Application 1: Men and Violence: contextualising dangerousness in global cultural transformations

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 and the UREC follows (this is not an exhaustive list):

- There is no discussion about how the researcher will attempt to minimise potential psychological harm or distress. Participants should be fully informed about the nature of the research, advised that they do not have to answer any questions should they not wish to do so, told that they can withdraw from the research at any time and be provided with contact information for support services.
- A safety protocol for the researcher should be established; this is particularly important given that the participants have violent histories. Participants may be distressed by the research and there is no consideration of their possible triggers for violence.
- The safety of the gatekeepers should also be considered.
- The researcher should inform the participants that there are limits to the confidentiality, i.e. if the researcher is told that someone’s physical well-being or life is at serious risk, or informed of a child protection issue, they will have to break confidentiality.
- The information sheet is lacking in information.
- The information sheet should contain details of how participants can complain.
- There is no information stating if or when the transcripts will be destroyed.
- There is no information about whether any data will be used in future research (and no consent sought for this).
- The decision to seek oral consent seems sound but the researcher could have provided a transcript outlining what they were intending to ask the participant’s consent for with the application.
- There is no information about how the researcher knows the potential participants. If the researcher knows the participants socially, they will need to be careful to manage the transition from social relationship to research relationship (and possibly back again after the research).
- There is no information about whether the Dictaphone will be encrypted.
- The researcher should be careful not to buy drinks for the participants as this could be considered to be coercive.
Complete this form if you are a member of staff or a postgraduate research student who plans to undertake a research project which requires ethics approval via the University Ethics Review Procedure.

or

Complete this form if you plan to submit a ‘generic’ research ethics application (i.e. an application that will cover several sufficiently similar research projects). Information on the ‘generic’ route is at: www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy/approval-procedure/review-procedure/generic-research-projects

If you are an undergraduate or a postgraduate-taught student, this is the wrong form.

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 and email it to the Ethics Administrator of your academic department. Please note that the original signed and dated version of ‘Part B’ of the application form should also be provided to the Ethics Administrator in hard copy. Ethics Administrators are listed at: www.shef.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**

**Part A**

A1. **Title of Research Project:** Men and Violence: contextualising dangerousness in global cultural transformations

A2. **Contact person** (normally the Principal Investigator, in the case of staff-led research projects, or the student in the case of supervised-postgraduate researcher projects):

- Title: ***
- Post: ***
- Email: ***
- Name: ***
- Department: ***
- Telephone: ***

A2.1. **Is this a postgraduate researcher project? If yes, please provide the Supervisor’s contact details:**

- Title: ***
- Post: ***
- Email: ***
- Name: ***
- Department: ***
- Telephone: ***

A2.2. **Other key investigators/co-applicants** (within/outside University), where applicable. Please list all (add more if necessary):

- Title: 
- Post: 
- Email: 
- Name: 
- Department: 
- Telephone: 

- Title: 
- Post: 
- Email: 
- Name: 
- Department: 
- Telephone: 

A3. **Proposed Project Duration:**

- Start date: ***
- End date: ***

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 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 of this research is to understand why some men value and are willing to use physical violence against other men. The study will shed light on the reasons and motivations for men’s violence, the social and situational contexts in which men become violent, and how wider social and cultural transformations taking place globally are impacting upon these men’s lives.

The following are the key research questions/objectives that this project will seek to answer:

- How, and in what ways, are social and cultural transformations impacting on male/masculine identities? And how are these linked to physical violence committed by men against other men?
- In what ways do contextual settings impact on men’s use of physical violence?
- In what contexts do men feel it is appropriate to use physical violence? And why is this?
- How is the use of physical violence and intimidation linked to the construction of masculine identities?
- Why do some men view physical violence as useful or worthwhile? How do these men come to value it in this way?

ii. The project’s methodology:
   (this must be in language comprehensible to a lay person)

