

NAVIGATING ETHICAL CHALLENGES IN TRAUMA- AND VIOLENCE-INFORMED RESEARCH:

TOWARD A TRAINING MODULE FOR GBV RESEARCHERS

KNOWLEDGE HUB | OCTOBER 29, 2024

Dr. Robert Nonomura

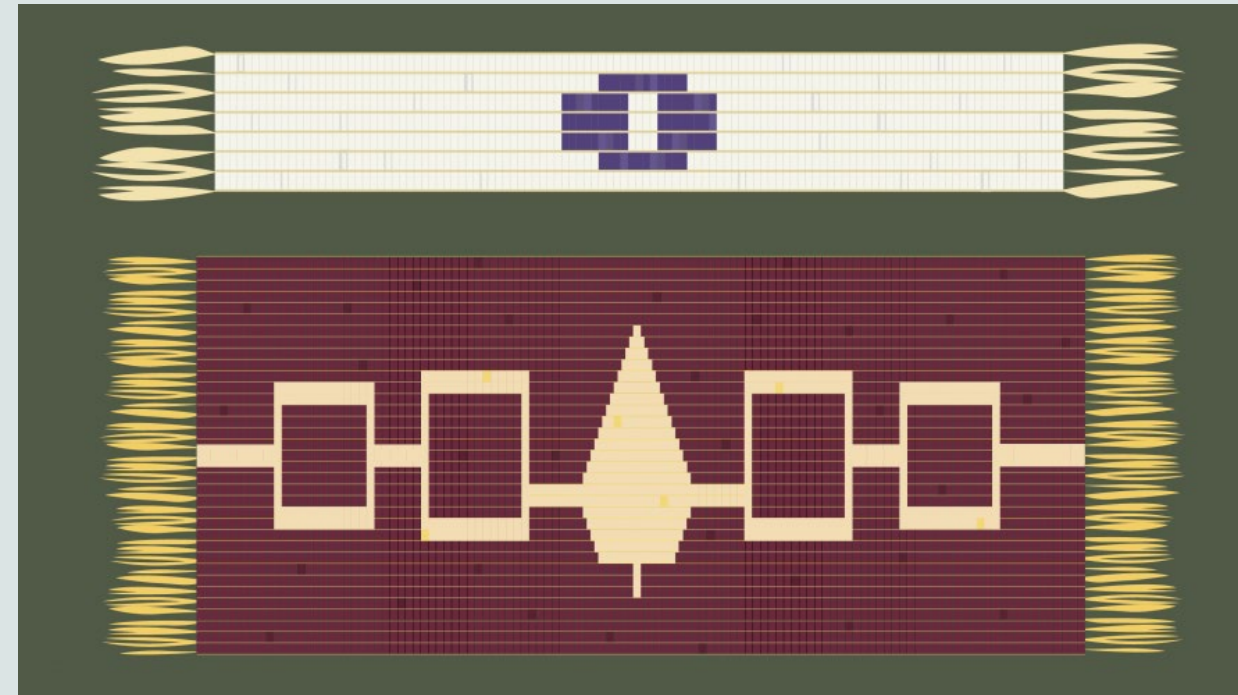
Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology

Western University, Canada

ACKNOWLEDGING THE LAND

Let us recognize the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Chonnonton peoples.

These territories are connected with the London Township and Sombra Treaties of 1796 and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum.



OVERVIEW



Dr. Robert Nonomura (he/him)

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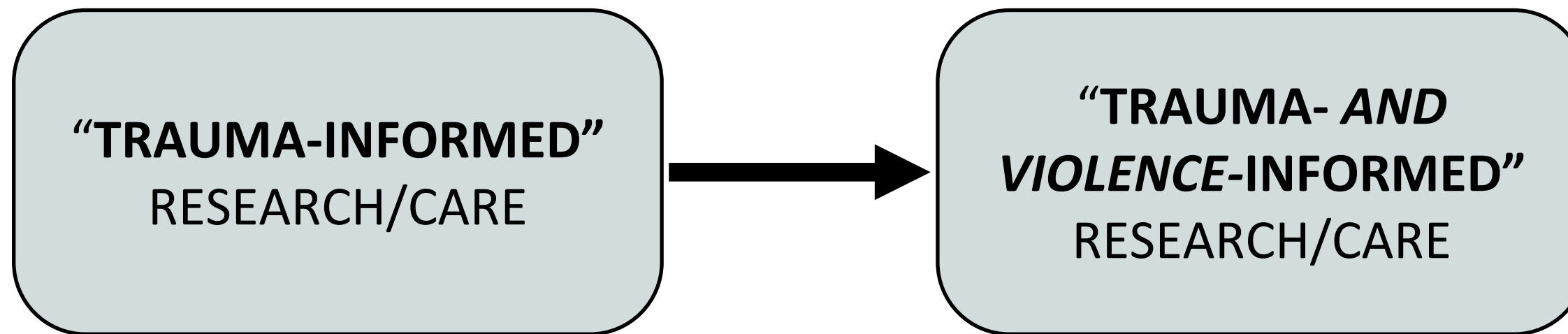
Former Research Associate, CREVAWC

