

WHAT I USUALLY DO NOT WRITE ABOUT
MY FIELDWORK:
NEGATIVE EMOTIONS IN RESEARCH
ON THE EXPERIENCE OF THE SECOND WORLD
WAR IN EASTERN GALICIA

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It was far from easy to determine whether doing fieldwork was one of the unpleasant tasks like national service that might quite properly be suffered in silence, or whether it was of the ‘perks’ business that man should feel grateful for. Colleagues’ opinions were of real help. Most had had plenty of time to enfold their experiences in the rosy glow of romantic adventure. The fact of past fieldwork is something of a licence to be a bore. One’s friends and relatives are trifle disappointed if every subject from doing the washing to treating the common cold is not larded with a sauce of ethnographic reminiscence. Old stories from old friends in themselves and soon nothing but the good times fieldwork remain to bar a few awkward islands of unreduced misery that cannot be forgotten or submerged in the general euphoria (Barley 1983, 8).

We usually do not speak about the emotions we experience during fieldwork. I suspect there are several reasons for this. The first is loyalty towards the narrators and a disinclination to stray from the role of an independent observer. The second is that the presence of emotions in reflections on field research as an intrinsic autoethnographic element of research is often construed as a lack of professionalism on the researcher’s part. The third one concerns our fear that we will be regarded as trivial. All three share a common denominator in the form

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of a worry about being judged by the academic community that we represent and for which we write. Even when we do decide to talk about the emotions we experience concerning our interlocutors, during field research, we mainly write about positive emotions: empathy and compassion, and, if necessary, the difficulties associated with adequately demonstrating them to the people we share them with (Shrestha 2007).

To begin with, therefore, I would like to state that this article will not go far beyond the framework marked out in the contemporary academic discourse. While being decidedly honest in my reflections, like my predecessors, I do not intend to tell “everything as it was.” My aim in this article is to speak of the complex emotions I experienced during my fieldwork in Ukraine within the “Social Anthropology of Filling the Void: Poland and Ukraine after World War II” project.¹ I will also discuss recordings that I collected personally during the fieldwork, and the results of the project should not be seen solely from the perspective of the experiences described here and the way of dealing with them. I would like first to present the main fields of study on difficult emotions experienced by a researcher during fieldwork before discussing several examples from my research practice. I will then use these observations to conclude the future.

My position is that emotional experience during fieldwork can be both a punishment and a blessing. From one point of view, sharing and empathizing with interlocutors’ experiences can be a burden for the researcher, and it is, therefore, worth considering what we can do to deal with this; which and whose help we can use in this process. On the other hand, forming a profound understanding with our interlocutors (known in psychology as a *rapport*) ensures insight into their experience, giving us a basis to interpret the story they tell us (Kaniowska 2006, 22). It is part of treating this issue seriously to ensure the necessary conditions for all researchers to consider the support they might need in this respect. This aspect of fieldwork in our cultural space, however, is especially relegated to the area of the researcher’s individual experiences; his or her privacy is the subject of private conversations. I will therefore refer to this issue, thereby making use of the reflections from my fieldwork in Ukraine cited here.

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NON-PHYSICAL THREAT

As Geraldine Lee-Treweek rightly notes, previous reflections on the threats that a researcher might face during fieldwork are mostly focused on physical danger (Lee-Treweek 2000). However, it seems that much broader issues exist which are stifled, owing to the belief that the physical threat is the top and most common form of danger in fieldwork. However, potential emotional risks include identifying with people who have bad experiences or pain, which produces in the researcher feelings of sadness, anger, or depression. The last four decades in qualitative methodology literature were published accounts of research staff who found themselves much affected by their work on sensitive topics. Such statements suggest that the effect of qualitative work can come sometime after the completion of fieldwork and in unexpected ways (Corden *et al.*, 2005).

Though, the need for emotional involvement in oral history (or another type of qualitative research) means that researchers working in the field can also experience major threats to their mental stability and sense of self as a result of the negative emotional states caused by the research process (Gilbert 2001). In certain subject areas (experience of violence, loss, suffering), it is particularly worth reflecting on the “non-physical” threat. During interactions between the researcher and the participant in the research, there is a tendency for greater concentration on the narrators’ feelings and protection of their wellbeing. This care for those we are studying inevitably leads us researchers to another danger, in which participants’ emotions are of primary importance. When working with a thematic area concerning the Second World War in Eastern Galicia, including collaboration with the Nazis and violence (when talking to a perpetrator as well as to a victim), this also means the emotions that come out in the process of co-creating the narratives between both participants.

In oral history, as in cultural anthropology, there is a high risk of going outside of the framework of the convention imposed by the method and leaving the role of the researcher. Both practices specify rules of fieldwork, which, depending on the paradigm, are respectively limited to what it is “appropriate” or “inappropriate” to do while recording testimonies. Kleinman and Copp call this the feeling of “becoming familiar” in the field.

We expect to establish rapport quickly and close ties soon after. Granted, we give ourselves some time to fret about whether participants will allow us into their world. Initially, we keep a low profile, acting emotionally flat, passive, and nonthreatening, and learn enough to avoid embarrassing ourselves or getting kicked out of the field. Except for this guarded beginning, we expect to actively seek close relationships with participants. This suggests a two-stage model of feelings: a short period of anxiety and distance followed by (almost) instant

closeness. Once we feel connected to the people we study, we think we must consistently feel good about them (Kleinman and Copp 1993, 28).

For many of us, this happiness at participating in a group can result not only in abandoning all research duties but also in distorting our judgments owing to a certain kind of loyalty towards the research participants (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, 87). Excessive engagement also puts a psychological burden on researchers as we sooner or later realize that the tools we take into the field are insufficient for solving many of the problems the narrators tell us about. Some of us are also bothered by feeling guilty that we have used our interlocutors to satisfy our own research needs without giving anything in return.

It is a similar story with maintaining a marginal/neutral position in the field. For many of us, this entails an enormous mental strain, as sticking to this position is not always easy. Furthermore, according to Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson, a researcher who does not identify unduly with the community being studied will often be tormented by feeling duplicitous:

There is a sense of split personality that the disengaged/engaged ethnographer may suffer. But this feeling, and equivalent feelings, should be managed for what they are. Such feelings are not necessarily something to be avoided or to be replaced by more congenial sensations of comfort (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, 90).