A methodology which incorporates qualitative methods of inquiry and involves the researcher spending time with participants is the most suitable for meeting the objectives outlined above. Therefore, this project will involve the use of in-depth qualitative interviews with a small sample of men who have histories of behaving violently towards other men. The interviews will be informal, largely unstructured and will cover several broad topic areas, including: participants’ life histories and their personal experiences of violence. Due to the topic of the research and the amount of data that will need to be gathered from individuals, the researcher anticipates having to re-interview all the participants, possibly on several occasions. The researcher also anticipates that some participants may not be particularly forthcoming with information during the early stages of fieldwork – re-interviewing will therefore be necessary in order to build rapport and trust to facilitate the gathering of more data.

The research will not investigate a specific form of men’s violence that is perpetrated in a particular context i.e. only domestic violence or football related violence (football hooliganism); rather, the sample will explore physical violence perpetrated by men in a variety of different contexts.
A6. **What is the potential for physical and/or psychological harm/distress to participants?**

There is the potential for participants to experience psychological distress. It is possible that during the interview process, participants may be required to recall and discuss past experiences that may have been particularly distressing or difficult for them. The threat of, as well as actual physical violence, will have been recurrent features in these men’s lives. Experiencing (as a perpetrator or victim) and witnessing physical violence can be particularly traumatic and may induce a variety of emotions, including: guilt, remorse, humiliation, anger, frustration or resentment.

There is a possibility that the researcher’s gender identity as a male may be considered problematic by the participants. This has additional pertinence as the participants will be asked about their masculinity in relation to violence and may be conscious of trying not to show any perceived signs of weakness or vulnerability in front of a male researcher. The interview situation is an encounter for the performance of masculine identity, but one that can simultaneously be experienced as disempowering by some men. The researcher is aware that how questions are phrased and the structure of the interview encounter are important in making sure that these men feel comfortable and un-threatened (Schwalbe and Wolkomir, 2001).

The participants may also fear being judged by the researcher, given that they have engaged in violent behaviour which will have undoubtedly caused physical and psychological harm to other men. Participants will be made aware that the research does not have a moral or criminal justice agenda. Questions will be asked in a sensitive manner and the researcher will ensure that responses to disclosures from participants are non-judgemental.

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)**

It is likely that some interviews will be conducted outside of normal working hours and all of them will be conducted off University premises. There is a potential risk to the researcher’s physical well-being.

**If yes, explain how these issues will be managed.**

All the men who will be recruited as participants in this study will either already know the researcher personally or will have an established relationship with one of the researcher’s ‘gatekeepers’ (see section A8 below for more information). In the case of the former, the researcher already has an established rapport and trusting relationship with these men having spent considerable time with them in a non-research capacity prior to beginning the project. In the case of the latter, the researcher has established relationships with the several ‘gatekeepers’ who will assist with recruitment. These individuals will not only provide informal ‘references’ (Winlow, 2001) attesting to the researcher’s character and trustworthiness, but will be present at the initial meeting between the researcher and participants to facilitate the introductions (see section A8 below for more information).

Interviews will be conducted in either public settings or in participants’ homes. The location of the interview will depend upon the level of rapport that the researcher has with the particular
participant. Those participants who will be introduced to the researcher via a gatekeeper will be interviewed, in the first instance, in a public setting. The researcher is acutely aware of the need to exercise ‘common sense’ and caution when conducting fieldwork and will not enter participant’s homes unless he feels comfortable doing so. If entering participants’ homes the researcher will not hesitate to terminate interviews and vacate the research field should he feel that his personal safety is under threat. Interviews taking place in public settings will be sufficiently private to allow for confidential conversation, yet members of the public will be nearby in the unlikely event that the participant becomes aggressive towards the researcher. The researcher will ensure that their mobile phone is always fully charged before interviews and remains turned on throughout the duration, albeit on the ‘silent’ mode.

