limits of Western sciences, the inclusion of non-Western and Indigenous epistemologies, the involvement of research participants as team members, and through the development of novel research methods (see Sanjek, 1993; Schensul et al., 2015, among others). An increasing number of Indigenous researchers themselves have spoken about the need for decolonization of research paradigms, including (or especially) in the field of research ethics (Smith 1999). In this paper, we draw on our experience of conducting fieldwork in the Global South from different disciplinary backgrounds and discuss our experiences of working in hunter-gatherer and small-scale communities. We will begin by introducing ourselves.

Authors' Backgrounds

Monika Abels is a cross-cultural developmental psychologist who has received her training in Germany and started working with families in Indian villages as a student. Without much prior exposure to German middle-class caregiver-infant interactions, rural Indian child-rearing practices seemed like the "normal" way of interacting with infants, while the German interaction patterns seemed "strange" after her return. This experience of being a traveler between worlds, trying to make sense of the divergent experiences, has shaped Monika Abels (see Abels, 2017) and influenced her approach to research since. Mainly for theoretical reasons, she decided to work with the Hadza, a hunter-gatherer tribe in Tanzania some years back. The main fascination was that hunter-gatherers both embrace individual autonomy and show high degrees of cooperation. Cross-cultural psychologists have found/assigned this combination in/to recently urbanized, formerly farming populations or recently affluent groups in otherwise "traditional" societies (e.g., Kagitcibasi, 2005; Keller, 2007). More or less explicit in this model is that the subsistence farmers are considered an interdependent starting point, and societies then change towards more autonomy (Kagitcibasi, 2005). However, this characterization ignores hunter-gatherers that arguably existed before agrarian societies came into being and show high levels of autonomy (Hewlett, 2016). Therefore, Monika Abels became very interested in hunter-gatherer child-rearing and development and thus started working with the Hadza.

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[1] We use the term "Indigenous" in the international legal meaning of the term, denoting peoples who have priority in time, distinct cultures, and lack of political power (see UNGA 2007).

Velina Ninkova is a social and visual anthropologist with interdisciplinary background in Indigenous studies and linguistics. Velina Ninkova has conducted extensive ethnographic fieldwork with Indigenous San communities in Namibia and Botswana since 2008, including 11 months of fieldwork in 2013. Formal and traditional education and knowledge transmission are among the themes she has explored. Velina Ninkova is also a cofounder of the Research and Advocacy Group for Hunter Gatherer Education established under the International Society for Hunter Gatherer Research and has been involved with studies of hunter-gatherer education and socialization on a global scale.

A common multidisciplinary interest in child socialization, especially among hunter-gatherers, has brought us together. In this paper, we will discuss our experiences and thoughts on working in small-scale societies, taking into consideration regulatory and ethical issues. We will start by characterizing the communities that will be in the focus of this discussion, turn to regulatory issues laid out by different countries and communities, and discuss some topics concerning informed consent and research approaches.

Research Contexts and Populations

The Hadza and the San are among the most well-known and researched remaining contemporary hunter-gatherers on the African continent. The Hadza have lived as hunter-gatherers in Northern Tanzania, in an area surrounding Lake Eyasi for a long time. Due to simple tools, few religious beliefs, and ritual, they have been described as one of the least culturally complex societies known (Marlowe, 2010). In recent times, Hadza have been confronted with land-loss issues related to neighboring groups with other livelihood patterns (Blurton Jones, 2016). Therefore, many Hadza have moved away from the bush or have embraced tourism as a source of income (Yatsuka, 2015).

San is an umbrella term that denotes linguistically and culturally diverse hunter-gatherer groups living in Southern Africa. The largest San population resides in

Botswana, followed by Namibia and South Africa. The traditional livelihoods of all San groups have been heavily impacted by European and Bantu settlement and in more recent times by government development and conservation initiatives. Former hunter-gatherers, currently, most San groups subside from mixed economies, which include foraging, farming, underpaid manual labor, and government allowances (see Barnard, 1992).

Yet, despite these changes, authors have noted that hunter-gatherers are distinct from others not only by virtue of their subsistence strategies but also by their social institutions and cosmological beliefs. These institutions and beliefs remain resilient even after their subsistence conditions have changed, thus setting apart settled hunter-gatherers (also referred to as “post-foragers”) from neighboring pastoralist groups (Barnard, 2002).

