



Researchers' views on, and experiences with, their own 'gender' as an intersectional factor while investigating gendered issues in ECEC

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COMPARE – CONTEXTUALIZE – CONNECT

12TH SIG GENDER BALANCE RESEARCH CONFERENCE

UNIVERSITY OF BRIGHTON, UNITED KINGDOM, 3RD SEPTEMBER 2024, 9.00-16.30

This session is not just conducted by the three of us as presenters; it is designed to encourage a discussion in which all researchers in the room will participate.

Structure of the Session

1. Part 1: Theoretical introduction & our own reflexivity experiences (30 min)
2. Part 2: Reflection in small groups and plenary discussion about gender reflexivity within the group's own research projects (25 min)
3. Part 3: Workshop on Reflexivity (30 min)



Reflexivity



Part 1:
Theoretical
introduction



Reflexivity in ECEC research from a gender perspective

Difference between reflection and reflexivity

There are several definitions of reflection and reflexivity.

Reflection is defined as an intentional attempt to understand something from our experiences of a specific situation (Dewey, 1916: 151, 1933/1998). It is generally characterized as a cognitive activity and encompasses learning by reflecting on experience (Cunliffe & Easterby-Smith, 2004: 2)

Reflexivity is a set of continuous, collaborative, and multifaceted practices through which researchers self- consciously critique, appraise, and evaluate how their subjectivity and context influence the research processes (Olmos-Vegas et al., 2023). It involves qualitative researchers considering their own positions, social identities, and that of the study participants during the research process (Ravi, 2019).

Why reflexivity?

Reflexivity as rooted in a respect for and a valuing of subjectivity. It is part of how qualitative researchers account for the significance of the intertwined personal, interpersonal, methodological, and contextual factors that bring research into being (Olmos-Vegas et. al., 2023).

There are several different goals held by researchers when they engage in reflexivity, including neutralizing the influence of their subjectivity, acknowledging it, explaining it, or capitalizing on it (Gentles et al. 2014). These purposes point to different ways researchers might think about the relationships between their identity, context, and research.

Types of reflexivity (Olmos-Vegas et al., 2023)

Personal reflexivity: personal reflexivity requires researchers to reflect on and clarify their expectations, assumptions, and conscious and unconscious reactions to contexts, participants, and data. Engaging in personal reflexivity should go beyond disclosing each investigator's background and training; it should include descriptions of how the researcher's prior experiences and motivations might influence the decisions made throughout the project whether that influence is positive, negative, or neither.

Interpersonal reflexivity: interpersonal reflexivity refers to how the relationships surrounding the research process influence the context, people involved, and results. A thoughtful approach to interpersonal reflexivity involves recognizing and appreciating participants' unique knowledge and perspectives and attending to their impacts on the research process. Another dimension of interpersonal reflexivity includes how the relationships among the research team members unfold and impact the research.

Types of reflexivity (Olmos-Vegas et al., 2023)

Methodological reflexivity: where researchers critically consider the nuances and impacts of their methodological decisions. It often begins with thoughtful consideration of researchers' paradigmatic orientation(s). Choosing or acknowledging a paradigm entails opening and foreclosing particular possibilities, so using methodological reflexivity implies understanding the boundaries that a chosen paradigm imposes upon the research. At the outset, researchers need to be reflexive about aligning their methodological choices with their paradigm and theoretical or conceptual framework.

Contextual reflexivity: it refers to locating a particular project in its cultural and historical context. It highlights how the research questions and their answers are embedded in and influenced by a social field of assumptions and practices. Contextual reflexivity also entails understanding how research transforms the social field in which it is conducted in ways that are both intended and unintended. Ethical research seeks to positively impact the contexts in which it takes place; new insights can be generated from how participants' reflections or engagement in the study affects their practices and context.

