Application 3: Is altruism a sexually selected trait in humans?

Important note: This is a real application which has been doctored for the purposes of training. Information has been removed from the application and the application has been anonymised. The UREC does not endorse this application as a model.

The application, shown on the following pages, was discussed at the workshop. A summary of the key points raised by the participants, the UREC and the original ethics reviewers follows (this is not an exhaustive list):

- The ethics of the research was considered questionable as the participants are being deceived about the true nature of the activity. While, in certain circumstances, covert research or research involving principled deception might be necessary in order to answer specific research questions, it was not felt that this was necessary, or appropriate, for this particular project;

- The applicant has stated that requesting consent would negate the results but further information could in fact be provided to the participants at the outset without negating the results – the only thing that needed to be concealed was the fact that altruism was the key trait being looked at by the research;

- As participants are likely to believe they are attending a real speed-dating event, only to find out afterwards that it was a research activity and some of the attendees were actors, they may be upset or offended. The application does not show any awareness of this risk;

- The application displays a lack of detail and lack of clarity concerning the research activities in question (e.g. there is no information in the methodology section relating to a questionnaire, which is referred to elsewhere in the application; there is very minimal information provided about how participants will be identified, approached and recruited).
University Research Ethics Application Form for UGs and PGTs

This form has been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC)

Complete this form if you are an **undergraduate or a postgraduate-taught student** who plans to undertake a research project which requires ethics approval via the University Ethics Review Procedure. If you are a member of staff or a postgraduate research student, this is the wrong form.

Your Supervisor decides if ethics approval is required and, if required, which ethics review procedure (e.g. University, NHS, Alternative) applies.

If the University's procedure applies, your Supervisor decides if your proposed project should be classed as 'low risk' or potentially 'high risk'.

**PLEASE NOTE THAT YOUR DEPARTMENT MAY USE A VARIATION OF THIS FORM: PLEASE CHECK WITH THE ETHICS ADMINISTRATOR IN YOUR DEPARTMENT**

This form should be accompanied, where appropriate, by all Information Sheets/Covering Letters/Written Scripts which you propose to use to inform the prospective participants about the proposed research, and/or by a Consent Form where you need to use one.

Further guidance on how to apply is at: www.shef.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/approval-procedure/review-procedure

Guidance on the possible routes for obtaining ethics approval (i.e. on the University Ethics Review Procedure, the NHS procedure and the Social Care Research Ethics Committee, and the Alternative procedure) is at: www.shef.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/approval-procedure/ethics-approval

Once you have completed this research ethics application form in full, and other documents where appropriate, check that your name, the title of your research project and the date is contained in the footer of each page.

**If your supervisor has classed the project as ‘low risk’:**

- Email this form, together with other documents where applicable, to your Supervisor; and
- Sign and date **Annex 1** of this form and provide a paper copy to your Supervisor.

**Important Note for Supervisors:**

Following the ethics review the Supervisor must provide the academic department’s Ethics Administrator with a copy of the ‘low risk’ research ethics application that s/he reviewed and a completed Ethics Reviewer’s Comments Form indicating the ethics decision that s/he took in relation to it. The Ethics Reviewer’s Comments Form can be downloaded here: www.shef.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/further-guidance/universityprocedure2/reviewersc. The Ethics Administrator reserves
the right to consult the Chair of the academic department’s Ethics Review Panel (or equivalent) of s/he has concerns that projects classed as low risk should in fact have been classed as potentially high risk.

If your supervisor has classed the project as potentially ‘high risk’:

- Email this form, together with other documents where applicable, to your department’s Ethics Administrator; and
- Ask your Supervisor to sign and date Annex 2 of this form and provide a paper copy of it to your department’s Ethics Administrator.

Ethics Administrators are listed at:
www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.99105!/file/Ethics-Administrators.pdf

I confirm that I have read the current version of the University of Sheffield ‘Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue’, as shown on the University’s research ethics website at: www.shef.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy

A1. Title of Research Project: Is altruism a sexually selected trait in humans?