Authors have also noted that while geographically scattered and numerically small, contemporary hunter-gatherers exhibit a number of common values and traits. Hewlett et al. (2011) refer to these common cultural values as foundational schemas. The main foundational schemas that characterize contemporary hunter-gatherers are egalitarianism, autonomy, and sharing. Egalitarianism refers to the relative lack of hierarchy and stratification in the social and political life of hunter-gatherers, as well as to gender and age equality. Autonomy describes the high level of personal independence that each individual possesses. Related to the principle of egalitarianism, each member of the group is granted personal autonomy, regardless of age, gender, or other distinctions. Sharing is most commonly associated with the sharing of meat and other food resources; however, it may also apply to the sharing of information, knowledge, and other non-tangible resources. These three foundational schemas are deeply interrelated, are acquired from an early age, and have continued to operate under changing ecological and social conditions.

We consider these schemas as fundamental to our approach of conducting research with hunter-gatherers. We believe that it is important for researchers to understand what these different cultural models may mean for the research process and for the impact research may have on such communities.

“Come Through the Door, Not the Window”: Regulatory Issues and Their Implications

In this section, we discuss practical regulatory and ethical issues that govern research with the San in Namibia and the Hadza in Tanzania. Our experiences are with these communities, but we are drawing on a broader range of literature and assume that some of our experiences generalize to other places and communities in Africa and elsewhere. Shroeder et al. (2019) have described how “ethics dumping,” or the application of lower ethical standards in non-Western countries from high-income to lower-income settings, can happen either in the form of intentional exploitation or due to insufficient knowledge or ethical awareness on part of the researcher. Heavy and unclear bureaucratic processes and/or lack of specific guidelines for research with Indigenous communities in the Global South often contribute to sub-standard, and at times—harmful, research practices. The regulatory situations in Tanzania and Namibia provide good examples of the challenging and sometimes conflicting requirements researchers must navigate prior to entering the field. On the one hand, researchers must secure state permits and clearance from their host institutions; often there is little coherence between the two. On the other hand, Indigenous communities themselves may or may not have ethical protocols in place. In these complicated processes, what often becomes overlooked are the concrete needs and voices of the communities themselves.

We have experienced a highly structured and regulated approach to research in Tanzania and a much less regulated situation in Namibia. We will compare them and discuss conflicts that arise from differing demands of national regulations (or lack thereof) and funders or home institutions in the Global North. The San of Southern Africa are also the first Indigenous peoples on the African continent who have compiled their own Code of Research Ethics. The Hadza do not have a unified voice (see Gibbons, 2018) in spite of several organizations that fight for their rights (e.g., https://www.dorobofund.org/protect-land-rights).

Tanzania

Any foreigner or Tanzanian who is not affiliated with a research institution, ministry, or institution of higher education, who would like to conduct research in Tanzania, needs to find a local cooperation partner and send a research application to Costech, the Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology (costech.or.tz). There are fees both for the application and receiving the permit, and a research permit is valid for a maximum of 1 year. Being granted, a research permit comes with several obligations regarding accountability and treatment of data and materials. Some projects may need clearance from an additional authority. For example, "Research related to medical, public health (…) require special clearance from relevant authorities i.e. National Institute of Medical Research (NIMR) for the study that involves medical, public health and / or human subject (health)…". Whether this is required or not is decided by Costech on the basis of the submitted project description. A psychological project assessing physiological data may therefore require a clearance from the National Health Research Ethics Committee, which also requires the payment of a fee which depends on the urgency (there is a standard and an expedited procedure). The approval of these authorities is a condition for receiving a research permit.

After foreign researchers have obtained a research permit, they can apply for a residence permit to acquire the permission to be in the country. This procedure may be quite time-consuming and anxiety-provoking, especially when there is time pressure (for example, our project was funded for only 2 years and could hardly be carried out during the rainy season). Once these requirements are fulfilled, it is also necessary to receive approval from the authorities of the area(s) in which the researcher is planning to work. Whether this needs additional paperwork and appointments in advance depends on the authorities concerned. In our case, we visited the officials personally to explain the project to them and show our paperwork. The presence of a representative of the cooperating local institution proved to be extremely helpful to obtain the necessary approvals. For example, our cooperation partner managed to arrange meetings with officials at short notice when we were initially told that meetings had to be arranged days or weeks in advance.

