

**POLICY ON STUDENTS IN GEOGRAPHY COURSES
UNDERTAKING HUMAN RESEARCH**

July 2008

The policy of the Department of Geography, in adherence to University policies, is that all human research should be undertaken in an ethical manner. The policy detailed below as adopted by the Department on March 25, 1997 and revised on April 19, 2000, December 6, 2006, and on July 18, 2008.

UNIVERSITY POLICY (excerpts from key documents)

Human Research is any research that involves human subjects, the term human subjects meaning any person who is a source of raw or unformulated data and who is not acting as, or assisting, the principal investigator (SSHRC).

All research conducted under the auspices of Trent University (by faculty, staff or students), whether funded or unfunded, that involves human subjects, requires approval in advance from a duly constituted university committee to ensure that procedures to be used in the research comply with appropriate ethical guidelines. (Approved by Senate, September 17, 1991; Faculty Board, September 27, 1991)

In the case of student research projects, procedures adopted by the relevant department governing human research and approved by the university Committee on Human Research shall apply. (Approved by Senate, September 17, 1991; Faculty Board, September 27, 1991)

Trent University has a commitment to the Aboriginal Education Council (AEC) that human research on Native peoples will be commented upon by the AEC before the University Human Research Committee approved the research. (Chair, Committee on Human Research, 14 October 1996)

All such human research should be undertaken in an ethical way. "A research investigation that involves human participants should be designed to take account of the well being of prospective participants. Human participants should be clearly, fairly, and fully informed of the research objectives, procedures, foreseeable risks, and potential benefits. Their decision to participate should be fully voluntary. Risks (if any) should never be excessively harmful and the risk-to-benefit ratio should be taken into consideration in the design of the research. Participants' anonymity and confidentiality shall be full protected, unless this right is expressly waived or unless disclosure is authorized or required by law" (*Trent University Senate Policy for Research Involving Human Participants*, Working Document, October 2006, p1).

APPLYING TO UNDERTAKE HUMAN RESEARCH

All students in geography courses undertaking human research must apply before undertaking any such research to the Department of Geography Research Ethics Committee.

For research to be conducted in full-year courses (e.g., GEOG 470, GEOG 401/402), applications are expected to be submitted for approval no later than NOVEMBER; however, students are encouraged to submit their applications earlier in the year.

To apply, you must:

1. Complete the attached application form.
2. Provide a copy of the consent form(s) to be used (see attached example).
3. Provide a copy of the survey/questionnaire/other protocols to be used.
4. Ensure any letters or questionnaires that will be seen by members of the public contain no grammatical or spelling errors that would reflect poorly on you, the Department or the University.
5. Obtain the signature of the faculty member supervising the research indicating that s/he has reviewed the application prior to submission.

Please submit the application form, consent form, and questionnaire(s) to the Secretary of the Department of Geography, who will relay them to the at least two members of the Research Ethics Committee, which comprises several faculty involved in human geography. Allow at least **one week** for your application to be reviewed by the Committee.

CONSENT FORM

A consent form signed by the researcher and respondent (e.g., research subject) will indicate the expectations of both researcher and the participant as well as the nature of the research project. Confidentiality and the anonymity of participants must be guaranteed, unless integral to the research. An example of a Consent Form that can be used is attached.

Informed consent of parents or guardians **MUST** always be obtained before undertaking research using minors.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

An ethical way of undertaking human research also, normally, involves:

1. Giving respondents adequate time to prepare for an interview or respond to a survey.
2. Conducting the research politely, and sensitively, and offering thanks for the respondent's co-operation.
3. Asking permission if you wish to tape-record or film the respondent.
4. Ensuring anyone who assists you in undertaking the research is aware of, and conforms to, this policy.

NOTE

Discuss your human research methods with your instructor, or thesis/research supervisor, to ensure that your research conforms to this policy. Consult the attached list of references for information about conducting human research.

Bibliography of Selected References on Social Surveys and Interviews

Compiled by Janice Warfield and John Marsh, September 1997

Revised by John Marsh, April 2000; Steven Tufts, November 2004; Mark Skinner, July 2008

There is a considerable and current literature on the best and most ethical ways to conduct human geography research, such as surveys, interviews and focus groups, which should be consulted before designing and undertaking such research.