References

- Cunliffe A. L. and Easterby-Smith M. (2004) From reflection to practical reflexivity: Experiential learning as lived experience. In: Reynolds M. and Vince R. (eds) *Organizing Reflection*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 30–46.
- Dewey J. (1916) *Democracy and Education*. New York: Macmillan.
- Dewey J. (1933/1998) Analysis of reflective thinking: From how we think. In: Hickman L. A. and Alexander T. M. (eds) *The Essential Dewey, Volume 2: Ethics, Logic, Psychology*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 137–144.
- Gentles, S. J., Jack S. M., Nicholas, D. B., McKibbin, K. (2014). A critical approach to reflexivity in grounded theory. *Qual Rep.* 19(44):1–14.
- Olmos-Vega, F. M., Stalmeijer, R. E., Varpio, L., & Kahlke, R. (2023). A practical guide to reflexivity in qualitative research: AMEE Guide No. 149. *Medical Teacher*, 45(3), 241–251.
- Ravi, R. (2019). A deeper look in reflexivity. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 7(1), 383- 392.

Our own
reflexivity
experiences and
perspectives



Reflexivity in my research from a gender perspective (Zhuoran)

Research project on young children's gender construction in Chinese transnational families contexts

- **Motivation of the research:** my own gender experiences has influenced my research interests and who I am as a researcher.
- **Being a woman in the ECEC:**
 - being feminine - build up a rapport with children, especially with girls
 - gain trust from other practitioners - allowed to work alone with children
 - I treated girls with more patience - they had more time to answer questions

Reflexivity in my research from a gender perspective (Ricardo)

Research project on physical touch between male preschool teachers and children in ECEC using participant observation.

Positionality: insider as a man, preschool teacher, and outsider as a researcher.

Relations to the participants: my (power) position as a male researcher could affect how the participants interacted with me. I decided to be more in the background during the fieldwork. At some moments, I also thought about my position as a man. Then, I tried to avoid more physical interaction with children based on an internal security system.

Identification: it was easier to identify with the male preschool teachers based on my experiences. It was positive to understand their perspectives, but at the same time, I had to reflect more on how I would write about female and male teachers without stereotyped assumptions.

Strategies: I included my and others' perspectives during the research project. It was a way to create diversity and bring different reflections.

Reflexivity in my research from a gender perspective (Halah)

Social and cultural factors affecting the involvement of male educators in early childhood education: **a cross-cultural study**