Rules for the researchers may also change over time. While many previous researchers lived with the Hadza in their camps, Monika Abels was told that this was no longer allowed. On the one hand, there had been visitors who had abused their position as a researcher; on the other hand, it was felt that the safety of researchers and their possessions would be endangered (though not through the Hadza).

The Hadza themselves have different strategies of dealing with researchers. Some camps decide on a case-by-case basis if a researcher is welcome or not. In these cases, it is also up to the researcher and the camp/the participants to agree on the conditions of the research, such as what compensation is appropriate. In other areas, there are general rules for compensating the camp, and the resources are used communally. It seems that there are also areas in which the majority of the population are shielded from outsiders, while some make themselves available. There have been recent attempts to develop an ethical code for research with the Hadza similar to the one described in the section on the San which might help harmonize the strategies and protect the Hadza from intrusive research/ers (Crittenden, 2019).

Overall, we find some aspects of the Tanzanian regulatory requirements exemplary. For example, involving a Tanzanian cooperation partner ensures that research projects are not carried out without local involvement. From our experience, the National Health Research Ethics Committee evaluates the proposals critically and ensures that the cooperation partner has appropriate experience to cooperate on the project. We find that this a good practice that potentially leads to an involvement of the local researchers in international research projects from which all sides can benefit. However, this procedure also makes foreign researchers vulnerable, especially when beginning to work in Tanzania without established networks and partners they can trust. It may also limit research to research areas that are already established or of interest to persons or institutions in the country while excluding other topics that could potentially also be of interest.

Another issue is how the collected data is handled. The Tanzanian organizations that decide on whether or not researchers are allowed to conduct their research may require that a copy of all the data which was collected remains in Tanzania. This is a logical requirement that follows from their requirement to involve a local researcher in every research project. However, funders or host institutions may have rules that state that the data belongs to them and should therefore also be stored with their organization. This contradiction may place the researcher in an unsolvable conflict. In our experience, the organizations may be unable or unwilling to resolve this issue, leaving the researchers themselves to make decisions on how to handle the situation. While we have described this conflict in relation to our experiences in Tanzania, we assume that it could arise in other countries that have similarly highly regulated processes as well.

Namibia

Obtaining a research permit from the Namibian state is a fairly easy, albeit not a straightforward process. Each ministry issues permits for research that generally falls under their thematic domain. A foreign researcher should ideally have a recommendation letter from a Namibian institution thematically related to the topic of research (e.g., a national or regional governmental office, educational institution, NGO, and so on). Of special regulatory scrutiny is research in national parks and concerning artefacts under the loose category of "national monuments." Indigenous peoples' interests are not safeguarded by the state, except in cases of videotaping and traditional music recordings, in which case, the researchers must seek special permission.

The San are among the most researched people on the globe. While each Southern African country with San population has its own research regulatory framework, collectively, the San have been subjected to a poorly regulated and disproportionately huge research interest. As a result, various San communities, leaders, and individuals have expressed concerns regarding the poor status of regulations and the lack of community support or follow-up from overseas researchers. The San Code of Ethics was officially issued in 2017 and presents the first ethical document written by an indigenous group on the African continent. The document focuses on four pillars of conduct—respect, honesty, justice and fairness, and care. Citing one of the prominent San leaders, Andries Steenkamp, the Code requests that researchers "come through the door not the window. The door stands for the San processes. When researchers respect the door, the San can have research that is positive to us" (SASI 2017). The Namibia San Research Council is the San representative body that grants approval for research with San communities in the country in adherence with the San Code of Ethics. While the Council's goal is to protect and promote the interests of the San communities in research relations, especially with overseas researchers, their scope of action and capacity for follow-up is limited.

Many San communities live in remote, impoverished areas with little to no contact with other communities or any awareness of their rights with regard to research. High illiteracy level or limited access to technology also means that researchers seldom seek community verification of results and findings. At best, San communities are presented with the published materials of the studies that were carried out with them. Even in these cases, the findings or the implications that these findings may have are seldom explained or contextualized.