How we react to complicated situations in the field depends on many factors, including our stress resistance. A researcher entering the field can be compared to a student in his or her first year on campus. The researcher experiences the same stress about adapting (delaying communication with new people, a sense of incompetence, anger, anxiety, and frustration). It is important to realize that entering a completely new and unknown environment is very stressful for some of us, and with time, there is a risk that it will turn into chronic stress and burnout. In the long term, however, researchers' degree programs do not prepare them for all this.

Therefore, unlike other professionals working with personal human experience (psychologists and psychotherapists), we expect strong and positive emotions during fieldwork. After all, this is an encounter with an exceptionally individual form of the past. Although it might not be friendship, the relationship will be intimate, based on an immediate emotional and intellectual understanding with the interlocutor. Filip Wróblewski Polish anthropologists conceptualize fieldwork using such categories as empathy, dialogue, and face-to-face relations with informants and fieldwork participants. In his opinion, empathy was turned into a fetish (in a metaphorical sense). That empathic compassion and dialogue

with the Other determine the quality of research (Wróblewski 2014). I suspect that we are not prepared for other emotions. At least, I was not prepared before researching the “Social anthropology of the void” project. The issue here is not a lack of fieldwork experience but an unreadiness to experience difficult emotions along with fatigue from empathizing with the interlocutor, resulting in a whole array of negative feelings.

Moreover, the conviction that discussing our own emotions trivializes the observations formed in the research process (seen as scientific and objective) also means that researchers in Poland are usually left alone with their feelings (Stanisz 2013). Whereas people working in professions related to caring can count on professional support in the form of supervision, in research in the social sciences in this part of the world, such practice, if it even exists, is undoubtedly in its infancy. Mostly, however, it remains the domain of the researcher’s private experiences, and the quality of support depends on the resources available to individual researchers (support from friends or family, and less often, professional help).

TEAM, EXPERIENCE, AND FIELD

In terms of the non-physical threat that fieldwork brings to researchers, the scale of our psychological burden largely depends on our previous life baggage and the role we insert ourselves into when entering the field. Do we even consider the effects of whether we are intimate with the community or distant from it? Of how we introduce ourselves and explain the objective of our research? How did we function in the research team? And how the impact our role in the project has on our position in the field?

Indeed, the research team plays a major role in fieldwork as a particular whole: both representatives of the academic community and support staff. The presence of each of them leaves a mark on the research process and its outcomes. As Karen Gilbert notes:

Staff members bring unique characteristics to their work on a project, which includes academic status, age, life cycle stage, gender, the connection between their life experiences and the focus of the research, and their vulnerability to the emotions being evoked by the study. They may have little if any, research experience; they are relatively unknowledgeable about the process of doing research as well as the content area being researched; they have over how their role in the process is expected to be played out. All of this may be further complicated by such factors as the research design and methods used, the particular tasks they are asked to do, the makeup of the research team and their relationship with other team members, and the content area of the study (Gilbert 2001, 149).

Being aware of this allows us to foresee both the potential threats and the benefits that reflection on the construction of the research team can deliver. In the case of research on the difficult experience of World War II in the context of the problematic Polish-Ukrainian neighborhood in the area, questions of which members of the team should record one interview or another are by no means exclusively an organizational matter (Wylegała 2013). My experience also shows that examining issues of emotional importance to the researcher in interviews with narrators with a completely different outlook on past reality (in our case, for example, researchers from Poland recording interviews with veterans of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and Ukrainian Insurgent Army (OUN-UPA)) without adequate emotional support is not productive in terms of the quality of the research. In my subjective view, it is also ethically dubious in the context of the researcher forming a relationship with the narrator.

In the “Social anthropology of the void” project, the team consisted of experienced researchers moreover with diverse academic backgrounds. The field research in Ukraine was conducted in international research teams, and the narratives were recorded in the language preferred by the narrator. It is also worth noting that an important role in the course of the research was played by custodians of memory and local amateur historians (gatekeepers). This presence had a significant effect on the emotional atmosphere generated during the fieldwork. We also paid attention to how we would reach the interviewees and which of us would record specific individuals, also considering our predispositions and resistance to stress.

In my case, the fieldwork was preceded by research on secondary materials. I analyzed video recordings made in the same area by other teams². I was also not a complete novice in field research. My Ph.D. dissertation was a methodological study in which I examined many issues concerning the research process (Kudela-Świątek 2013). In my research environment, however, fieldwork had never been regarded as a situation posing a potential personal danger. The emotional implications of such research were never discussed or planned, and this meant that my emotions in this respect came as a shock to me. By no means do I treat this as a result of cultural limitations; I see it as a lack of reflection on emotions in the field that is typical of our discipline.³ I also discerned a similarity between my difficulties and those described by Lee-Treweek, who examined

² Here I mean the Yahad-in Unum interviews conducted in Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus. I used this oral history collection, which was donated in 2009 to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

³ The idea for using group support for representatives of the social sciences appears in Anne Corden, Roy Sainsbury, Patricia Sloper & Bernard Ward’s article (Corden *et al.* 2005).

the subject of social care in the United Kingdom (Lee-Treweek 2000). While working in this team and on this project, I also decided to professionalize my knowledge of psychological first aid. In the middle of the project, I received the appropriate professional qualifications in this field. However, my therapeutic experience was still insufficient to support the team.

To begin with, I would like to note that entering the field for me is always tricky as, firstly, it entails leaving my comfort zone (literally and metaphorically). This is because of the complicated subject matter of the project concerning collaboration with the Nazis, violence, the Holocaust, and slaughter in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia. We conducted the field research in small towns in pre-war Eastern Galicia today in Ukraine (Lviv, Ternopil, and Ivano-Frankivsk districts) in 2017–2019. The infrastructure of these settlements was relatively poor, and living conditions were onerous. Secondly, as an outsider, albeit a speaker of Ukrainian, I did not always receive the narrators' trust. Thirdly, in this project, too, I had a dual role. Our team was Polish-Ukrainian, and my position in the field was constantly being negotiated within the research group and in the relationship with my narrators.

