Pride Protocols approved by FETC, community engaged research in education

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The FERB is working with protocols for research practices that she approves. This is useful for qualitative research in particular, as this type of research is more diverse. In these protocols methodological issues are handled, such as approaching participants.

The advantages of working with protocols are

- Ethics applications can refer to them, and this makes the ethics applications simpler, which is beneficial for researchers and reviewers;
- Researchers have less discussion with the reviewers about field work;
- The protocols provide guidelines of field work that the FERB approves, and thus helps researchers in setting up their field work.

The protocol has the following content:

A. Introduction to two special types of participants in community-engaged research
B. Informed consent of incidental participants
C. Informed consent of core participants.

[1] Text is mostly adapted from ethics applications by Sanne Akkerman (s.f.akkerman@uu.nl), dated in 2025, and results from the Unicity project (https://students.uu.nl/universiteitsbreed-honours/masterprogrammas/unicity)

A. Special types of informed consent in community-engaged research

Community-engaged research, participatory research, or co-creation projects are projects in which participants also have an active role in shaping the research. As a result, in some situations the standard informed consent procedure might not be feasible or might not cover enough of the rights and duties of the participants. We first define different types of participants and explain adapted informed consent procedures for such participants below.

Incidental participants in public space

Community-engaged research often includes shorter interactions with or observations of participants in public space. Since it is often not possible to provide those participants with information about the study longer beforehand, incidental participants can indicate directly after being informed about the study whether they are willing to participate. Those participants are called *incidental participants*.

Participants as co-researchers (core participants)

Sometime, research participants can take on a double-role in a research project: they can participate both as participants, as well as co-researchers. Those participants are defined as *core participants*. Core participants form a more-or-less stable core group of people (for example, students, researchers and inhabitants) who collaborate in all phases of the research project (e.g., during study design, data collection, interpretation of results, dissemination). However, besides contributing to the project as co-researcher, they can also be participant themselves (e.g., fill in surveys about how they experience their role, be interviewed or observed). A core participant can thus simultaneously be a research participant and a co-researcher (i.e., they might play a role in collecting and in processing data).

Audiovisual material recorded in public space that does not focus on individuals

In certain situations, it is necessary to make audio recordings or video recordings in public spaces and the research may incidentally capture individuals who are present. Any recording in which a person is identifiable—whether by image or sound—constitutes personal data. Recognizability does not require a clear image of the face; distinctive features such as a tattoo or birthmark may also render someone identifiable. However, if the recordings are not intended for public distribution or publication, explicit consent from those individuals is generally not required. It is advisable, however, to ensure that the recording activity is clearly visible, allowing individuals the option to avoid being filmed if they wish.

B. Informed consent of incidental participants

An incidental participant is shortly engaged in research while in public space (e.g., during an interview or observation recorded on video, a questionnaire study). Thus, they cannot be informed about the study beforehand, but they should indicate immediately, on the spot, whether they are willing to participate after being informed about the study. For this an oral consent protocol might be used (appendix to protocol B), for which the consent check is recorded on audio and/or video. If participants are younger than 16 years old, consent from a parent is also necessary. Again, oral consent (recorded on audio and/or video) suffices, and oral consent might also be provided through a phone call. Note that this procedure is only acceptable for research activities for which no harm to the participant is anticipated (not invasive), when research topics are not sensitive and when no deception takes place. If it is decided that a larger time investment of an incidental participant would fit the project better, longer participation is possible and consent can be updated. In all cases, time investment will be explicit mentioned in the consent procedure, and will naturally depend on every participants' willingness and interest. Like in any form of research, participants can withdraw from participation at any time during the research period.

Appendix to Protocol A: Example Consent Protocol for incidental participants

1. First, you make contact. When the other person is open to talking to you about [research topic], you use the steps below.

2. Check-ins [CRC]

    1. C: Context. Explaining the research and context. The topic and focus of this conversation must also be clear.

    2. O: Recording. Asking for recording consent. Indicating that we will talk about this again at the end of this conversation.

    3. C: Check. “Do you understand what we are going to talk about now? And that you can leave the conversation at any time?”

3. (having a conversation)

4. Check-outs after conversation [RC]

    1. O: Recording. Is it okay for us to store this and process it further for research purposes?

    2. C: Contact. Are you open to a possible follow-up from this conversation or would you like to receive the results of the larger study? [if yes] Can we register your contact details?

C. Informed consent of core participants.

Core participants will have to sign a more elaborate informed consent form than regular research participants, which includes procedures and codes of conduct to handle their role as co-researcher. Generally, community-engaged research projects start from institutions such as schools and leisure clubs. The researcher first asks consent of the institutions and then recruit participants following the approach of distributing and collecting informed consent letters and complying to additional rules for consent and data storage regarding audio and video data. See attachment to protocol C1.

Note that even though those participants are co-researchers, time investment of participants is not predefined and may range from one single interview and observation to more longer term participation. In all cases, time investment will be explicitly agreed on in the consent procedure, and will naturally depend on every participants' willingness and interest. Participants can withdraw from participation at any time during the research period.