9

German participants



Male ECE educators in Germany

and

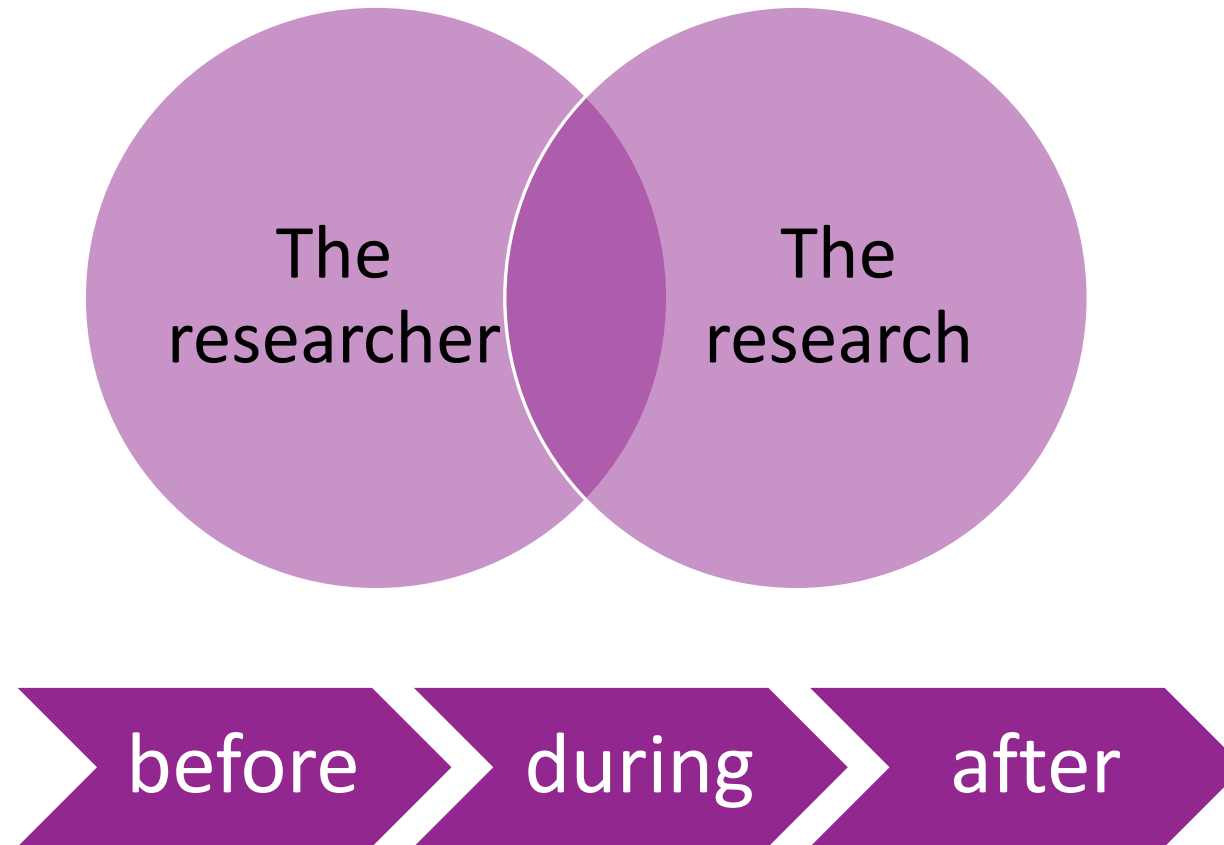


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migrant Participants (MENA)

