



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

HPCA7016

Researching
Contemporary Cosmologies



Seminar 2: 16 February 2022

Ethics & the E1 Form

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Being aware of ethical issues

‘*Ethics* are the guiding principles that help an individual or group to decide what is right or wrong.’

- Bell, J. and S. Waters, *Doing Your Research Project* (New York: Open University Press/McGraw-Hill, 2017), 7th edition, p. 64.

In some situations, the ethical issues are clear – in others, we need to use our judgement.

This judgement will be influenced by our own subjectivity – our personal background, experience and view of the world.

Ethical issues can arise at any stage of the research process – in the design stage, the fieldwork stage, and in the analysis/writing up.

- Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, *Qualitative Research Methods* (London: Sage Publications, 2020), ch. 5.

The Belmont Report (1979): three core principles

Respect of persons – the welfare of your participants always takes precedence.

E.g. some of your participants may decline to answer certain questions and that is their right.

Benefice – 'do positive good'.

Research should aim to benefit the participants' community and/or society in general. Think about how this consideration might shape/nuance your own project.

Justice – be fair, non-exploitative, show consideration.

- E.g. some of you may choose to research a community to which you yourself belong and you will need to navigate between your role as researcher and your role as a member of the group.
- E.g. consider who else within your participant group needs to be informed of your research. It may be appropriate to ask permission from the group's organiser/s (if this person is not already your gatekeeper).

- See Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, *Qualitative Research Methods*, ch. 5.

Research principles

Informed consent – *Participants Information Sheet; Interview Release Form*. Self-disclosure – state clearly who you are and what you are doing – non-deception.

Self-determination – participants have the right to stop an interview, not answer a question, or have their contribution removed from the study altogether, without negative consequence.

Minimisation of harm – participants should always feel (and be) safe. E.g. in the design stage, think about the questions you would like to ask your participants and then vet them for appropriateness.

Anonymity – as you sort your data and then write up your project, you need to anonymise the data so that no participant is then identifiable. Data needs to be stored securely, anonymously, and in accordance with Data Protection rules. And be aware – e.g. if you interview the head of an astrology club in Milton Keynes, and there is only one astrology club in Milton Keynes, even if you anonymise that person in your write-up, they can still potentially be identified.

Confidentiality – right to confidentiality, unless participant gives prior consent. E.g. don't conduct interviews in a location where others may be able to overhear. (Note: in your write-up, you will be quoting directly from the interviews and questionnaires – so 100% confidentiality is not possible).

You will be handling potentially sensitive material – personal beliefs, religious and spiritual beliefs, personal experiences and behaviours, etc.

- See Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, *Qualitative Research Methods*, ch. 5.

Guillemin & Gillam: the role of reflexivity in ethics

Guillemin and Gillam suggest that reflexivity (i.e. the researcher's examination of their own personal beliefs, context and worldview) is not just a way to ensure a rigorous approach – it is also relevant to ethics because it is the researcher who chooses the research question and the methodology, designs the questionnaire, asks the interview questions, and interprets the data.

‘Adopting a reflexive research process means a continuous process of critical scrutiny and interpretation, not just in relation to the research methods and the data but also to the researcher, participants, and the research context.

This would include issues about the ultimate purpose of the research. Is the aim to construct knowledge, advance the researcher's career, further the specific goals of the research participants, or some more theoretically based purpose, such as “enabling community life to prosper”... and is this an ethically appropriate purpose? It would also include the interpersonal aspects of research, the interactions between researcher and participant that we suggest are the substrate of the ethical dimensions of research practice.’

- Guillemin, Marilys and Lynn Gillam, 'Ethics, Reflexivity, and "Ethnically Important Moments" in Research'. *Qualitative Inquiry* Vol. 10: 2 (2004), p.275.

Very important: your participants in this project

Your participants must all be adults and must not be classed as 'vulnerable' in any way.

e.g. you cannot do research into things such as use of psychedelics in religious/spiritual experience.

e.g. you cannot include teenagers or children in your study.

e.g. you cannot include vulnerable adults in your study.

You must keep your participants – and yourself – safe.

Reflexivity

We will be looking at reflexivity (and the notion of being an insider/outsider) in Seminar 5.

For now – start to think about your possible participant group and any ethical or sensitive issues that might arise from working with those people

Think also about your relationship to the topic you have chosen and some of the issues/biases/viewpoints you might need to be aware of.

The presence of the researcher is instrumental in shaping the research.

The E1 Form

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The E1 form

The high ethical standard required in qualitative (and quantitative) research is enshrined in the **Ethics form (E1)**. Working your way through this is in itself a good way to learn and think about ethical issues. Your signing of the E1 form indicates your acceptance of this high standard of approach from you as the researcher.