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7. Eichler, M. Nonsexist Research Methods. Routledge Publishers, New York, 1991.
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12. Hay, I. (ed.). Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography. Oxford University Press, New York, 2005.
On reserve.
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16. Holstein, J.A. Applications of Case Study Research. Sage Publications, California, 1995.
H 61 .Y56 1993
17. Kitchin, R. and Tate, N. Conducting Research in Human Geography: theory, methodology & practice. Harlow, UK: Prentice Hall, 2000
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18. Stouthamer-Loeber, M. Data Collection and Management: A Practical Guide. Sage Publications, California, 1995
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NOTE: It may be useful to see previous Trent University Honours Geography Thesis projects for examples of research designs, qualitative and quantitative methodologies, and research instruments (surveys, interview guides, etc).



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HUMAN RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

Nature of the Project: [A brief paragraph explaining the nature of the project and the role of the participant in the project].

Example:

[Project Title] is a study of _____. Part of the study involves a series of semi-structure interviews with _____. We hope to gain greater insight into _____ from participants in the project. The interviews are designed to take no longer than _____.

Researcher: _____ [i.e., Student's Name]

Researcher Contact Information: The student's Trent e-mail address and/or home phone number and indicate that the student may also be reached through the Geography Department.

As a participant in the above project, I understand the following:

1. I have been fully informed by the interviewer about the nature of the research and my participation in the project;
2. My participation is entirely voluntary. I may refuse to answer any or all questions and end the interview at any time;
3. The data resulting from the interview will not be used for any commercial purposes and will be strictly used for the advancement of research and social policy applications;
4. The information supplied during the interview will be kept confidential and my identity will not be used in any reports or other publications;
5. The information will be stored responsibly and my participation in the project will be known only to the researchers;
6. Any risks to my participation in the project are unforeseen by the researcher;
7. I have been provided with a copy of this participant consent form for my own records; and
8. I understand that this project has been approved by Trent University's Department of Geography's Research Ethics Committee.

Participant Name: _____ **Participant Signature:** _____
(please print)

Interviewer Name: _____ **Interviewer Signature:** _____
(please print)

Date: _____



TRENT UNIVERSITY
Department of Geography Research Ethics Committee

STUDENT APPLICATION TO UNDERTAKE HUMAN RESEARCH

1. Submission Date of Application: _____
2. Name of student: _____
3. Student e-mail: _____ Student Telephone No. _____
4. Course for which human research is being undertaken: _____
5. Name of instructor(s) in the course overseeing this research, or in the case of Geog 401/402, the name of your thesis supervisor: _____
6. Title of the research project: _____

7. Name of community/corporate/government research partner/host/placement organization (if any): _____
8. Source of project funding (if any): _____
9. When and where will the surveys and/or interviews be conducted: _____

10. Who is to be interviewed or surveyed in this project? : _____

11. Are any of the research participants from vulnerable populations (e.g., intellectually disabled, persons under 18 years of age, persons under institutional authority)?
Yes ____ No ____ Not sure _____ (explain: _____)

12. Are the risks to the participants' physical or mental health, reputation in the community, financial situation or personal privacy minimal?

Note: Minimal risks is defined by the REB as the reasonable expectation "to regard the probability and magnitude of possible harms implied by participation in the research to be no greater than those encountered by the participant in those aspects of his or her everyday life that relate to the research".

Yes ____ No ____ Not Sure ____ (explain: _____)

13. How is the informed consent of participants being obtained? (Check One)

- Verbal explanation and signed consent form prior to participation
- Signed consent form prior to participation
- Disclaimer on survey instrument implying consent
- Verbal consent
- Other _____

14. Please indicate the level of anonymity/confidentiality/privacy guaranteed to research participants. (Check One)

- Names and identifying information will not be used in any reports of findings, will not be stored with the raw data, and will not be known to researchers.
- Names and identifying information will not be used in any reports of findings and will not be stored with the raw data
- Names and identifying information will not be used in any reports of findings
- None (i.e., actual names of participants will be used in any reports of findings).

15. How will the raw data be handled, stored, and/or disposed of in order to adhere to the above level of confidentiality?

16. Have you attached copies of the proposed project Consent Form (or statement of consent)?

Yes ____ No ____

17. Have you attached copies of the statement introducing the research?

Yes ____ No ____

18. Have you attached copies of the proposed project survey instrument (e.g., questionnaire)?

Yes ____ No ____

19. If this is a resubmitted application, have you included a copy of the original application AND a brief statement outlining how you have addressed the committee's initial concerns?

Yes ____ No ____ N/A ____

Student Name: _____ Signature _____
(please print)

*Supervisor/Course Instructor: _____ Signature _____
(please print)

* Faculty signature indicates that s/he has reviewed the application prior to submission.