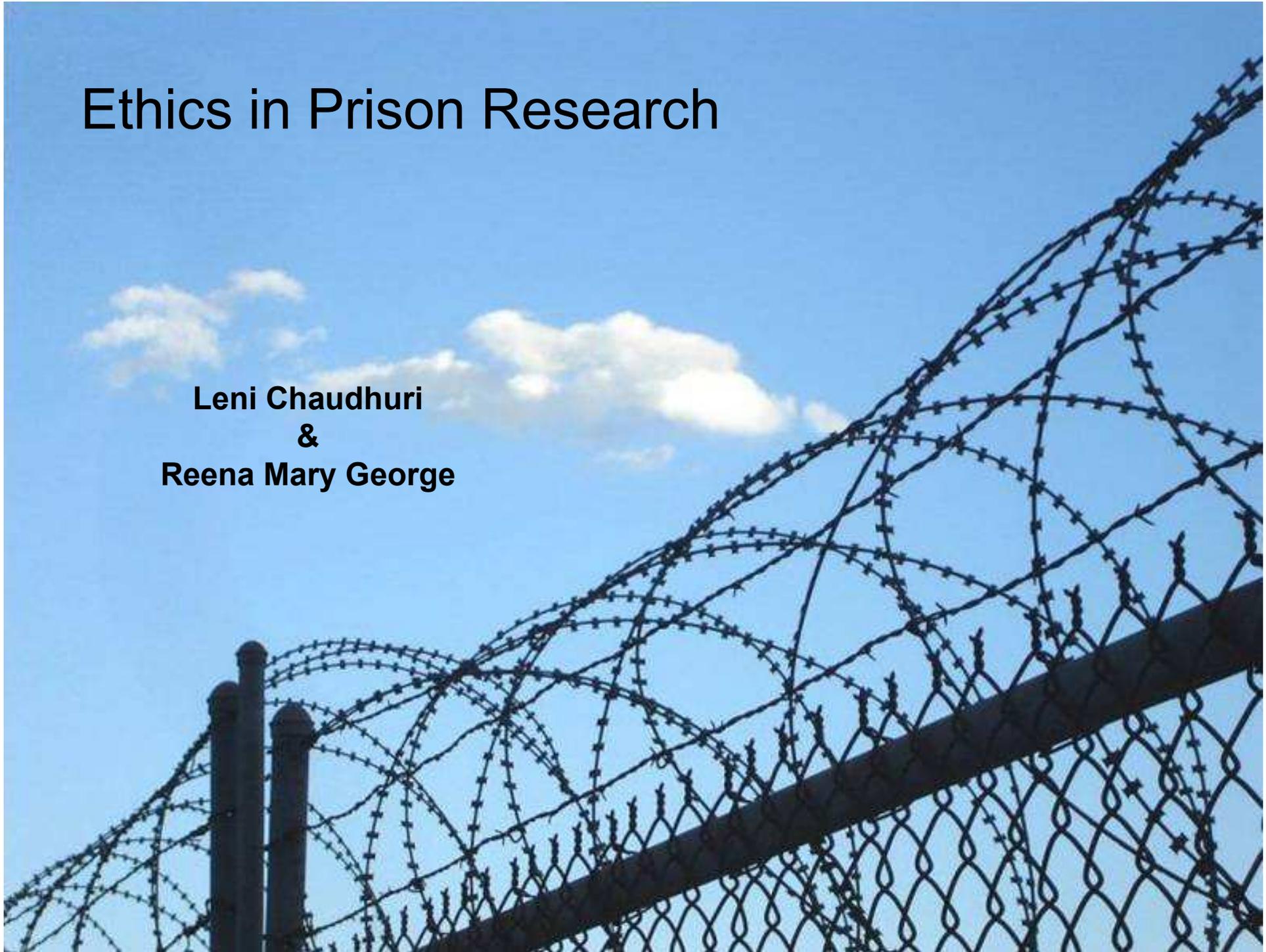


Ethics in Prison Research

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&
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Background

