

# Ethical decisions as an evidence based decisions, examples from social sciences

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- General principles
- Network of ethic control
- Teaching and learning
- European Social Survey
- Case study

Rules of ethics are good everywhere

# Good Scientist = Good Person?



# Ethos- habit, customs

## Science ethics

- Good science
- Principles to evaluate
  - Utility
  - Rights
  - Justice
  - Common Good
  - Virtue



# We want to be ethical scientists

- Do not hurt, without justified need!
- If possible do not hurt at all!
- If you need to hurt,  
heal the wound as well  
as possible!
- Do not steal!
- Be honest!



# Social science and humanities

- Work with people
- Subjective understandings what is ethical
- Cultural differences in multicultural research
- Different counterparts

# Most common principles

- Voluntary participation (contact research)
- Informed consent – for data storage, changes behaviour, selective sample, lost anonymity and confidentiality

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a71h6LZKXTc>

- Informed consent - information should be used only for purposes specified at the time of collection
- The best interest of respondents, informants safety monitoring throughout the study, harm from publications
- Vulnerable groups – difficult to conduct research, out of scientific interest

# Network of ethic control

Financing institution



Researcher and code of ethics



Publisher

Board of ethics



Internal institutional ombuds



Public

# Challenge 1.

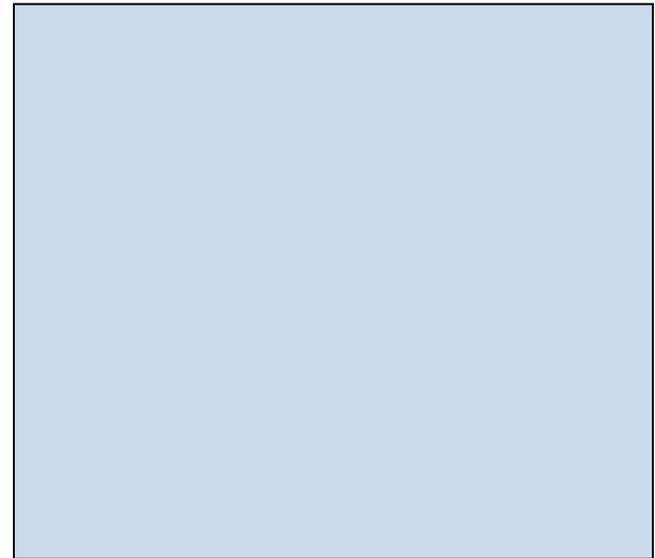
Science is more and more international



# Challenge 2. Increasing number of (open) databanks



Personal data with some kind of ID



Without ID possibility

# Doctoral school in ethics

- Too many papers – reasonable amount of information within reasonable timeframe
- Evidence based decisions