During fieldwork, I usually keep a diary in which I both make notes on the individual interviewees and write concise summaries of what is going on around them. In this research, however, my notes instead described the difficulties with adapting in the field. In summer 2017, when we first began fieldwork near Rohatyn in Ukraine, my emotional reactions were not yet so pronounced. In 2019, however, during the last research near Buchach, I usually felt a sense of unease and even despair.

This was not even about the fact that I saw human suffering and loneliness and the conditions in which some of my interlocutors lived. I am an experienced researcher, and all my previous field research was on people experiencing the trauma of communism. Nevertheless, I was researching in Eastern Galicia for the first time. I had previously known this history in extreme forms: the Volhynian massacre as an important element of Polish culture of remembrance and the patriotic activity of the OUN-UPA Ukrainian military formations in this area, which is essential for contemporary Ukrainian identity. These histories were so contradictory and mutually exclusive that I procrastinated for as long as possible before reflecting on what I might face in this area and how I would deal with it.

Initially, I had an inexorable sense of helplessness, illustrated in the research diary by hugely depressing comments. During the research, on each occasion, the inconveniences became highly onerous to me: the acrid smell of unkempt older adults, their loneliness, and the mantra-like telling of standardized stories about the war and the first decades after it. In almost every cottage for the three years of fieldwork, I heard that “our army” fought for independence, Poles were

murdered somewhere far away, and not in our village (although Grzegorz Motyka's research reveals an entirely different picture) (Motyka 2006). That the Jews left before the war, and it so happened that nobody from our small town died, while the Soviets destroyed the narrator's family. These stories drove me into a highly fatalistic depression that directly permeated my fieldwork experience. From the first day, therefore, I began to approach the fieldwork as a duty (and an unpleasant one). In other words, something I had to force myself to do, and I had to struggle to stop myself from showing this. During the fieldwork in Pidhaitsi (2018), I felt so deceived by the narrators that after the first day of research, I carefully read again on the history of the town and the surrounding villages and worried whether I understood what they were telling me. At one point, I even began to confuse the interlocutors; their stories formed a particular somewhat similar and easily identifiable narrative template. I thought at the time that scrupulous/compulsive notetaking would give me at least an illusory sense of competence. During the research in Rohatyn (2017), meanwhile, I observed that my basic reaction to the histories I heard was becoming physical and symbolic alienation from the narrators. Paradoxically, though, at the beginning of the research in this project, I had feared getting too close to the narrators as well as the burdens that we are empathizing with their suffering would bring. After completing a recording, I escaped as soon as I could into a solitary reflection on what I had heard and a comparison of the contents with the subject literature (Mędrzecki 2018).

Additionally, in some cases, I compared what I had heard with diaries in which the authors describe the years of the Second World War (Anczarski 1996). The towns and villages we visited were presented in my notes as incredibly depressing places. Writing this article, I was also surprised to discover that some of them are actually in very picturesque locations.

Like most field researchers, I previously regarded my research diary as useful but ultimately separate from the analysis proper. Since keeping a diary in the field was a depressing endeavor for me, revisiting it to write a text also seemed somewhat perverse. I had to put aside the field notes and diary for well over a year after completing the observations before returning to them and beginning the analysis. I then also realized that the record of my emotional reactions has something that contributed to my renewed understanding of narrators and made me aware of the emotional danger that I, and the entire team, experienced.

In our research team, I also observed an interesting intellectual form of venting emotions after complex field research. I suspect that our team leader, Anna Wylegała, found the fieldwork in Pidhaitsi (2018) a more challenging experience than did the others. After the research, she published a journalistic

article in *Kultura liberalna* magazine in which she explored the difficulties that she and we encountered during the fieldwork there:

Fieldwork during which you ask about death the whole time is very emotionally exhausting. On the last day in Pidhaitsi, I look for one more mass grave near the village Stare Misto, around 2 kilometers from the town center. The locals direct me further and further, and in the end, a fifty-something man who lives nearby leads me into a literal field. On the way, he tells me that the road that the Germans (and the Ukrainian police, which the man doesn't mention) drove more than a thousand Jews along on 6 June 1943 is known as "Stratnitsa" in the village, from the verb meaning "to execute." As his parents were resettled from the Lemko region after the war, he is not from here, but people told him about the murdered Jews – he heard about them in school and from neighbors. [...] We say goodbye in the middle of the field, and I remain alone. A sea of wheat surrounds the mass grave with two irregular mounds of overgrown earth growing out of it like islands, and on them, an old matzevah and a new granite slab with a memorial plaque erected a decade or so ago on the initiative of the last living Pidhaitsi Jew, who left for Israel after the war. Thunder rumbles (Wylegała 2018).

Before this, Wylegała writes extensively on the standardized narratives about the Holocaust and collaboration that we had heard. Unlike in her academic texts, however, this magazine article records the emotions that came with the research while still fresh, immediately after returning from the fieldwork. The article was very much needed by our team, as it extremely vividly and metaphorically relays the emotions that we discussed at our informal meetings and which we helped each other to cope with. This text encouraged me to explore the subject of the need for deeper reflection on a researcher's emotions during fieldwork. This was why I decided that it was appropriate to use examples from this series of fieldwork to illustrate my thoughts on the usefulness of thinking on a researcher's negative emotions in the field. I also believe that perception of our own emotions in these areas is often treated as "personal" and, therefore, superfluous and not worthy of consideration in fieldwork reports or contextualizing certain conclusions. However, in my view, "enduring" in this case is the least productive thing to do for the effect of the research itself. Sharing our experiences and ways of dealing with them is valuable for other researchers – even if it should lead others to reflect on their research methods.