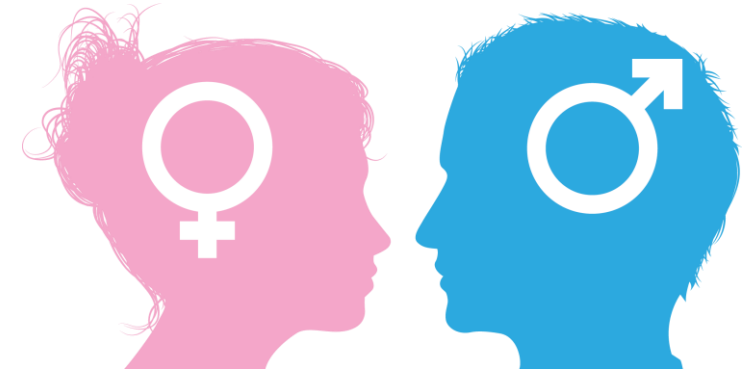
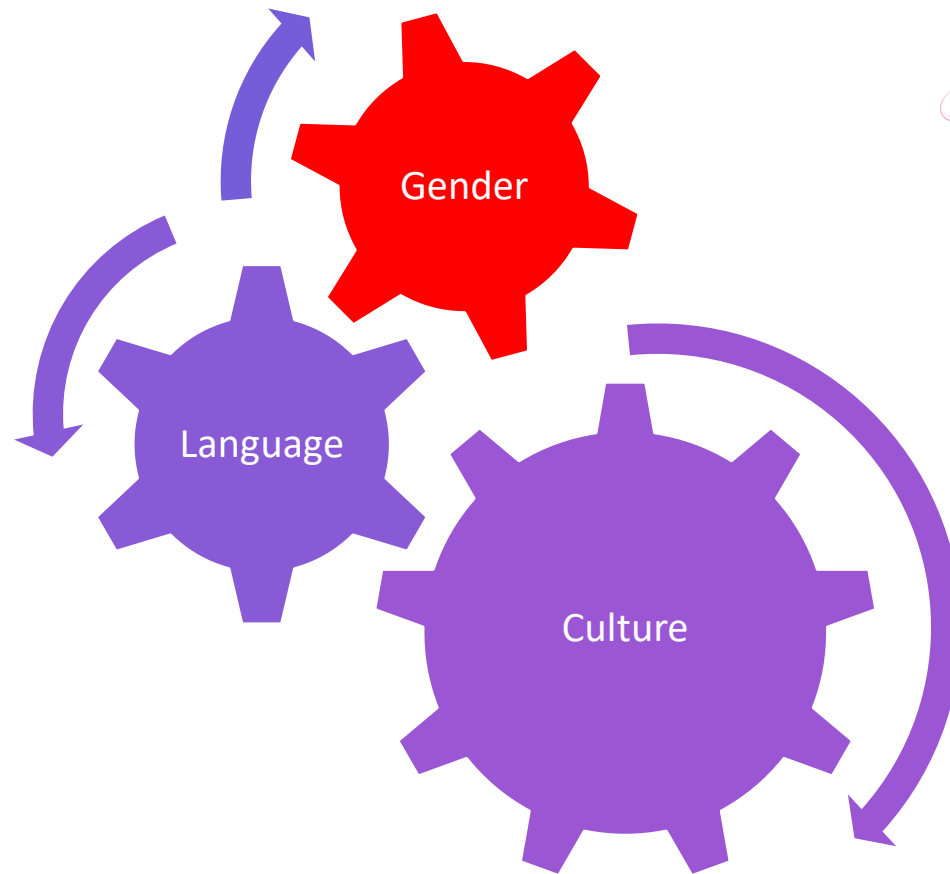
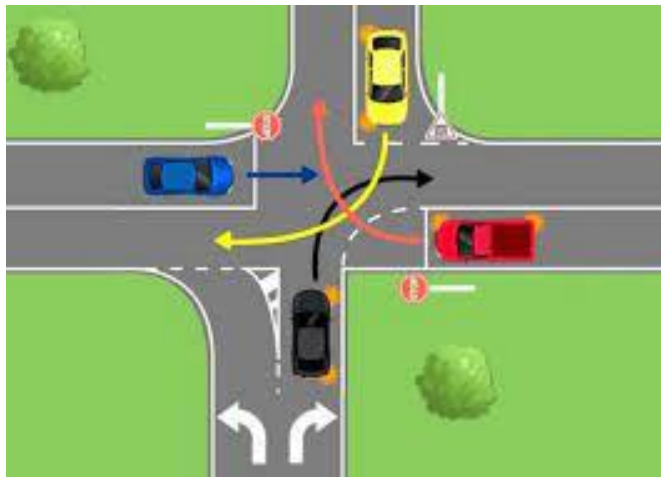
Reflexivity is an awareness of the researcher's role in the practice of research

Reflexivity as a process



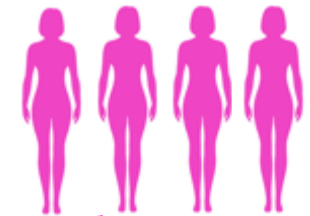
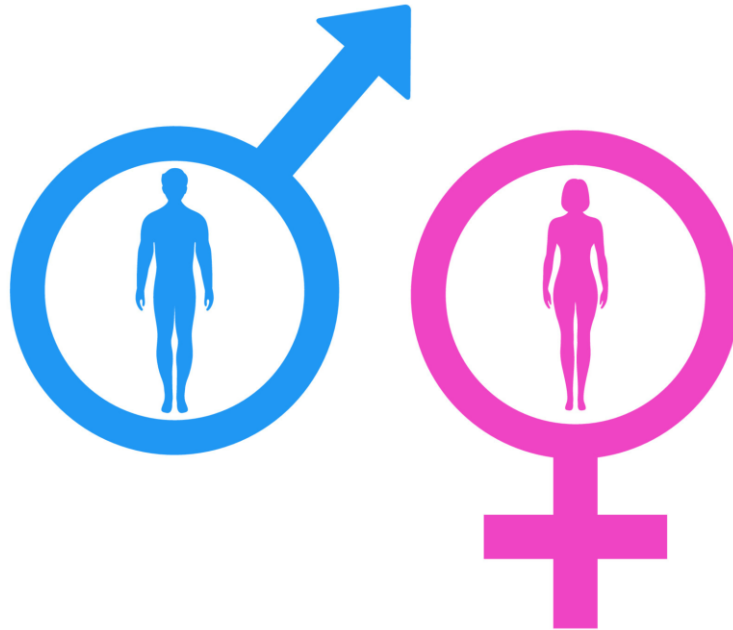
Before