Lessons from Our Regulatory Experiences

We welcome both the thoroughness of the Tanzanian regulatory organs that help involve local researchers and authorities and the San Code of Ethics which constitutes an attempt by the potential research participants to find a unified way to deal with the huge interest they are exposed to. However, the plurality of regulatory and ethical procedures, potentially combined with absent or limited awareness and control of rights by local communities and authorities, may give researchers a lot of power in the field. In this regard, we would like to emphasize the importance of personal conduct. Many of us have heard stories of or have been compared to previous researchers. Non-compliance with established ethical protocols in the field can either deter the involvement of communities in future research or can set unrealistic expectations about the research process or the role of the researcher with regard to participants. One of the most widespread expectations communities have is developing a long-term relation with researchers and learning about findings in appropriate manners. Instead, participants sometimes receive promises of continued future engagement, potential monetary incentives, or other material benefits. As most of these never come to pass, the expectations to meet these requirements often fall on the shoulders of new researchers.

We feel it is important to be aware of the community's experiences and expectations already when planning a research project. If possible, members of the community or persons or organizations who are aware of their situation and needs should be included in planning the research and the incentives for participation for individuals and the community as a whole are offered. We recommend that researchers consider what they can realistically offer before they arrive in the field. Researchers have the responsibility to include and inform their participants as well as they can, because participants have a right to demand "What advantage do we get from your study?" or as a participant in a study on the Hadza gut microbiome put it "I want to know the results of my poo." (Gibbons, 2018, p.704). Overall, a balance has to be found between including research participants in all aspects of the research, especially in the context of research with indigenous peoples or formerly colonized subjects (see, e.g., Chilisa 2019) and researching questions that are interesting for theoretical reasons and may not have an obvious or immediate applied relevance.

Whenever possible, long-term research should be the norm. If this is not feasible, researchers need to be honest about it to their potential participants. It might be worth considering affiliating oneself with research institutions or other organizations that have already established connections with the communities. This can make both realistic planning and informing the community about the results of the research afterwards easier. However, this can also be problematic as these organizations may be strict gatekeepers and/or have their own agendas that may or may not align with the researcher's.

Free, Prior, and Informed Consent

Free, prior, and informed consent can be broadly defined as the process in which the participants are made aware of the scope, objectives, and risks of participating in research and are granted the right to withdraw at whichever phase of the research process they wish. It is also considered a basic human right under the UN human rights framework (Constantin, 2018). Important aspects of this are respect for the autonomy and dignity of potential research participants (Constantin, 2018). As the name itself suggests, consent must be obtained *prior* to any research engagement. Authors have noted, however, that the rationale and practice of obtaining consent is rooted in Western cultural practices and notions of individual autonomy and level of education that are not easily adapted for work in the Global South and especially with illiterate or undereducated populations (Krogstad et al., 2010). The export of research ethics to the Global South has therefore been labeled "ethical imperialism" (Israel, 2018).

Written Consent

The most common way to consent in Western communities is by providing participants with a written project description including a benefit and risk assessment, their rights during the different stages of the research process, and the treatment of their data and asking them to sign. For example, the Declaration of Helsinki phrases giving non-written consent as an exception. The requirement to have a signed consent form is impossible to fulfill for researchers working with illiterate communities but is sometimes asked of researchers by ethics committees (Wynn, 2018). This has led some researchers, for example, in India, to have their illiterate participants give their consent by thumb printing on the form. Alternatively, illiterate participants can also consent by writing a cross on the form. While this is also how the government there tends to handle these situations (for example, during elections, see Times of India, 2017), it makes illiterate participants vulnerable to manipulation as they cannot read and confirm what they are agreeing to. The situation can also put excessive pressure on the few individuals who can read in predominantly illiterate groups. Even if they can read it, the documents are sometimes unintelligible because of the vocabulary and complexity of the language chosen. For some communities, the signing of an official document may also evoke historical injustices, such as land dispossession or other forms of state and settlers' exploitation (Wynn, 2018), and may ultimately compromise the relationship between the researcher and the participants.