NEGATIVE FEELINGS CAN BE DECEIVING

Our feelings towards the people we research are situational; they depend on what the participants say or do (or do not say or do). Sometimes we will like them, and other times not. In addition, we might feel ambivalent towards them, their words, or their actions. Occasionally, we experience emotions simultaneously. The expectation that we will have one feeling (such as comfort or feeling a bond) in all situations is unrealistic. What do we do when we lack empathy or feel hostile towards participants? What happens when a researcher in the field expresses her negative feelings towards narrators? However, rather than discussing these threats as a problem, I see the researcher's negative emotions as frequently helpful in understanding the whole story and how it is told. It is, therefore, an essential part of the research process.

Although the literature on fieldwork emphasizes building relations with participants, sometimes attempting to do so might fail, and researchers may experience negative emotions (Glesne 1989; Gaglio, Nelson and King 2006). A further factor might be conflict situations, whose participants are the researcher on the one hand and so-called gatekeepers and/or narrators on the other. In this situation, the researcher experiences annoyance or anger as a result of the participants' unexpected, unforeseen and unpredictable behavior (Rahaman and Saha 2019). It is not uncommon for participants to be not particularly encouraging towards researchers and their work. Neither is it rare for researchers' overriding reaction to this attitude to be anger (Levy 2016; Arditti *et al.* 2010; Holland 2007).

In my case, such emotions were triggered by the research participants' unwelcoming and fickle behavior and my inability to form friendly relations with the narrators. Sometimes too, their lack of engagement in the subject of the research stirred feelings of anger within me. In the fieldwork in Rohatyn (2017) and especially in Barysh (2019), I was unable to build a relationship with certain participants in the research or felt that the relationship was not genuine. In the case of Pidhaitsi (2019), a significant factor arousing negative emotions was the presence of third parties during the recording, who wanted to interfere in the narrative in various ways. I also experienced the negative consequences of the narrators' antipathy. For example, although a more extended interview had been planned, I was forced by the interlocutors or their families to cut the recording short (Pidhaitsi 2018). Therefore, I was unable to ask about everything that interested me, which also caused a sense of disappointment and irritation.

Additionally, it was difficult to meet people who were already suffering from dementia, which became apparent only during the interview. What is more, the field research in Pidhaitsi (2018), on the other hand, was frustrating for me for

another reason. I had cases there when I did not obtain the source data that I wanted because my interlocutors preferred to talk about their current situation and woes than to return to their recollections of the Second World War. This led to a sense of wasted time and energy and consequently discouraged me from continuing research in the area.

I became similarly emotional about the apathy of a narrator who, on the day of our scheduled interview in Rohatyn (2017), was unwilling to talk much, mostly remaining silent or giving one-sentence answers during the recording. A day previously, our conversation had promised to be very lively. The woman, Olga F., came from a Ukrainian family who resettled from Poland after the war. Especially the post-war years might seem likely to be the most important ones for the narrator owing to her age and her own experiences of displacement, as opposed to those told in the family.

W: Which language did you speak at work?

O: No, I spoke Ukrainian.

W: Did a lot of people speak Russian?

O: At my work, only one woman spoke Russian.

W: You said that your parents spoke their native language. What did you mean?

Was that different from your language?

O: Not that. It was a mixed language. Their kind of dialect.

W: Did your parents teach you that language?

O: I can speak it. [...] I know my dad's language. My God [...]

W: How did you learn? Did they accept you into Komsomol?

O: Yes.

W: How did that go?

O: I was a Pioneer, and I was in Komsomol... But I wasn't at the party. None of ours were.

W: And it didn't matter for Komsomol that you were resettled?

O: No, they accepted me automatically.

W: It didn't matter that you were resettled?

O: No! It didn't matter!

W: Was anyone ever thrown out of Komsomol? Anyone you knew?

O: I don't remember that. I don't have anything like that to say. I wasn't interested...⁴

⁴ Olga F., recorded in Barysh in July 2017.

Analyzing this recording after some time has passed, I now perceive that the narrator was building her identity on the experience of resettlement, which constitutes a significant factor distinguishing her from other people. She is also active in a local folk band, whose objective is to spread traditions brought to the new place of residence from Poland. All the topics I discuss with her concern those aspects of life that are not important for her, which is why they were not previously the subject of her reflection, and during the interview with me, she seems surprised and flummoxed by my questions. She soon becomes bored by the interview, which inexorably nears its conclusion. But this is not to say that the narrative should be seen as representative of the whole group.

On the contrary: the negative emotions that accompany this final phase of the conversation indicate that the narrator is focusing from all her biographical experience on selected events that reinforce her image of a displaced Ukrainian (the lack of differences between her and the local population in Rohatyn). Previously, the subject of Poles hiding from attacks from the local population comes up, and Olga clearly differentiates Poles and Ukrainians – although it might seem in her case as someone born in and resettled from Poland that this division would not be so obvious. In other words, the assessment of past reality and social relations in the 1940^s is presented absolutely from the point of view of the contemporary narrative dominant in Ukrainian public discourse. The emotional tension that develops between us makes it easy to discern this and gain a deeper understanding of the fact that the past is recreated “here and now” and should satisfy the narrator’s current needs. Only to an extent, meanwhile, can it fulfill the researcher’s needs.

EMPATHY ≠ SYMPATHY

Adilur Rahaman and Shuvo Sava, who conducted a study on the negative emotions of researchers during their fieldwork, show that anger can be an inevitable and justified reaction during such work. However, a researcher’s anger can influence the research process in many ways. During fieldwork, the researcher might begin to doubt the importance of the subject and grow in antipathy towards the research participants. She might selectively approach the collected materials and reject the data whose collection was accompanied by negative emotions (Rahaman and Saha 2019). In my situation, the experience of anger and the detachment from my own negative emotions that came with it blocked my analytical work on the research material for many months.

