

19 October 2017

Ethical Approval and Risk Assessment Form for Sociological Research

To be returned to Odette Rogers at the Department of Sociology Office BEFORE UNDERTAKING YOUR FIELDWORK.

FIELDWORK CAN COMMENCE ONLY AFTER APPROVAL IS GRANTED.

If you will be undertaking any sociological research that involves gathering information or data from human participants, or involves working away from Cambridge, you must discuss the ethical implications and risks of the research with your supervisor (*psychological research has its own parallel ethical approval procedures*).

The first part of this form, ‘ETHICS’, should be completed for all research involving human participants, or if the research raises other ethical issues. The second part of this form, ‘RISK’, should be completed by all researchers.

**PART A: ETHICS**

Both the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), and the British Sociological Association (BSA), publish guidelines for research with human participants. You may find it useful to consult these guidelines, which can be found at the following webpages (accurate as of 5 May 2016).

*ESRC Framework for Research Ethics*

<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/files/funding/guidance-for-applicants/esrc-framework-for-research-ethics-2015/>

*British Sociological Association: Equality and Diversity*

<http://www.britsoc.co.uk/equality/>

You can check whether your research requires approval from the NHS (National Health Service) Research Ethics Committee on the following webpage (accurate as of 5 May 2016).

*NHS Research Ethics Committee Approval*

<http://www.hra-decisiontools.org.uk/ethics/>

Ethical approval is first of all considered by the Sociology Ethics Committee, who will either approve a proposal or refer it to a University Ethics Committee for further consideration.

**PLEASE FILL IN THE FOLLOWING TABLE:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Your name**: | **Title of research**: |
| **Date (DD/MM/YYYY):** | **Status** (please circle one or delete inapplicable):   1. Academic 2. PhD student 3. MPhil student 4. Dissertation undergraduate |
| **Supervisor** (if appropriate): | **DoS/Faculty Advisor** (if appropriate): |

|  |
| --- |
| Summary of your research Please outline the main research questions you intend to address, the research design you propose to use, and details of all research instruments and procedures to be deployed. Please attach any relevant documents, such as questionnaires.  **PLEASE ALSO SUBMIT A COPY OF THE INFORMED CONSENT FORM YOU MAY BE ASKING YOUR PARTICIPANTS TO COMPLETE (a sample form is included at the end of this document).** |

**PART B: RISK**

**THIS PART OF THE FORM MUST BE COMPLETED BEFORE YOU UNDERTAKE ANY FIELDWORK.**

Before undertaking fieldwork, researchers should consider carefully (1) what hazards the researcher and participants may face during the research; (2) the risks posed by these hazards; and (3) what steps can be taken to minimise these risks.

Of course, research cannot be risk-free, and it is important that researchers consider what hazards might arise in the course of their fieldwork, and their likelihood (both for their own safety, and for the safety of their participants), and then consider what sensible and proportionate steps can be taken to reduce the risks posed by these hazards.

An example of a risk involved in research would be increased vulnerability to attack during fieldwork. Because there are particular risks associated with doing fieldwork alone, a typical measure to minimise such risks would be to work in pairs, or to leave a travel itinerary and interviewing schedule with a colleague and to phone in at pre-arranged times.

A useful discussion of fieldwork safety can be found at the website of the Social Research Association, at the following webpage (accurate as of 5 May 2016). You should read this document before completing the rest of this form.

*Social Research Association – Code of Safety for Social Researchers*

<http://the-sra.org.uk/sra_resources/safety-code/>

This part of the form asks you to list any hazards that you may encounter during your proposed fieldwork, and the reasonable steps that can be taken to minimise the risks posed by these hazards. You will then have to estimate both the likelihood and severity of these hazards, on scales of 1-5, to produce risk ratings for each of the identified hazards you may encounter in your fieldwork. When the risk ratings for all of the identified hazards have been calculated, the highest risk rating is taken as the overall risk rating for your fieldwork.

**PLEASE PROVIDE THE PROPOSED START AND END DATES OF YOUR FIELDWORK:**

|  |
| --- |
| **Proposed start date of fieldwork:** |
| **Proposed end date of fieldwork:** |

**Definitions**

**Hazard**

The potential for harm.

**Risk**

A function of the probability (or likelihood) of that harm actually occurring and the severity of its consequences.

**Risk assessment**

The process of deciding on actions to be taken to reduce risk to an acceptable level, preferably ‘low’ or ‘very low’, through the implementation of control measures.