- Knowledge Hub
- Learning Network
- Supporting the Health of Survivors of Family Violence in Family Law Proceedings

OVERVIEW

- I. From trauma-informed to trauma- and *violence*-informed approaches
- II. Ethical challenges for GBV intervention researchers
 - Knowledge Hub Project
 - Trauma- (and violence-)informed research ethics
- III. Future directions for TVI research ethics training

FROM TRAUMA-INFORMED TO TRAUMA- AND VIOLENCE-INFORMED APPROACHES



(Substance Abuse and Mental
Health Services Administration,
1994)

(Ponic & Varcoe, 2017; Varcoe et al., 2016)

TVI “expands the concept of trauma informed support to account for the intersection of systemic and interpersonal violence and structural inequities on a person’s life.”

(Varcoe et al., 2016, p.1)

FROM TRAUMA-INFORMED TO TRAUMA- AND VIOLENCE-INFORMED APPROACHES

General ethical principles in TVI research and care:

- Address impacts of interpersonal and *structural* violence
- Prioritize empowerment and agency
- Take an intersectional, collaborative approach
- Create emotionally, physically, and culturally safe environments

(Lalonde, Nonomura, Tabibi, Baker & Morris, 2021)



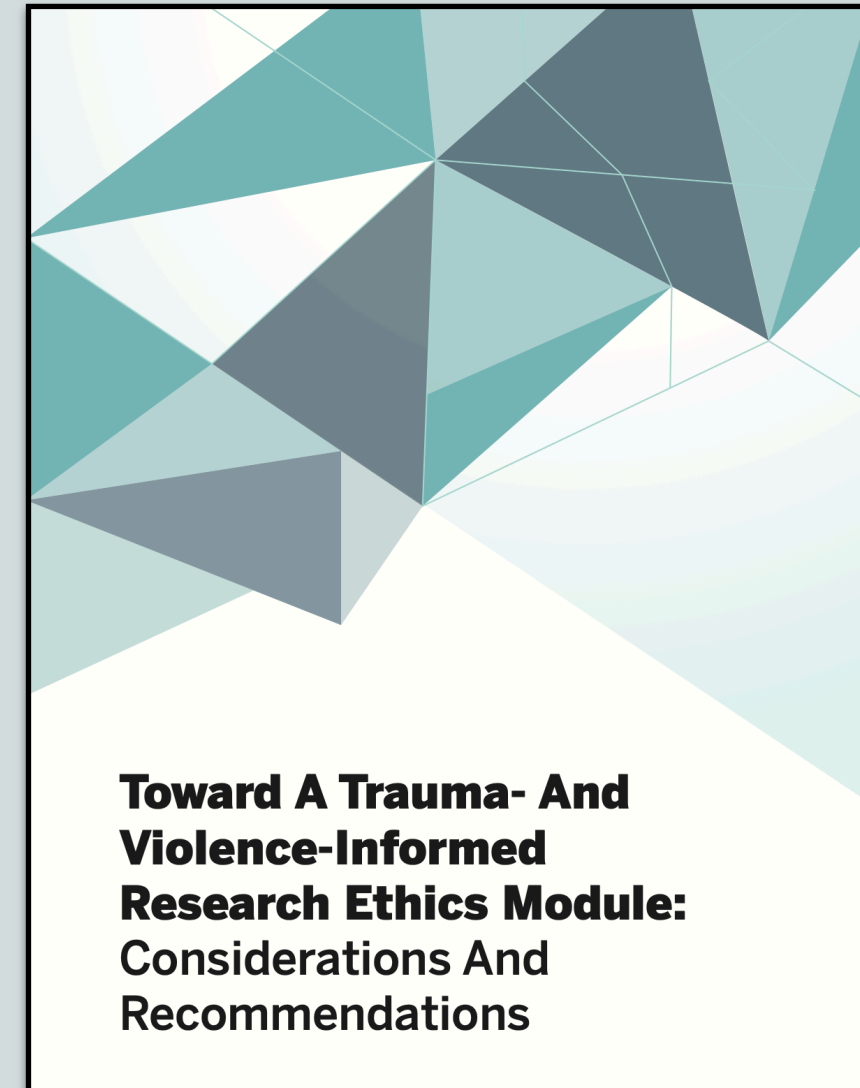
FROM TRAUMA-INFORMED TO TRAUMA- AND VIOLENCE-INFORMED APPROACHES



**KNOWLEDGE
HUB**

- **17 violence intervention projects**
- **3 meetings** by a Working Group on ethical challenges encountered by front-line practitioners

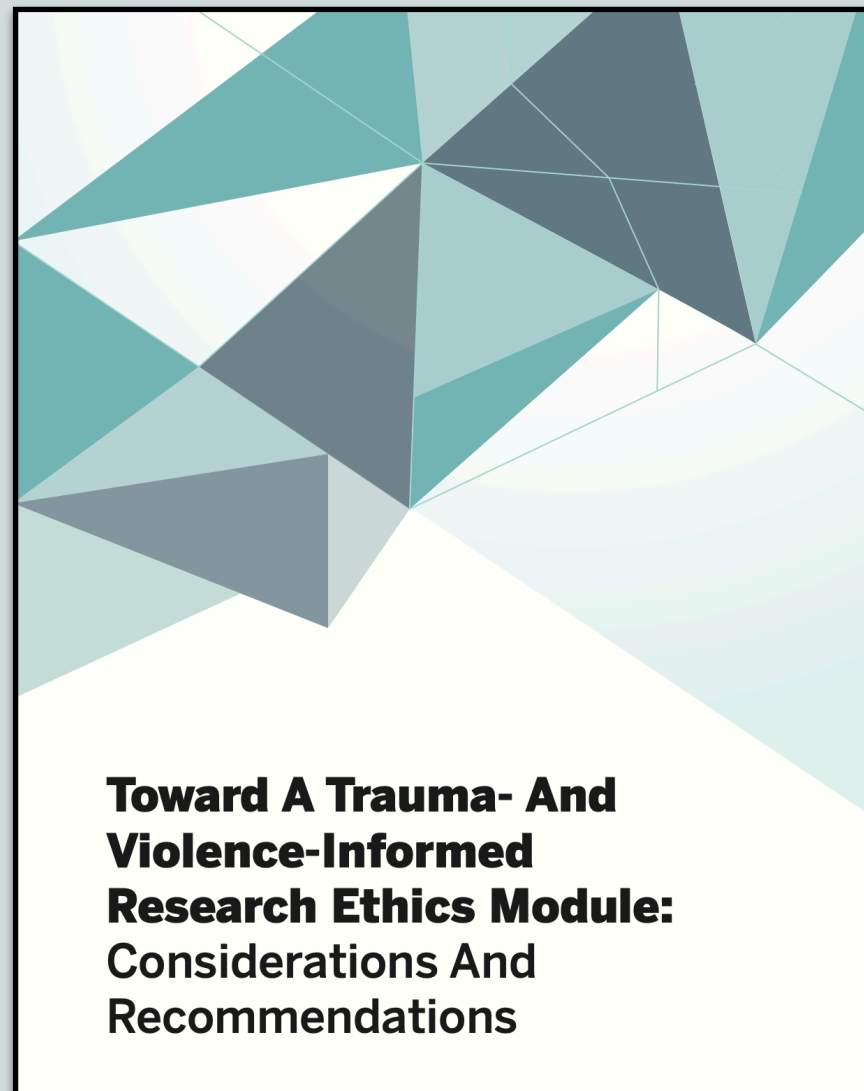
Q: What challenges do practitioners face in ethically conducting “**trauma- and violence-informed**” research on GBV intervention projects?