A2. Name of Student

Name: XXXX Department: XXXX
Email: XXXX Telephone: XXXX

Name of Supervisor: XXXX

A3. Proposed Project Duration:

Start date: XXXX End date: XXXX

A4. Mark ‘X’ in one or more of the following boxes if your research:

- involves adults with mental incapacity or mental illness
- involves prisoners or others in custodial care (e.g. young offenders)
- involves children or young people aged under 18 years
- involves using samples of human biological material collected before for another purpose
- involves taking new samples of human biological material (e.g. blood, tissue)
- involves testing a medicinal product *
- involves taking new samples of human biological material (e.g. blood, tissue) *
- involves additional radiation above that required for clinical care *
- involves investigating a medical device *
- Is social care research
- Is ESRC funded

* If you have marked boxes marked * then you also need to obtain confirmation that appropriate University insurance is in place. The procedure for doing so is entirely by email. Please send an email addressed to insurance@shef.ac.uk and request a copy of the ‘Clinical Trial Insurance Application Form’.
It is recommended that you familiarise yourself with the University’s Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue before completing the following questions. Please note that if you provide sufficient information about the research (what you intend to do, how it will be carried out and how you intend to minimise any risks), this will help the ethics reviewers to make an informed judgement quickly without having to ask for further details.

A5. Briefly summarise:
   i. The project’s aims and objectives:
      (this must be in language comprehensible to a lay person)
      The aim is to test whether altruism is a preferred trait in human mate choice by (a) anonymous questionnaire (see attached) delivered by the website ‘survey monkey’, and (b) assessing patterns of mate choice in a speed dating experiment.
   ii. The project’s methodology:
      (this must be in language comprehensible to a lay person)
      Undergraduates on the University’s ‘announce’ list will be invited to participate in one of two speed dating events at the Student’s Union. Initially they will be told the experiment is to investigate the effects of music on social situations in order to make the experiment blind. At the end of the experiment the participants will be told the real subject of the experiment and at this point will be given the option of withdrawing their data from the study. In each experiment the student actors (male in experiment one and female in experiment two) will have two personas, one altruistic and the other non-altruistic (e.g. in one persona the actor will have spent his lunch hour donating blood, in the other he will have spent his lunch hour in the gym). The actors will alternate between the two personas as they ‘meet’ each subject. Both actors and subjects will be asked to fill in a card with whether they would like to meet each player after the speed dating event and matches will be identified to actors and players at the end. The subject’s responses to the actors as altruists will be analysed with the responses to the same actors as non-altruists being the controls.

A6. What is the potential for physical and/or psychological harm/distress to participants?

   None.

A7. Does your research raise any issues of personal safety for you or other researchers involved in the project? (especially if taking place outside working hours or off University premises)

   No

   If yes, explain how these issues will be managed.

A8. How will the potential participants in the project be:
   i. Identified?
The participants for both Parts A and B will be self-selecting

ii.  Approached?

For Part A participants (students from the department) will receive an email inviting them to complete the questionnaire

For Part B participants (students on the undergraduate ‘Announce’ list) will receive an email inviting them to sign up for the speed dating event.

iii. Recruited?

The participants for both Parts A and B will be self-selecting.

A9.  Will informed consent be obtained from the participants?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>X</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

If informed consent or consent is NOT to be obtained please explain why. Further guidance is at: [www.shef.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/policy-notes/consent](http://www.shef.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/policy-notes/consent)

Requesting consent would negate the results

A9.1.  This question is only applicable if you are planning to obtain informed consent:

How do you plan to obtain informed consent? (i.e. the proposed process?):

Remember to attach your consent form and information sheet (where appropriate)

A10.  What measures will be put in place to ensure confidentiality of personal data, where appropriate?

Names (or other identifying information) will not be tied to the data at any stage of the project.