Another important aspect of experiencing negative emotions during my fieldwork was the belief that I am not sufficiently empathetic (which I understood at the time as a synonym for “sympathetic”) towards my narrators and the

resulting sense of shame and guilt towards them. Guilt and shame proved to be more productive than anger for analyzing the source material, as they made it clear to me that sympathy is not the only key to understanding the interlocutor's experience. As I have said, it is not difficulties with empathy or compassion with the interviewee that is the issue, but the whole spectrum of negative emotions described here that I felt in relation with him or her. I also think that it is challenging to admit to feeling anger and antipathy during fieldwork. Relating situations from fieldwork in which the researcher feels anger towards the narrator is rare in anthropological studies. In my experience, liking the studied community or some of its representatives is unnecessary for understanding their story. While carrying out the fieldwork for the "Social anthropology of the void" project, in fact, for the first time, I felt a large gap and lack of strong bonds with my interlocutors. If I am completely honest with myself, animosity was the dominant emotion. However, awareness of the negative emotions and their source also helped me analyze the recorded memories.

In this sense, I would like to give particular attention to a situation that took place in Barysh (Ternopil District) in July 2019. This village was especially significant on our field map on account of the monument unveiled in 2012 in the local cemetery commemorating the 135 Polish families that died there in February 1945. My feelings in this place were rather contradictory. At this point, I wanted to focus on one of the stories I heard from Petro, one of my narrators.

In Polish historiography, Barysh is known mostly for the so-called "Barysh atrocity" committed by OUN-UPA on the local Polish population living on the Mazury settlement. In 1944, after the Ternopil District was occupied by the Red Army, Polish men began to be called up to the army, leaving villages without self-defense. In their place, *Istriebitielne bataliony* (Destruction battalions, colloquially "destroyers") were called up. The "destroyers" post in Barysh consisted of more than a hundred soldiers, fifty of whom had previously belonged to the Polish Home Army. The unit's commander was Ivanenko, a Ukrainian from the other side of the Zbruch River, and his deputy was the Pole Józef Krowicki. The "destroyers" from Barysh actively fought against the Ukrainian nationalist underground. The first massacre in Barysh came in January 1945, when 21 people were killed in the Tysów hamlet. On the night of 5/6 February 1945, the Mazury settlement in Barysh was attacked by a UPA kurin' (unit) led by Yaroslav "Bystry" Belinsky, murdering the local population without heed to sex or age and burning the buildings down. The UPA received support from the Ukrainian civilian population, who looted the Poles' possessions. According to Henryk Komański and Szczepan Siekierka, the village was defended by only some of the local "destroyers" (some witnesses say ten), as most of them had been summoned to Buchach the day before. On Plebańska

Street, the attackers encountered fierce resistance from the “destroyers” and the local residents. Some of the population took refuge in the brick buildings of the school and church. The massacre of the population and fighting carried on for around five hours, after which the UPA kurin’ retreated. It is estimated that a total of 135 Polish families living in Barysh were killed (Komański and Siekiera 2006, 147). In the first Polish dispatches, meanwhile, Ukrainian losses were estimated at several dozen dead and injured, which Grzegorz Motyka considers being an inflated figure (Motyka 2006, 408). The Mazury settlement was completely burnt down. Within days, the surviving Poles buried the dead and moved to Buchach, from where they were resettled in Poland’s Recovered Territories.

Petro and my conversation covered various subjects of the relations between Poles, Ukrainians, and Jews in his home village, but when my narrator began to talk about the murder of the local Poles, unexpectedly to myself, I stepped out of the researcher’s role and began to press him, asking questions that pointed to my emotional engagement. He was unable to maintain a neutral position. I also avoided referring to this atrocity directly, which is why I refer to the fire in Mazury:

W: I’ve been told there was a fire here in Mazury?

P: A fire?!

W: Yes, that the cottages were burnt down...

P: That was where Czeremszyna Street is. That’s the street you walked along to come to me. It was once Czeremszyna Street. The Poles were supposed to kill the Ukrainians because two-thirds were Poles, and Ukrainians were one-third. They were supposed to massacre the Ukrainians. And the Ukrainians soon found out about that; someone informed them. They got together and burnt down Mazury. Because there were only Poles in Mazury. Only one Ukrainian. Maybe two lived on the fringes. But they burnt them. Around 120 Polish people were killed then. And then they left for Poland. They got together and went, some by horse, some by foot, but they set off for the station in Buchach, and from there, they were taken to Poland.

W: Where were the people buried?

P: In the local cemetery.

W: Who buried them?

P: They buried them themselves. The Poles did. The peasants from the local villages got together and destroyed them because they would have killed all the Ukrainians. Just like they did in Volhynia. There were lots of Poles there! But who showed you where I live?

W: Mr. X showed me how to get to you, and I found you. Did you perhaps know any of those men who went after the Poles?

P: I knew them, but they're gone now. My eldest brother, Ilko G. The boys went to Germany, and he went to the UPA. He was in the Carpathians for two years. The people let us know he was alive. And when they killed his commander, he came home from there on foot. In Barysh they massacred all the peasants who were hiding in houses. The Russians caught him in the neighboring village and killed him.

W: You said the men who went after Mazury are gone. Did they die?

P: Sure. But they were Ukrainian patriots. And the Russians sent them to prisons and killed them...

W: Did someone help the Poles when Mazury was burning?

P: Like who?!

W: I don't know. Maybe some other people, other Poles?

P: No, there was no one here to help.

W: Nobody helped them: the cottages were burnt down, and they were fleeing where they could, and nobody helped them?

P: No, the Poles wanted to kill me too...⁵

I deliberately quoted a lengthy passage to illustrate how the tension between us gradually increased: my questions become increasingly insistent, and Petro's responses less concise. The tension begins to increase when the narrator cites contradictory sequences ("the murdered Poles went to Poland," "the murdered Poles were buried by Poles in the local cemetery"). This is particularly visible at the moment when, after an emotionless narrative about the murder of the residents of the entire Mazury settlement in the village of Barysh, my interlocutor calls the people responsible "Ukrainian patriots." From this point, my questions are no longer considered and are characterized by emotions. The transcription softens our tension; on the recording, it is unsparingly clear how I am short of breath and ask the next question in detachment from the previous related story about the razed Mazury settlement in 1945. I cannot believe that this could have taken place and that those responsible were guided by a feeling of love for their homeland. Later on, the interview was even worse, and I ended it after almost an hour, utterly frustrated that I had wasted this opportunity. When analyzing the transcription meanwhile, I noticed contents that the emotions during the interview disguised: the internal contradictions in the narrative. The narrator seemingly wants to come across as a hero and therefore uses phrases suggesting the need to defend a territory from an intruder (although he is speaking about locals, the people he grew up with). He also uses verbs in the third