Reflexivity as a process



Before

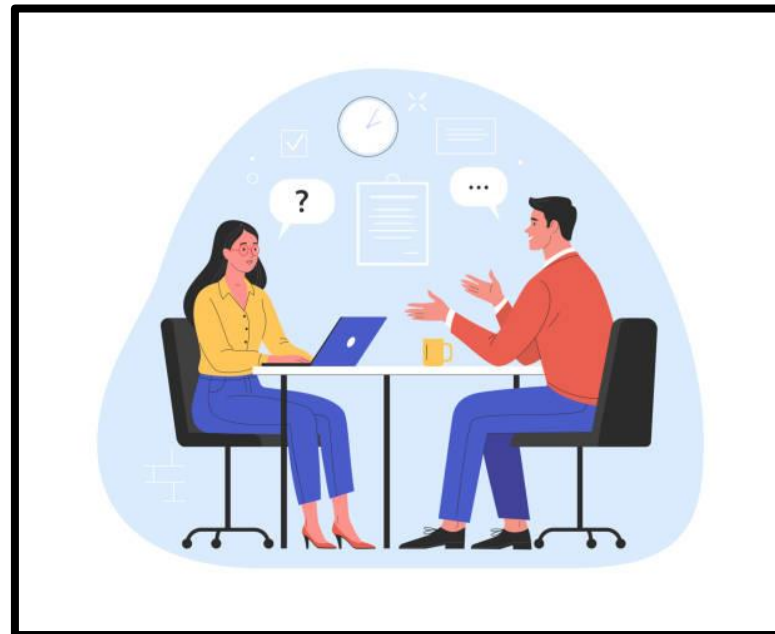
Gender matching: two different perspectives



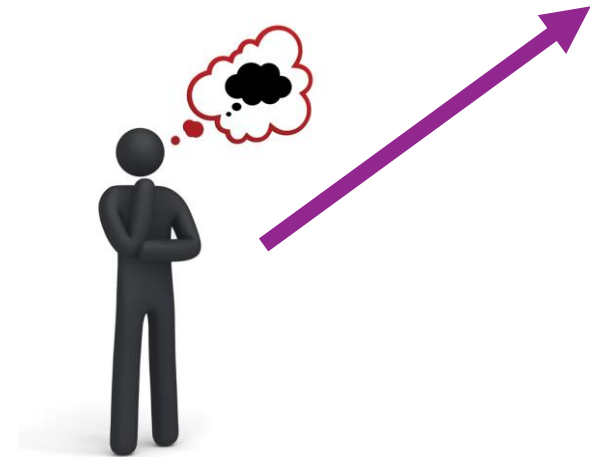
Before

Cross-gender research

Male ECE educators
not comfortable
woman
masculinities?