Fortunately, the rigidness that previous researcher generations experienced with ethic committees or institutional review boards in countries with predominantly literate populations seems to have given way to more adaptive ways of thinking about ethics. For example, the Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research (Sikt) states that is acceptable to "gain oral consent (e.g. for research in oral cultures or with people who are illiterate)" (Sikt, n.d.). This may also reflect the considerations and reflections of non-medical disciplines that often have less rigid procedures. Potentially, adaptive consent procedures can address criticism such as those raised by Bhutta (2004) who stated that these procedures are mechanical and do not ensure "true understanding" of the risks or implications of the research (Bhutta, 2004). Ethics committees all over the world have adapted to this challenge by requiring the researcher to establish consent and to document this, but this can also be done verbally in an audio- or video-recording, for example. These new means for consenting, however, may present other challenges, such as difficulty in anonymizing the participants, among others.

True Understanding

While providing written materials to illiterate participants obviously makes understanding impossible, there are other hurdles to understanding of consent, including their decisions regarding participation or withdrawal. We would like to return to the question of "true understanding" (Bhutta, 2004) here. Psychologists working with indigenous populations in the Global South face some issues that psychologists may face elsewhere as well but which are accentuated here. For instance, research participants may find it difficult to come to terms with the very idea of research, let alone with the specific research questions. As Kass and Hyder (2001) have written, many African languages lack words for "research" and "science" and generally use the word for "medicine" to denote them.

In our own experience, researching caregiver-infant interactions from a cultural perspective may be met with bafflement by the participants and questions such as "Why do you have to come here to study this? Don't you have babies in your country?" Inquiries about mating behavior have been also met with suspicion by participants. While WEIRD participants who are not in academia might already find it difficult to understand what agreeing to having one's data used in scientific publications or examples used for presentations means, it is impossible to understand the implications of this for participants who are illiterate, have no concept of the internet, etc. Similarly, it might be difficult to understand the logic of some research methods that Western researchers might take for granted, such as rating scales (see Abels, 2008).

Additionally, the notion of consent in small-scale hunter-gatherer societies can also vary considerably from our understanding of the term. Based on work with central African hunter-gatherers, Freeman et al. describe how local populations interpreted the notion of consent in conservation efforts in various ways, ranging from "I accept of my own will" to "I accept because I am tired of this debate" (2010, p. 330). Freeman et al. further point out that while the Western notion of consent is a singular and finite occurrence, in Central Africa, the term describes "a transactional social relationship based on ongoing verbal and material exchange" (2010, p. 330). We will return to the notion of material exchange below. We would like to note here that the concept of continuous or ongoing consent is also discussed by authors working outside of Africa (e.g., Gupta, 2013; Klykken, 2022).

Individual Consent or the Question of "Whose Consent Do I Need?"

The idea of consent is often based on the idea that individuals should consent to their participation in research. This idea of consent can be related to the researcher's understanding of the self as autonomous and separate (Kagitcibasi, 2005; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). However, as we have already laid out in the previous sections, hunter-gatherer societies are also characterized by a high degree of social cohesion. Often unknown to researchers are the multiple kin networks in which each individual is embedded at all times and which impact their relation to self and others. Potential research participants who are aware of these social ties may therefore perceive individual consent as alien.

Related to this is the assumption of individual participation in research. In case the researcher would like to assess the infants' daily life experiences or interview somebody without explicitly excluding others, there is no way of knowing who will be a potential participant. It is therefore important to inform the whole group of the research and, if possible, elicit their consent. However, there may still be persons entering the scene unexpectedly who are suddenly part of the situation by interacting with a child or commenting on a participant's statement without having been informed in advance. Unintentionally, the demand to establish informed consent prior to a research-related interaction is breached in these situations.

Another topic is the question who can or has to consent to a child's participation in research. When working with hunter-gatherer infants, we find them spending time with many caregivers (Tronick et al., 1992), often in close bodily contact (Marlowe, 2010). Later on, children spend copious amounts of time in groups with other children, playing and foraging (Crittenden, 2016). Children move around freely, chose their own activities and interactional partners, and sometimes do not live with their parents. In hunter-gatherer societies where children enjoy a great degree of personal autonomy, parents may not understand the need to consent on behalf of their children and may view this as a breach of their cultural norms.