⁵ Petro G., recorded in Barysh in June 2019.

person (in Ukrainian, the narrative takes place in the neuter, which adds points to the narrator's emotional distance from the contents), as if he wanted to cut himself off from the history. As if it did not affect him and was not part of his biographical experience. Indeed, using active forms, in this case, could connect him to the Ukrainians he talks about. Furthermore, the fact that he is reproducing local folklore is indicated by the figures he cites. In the quoted passage, he gives the number 120, but this precision is lacking elsewhere. His heroic narrative is also supposed to be made credible by knowing the perpetrators personally. But was this really the case? Perhaps this is simply the way the murders in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia should be spoken about nowadays? My questions are not supposed to undermine the credibility of the dramatic events that took place in Barysh in winter 1945 but to show how I was led by anger towards my interlocutor. Furthermore, I did not reflect on the importance of accepting the presence of negative emotions in the field and learning to deal with them without damaging oneself and the quality of the research. At the time, the more I immersed myself in the field, the more negative emotions I experienced.

And here, in Barysh in Ternopil District in July 2019, I have had my most challenging experience in emotional terms. One of my gatekeepers was the daughter of my narrator, Olga K., who took me to see places important for the locality, culminating in the village cemetery, where, in 2012, a privately funded monument to people murdered by the UPA had been unveiled. The content of the inscription contains no information either about the perpetrators or the reasons for the crime. The symbolic memorial is meant only to commemorate the fact that the Mazury settlement in the village was burned down in February 1945, as wrote previously. Moments before, I had spent a pleasant afternoon in the company of my guide's mother, who told me about her brother, who fought in OUN-UPA units. My strongest emotion was the worry that I would be rejected by the gatekeeper guiding me around the local cemetery. A sense of shame then replaced this that I had misled my guide and her mother by not revealing my true emotions and feelings about the contents I had heard.

According to the *American Psychology Association* (APA) dictionary, "guilt" refers to a feeling that results from an action that may be harmful to others (VandenBos 2015). This is a terrible emotional state because the social actor wants to take back his inappropriate action. In the field research, the sense of guilt comes from the following sources: first, the researcher might feel that she is obtaining data from her narrators in a dishonest way; second, the researcher has a sense of helplessness dictated by the awareness that she is interfering in the participants' lives, but is unable to help them (Hubbard, Backett-Milburn and Kemmer 2001; Johnson 2009). According to the definition in the APA as a mentioned earlier dictionary, however, "shame" is an unpleasant feeling that

appears as a result of recognizing one's shame in one's behavior, circumstances, or actions (VandenBos 2015). In methodological literature, there have been numerous attempts to determine the source of shame in fieldwork. For example, Amy Pollard identified the following causes of shame among Ph.D. students conducting ethnographic field research: sporadic digressions from the fieldwork, depression, frequent returns home, and spending time with the local population in the field (becoming overfamiliar) (Pollard 2009). In my case, meanwhile, the source of shame and the sense of guilt during this fieldwork was situations in which my relationships with the narrators were complicated from the outset by different perspectives on past situations. In this situation, my own views were not revealed in the narrator's presence and were only manifested in weak engagement in the interview. In this way, I felt discomfort at the sense of deceiving my interlocutors.

Jean Duncombe and Julie Jessop also wrote about the ethical aspect of the relationship between researcher and narrator, discerning the danger that the positive familiarity created could be abused. When operating in an area of profoundly intimate topics, when the honesty of the interlocutor plays a decisive role in discovering unknown (or relatively undisclosed or seldom disclosed) aspects of the past, "doing rapport" is confused with creating "fake friendship" with the interlocutors, feigned for the purposes of the research (Duncombe and Jessop 2002). My experience shows that a similar danger also exists in work on traumatic experience (and especially one that places the researcher and narrator on two different sides of the conflict), in which the emotions, important as they may be, are also difficult to contain.

During the interview with Olga K., I tried paraphrasing the questions I had asked earlier on. In the beginning, Olga's narrative was about how she remembers her early childhood, which fell at the time of German occupation. She also told me about her brother and about having been forced to hide to avoid transportation to Siberia. During this history, the story about the burnt-down Polish settlement Mazury first came up:

W: Mazury, where is that?

O: Oh, there. Where the street by the vegetable garden is, it was only Poles living there mainly. That street was burnt down afterward. They killed many people.

W: When was that? When was it burnt down?

O: I don't know. In '45 or '46? Maybe '45. Because in '47, they transported people to Siberia, those who were suspected [of collaboration with the Ukrainian partisans]. And it was before that. They burnt that street down then, and also Kleban' Street, by the school.

W: Do you remember what it was like?

O: What do I remember? I remember it was burnt. We were sitting at home and didn't know what would happen next. Whether to go out or not? Some men were walking around, shooting. And then the next day, the bodies were collected, a ditch was dug at the cemetery, and they were buried there.

W: Did many people die there?

O: I don't know exactly how many. But I tell you, we were suspected. And I hid so they wouldn't send me to Siberia. And we succeeded. They didn't send us to Siberia.⁶

Towards the end of our interview, I wanted to return to this subject and tried to get closer to the narrator. My language and way of asking questions, not entirely consciously, were even adapted to her. Nevertheless, I felt terrible about this. My negative emotions were connected to the fact that I wanted to please the narrator so much that I tuned myself for her as one tune, a musical instrument for an artist.

W: You told me that you got on well with your neighbors. Why do you think Poles and Ukrainians fought each other? If you say that they got on well?

O: Well, they used to get on well. And after the war, for some reason, they started to fight each other. How should I know why? One side wanted this to be Poland, and the others for it to be Ukraine. That was why.

W: Were there also Ukrainians who helped the Poles to save themselves?

O: Why shouldn't there be? There were some too.

W: Because I was told that when they burned down Mazury, people were afraid to help...