Public Health
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ETHICAL CHALLENGES FOR GBV INTERVENTION RESEARCHERS

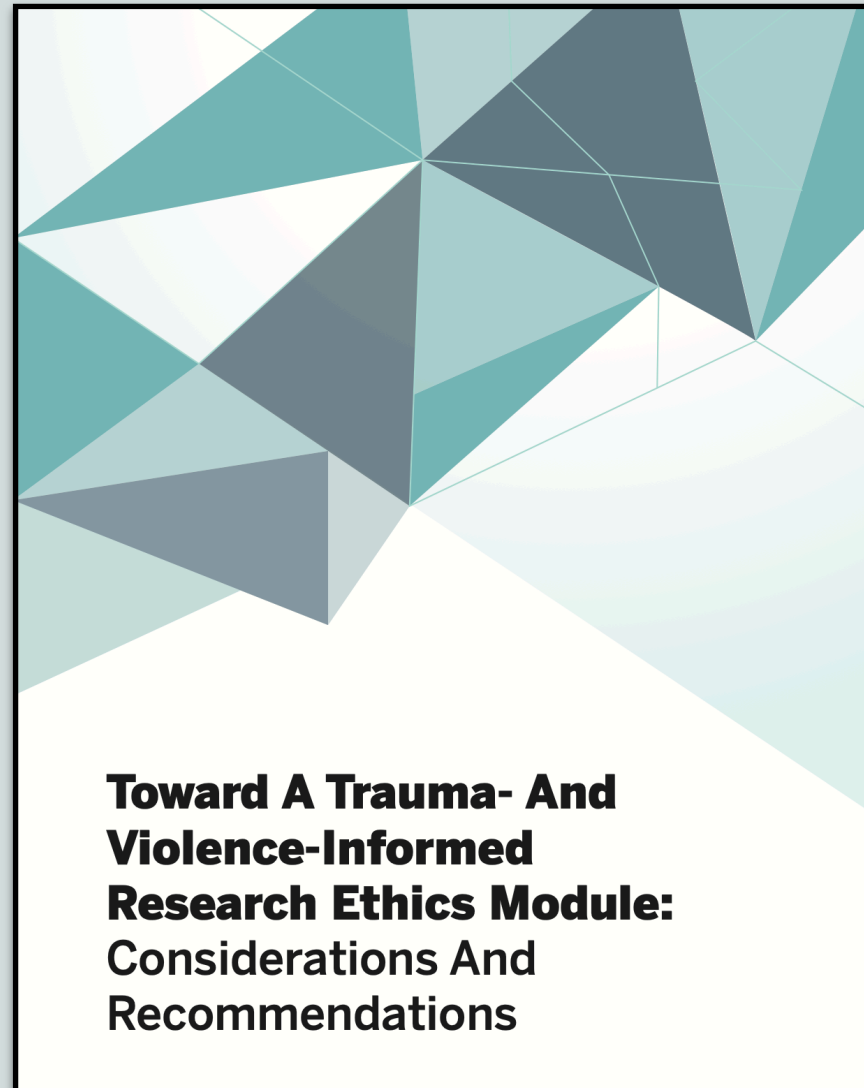


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- Identified ethical “tensions” not resolved by standard best practices, REB recommendations
- Proposes a “situation-based learning” approach to researcher training (Strand et al. 2014; Wilson-Mitchell & Handa 2016)
- Utilizes vignettes to illustrate real-world dilemmas & re-imagine possibilities for TVI social research.

ETHICAL CHALLENGES FOR GBV INTERVENTION RESEARCHERS



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Thematic ethical tensions in GBV intervention research:

1. Safety & Empowerment
2. Researcher-Clinician
Role Boundaries
3. Organizational Collaboration
& Boundaries

ETHICAL CHALLENGES FOR GBV INTERVENTION RESEARCHERS

Violence creates situations where it may be difficult to promote *both* the safety *and* empowerment of participants.

SAFETY

Reduce Risk

Avoid Re-Traumatization

Protect from Harm

EMPOWERMENT

Respect Choice

Promote Agency

Avoid “Protectionism”