A11.  Will financial/in kind payments (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants? (Indicate how much and on what basis this has been decided)

No

A12.  Will the research involve the production of recorded media such as audio and/or video recordings?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>X</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

A12.1.  This question is only applicable if you are planning to produce recorded media:

How will you ensure that there is a clear agreement with participants as to how these recorded media may be stored, used and (if appropriate) destroyed?
Guidance on a range of ethical issues, including safety and well-being, consent and anonymity, confidentiality and data protection are available at: www.shef.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/policy-notes
University Research Ethics Application Form - Annex 1 - Student Declaration

(The student completes Annex 1 if the Supervisor has classed the student’s proposed research project as ‘low risk’)

The Supervisor needs to receive an electronic copy of the form, and other documents where appropriate, plus a signed, dated, paper copy of this Annex 1 ‘the Student Declaration’.

Full Research Project Title:

| Is altruism a sexually selected trait in humans? |

In signing this Student Declaration I am confirming that:

- The research ethics application form for the above-named project is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.
- The above-named project will abide by the University’s ‘Good Research Practice Standards’: [www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/good](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/good)
- The above-named project will abide by the University’s ‘Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue’: [www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy)
- Subject to the above-named project being ethically approved I undertake to adhere to any ethics conditions that may be set.
- I will inform my Supervisor of significant changes to the above-named project that have ethical consequences.
- I will inform my Supervisor if prospective participants make a complaint about the above-named project.
- I understand that personal data about me as a researcher on the research ethics application form will be held by those involved in the ethics review process (e.g. my Supervisor and the Ethics Administrator) and that this will be managed according to Data Protection Act principles.
- I understand that this project cannot be submitted for ethics approval in more than one department, and that if I wish to appeal against the decision made, this must be done through the original department.

Name of supervisor:

XXXX

Name of student:

XXXX

Signature of student:

XXXX Date:XXXX
University Research Ethics Application Form - Annex 2 - Supervisor Declaration

(The Supervisor completes Annex 2 if s/he has classed the student’s proposed research project as potentially ‘high risk’)

The Ethics Administrator needs to receive an electronic copy of the form, and other documents where appropriate, plus a signed, dated, paper copy of this Annex 2 ‘the Supervisor Declaration’.

**Full Research Project Title:**

| Is altruism a sexually selected trait in humans? |

**In signing this Supervisor Declaration I am confirming that:**

- The research ethics application form for the above-named project is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.
- The above-named project will abide by the University’s ‘Good Research Practice Standards’: [www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/good](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/good)
- The above-named project will abide by the University’s ‘Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue’: [www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy)
- Subject to the above-named project being ethically approved I will undertake to ensure that the student adheres to any ethics conditions that may be set.
- The student or the Supervisor will undertake to inform the Ethics Administrator of significant changes to the above-named project that have ethical consequences.
- The student or the Supervisor will undertake to inform the Ethics Administrator if prospective participants make a complaint about the above-named project.
- I understand that personal data about the student and/or myself on the research ethics application form will be held by those involved in the ethics review process (e.g. the Ethics Administrator and/or reviewers) and that this will be managed according to Data Protection Act principles.
- I understand that this project cannot be submitted for ethics approval in more than one department, and that if I and/or the student wish to appeal against the decision made, this must be done through the original department.

**Name of supervisor:**

XXXX

**Name of student:**

XXXX

**Signature of supervisor:**

XXXX

Date: XXXX
Make your perfect partner!

Age:

Sex: Female Male

Interested in: Female Male

Please answer the following 5 questions, choosing the traits you would most like in a long-term partner:

1. What job would your partner have?
   a. Model
   b. Successful business person
   c. University professor
   d. Stand-up comedian
   e. Paramedic

2. What would your partner do in their spare time?
   a. Go to the gym
   b. Reading and photography
   c. Charity volunteering
   d. Travel and fine dining
   e. Sky-diving

3. How would you prefer your partner spent a long lunch break?
   a. At the gym
   b. At an expensive restaurant
   c. Visiting a museum or gallery
   d. Watching a comedy film at the cinema
   e. Donating blood

4. Where would you go on holiday together?
   a. Luxury holiday in the Bahamas
   b. Volunteer at an orang-utan sanctuary
   c. Music festival
   d. Rock climbing and mountain biking
   e. Shopping holiday in New York

5. What trait would you most like in your partner?
   a. Kindness
   b. Sense of humour
   c. Intelligence
   d. Attractiveness
   e. Wealth