O: But when Mazury was on fire, nobody helped. Nobody could. They were shooting there. The only ones who survived were those who managed to survive.

W: You know why I'm asking? I just think it must be terrifying when everything around you is on fire...

O: Back then, everything was terrifying. If someone saw cottages burning, he was scared they'd burn down his next. It was terrifying. Why wouldn't it be when it was?⁷

An additional difficulty in this relationship was the fact that Olga and her daughter shared their modest meal with me. This only served to reinforce my strong sense of disloyalty towards the community I was researching. I also wanted our trip to the cemetery to end soon so that I could join the rest of my

⁶ Olga K., recorded in Barysh in June 2019.

⁷ Olga K., recorded in Barysh in June 2019.

team and stop thinking for a moment about what I had heard and seen that day in Barysh. I did not cheat Olga because I just said nothing. I thought it would be best if I just didn't say that I knew what the plaque in the cemetery commemorated. But over time, I felt ashamed in front of these unknown victims buried in the Barysh cemetery.

Here, too, the sense of guilt/shame is the result of a reflective understanding of the researcher-subject relationship and the realization that it had an instrumental character in this particular case. This situational context also made me realize how significant reflexivity and autoethnography are in our work. My point is that, despite being entangled in complex assemblages of ideas and prejudices and different ways of perceiving the past reality by Poles and Ukrainians, not to sink into pessimistic statements about mutual aversion.

As Marek Pawlak writes, being in the field, we become the subject of our research and observations – we experience similar global processes as our informants, and we construct strategies for negotiating them, just like them. Therefore, the autoethnographic perspective is an excellent starting point for the problematization of existing ideas that are based on the ideology and power relations that are played out in our localities (Pawlak 2018, 103). I also think that Olga and her family do not hide the truth about the fire in Mazury (as you can see in the quoted fragment of the recording). They believe what they told me.

I graduated from high school in Ukraine in the earliest period of its independence. This is important to know because, in the last decade of the 1990^s, the patriotic narrative of the OUN-UPA was only emerging in opposition to the Soviet description of World War II. And when I started studying history at the Jagiellonian University in the early 2000^s, my knowledge about Poles and Ukrainians' difficult neighborhoods was very general and non-ideological. Nevertheless, at the University, I used the knowledge gained in the process of school education. On the other hand, the literature and sources that I encountered during my studies recreated my perception of this issue. However, Olga and her family do not be able to confront the official state narrative about the Barysh fire with any other source. The desire to work through difficult emotions (shame and guilt) forced me to self-reflect on what elements the narrative of human experience consists of. Therefore, autoethnographic self-observation allowed to cool down post-field emotions and see the contradiction between how Olga's daughter tells about the personal experience of her mother and how she tells an official story in the local site of memory in the cemetery.

TO BE, OR NOT TO BE, THAT IS THE QUESTION

Sherryl Kleinman and Martha A. Copp observed that one of the ways of dealing with difficult emotions during fieldwork is to ignore or suppress them (Kleinman and Copp 1993, 33). In our culture, too, controlling one's emotions assumes that they are intellectualized. In this case, the researcher is supposed to concentrate on the content of the narrative, engaging in it in such a way as to make emotions less important. In my view, this is close to Hammersley and Atkinson's aforementioned concept of retaining a marginal position during fieldwork. This views such a position not as an attempt to objectify the fieldwork – which, I suspect, is impossible – but as an opportunity for a common-sense approach to qualitative research, mainly geared towards protecting the researcher's mind from the burdens of fieldwork. The marginal position, therefore, means maintaining a balance between closeness and remaining an outsider regarding the studied community/narrator. It is also not easy to maintain, as it requires the researcher to simultaneously occupy a position in the abstract world of academic research and one in the actual research field. This is essential to avoid the stress that comes with the fieldwork becoming chronic stress, ultimately resulting in burnout. However, is it possible in every situation? Is it an equally good strategy for all of us?

My position is that when planning fieldwork, it is necessary to anticipate researchers' emotional burden in the same way as every other risk in the project (budgetary, concerning weak infrastructure, etc.). Planning costs for funding psychological support for researchers working with complex topics should be standard in projects whose methodology envisages emotional interaction with another person. It is also to be expected that some field researchers will sometimes have to be replaced by other people on account of emotional needs. It is also worth considering extending the working time for the individuals who later transcribe the recordings – particularly as when doing so, they have to listen to the recording several times, which can mean renewed trauma in the case of traumatic descriptions of experiences. These, I believe, are overlooked items in the budget of every project, but this does not mean that we should not talk about them.

It is also essential to look into the possibility of sensitizing researchers working in the field to what they might encounter, for instance, by looking for people who have conducted fieldwork in this area. Such meetings could be informal but are necessary, as we still do not have institutional forms of support, while fieldwork reports discussing the emotional aspect of the research are still a rarity. I believe that it is important to encourage members of a research team to write down and/or articulate their difficulties resulting from working with a particular interviewee or subject area.

In the project “Social anthropology of the void,” we at first intuitively began using resources available within the research group to deal with the difficult emotions caused by the recordings. The research team’s periodical meetings also envisaged discussion of our difficult experiences and allowed the members to offer each other support. This interaction within the team also proved helpful for the analysis of the recordings and helped escape the impasse in the fieldwork.

Gilbert also emphasizes the necessity of a professional psychotherapist and experienced supervisor participating in such meetings. She argues that such supervisory meetings can provide the research team members with a specific structure for discussing their thoughts and feelings about the research process. During them, members may also discuss their changing view of the subject they are researching. This can allow them to reinterpret the data gathered during the research while also allowing them to interact with each other. If the team members feel overwhelmed by emotions, it can also be essential to demonstrate immediate psychological support literally. The participation of the therapist and supervisor provides a structure to this process, guaranteeing the research team the necessary support (Gilbert 1998).