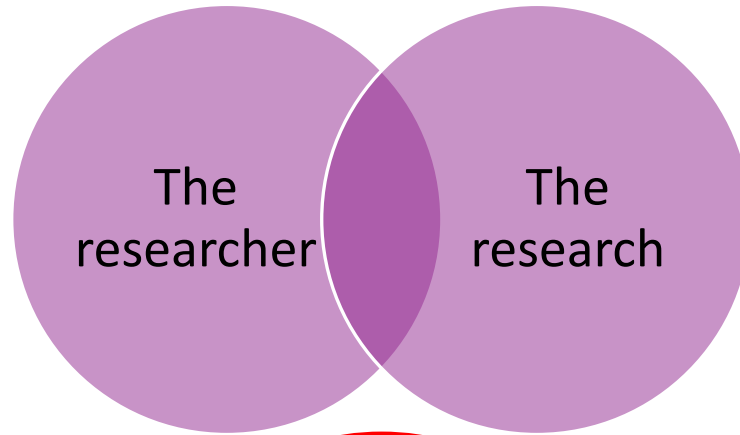


**Some proactive
decisions**, before
conducting the
interviews with the
male ECE educators



During

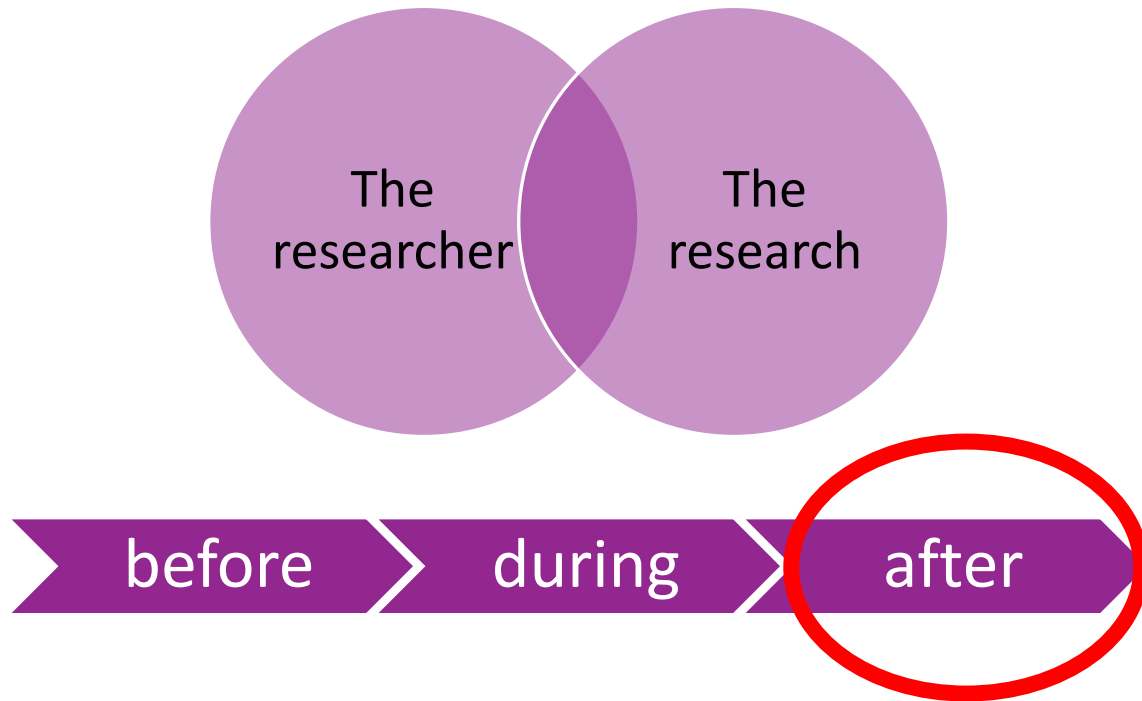
Reflexivity as a process



Throughout the research journey, I documented personal observations, comments, research diaries, and reflective insights, which were recorded before, during, and after the conducted thematic analysis.

Reviewing and analyzing the researcher's personal diaries --- The post-reflexivity chapter