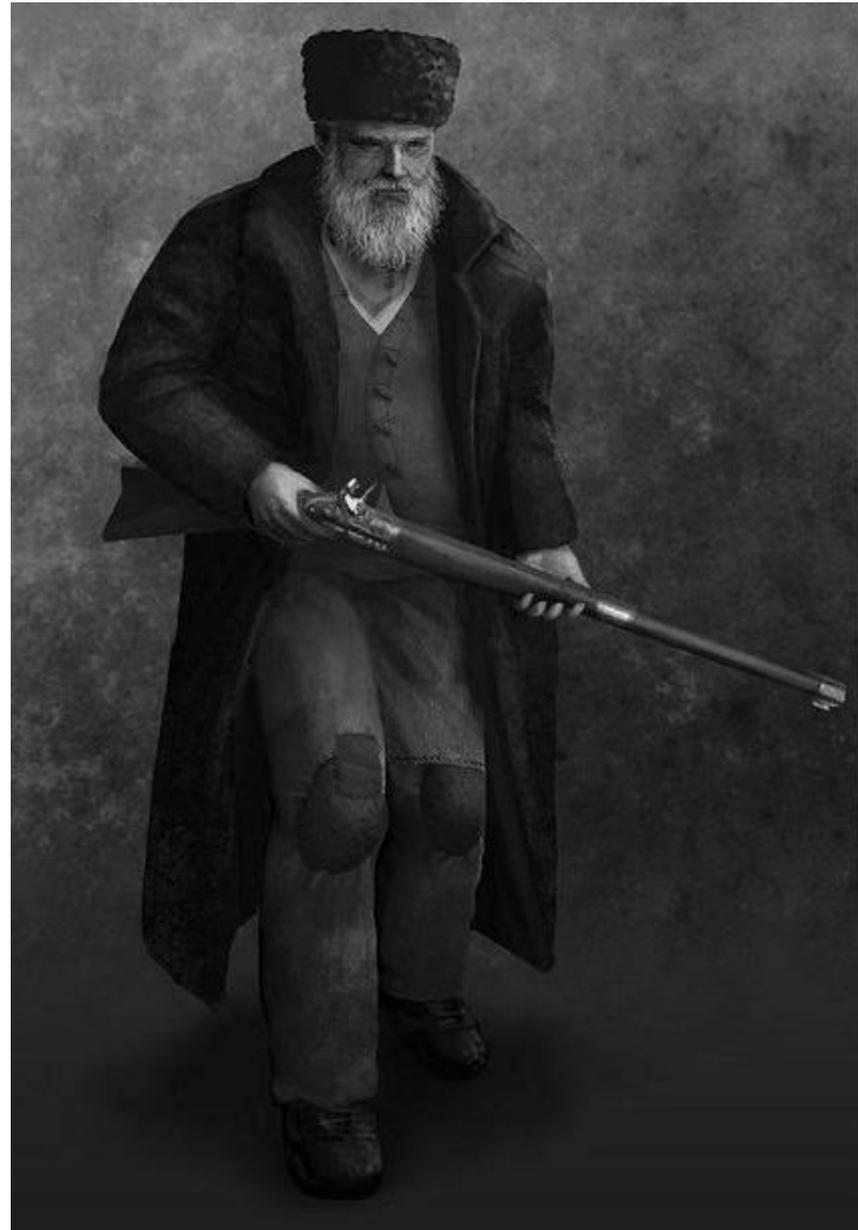
# European Social Survey



- 50 000 users, data of 300 000 individuals, 30 countries, 700 topics
- Informed consent
- Anonymous data
  - users need to have confidence in the data collected and published by the ESS
- Very high cost effectiveness (do not waste) and highest methodological standards
- Science - internationally highly standardised

- ESS subscribes to the Declaration on Ethics of the International Statistical Institute (ISI, [www.cbs.nl/isi/ethics.htm](http://www.cbs.nl/isi/ethics.htm)), to which all national teams are asked to adhere
- No national data or interpretations of the data must be released or published until the data has been officially released by the ESS data archive at the NSD Norway
- Thereafter, the data are available without restriction as a resource for research and policy making

Our attitudes about ethical behaviour depends on our knowledge



# Baltic Sea Regional Study on Adolescent's Sexuality 2003-2005

Svein Mossige, Lars Lööf etc

7 countries - Sweden, Norway, Poland,  
Estonia, Lithuania, Iceland, St Petersburg

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse situation

Attitudes about sexuality and sexual abuse



- 3% and 12% of child sexual assaults are both detected and reported to the police (McAlinden 2006)
- Need for comparative analyses with non-violent group. Can be unethical not to do research on child abuse (Becker-Blease & Freyd, 2006)
- Research must be designed to ensure that the participants are not harmed

# Sensitive questions

- Experience of sexual behaviour, abuse
- What did the person(s) do to you
- Who the person was to you?
- How old?
- When?
- How?
- With whom?
- Did you turned to somebody?
- Do you have experience of being abuser yourself?
- What did you do after?

# Things to worry about before the study

- Science – misreporting (under, over, avoidance)
- Recall of painful memories



# Solutions

- Science – misreporting
  - Explain why, personal space
  - Independent research personnel worked with children
- Recall of painful memories
  - Compulsory leaflet to everybody with information were to go in case of personal problems
  - Equal time and filling task for all participants