You must not conduct any interviews, circulate questionnaires or collect data from people for your research until you have had your E1 form approved by your tutor.

(You can however conduct a small 'pilot study' to test your questionnaire and help you refine it before launch – e.g. ask a couple of friends to read it through and give comments)

Some key points addressed in the E1 form:

1. The nature of the group of participants you will be working with and how you intend to find/contact them. Also your relationship to them.
2. How you will be working with your participants – the methodology of your research.
3. Your participants' right to be fully informed of how you will use their information, their right to decide at any stage to withdraw from your research, and their right not to be coerced in any way.
4. Assessment of the risk to yourself, your participants and the university.
5. Adherence to data protection laws in the storing, moving, sharing and eventual deleting of your field work data.

The E1 form

Your first-draft E1 form needs to be submitted to your tutor no later than **Sunday 13 March**. Remember, this submission is not your form being approved and it might take a few drafts for you to get your form approved.

Use the annotated E1 form as a template to help you (in the 'Ethics' section of the RCC Moodle page).

The final date for submitting your E1 form to your tutor is **Sunday 3 April**.

Submission of the final Assignment 2 is **Monday 16 May**. So this leaves you a maximum of 6 weeks for your fieldwork and writing up.

If you have any questions about the form, bring them to the seminars, email your tutor, or post them to the Research Ideas Forum.

The E1 Form

Section A

- Taught PG student
- Institute of Education and Humanities
- Campus: Lampeter
- Programme of Study: MA Cultural Astronomy & Astrology or MA Ecology & Spirituality

Section C

Ensure you indicate that you have read these three documents:

- *UWTSD Research Ethics & Integrity Code of Practice* (on RCC Moodle)
- *UWTSD Research Data Management Policy* (link on RCC Moodle)
- *BERA Ethical Guidelines (2018)* - available at <https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2018> (British Educational Research Association)

The E1 Form: Section E

Purpose of Research Activity: the academic rationale which has prompted the project. E.g. Project 4 – something like: ‘Bertrand Russell said that astrologers don't believe in the science they profess - this project will examine this statement amongst a group of astrologers by exploring their beliefs and practice’.

Research Question: what is the question you are asking – the title of your research. E.g. ‘Do astrologers believe that astrology is an art or a science’.

Aims of Research Activity: the broad aim, without being specific about who you are going to research and how. E.g.: ‘The aim of this research is to add to the existing research on the beliefs of astrologers and what this might say about their cosmology or worldview.’

Objectives of Research Activity: State briefly how you are going to go about it: e.g. ‘The objectives of the project are to conduct qualitative research using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, in order to explore the research question stated above’.

In this section and also under ‘Proposed Methods’, remember that **you need to include citations** to support/justify the research question and the methodology you intend to use.

‘Location of Research Activity’: **online**

The E1 Form

Section J

'All data from questionnaires and interviews will be stored on my university OneDrive account and will not be shared.'

As well as the E1 form...

It is essential that you email these three things to your module tutor by the deadline dates:

1. E1 form.

2. Participants Information Sheet.

This is a document you need to create yourself. It goes to your interviewees and contains a statement about who you are, what the research is for (your MA), the title/subject of your research, and an assurance of confidentiality and anonymity for your participants. You can add the UWTSD logo at the top of it.

(You also need to send an Interview Release Form to your interviewees – you will find a blank form in the ‘Ethics’ section on Moodle).

3. A draft of your questionnaire.

This needs to contain at the top the same wording as in your PIS above (i.e. your project/ethical statement) and an additional box where your participant indicates their consent to your use of the data in your project. You can add the UWTSD logo at the top of it.

See the document on Moodle entitled: ‘Ethics Requirements and Check List 2022’.

Participants Information Sheet & Questionnaire – what to include

- The title of your research project. You can also add the UWTSD logo.
- A statement about who you are (student of the MA in ... at UWTSD).
- What your research is for (a project in fulfilment of one of the MA modules).
- A brief description of the research topic and an idea of what kind of questions you will be asking them.
- How long will the questionnaire/interview take them to complete. (ideal is about 15-20 mins).
- They can ask for more information about anything they don't understand. Their involvement is voluntary and they have the right to withdraw from the project at any stage or decline to answer any question.
- Questionnaire – add a tick box before the main body where your participant indicates their consent to your use of the data in your project.
- Questionnaire – add a tick box at the end asking if they would be willing to participate in an online interview on the same research topic (about 20-30 minutes of their time). A box to add their email address so you can contact them.
- An assurance of confidentiality and anonymity. All data is only analysed by you and will only be used for this project. No information will be shared or used to identify the participant. All information will be stored electronically and password protected.
- Thank them for their participation...!