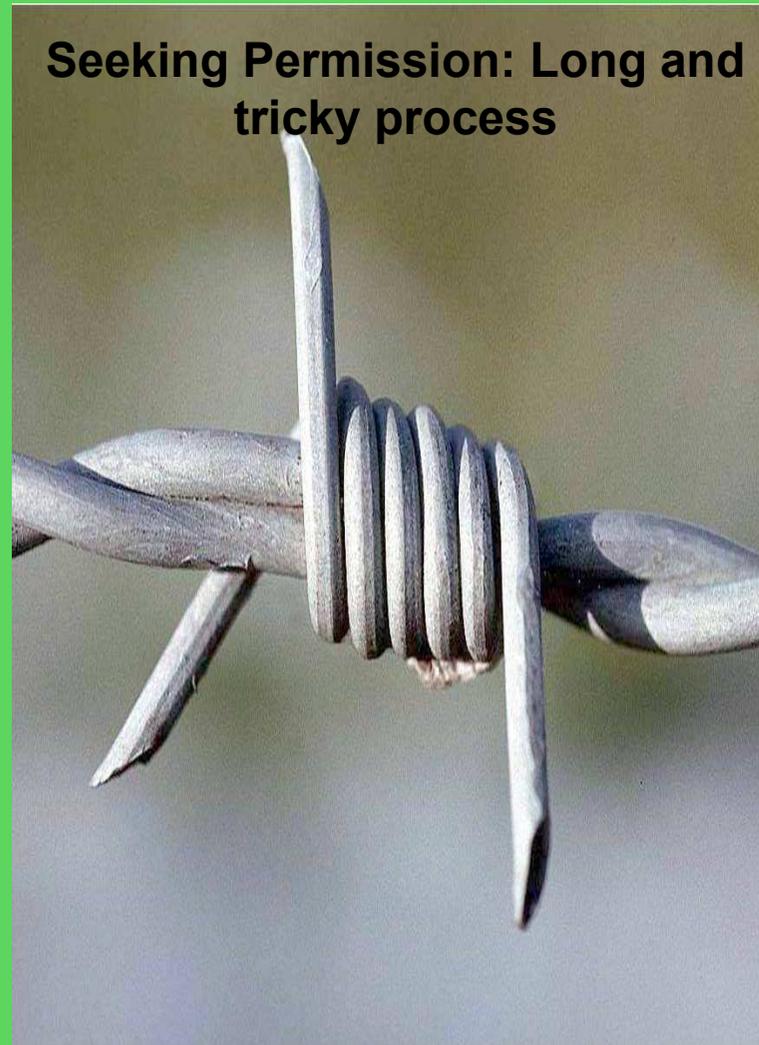
A primary study was conducted on health and human rights issues affecting women in prisons in Maharashtra. The presentation brings out the ethical issues which emerged while conducting the study.



Methodology

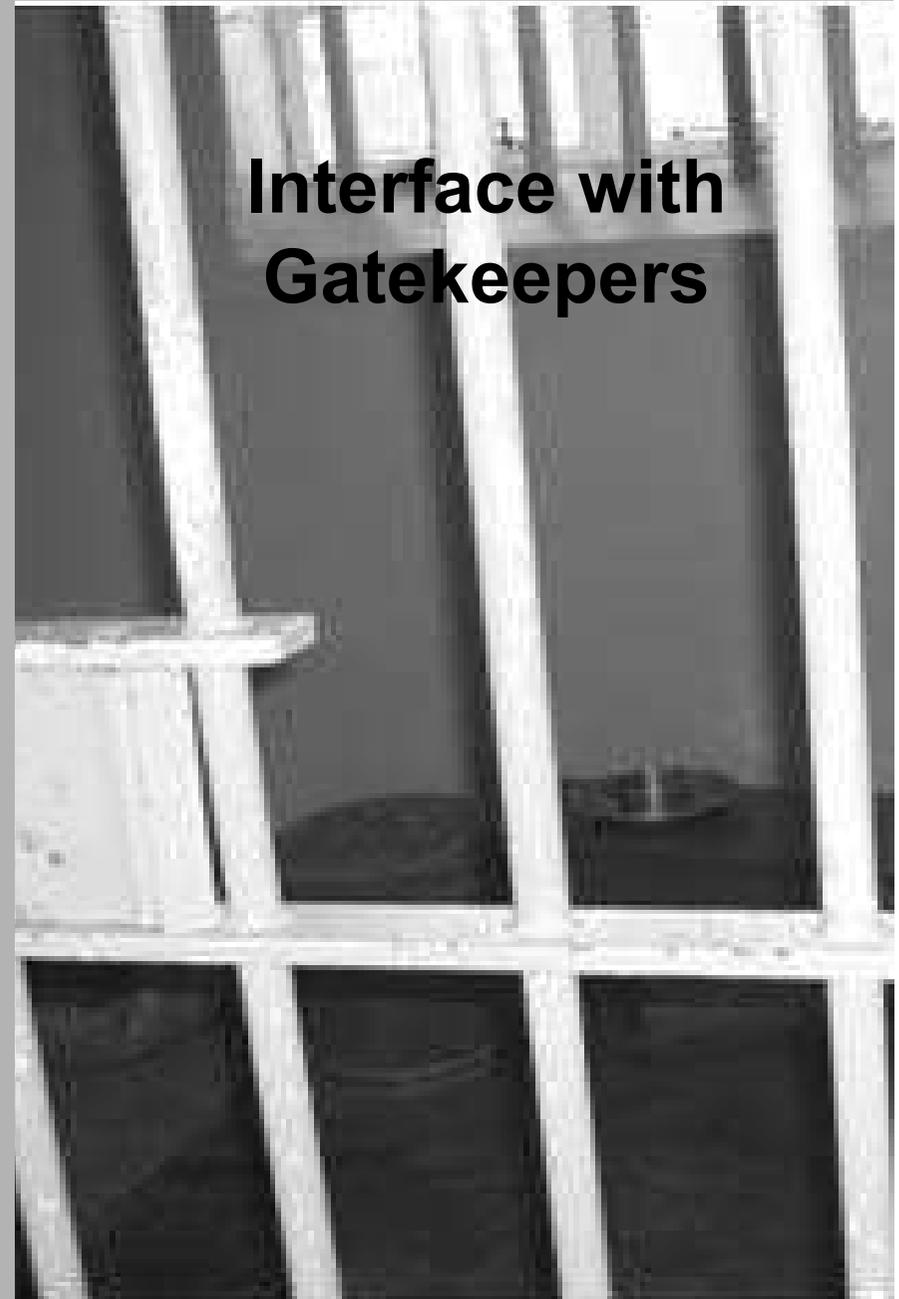
- Key informant interviews with a randomly selected sample of women prisoners
- Interviews with Jail Authorities and Medical Professionals
- Observation of jail infrastructure