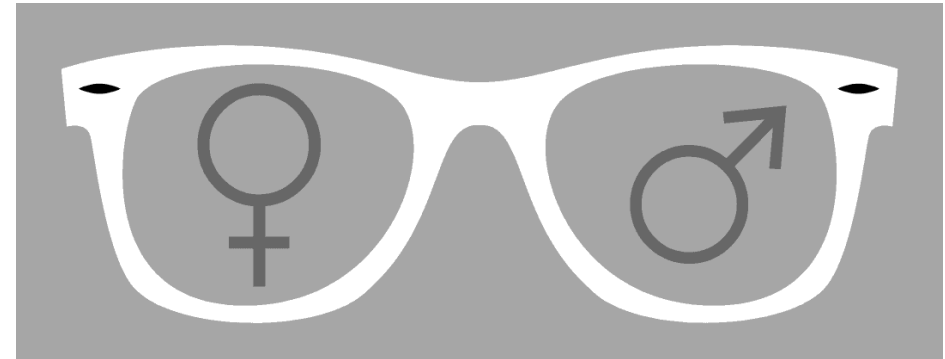
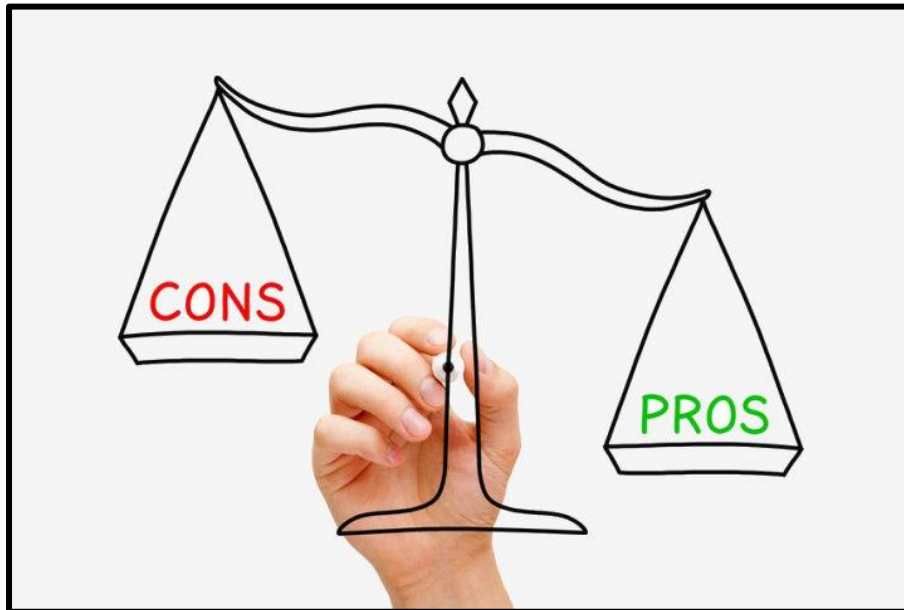
Reflexivity as a process



3 key points

The post-research reflexivity

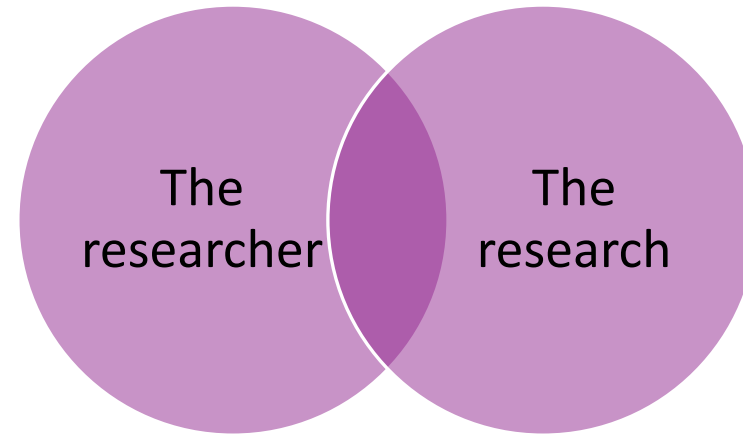
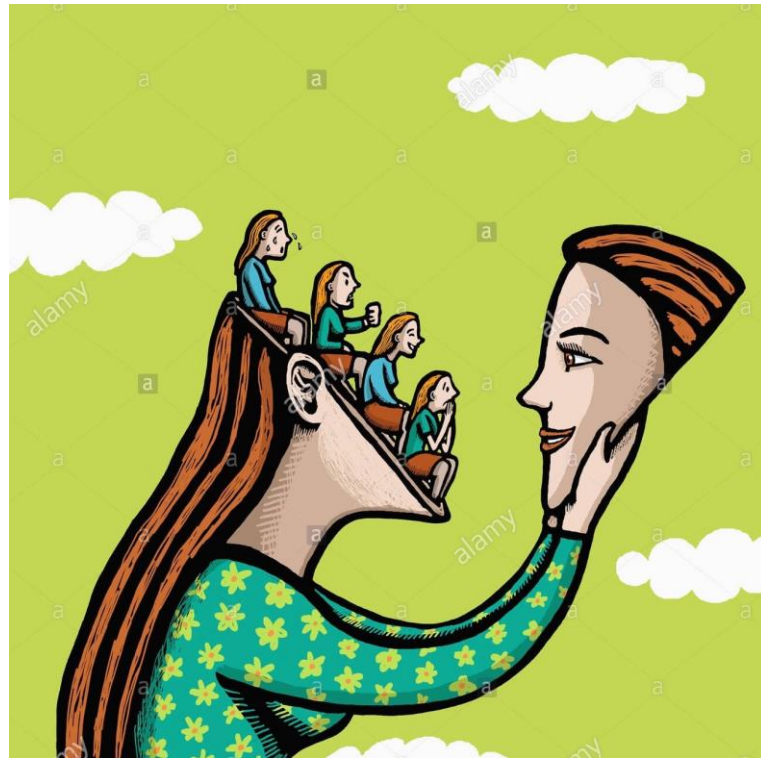
Overall...



