

# Example of Successful DRC Proposal

DRC Application ||

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## Application for Student Human Subjects Research Project

Date: September 20, 2016

Student name:

Student email:

Faculty advisor name:

Faculty email address:

### TITLE OF PROJECT

It's not all a crapshoot: the legitimization of racialized capital in the college admissions process

### I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

#### A. Research proposal and specific scientific and scholarly aims of project

This research project aims to explore how articles published in the New York Times conceive, write about, and affirm various social practices that high school students and families should engage in to ensure students are competitive applicants for the college admissions process. The bulk of this research project will consist of conducting content analysis on publicly accessible news articles. The content analysis will also be buttressed with 6-8 interviews from field experts (admissions officers and high school counselors). By analyzing public news and expert information, this research project hopes to shed light on current, public perceptions of the college admissions process.

#### B. Summary of existent research

Regarding this subject matter, various scholars have studied the college admissions process quantitatively and qualitatively without undue risk to the human participants. Examples:

1. Massey, Douglas S., Camille Z. Charles, Garvey F. Lundy, and Mary J. Fischer. 2006. *The Source of the River: The Social Origins of Freshmen at America's Selective Colleges and Universities*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
2. Bowen, William G. and Derek Bok. 1998. *The Shape of the River: Long Term Consequences of Considering Race in College and University Admissions*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Regarding this methodology, various scholars have used semi-structured interviews without undue risk to the human participants. Examples:

1. Brown, Hana E. 2013. "Race, Legality, and the Social Policy Consequences of Anti-Immigration Mobilization." *American Sociological Review*. 78(2) 290-314.  
In this example, the primary researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with similar professionals in similar occupations with undue risk to the interviewees.

#### C. Research methods and activities

Interviews with college admissions officers and high school counselors are the only interactions with human subjects that are involved in this research project. Interviews will be conducted in spaces that are safe and comfortable for the interviewees (i.e. their office, a public coffee shop). The time commitment for each interview is forty-five minutes to an hour. I will also do my best

to protect the identities of all interviewees by restating that their interviews will only be designated as A. College Admissions Officer or B. High School Counselor.

#### D. Process of participant selection

I will be recruiting admissions officers and high school counselors in the Greater Philadelphia area through email. I will send one email providing information and asking for their voluntary participation; if they do not respond within one week, I will send a follow up email. If they do not respond to these two emails, I will stop contacting them. Recruitment materials are on page 4 of this document.

## **II. DESCRIPTION OF DATA**

### A. Type of data collected

6-8 (total) expert interviews from admissions officers and high school counselors.

### B. Identifiable data?

No. No data will be stored for future use or entered into existing databases.

### C. Electronic data collection?

Yes. I will be collecting audio file versions of interviews and electronic versions of the transcriptions for each interview.

### D. Data format, maintenance?

I will be maintaining data electronically through ATLAS.t, R, and Zotero. Specifically, I will maintain interview audio files through Voice Memo (password protected yet retrievable through my personal and password protected iTunes account) and the interview transcriptions on electronic Microsoft Word and ATLAS.ti platforms.

### E. Data storage?

I will be storing data on my personal laptop, which is password protected. All relevant research files will also be back up to my external hard drive (also password protected) every week. My laptop and external hard drive are maintained in my locked room if/when I am not actively using them.

### F. Data access?

Yes. My thesis advisor, \_\_\_\_\_, will have access to my data if necessary and when appropriate.

### G. End of study, research destruction?

All identifiable data will be destroyed prior to my graduating from Swarthmore College in May 2017.

## **III. INFORMED CONSENT**

### A. Form of informed consent

I will be obtaining written, informed consent from all interviewees. Consent form is attached to the end of this document.

**B. Process for obtaining informed consent**

I will obtain informed consent by first informally inquiring for participation through email, have interviewees read the informed consent form and understand that participation is completely voluntary, and sign if comfortable.

**C. Minimizing coercion when obtaining consent**

After interviewees read over the informed consent form, I will transparently answer any questions or concerns they have about the study and assure them that all recordings, participation, etc. is voluntary before, during, and after the interview.

**IV. RISKS AND BENEFITS****A. Potential benefits associated with study**

Participants will not directly benefit from the research.

**B. Reasonably expected risks**

There might be a small risk to interviewees for disclosing information in the interview that they do not want identified with their institution.