ETHICAL CHALLENGES FOR GBV INTERVENTION RESEARCHERS

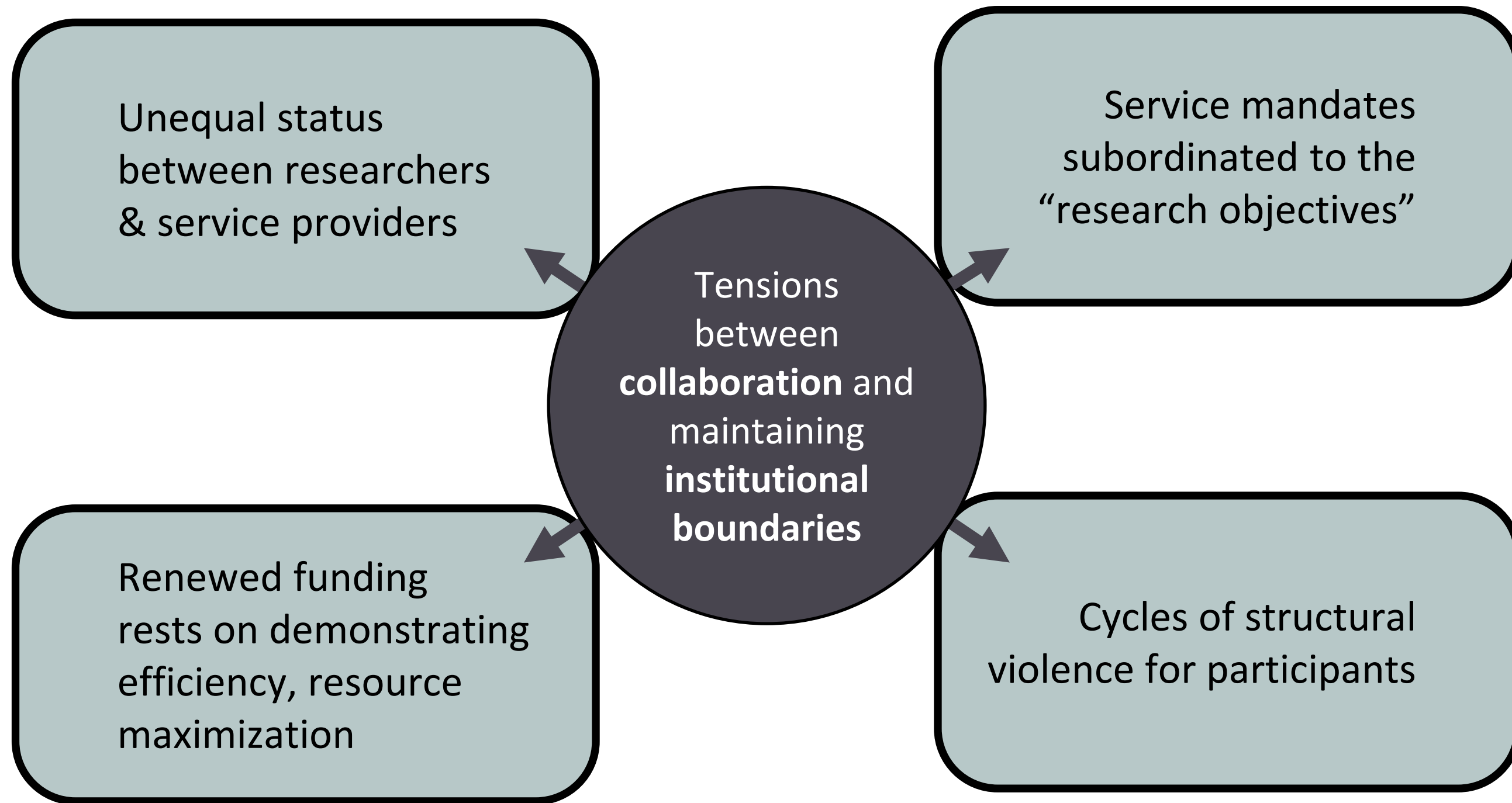
TVI practitioners face situations where conventional boundaries between *research* and *support roles* may be less clear cut.

- Clinicians sometimes tasked with research responsibilities
- Researchers may need to move into support role (or may *require* support)



- Clients may sense an obligation to participate in an agency's research
- Participant empowerment may require accommodations unfamiliar to researchers

ETHICAL CHALLENGES FOR GBV INTERVENTION RESEARCHERS



ETHICAL CHALLENGES FOR GBV INTERVENTION RESEARCHERS

IMPLICATIONS FOR TVI RESEARCH ETHICS

Need for resources & guidance
beyond standard REB protocols and
“best practices”

Violence is ethically complex—
fraught with social injustice and
interpersonal harm.