However, I also recognize that there may be additional limitations associated with my gender as a female researcher that I have not yet identified.

During

Reflexivity as a process



This was our experiences



from 3 different research projects



Part 2:
Reflection in small
groups and plenary
discussion about
gender reflexivity
within the group's
own projects
(25 min)





Group discussions (small groups- 3 to 4 people)

Please select a specific research project that you participated in and discuss one or more of these questions in your small group (You have 20 min):



1- How has your own gender identity influenced: (15 min)

- Your research interests or motivations?
- Your choice of research methods (e.g., interviews, surveys)?
- Challenges or advantages related to your gender in conducting fieldwork or data collection?
- Your interactions with research participants and stakeholders?
- The interpretation of your research findings?

2- Have you addressed such gender-related biases or assumptions in your research? Have you reported on this? Do you think it is important to report on this within the same project or in other publications? (5 min)



Group discussions (small groups- 3 to 4 people)

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- The interpretation of your research findings?

2- Have you addressed such gender-related biases or assumptions in your research? Have you reported on this? Do you think it is important to report on this within the same project or in other publications? (5 min)



Part 3:
Workshop on
Reflexivity (30 min)



Workshop - Reflexivity Exercise

This exercise aims to develop reflexivity skills, which are essential in research. Observing our responses to others is a crucial step in co-creating knowledge. Additionally, this exercise encourages reflexive writing as a valuable learning tool.

You will receive a **narrative** from an **ECEC preschool teacher** and will be asked to reflect on it from a gender perspective.

Please refrain from writing your name on the paper, as this exercise is anonymous.



Workshop - Reflexivity Exercise – Part 1

Please read the provided narrative from an ECE preschool teacher. Take a few minutes to reflect on it. Consider the following questions:

- What are your initial thoughts about this narrative?
- How do you find yourself speculating about the gender of the preschool teacher in the narrative? ”
- How (or to what extent) has this narrative influenced your thoughts and feelings?
- How (or in which way) do you believe your own gender identity influences your reactions?

Now, complete the following sentence to capture your reflections related to the previous questions:

As a male/female/non-binary researcher, I feel/assume/think/

.....
.....
.....
.....
..... [fill in your thoughts].



Workshop - Reflexivity Exercise – Part 2

Please exchange your paper with the colleague closest to you.

You are asked to read the reflection written on the paper you receive and write your own reflection about this reflection, considering your gender identity, on the back of the paper. You have 5 minutes to do so.

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.....

..... [fill in your thoughts].

Workshop - Reflexivity Exercise – Part 3



General discussion

- How did your own gender identity shape the way you interpreted and responded to the reflections?
- Reflecting on the exercise as a whole, how might gender reflexivity influence your future research practices (or *pedagogical work*) or perspectives?





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