In their field research Anne Corden, Roy Sainsbury, Patricia Sloper & Bernard Ward described the exploratory use of professional therapeutic support by social researchers working on a sensitive topic. Talking to recently bereaved parents about the financial implications of their child’s death was expected to be demanding work, and the research design included access to an independent psychotherapeutic service. Using this kind of professional support is rare within the general social research community, and it is helpful to reflect on the process. The primary focus of their study is the potential impact on field researchers’ wellbeing. The analyst who helped the team concluded that thinking about what was happening for the individual researchers and what was happening for the group during the research supported the researchers to keep the boundaries around their own agendas as individuals and as a group of field researchers working together. In retrospect, the therapist felt that he would want to be much more specific about what he had to offer and suggest a series of group sessions rather than individual sessions in offering a support group to future researchers. He would wish the group to meet regularly during the research (Corden *et al.*, 2005).

I would also add that professional support will minimize the risk resulting from the excessive focus on the research participants’ emotions. Non-professional/independent reflection on one’s emotions can become unproductive when it is an objective in itself. On the one hand, emotions are indispensable for understanding the experiences of a person we get to know in an oral history, but

on the other, concentrating exclusively on them cuts the researcher off from the subject of the research. Ghassan Hage notes that examining others and their emotions from the perspective of one's own identity and own feelings can also lead to only knowing oneself in others:

Psychoanalysis has shown us that we are in many ways "other," or, as Julia Kristeva has put it, "strangers" to ourselves. In this sense, if reflecting on our emotions is a reflection on this "strangeness" or otherness contained within us, reflections on the emotions of the anthropologist can only enhance the general anthropological project of deepening our knowledge of cultural otherness in all its manifestations. If this is not kept in mind, talking about emotions still carries with it the danger of making "knowing the self" a substitute for knowing otherness (Hage 2009).

Nevertheless, I am confident that the emotions that came with the fieldwork, scrupulously described in the report, are very important for other researchers. They should therefore be discussed as given and generally unspoken rules of emotions in the researched setting. Indeed, sharing negative experiences in fieldwork methodology satisfies various needs of researchers. These include determining theoretical conceptions (Davies 2010), generating a therapeutic effect for oneself (Allan and Arber 2018), and offering support in the form of training for other researchers (McGarrol 2017).

Lee-Treweek also maintains that when researchers begin to reflect on the reasons why they felt unwelcome, distanced, or angry, and how their experiences relate to their expectations before beginning the fieldwork, there is often a higher level of understanding of how others experience the world around us and their assessment of past reality (Lee-Treweek 2000). When we also share our emotions within the project team, we also have the opportunity to gain an insight into the comparison of the participants' emotional reactions with our own, as we encounter people of diverse sensitivity and emotional responses who question our own attitudes; people with a different biographical experience and socialization.

CONCLUSIONS

Emotional threats should be seen as a universal but also developmental experience for researchers that can have serious consequences. Experiencing this form of threat entails personal costs, and when organizing and planning qualitative research, we should treat it seriously. We must, therefore, think about the risk that the environment naturally brings to participants and the way a researcher experiences emotional dangers, which, even if unpleasant, can provide an insight into the social life of the place.

While appreciating the insight given by negative emotions for understanding a narrative, researchers should not forget their own limitations and vent various emotional tensions resulting from the emotional burden that comes from involvement in negative emotions. When planning fieldwork, I think we can make use of the experiences of other professions involving working with human experience and emotions. It is essential to create spaces and mutual support networks to allow researchers to work through their difficult emotions (supervisory groups). Although these strategies seem simple, in reality, it is necessary to create support networks, and asking for additional support is not always easy. Even working in a harmonious team does not always mean that informal support will be available where needed. Factors such as the timetable, frantic work to complete the project on time and budget, and relations between the co-authors of the research hardly lend themselves to pausing to reflect on the emotions of the individual researchers participating in the project. However, a minimal amount of support recognizing the emotional dimension of research on social life can allow emotionally difficult situations to change from barely surmountable obstacles into insightful data gathered in the field.

In this way, and through a narrative and analysis of a wide range of negative emotions – an approach absent in mainstream literature – I attempted here to encapsulate the negative emotions that accompany fieldwork on the problematic past. This is a theoretical contribution to understanding negative emotions in fieldwork as such and to examining this specific field from a different perspective. In a certain sense, one realizes that narrators living in an information bubble created by the dominant version of memory politics do not want (or do not have the resources) to verify or confront the place where they live in the Second World War or post-war years. The subject of collaboration with the Nazis and shared responsibility for wartime atrocities is a difficult one and therefore consigned to oblivion, sealed by the belief that the past must be left alone to move on – which is a form not so much of escape as a safe hiding place from the complex emotions, shame and embarrassment caused by being reminded of the difficult past.

In this way, negative emotions in the field appeared mainly in a situational context and were very intense, but I denied and intellectualized them. When analyzed sometime later, however, I interpret the same recordings entirely differently. I see this as a certain chance for recordings that I initially deemed unsuccessful. Firstly, in the future, when I find myself in a similar situation, I will be aware of the situational as well as deceptive nature of the negative emotions I am feeling. Secondly, I will be more careful in approaching the analysis of identity narratives as less or more representative of a particular group.

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WHAT I USUALLY DO NOT WRITE ABOUT MY FIELDWORK:
NEGATIVE EMOTIONS IN RESEARCH ON THE EXPERIENCE
OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR IN EASTERN GALICIA

SUMMARY

The author's position is that emotional experience during fieldwork can be both a punishment and a blessing. From one point of view, sharing and empathizing with interlocutors' experiences can be a burden for the researcher, and it is, therefore, worth considering what we can do to deal with this; which and whose help we can use in this process. On the other hand, forming a profound understanding with our interlocutors (known in psychology as a rapport) ensures insight into their experience, giving us a basis to interpret the story they tell us.

This article aims to speak of the difficult emotions that the author experienced during her fieldwork in Ukraine within the "Social Anthropology of Filling the Void: Poland and Ukraine after World War II" project. Here she also discusses recordings that she collected personally during the fieldwork. The author also presents the main fields of study on difficult emotions experienced by a researcher during fieldwork before discussing several examples from her research practice. Finally, she uses these observations and reflections to draw valuable conclusions for the future of psychological support for field researchers.

Keywords: negative feelings, fieldwork, trauma, World War II, oral history