

## **Creating a Good Balance between Detachment and Involvement**

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How can we succeed in creating the necessary balance between detachment and involvement (necessary not only for good research) in participatory research on sexualized violence? When conducting research with parties concerned of sexualized violence, we are constantly confronted with the problem of how to show sympathy and understanding in our interaction with the interviewees on the one hand, while at the same time maintaining the critical distance that is needed when reflecting on their individual and collective self-presentations, and formulating questions in the interview. We remembered Elie Wiesel's (1979:241) observation on the violence inherent in modes of knowing in relation to Shoah survivors: "What do they feel when you tell them their story? When you claim to know more about it than they?" How could I bridge the chasm between "this woman who is writing about others, making them vulnerable" and those who are "more likely to be the ethnographized"? And "[w]hat, as she blithely goes about her privilege of doing research, is the story she isn't willing to tell" (Behar 1996:27; 20)? In this contribution, we will try to tell this story. We are faced with the same dilemmas when analyzing the interviews or other kinds of data material as for example case documentations of sexualized violence. Thus, in the case of analyzing different sorts of data material on sexualized violence against children and youth, we were aware of a tendency to identify with them and their fate, and consequently failed to understand the attitude of their relatives and / or professional helpers, who not seldomly exclude them from their social community.