Consenting with One's Feet

As noted above, the idea of consent is based on the notion of individual autonomy. "Yet an individual-based consent model and the use of written consent documents may be problematic in countries where norms of decision-making do not emphasize individual autonomy" (Tindana et al., 2006). This may not be in line with how decisions are made in the communities we work with. At least since Hofstede's influential work on cultural differences, psychologists have been aware that cultures can differ tremendously in their emphasis on individual autonomy (Hofstede, 1980). For instance, Monika Abels' experiences in India often were that a young mother would not be able to decide about her participation without getting the prior consent from her in-laws.

As described above, hunter-gatherers are characterized by a foundational schema that can be labeled autonomy. Our experience has therefore generally been that our hunter-gatherer participants communicate their consent or lack thereof. However, hunter-gatherer cultural values also impact the manner in which community members participate or withdraw from activities. In hunter-gatherer communities, members generally appear verbally agreeable, especially in front of unfamiliar persons. At the same time, individual autonomy is highly valued, and community members withdraw from activities or events by physically distancing themselves from others with or without prior note. For instance, Monika Abels would occasionally find transmitters, which were supposed to be worn by potential caregivers to measure the distance from the infant (Abels & Abels, 2017), hanging in the branches of bushes. These practices, while completely understandable from an insider's perspective, may disrupt or delay research protocols and timetables and create tension between researchers and participants. As Ninkova (2017) has described, forcing individuals to complete assigned tasks can be counterproductive and experienced as stressful by local participants.

The respect for individual autonomy also applies to hunter-gatherer children. Autonomy is taught and encouraged by peers, parents, and other caregivers; children are not coerced into activities they themselves have not chosen to participate in and are allowed a great degree of individual freedom and mobility (Boyette & Lew-Levy, 2020; Draper, 1976; Hewlett et al., 2011; Marlowe, 2010). Nevertheless, it might be more difficult for researchers to take their choices into account, particularly if they are too small to move away. Therefore, some of the ethical complexities of working with children in other places come to bear in this context, too (see, e.g., Dockett et al., 2009). It is therefore particularly important that the researchers monitor infants' and children's mood and body language (Mahon et al., 1996) and rather err on the side of withdrawal. The researcher should also be aware of potential long-term consequences, for instance, if video recordings or photographs of children are published. While it may be a good rule of the thumb not to publish any material that the researchers themselves would not like to see published about themselves or their children, the community's own standards may differ and need to be taken into account. This may include considerations as diverse as modesty or the ethical impact taking or disseminating a photograph might have. Historically, photography has also been linked to exoticizing and exploitation of indigenous subjects (see Landau & Kaspin, 2002). What is considered ethical today may change over time and potentially harm the involved participants or their descendants.

Power Dynamics, Resources, and Incentives for Local Participants

The Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees advise against rewarding or paying research participants as it may negatively impact the quality or accuracy of the obtained data (NESH, 2021). However, in impoverished contexts, individuals and communities often agree to participate in research projects precisely because of the tangible or intangible benefits that they may acquire from their affiliation to outsiders. In conditions of limited social and economic resources, affiliation with overseas researchers can create both opportunities and tensions among community members or among separate settlements or groups. Singling out and incentivizing individuals or families in egalitarian societies, however, is not without risks. Among many hunter-gathers, economic, social, and gender stratification is undesirable and can lead to social exclusion or conflict. In egalitarian communities, any actual or perceived advancement of an individual or a small group of people at the expense of others can be potentially harmful. Internal communal dynamics are often unknown to outsiders, which may add further disturbance in already marginalized communities. Gifts, salaries for local assistants or translators, vehicle services, and other incentives must therefore be critically examined and carefully implemented by researchers.

Local power dynamics can also impact the decision of marginalized communities to participate in research projects. Researchers affiliated with state or other local institutions may be seen as representative of these institutions, and people may not feel free to refuse participation. Similar challenges may occur when researchers are introduced to communities by members from other local dominant groups. Gatekeepers can therefore impact not only the ethical issue of consent but may also impact the nature and the quality of the collected data.

Suggested Strategies for Researchers' Involvement

In conclusion to our observation outlined above, we would like to emphasize several strategies that future researchers working with small-scale societies in the Global South may consider. Extensive prior review of available anthropological and other literature and learning of a community's recent history and relations with the state and other groups is a must. Once in the field, we suggest that researchers spend several days (weeks when possible) in learning about community dynamics and challenges before hiring a team and commencing the research. We realize that this is not a realistic expectation, as time in the field is usually limited, yet, nonetheless, we strongly encourage researchers to be open to changing their team members, participants, methods, and approach as they learn more about a specific community's realities.