# Culture differences by regions

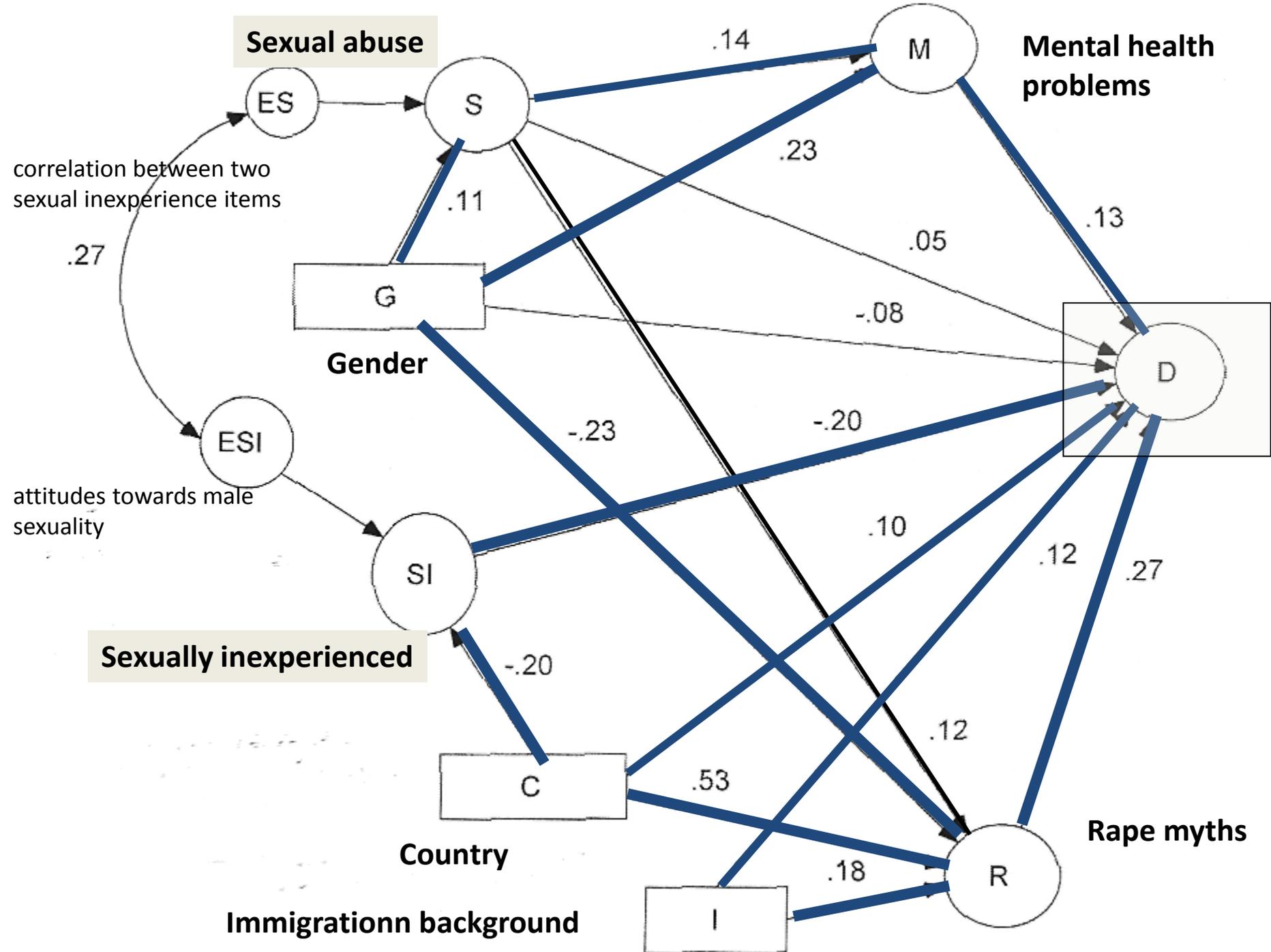
- Informed consent
- Consent from ethical committees
- Acceptance of a topic as such in some countries



# Estonia was first who got the data

- Surprising results for others
- Analyse - block of question at the end of a questionnaire





- Acceptance of rape myths was the strongest indicator of discomfort (should we care?)
- Sexual inexperience was the next strongest predictor of discomfort
- Country differences
- No direct correlation with sexual abuse
  - This means that being sexually abused was not directly related to discomfort

# Conclusions

- Ethical decisions should be more evidence (information) based decisions
- More empirical research about ethical impact
- Different treatment of projects with
  - No risk projects
  - Risky or possibly risky projects

# You can publish it!

Gisela Priebe, Martin Bäckström, Mare Ainsaar  
(2010) Vulnerable adolescent participants'  
experience in surveys on sexuality and sexual  
abuse: Ethical aspects. Child Abuse & Neglect.