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| **PART B, Section 1: Hazards**  **PLEASE GIVE A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF WHAT YOU PERCEIVE TO BE POSSIBLE HAZARDS TO YOURSELF OR OTHERS THAT MIGHT ARISE DURING YOUR FIELDWORK.** |

**PLEASE LIST IN THE TABLE BELOW THE POTENTIAL HAZARDS AND PERSONS AT RISK IDENTIFIED ABOVE:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Potential hazards:** | Hazard 1:  Hazard 2:  Hazard 3:  Hazard 4:  Hazard 5:  *Add as appropriate...* |
| **Persons at risk:** |  |

**PART B, Section 2: Risk Assessment**

**FOR EACH OF THE HAZARDS IDENTIFIED, PLEASE ASSESS ITS *LIKELIHOOD*, AND ITS *SEVERITY* WERE IT TO OCCUR, ON SCALES OF 1-5, IN ACCORDANCE WITH TABLES A AND B:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Table A: Likelihood of hazard** (chance of hazard occurring during fieldwork) | | |
|  |  |  |
| **Likelihood category** | **Description** (% probabilities are guiding estimates) | **Score** |
|  |  |  |
| *Highly unlikely* | Event highly improbable, though possible (<0.1% chance of occurring) | 1 |
| *Unlikely* | Event improbable, but can reasonably be expected to occur (≥0.1% – 5% chance of occurring) | 2 |
| *Moderately likely* | Event moderately likely to occur (>5% – 25% chance of occurring) | 3 |
| *Likely* | Event probable (>25% – 75% chance of occurring) | 4 |
| *Highly likely* | Event has high potential, or is certain, to occur (>75% – 100%) | 5 |
|  |  |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Table B: Severity of hazard** (estimated harm of hazard if it occurs) | | |
|  |  |  |
| **Severity category** | **Description** | **Score** |
|  |  |  |
| *Very low* | For example: lost time or effort, boredom, mental fatigue, minor embarrassment or frustration or the expectation of these, minor property damage, minor or moderate physical discomfort, or the anticipation of suffering these, minor invasion of privacy, etc. | 1 |
| *Low* | For example: minor physical pain or the expectation of minor physical pain, moderate psychological distress (embarrassment, shame, etc.), minor reputational damage, cause of offence, moderate property damage, moderate invasion of privacy, increased exposure to everyday risks (traffic, air pollution, etc.), etc. | 2 |
| *Moderate* | For example: moderate physical pain or anticipation of suffering moderate physical pain, recalling of traumatic events, unhappy rumination, moderate to high intensity stress or anxiety, etc. | 3 |
| *High* | For example: severe physical or psychological pain or damage | 4 |
| *Very high* | For example: substantial destruction, serious injury, medium to long-term disability, death, etc. | 5 |
|  |  |  |

**PLEASE PROVIDE IN THE BOX BELOW THE *RISK RATING* OF EACH HAZARD:**

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| --- |
| **Risk rating of hazards (likelihood x severity)**  The *risk rating* of each hazard is given by its likelihood score multiplied by its severity score and will be between 1 and 25.  Risk rating of hazard 1 =  Risk rating of hazard 2 =  Risk rating of hazard 3 =  Risk rating of hazard 4 =  Risk rating of hazard 5 =  *Add as appropriate...* |

**PLEASE PROVIDE IN THE BOX BELOW YOUR FIELDWORK’S *OVERALL LEVEL OF RISK*, WHICH IS EQUIVALENT TO THE HIGHEST RISK RATING AMONG THE HAZARDS IDENTIFIED ABOVE:**

|  |
| --- |
| **Fieldwork’s overall level of risk (between 1 and 25):** |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Risk of each hazard: guiding categories** | |
|  |  |
| **Risk rating range** | **Risk category of hazard** |
|  |  |
| 1-6 | *Low risk* |
| 8-10 | *Medium risk* |
| 12-25 | *High risk* |
|  |  |

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| **PART B, Section 3: Control Measures**  **PLEASE INDICATE IN THIS BOX WHAT PRECAUTIONS YOU WILL TAKE TO MINIMISE THE IDENTIFIED RISKS.** |

**PLEASE FILL IN THE FOLLOWING TABLE:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Signature of student:** | **Date (DD/MM/YYYY):** |
| **(if appropriate)**  **Signature of staff member/supervisor:** | **Date (DD/MM/YYYY):** |
| **Date for review (DD/MM/YYYY):**  (If a review will not be required please explain why, e.g., short duration of project, one-off nature, etc.) | |
| SIGNATURES ARE TO INDICATE WHO CARRIED OUT, AND/OR WHO APPROVED, THE ASSESSMENT ON BEHALF OF THE DEPARTMENT. SIGNING THIS FORM CANNOT TRANSFER RESPONSIBILITY FROM THE UNIVERSITY TO THE SIGNATORY. HOWEVER, REASONABLE CARE MUST BE USED BY ALL INVOLVED IN COMPLETING THIS ASSESSMENT.  THE ORIGINAL OF THIS FORM MUST BE PASSED TO MS ODETTE ROGERS IN THE SOCIOLOGY OFFICE. | |

**Department of Sociology**

**SAMPLE INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

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| **Title of Project:**  **Name of Researcher:**  As part of a research project on ?? I am conducting interviews. You will be asked questions about ??. This research is being conducted as part of a ?? course.  The interview will take about 40 minutes.  If you are interested in receiving further information about this project, please write your e-mail address on the extra sheet.  **Please tick box**   1. I confirm that I have understood these instructions and have had the   opportunity to ask questions.   1. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am   free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.   1. I understand that my responses will be anonymised and only used for academic research. 2. I understand that my interview may be recorded. 3. I agree to take part in the above project.     \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Name of Participant Date Signature  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Name of Researcher Date Signature |