**C. Minimizing potential risk**

I will minimize the risk by offering to meet out of their offices at a public coffee shop and, ensuring that their responses will be anonymized and in no way affiliated with their institution, only the position they serve (college admissions officer or high school counselor).

Interview data will be anonymized. Only the investigator and her thesis advisor will have access to the complete interview recordings and transcripts. Participation is entirely voluntary and participants may withdraw at any moment. Overall, I will do everything in my power to protect the data.

**D. Reasonableness of risk to participants vs benefits to participants**

There are neither benefits nor foreseeable risks to this study.

**V. APPENDIX**

A. Scripts for interviews (See page 5)

B. Consent forms (See page 6-7)

Example of recruitment email

Title of email: Greetings and inquiry about interviewing you for my college thesis

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Hello! I hope this message finds you well. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ I am a senior at Swarthmore College. I found your contact information on your institution's \_\_\_\_\_ website. I am contacting you today to inquire if you would be willing to be interviewed for my honors senior thesis, which seeks to better understand the college admissions process. I would like to interview you as an expert in the field of higher education and admissions; your insights would be invaluable to my study. The interview will be about 45 minutes and will be conducted at your office or at a local/public coffeeshop that is convenient for you.

This study is solely being conducted by me, \_\_\_\_\_ Attached to this email is the consent form to interview. Please let me know if you would like to be interviewed, and if so, when in the next two weeks (will offer specific dates) works well for you. If you have any questions or would like more information about the study, please feel free to contact me at \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you so much.

Best,

## Scripts for interviews:

Tell me a little about the history and mission of the institution you work at.

How long have you been part of this institution?

What's your role at your institution?

How does your institution involve students' parents with the college application process?

Can you speak a little bit about the day-to-day work that you do and how it relates to the larger mission of your institution?

How and why did you get into your field?

What is most rewarding aspect of your job?

What is the most difficult aspect of your job?

What does "success" look like for you?

Would you please describe the educational experiences of the students your institution works with?

What are your educational goals for the students and families your institution works with?

What kind of college admissions preparation or support does your institution provide?

Can you provide an anonymized example of a student who you were really enthusiastic about and went out of your way to root for? Why?

Can you provide an example of a student who you were really unenthusiastic or discouraged about? Why?

What skills, experiences, etc does the ideal college applicant have? Can you provide an example?

In what ways, if at all, do home and school environments support students to be competitive applicants?

What skills, experiences, etc does the less than ideal college applicant have? Can you provide an example?

In what ways, if at all, do home and school environments limit students to be competitive applicants?

What are your perspectives on how the college application process is written about in recent news articles?

Example of consent form:

Swarthmore College

Department of Sociology

### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

You are invited to participate in a research study about the relationship between high school experience and the college admissions process.

This study is being conducted by \_\_\_\_\_, an undergraduate student in the Department of Sociology/Anthropology at Swarthmore College in the US. It will be the core of my senior thesis, which is a requirement for my major.

**Site where study is to be conducted:** Location that is convenient and safe for all participants.

**Procedures:** Approximately four to six individuals are expected to participate in interviews. The time commitment for an interview is expected to be forty-five minutes to an hour for the interviews. Interviews will be audio recorded and then transcribed. Interviewees may review their own transcripts.

**Possible risks or benefits:** I do not anticipate any risks or benefits as a result of this study, but it is helping me to complete my work in college.

**Voluntary Participation:** Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may decide not to participate without prejudice, penalty, or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to leave the study, please inform \_\_\_\_\_ of your decision.

**Confidentiality:** \_\_\_\_\_ and her faculty advisor will be the only people who will have access to the transcripts and complete audio recordings. The recordings of the individual interviews and meetings, participant names, as well as the signed consent form will be kept by \_\_\_\_\_ in a private drawer and secured computer hard drive at Swarthmore College. Upon completion of the study, all audio files will be deleted from the researcher's hard drive.

**Contact Questions/Persons:** If you have any questions at any time, please contact me at \_\_\_\_\_ or contact Swarthmore's Sociology/Anthropology department chair at \_\_\_\_\_

#### Statement of Consent:

By signing below, you are certifying that you are at least 18 years old and agree to be interviewed and have the interview audio-recorded.

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Printed Name of  
Subject

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Signature of Subject

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Date Signed