From the *exploratory* to the *practical*:
**What is to be done when ethical principles appear to point a
researcher in various directions at once?**

ETHICAL CHALLENGES FOR GBV INTERVENTION RESEARCHERS

EXAMPLE SITUATION:

A researcher was conducting phone interviews with gay men about past experiences of intimate partner violence.

The participant, Tom, previously lived with an abusive partner.

They arrange an interview at noon, when Tom's current partner is at work and Tom's apartment will be quieter.



ETHICAL CHALLENGES FOR GBV INTERVENTION RESEARCHERS

They were 15 minutes into the interview when it was interrupted by someone in the background who seemed to have walked into the room and overheard Tom answering questions.

The researcher could hear this person angrily confront Tom about sharing private information about their relationship. The phone sounded like it was put down and the researcher could hear raised voices (but could not make out what was being said).



ETHICAL CHALLENGES FOR GBV INTERVENTION RESEARCHERS

The researcher was trying to decide whether or not to hang up and call 911 when Tom came back on the phone.

There was silence in the background and Tom reported that he was in a private space. **He stated that he wanted to continue the interview.**

Tom started answering questions again, but soon after, began sobbing (though he seemed to be trying to muffle the sound)."



ETHICAL CHALLENGES FOR GBV INTERVENTION RESEARCHERS

SITUATION PROMPTS

The researcher...

- wondered whether he should continue with the interview given what he had just heard.
- worried about Tom's safety and wondered whether he should call for help.

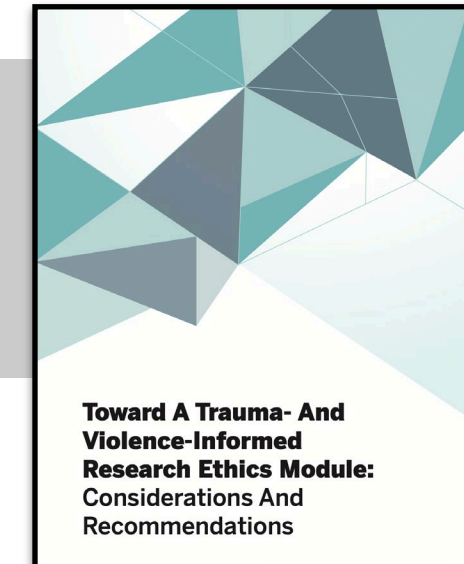


What does your research training suggest that you should do in this situation?

What can be done to make this study more TVI?

ETHICAL CHALLENGES FOR GBV INTERVENTION RESEARCHERS

DISCUSSION OF TVI RESPONSES



Immediate Strategies

- Assess crisis situation — risk factors, participant distress, potential for harm
- Utilize resource sheets to direct participant to support services for LGBTQ and other intersections.

Protocol Review

- Confidentiality and safety — establish neutral/coded language and safety plans with participant
- Emergency communications — do not disconnect with participant.
- Debrief — vicarious and secondary trauma for researchers

Future Directions for TVI Research Ethics Training

FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR TVI RESEARCH ETHICS TRAINING

Toward a Problem-Based Learning Module: Key Benefits

Demonstrated efficacy in health, trauma, and violence training.

(Layne et al., 2011; Strand et al., 2014; Stuber, Keeshin, & Dublin, 2018; Wilson-Mitchell & Handa, 2016)

Prompts reflection on epistemic and practical “gaps” in knowledge

- Potential for harm (complicity, re-traumatization, vicarious trauma) not previously considered
- Conceptual awareness of oppression did not translate to methodological solutions

Promotes collaborative & supportive methodological skill-building

- Communities of Practice
- Cross-disciplinary insights
- Cultural humility

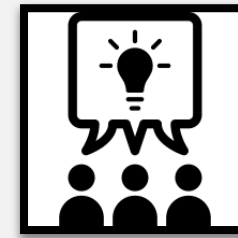
FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR TVI RESEARCH ETHICS TRAINING

NEXT STEPS



ADAPT PHAC REPORT

Convert from report format to learning module



SITUATION-BASED LEARNING

Align teaching format with pedagogical best-practices



PILOT PROJECT

Develop full TVI training module



TVI RESEARCH ETHICS

Advance TVI approaches to research ethics literature

Thank you!

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APPENDIX

Trauma- & Violence-Informed Strategies for Intervention Research:



Train *all* staff in TVI principles & approaches



Supply RAs with detailed resource sheets



Pair new researchers with a more experienced mentor



Tailor community-based interventions and training