We would like to illustrate this request with an example, namely using the rouge test on non-Western children. The rouge test is a widely used task to assess infant's self-recognition and in extension self-conception (Amsterdam, 1972; Lewis & Brooks-Gunn, 1979). In the rouge test, a mark is applied to the infants' faces, and they are then confronted with a mirror. Their reactions are taken as an indicator of whether or not they recognize themselves. If, for example, infants point at their own face, rub at the mark, or say their own names, they are assumed to recognize themselves. If they point at the mirror, try to greet, and play with the peer in the mirror, they are assumed to not yet recognize themselves. However, this task relies on some assumptions that may or may not hold in different contexts. We will discuss two of these assumptions, namely that a mark on one's face is noteworthy and that the child will express this.

1. It is noteworthy to have a mark on one's face. In India infants often have black dots in their faces. This is believed to protect them from an affliction with the "evil eye." In other communities, children may have other facial decorations (see, e.g., Gottlieb, 2004) or may not adhere to the WEIRD standards of cleanliness due to water scarcity or other factors. It may therefore not be particularly noteworthy for infants to have a mark on their face.
2. The child will be expressive about the difference. It is quite possible that a community's standard about appropriate behavior may interfere with the child expressing any surprise. It has long been known that emotional display rules differ between cultures and are socialized early on (Eisenberg et al., 2006; Malatesta & Haviland, 1982). Therefore, even if infants perceive something noteworthy, they may not express it.

And even if they do express it, the expression may differ quite dramatically. For example, research suggests that the frequency of pointing gestures differs markedly across cultures (e.g., Salomo & Liszkowski, 2013) and that other modes of directing others' attention may be important in some communities (Abels, 2020).

There are many other aspects of the mirror self-recognition test that can be discussed, but even only considering the two mentioned here would necessitate preliminary research into infants' conceptions of their outward appearance, their (emotion) socialization, and their communication. Without knowledge of these aspects, it is impossible to interpret whether a child who does not react does not recognize him/herself, does not find the mark noteworthy, does not express it or expresses it in a different, maybe subtle way that the outside researcher misses. We also recommend that researchers use method triangulation and mix methods for larger or long-term projects (Weisner & Duncan, 2013).

Conclusion

In this paper, we outlined the regulatory frameworks for overseas researchers conducting research in Tanzania and Namibia and discussed some ethical issues when working with hunter-gatherer individuals and communities. Hunter-gatherer populations differ from other populations in the Global South in several critical cultural domains. We have discussed this in light of hunter-gatherer foundational schemas. These foundational schemas have implications for the involvement of subjects from these communities in research and for the impact research may have on them. We recommend that researchers, who are planning to work with hunter-gatherer communities, familiarize themselves with the culture and values of these communities before conducting their research with them. While it is important to read the published literature and talk to researchers and organizations who have experience with the communities, we also find it important to leave time for acquiring some personal impressions and experiences in the field. We encourage researchers to reflect on the consequences of their research on the communities they work with and make ethical choices in the light of this. These aspects should also be implemented in the education of students interested in international research by providing them opportunities to interact with other communities and reflect on their own cultural background as well as the ethical implications of doing research in this context.

We also encourage researchers to form long-term commitments to the communities they work with. This may be difficult for independent and early-career researchers, but some choose to become advocates for the communities they work with later. As we suggested above, there are sometimes also options to cooperate with local organizations or research teams that have long-term connections with the communities. While we have discussed these topics in relation to our research experiences with the Hadza and the San, occasionally drawing on examples from rural India, we believe that the issues we have raised apply to many other groups and concern other scholars as well.

In conclusion, we would like to draw attention to the need for a better understanding of ongoing social and political challenges faced by many disadvantaged communities in the Global South. Regardless of the nature of the research questions, researchers and participants are always embedded in larger historical and social relations that impact the research process in often unintended ways. Awareness of this and responsibility for ethical and responsible conduct and engagement with potential research participants respecting their autonomy and dignity cannot be overstated.

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Data Availability There were no data generated or analyzed for this paper; therefore, data sharing is not applicable.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest The authors declare no competing interests.

Informed Consent Not applicable.

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