- Before commencing the study permission was required from the following places:
- Institutional Ethics Committee
- Ministry of Home Affairs- IG Prisons
- DIG of each administrative region
- Superintendent of each prison
- Warden of the concerned prison (on all days of data collection)



“Formal permission was just one small step”

- Caveat in permission granted
- Gaining physical access was the biggest practical challenge
- Conditions put forth by the prison authorities
- Problems in conducting random sampling
- Mundane and trivial restrictions posed by the jail staff
- Controversial clauses in the “prison manual”

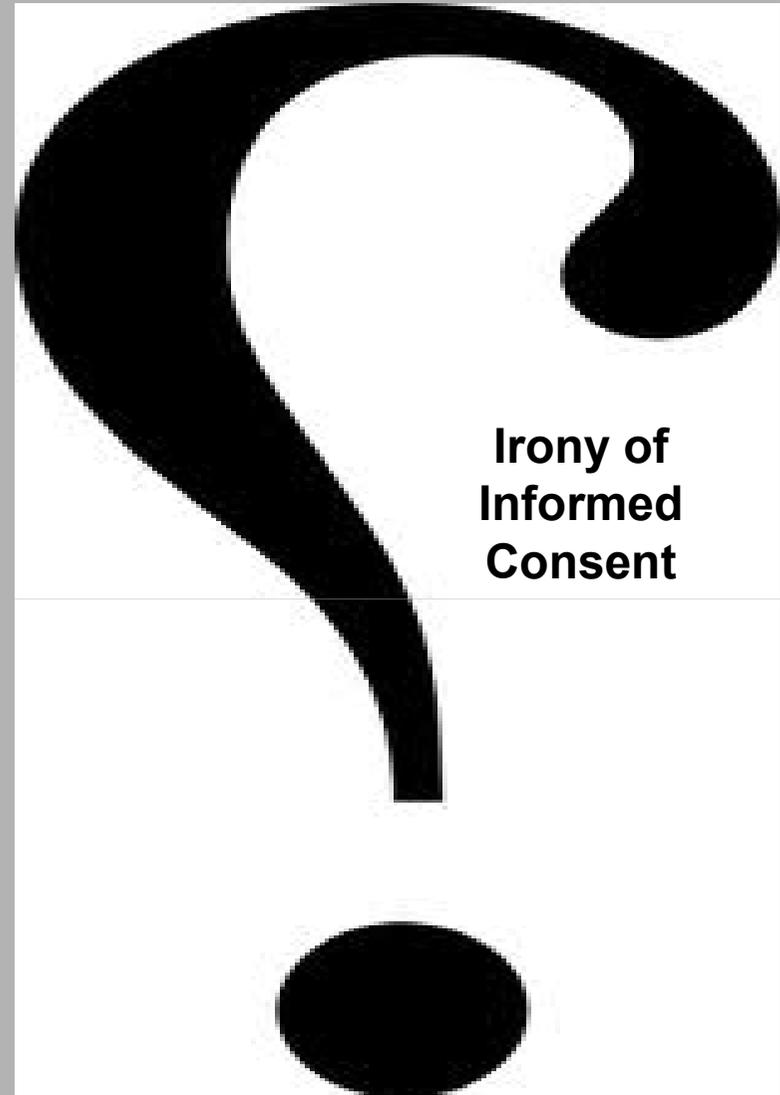


- Challenges in conducting random sampling
- Challenges in providing physical anonymity to the respondents
- Challenges posed due to lack of physical space, jail rules, standards proposed in the prison manual etc.
- Tricky negotiations with the gate keepers.
- Dealing with Gate keepers other than prison staff: experience with warders.

**The challenge of ensuring
anonymity and
confidentiality**



- Informed consent from a captive population- a major challenge
- Lack of decision making power among respondents
- Coercion by prison authorities



Access to sensitive information

- Access to information beyond the purview of the study
- Information about exploitation, sexual assault, physical harm

Every prison study will face certain challenges which cannot be sometimes foreseen, however, some of the ethical issues raised in this can be used in further researches done in Prisons in an Indian setting.