Importantly, this means that participants might be mutually dependent on each other (e.g., teachers and students in school institutions). Therefore, explicit regulations regarding data access (who has access to which data) should be made by the responsible researcher (as indicated in PRIDE). Anonymization is important here, but also member checking with participants when reporting in more detail about individual characteristics that might make it possible to identify them. Data managers should assess the data confidentially and restrict access accordingly (see Attachment to protocol C2. data confidentiality). Interviews and observations should be recorded in audio, video, image and text formats and stored on university-approved storage services.

Attachment to protocol C1: Example informed consent for core researchers

Note. This is an example protocol. It can be added to an information letter that details the study and rights of the core researcher as a participant.

Application form Core Participant UniCity

Context

We would like to invite you to participate in the UniCity program as a core participant. In Appendix A [omitted from this protocol] we explain what we want to achieve and how we conduct research. Please read this carefully, because it is important that you know everything before you say yes to participate.

In UniCity we have two types of participants: We speak to incidental participants once or a few times, such as during an interview or a meeting. We ask core participants to think along with us more actively and/or participate in the research. To do this, core participants must say 'yes' in writing and promise to adhere to our basic scientific rules.

Coordination & Consent

We regularly make recordings of people and places, but everyone, including you, has the right to privacy and must respect the privacy of others. In the UniCity project we therefore always ask for permission before we specifically question a person or make recordings of individuals. Every time we are going to record participants, we first ask the person for permission.

Here are some basic rules that everyone in UniCity must adhere to:

- Consent must be really clear: a 'yes' that you clearly show or say. No (time) pressure should be exerted. People are allowed to think about it and not feel rushed. If we are going to publish something in which people can be individually recognized, the consent must always be on paper or on audio tape.
    - It is important that everyone is clear about what is being asked of them. You take an active role in ensuring this, especially with incidental participants and in the public space. The UniCity Consent Protocol (Appendix B) provides guidance in this. The project management plays the leading role in ensuring a safe (research) environment.
- **We do not cause any harm and treat each other and our environment with respect**. We keep confidential information really confidential.
    - We are careful with things that people may be sensitive to. We are a listening ear for everything that people bring up themselves (within our own boundaries), but we do not actively ask questions that are sensitive. Think of questions about drug use, sexuality, religion, violence, health, things that are punishable and political preferences. We are also careful in processing data that contains sensitive information.
    - We take responsibility for our own boundaries and indicate when things become too personal, embarrassing or cause other unpleasant emotions.
    - If you have doubts about what may or may not be asked or feel that your own boundaries are being overridden, talk to the project leader.
- **We only record something (sound/image/text) if everyone you can recognize has given permission.** The only exception is if we record something on the street ("public

space"), but even then we are not allowed to specifically focus on one person when filming (a group activity is).
    - Recordings are intended for internal use. This means that current and future UniCity participants may watch the recordings and use the content for further research. You may never share recordings with people outside the UniCity core group without permission.
    - We agree with the people recorded whether we may use their name, an alternative name ("pseudonym") or whether we maintain their anonymity.
    - We only **publish** (final) products in which people are recognizable if they have given permission for that (final) product.
- **We store files that we share with each other securely**. We use the storage services of Utrecht University for this. The project leader arranges who can do this.
    - Preferably you record with UniCity equipment. You ensure that you store recordings containing personal data securely and remove them from recording devices as soon as possible. If necessary, ask the project management for help or advice.
    - You and other participants have the right to access data about them. They may also review this data and have it removed. This can be done via unicity@uu.nl.
- You can always stop at UniCity, without having to say why. Do you want us to stop using your data until then? Please let us know via unicity@uu.nl
- Finally:
    - If you do not adhere to these basic rules, the project management will unfortunately have to remove you from the UniCity programme.
    - Do you have a complaint about the research? Please send an email to the complaints officer of Utrecht University via klachtenfunctionaris-fetcsocwet@uu.nl.
    - Do you have concerns about the protection of (your) data? Please contact the Data Protection Officer via fg@uu.nl, or the privacy officer via privacy-fsw@uu.nl.
    - If there is anything that is not in these basic rules, we must first discuss it before doing anything.

Consent form

It is clear to me:

1) What UniCity entails and what my role in the program is	Yes/no
2) How my data is collected, processed and stored within UniCity	Yes/no
3) That I may withdraw my previously given consent in part or in full at any time, without any explanation and without any consequences for me.	Yes/no
I agree to:	
1) The above UniCity basic rules	Yes/no
2) The collection of contact details (name, telephone number, e-mail)	Yes/no

Signed:

Date: _____

Name: _____ **Signature:** _____

D. Bijlage bij protocol C2

Data types are distinguished according to the level of confidentiality, defined as:

1. Level 1: only accessible to core researchers

2. Level 2: only accessible to core researcher and enrolled students

3. Level 3: only accessible to core researchers, enrolled students and selected community members

4. Level 4: only accessible to core researchers, enrolled students and all community members

5. Level 5: public information (no access control)

The level of confidentiality is determined by the data managers mentioned above based on the nature of the data (i.e., personally identifying data), threat modelling (i.e., personal or institutional risks in case of leaks), and the level of consent provided by those on record.