In order to facilitate the organisation of interviews, it will be necessary for the researcher and participants to exchange telephone numbers. The researcher will not issue participants with his personal telephone number. Instead he will set up a pay-as-you go phone account with a different number specifically for research purposes; this will be discarded once the research has been completed.

Importantly, the researcher’s social background is not dissimilar to the men who will be involved in this project. In undertaking this research, the researcher will not be entering environments, encountering particular groups of men, or hearing about issues (physical violence) that are ‘alien’ to him. The researcher has the cultural competence and experience to conduct research diligently with this particular group of men, in a manner which will not unduly compromise his safety.

A8. How will the potential participants in the project be:

i. Identified?

The researcher has already identified a potential sample through his location in several social networks which contain men who have reputations and histories of behaving violently towards other men. As discussed above, the researcher is already known to some of these men and is aware of their personal histories via his association with them. Through several informal personal contacts – gatekeepers – the researcher has potential access to other participants with similar reputations and histories, which have been confirmed by these gatekeepers.

ii. Approached?

Initially, either the researcher himself or the researcher’s gatekeepers will discuss the study with the potential participants. Should the potential participant express an interest to be involved in the study, this will then be followed subsequently by an informal meeting between the researcher and the participant, at which the gatekeeper will be present to formalise the introductions if necessary. At the initial meeting between researcher and participant, the researcher will explain the research in sufficient detail, allowing the latter to ask any questions about the interview process and the research more broadly.

iii. Recruited?

At the initial meeting, once the researcher has outlined the project and relevant information (see section A9.1 below), the researcher and potential participant will exchange contact numbers, and a suitable date, time and location will be arranged for the first interview; although the researcher will allow the participants time to consider their involvement in the study if they request this (see
section A9.1 below for more information on gaining consent). Should additional time be requested, the researcher will inform the participant that they will contact them by phone at a later date to ascertain whether they wish to be involved. The researcher will not coerce potential participants – if any participant appears reluctant in anyway i.e. they are evasive when the researcher tries to contact them, the researcher will assume that the participant does not wish to be involved and will destroy any of the participant’s personal information that they’re in possession of.

A9. Will informed consent be obtained from the participants?

Yes [X]  No [ ]

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

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?):

Prior to the collection of any data the researcher will meet all participants informally and discuss with them the following:

1. The study’s key aims and objectives
2. The broad topics that will be discussed during the interview
3. Confidentiality (see below)
4. How anonymity will be maintained (see below)
5. How data will be managed and kept safe (see below)
6. Their rights (don’t have to answer any questions; can withdraw from the study at any point etc.)

Participants will be offered a short research leaflet which synthesises this information to take away with them if they wish (see attached appendices for an example information sheet). The researcher would prefer to discuss the above verbally in the first instance before handing out information sheets to ensure the participants are fully informed and that no assumptions are made regarding the participants’ literacy skills. At the beginning of the interviews the researcher will briefly revisit points 3-6 above before commencing with the interview questions.

Both the researcher and the supervisory team feel that it would be more appropriate to gain consent verbally rather than in written form. The ESRC advises that when conducting research with particular groups (such as drug users) asking them to sign consent forms may pose risks (ESRC REF, p21). Some of the men who will be involved in this research have criminal records and have come into contact with the criminal justice system through their offending behaviour. Requesting that the participants engage in a formal process of signing consent forms may remind them of these previous
experiences. This would be detrimental to the researcher’s attempts to establish trust and rapport with the participants, which could potentially affect the validity and accuracy of their responses during interview, or may result in their complete withdrawal from the study. In light of this, the researcher will gain consent verbally which will be recorded on a Dictaphone.

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?

Prior to the commencement of the interviews, all research participants will be advised that the interviews are confidential. It is possible that during the course of the fieldwork, the researcher may come to possess what has been termed in the literature as ‘guilty knowledge’ (Winlow, 2001). This is a possibility when conducting research with active criminal/deviant groups, and is defined as knowledge of previous or ongoing harmful activities which have not been brought to the attention of the police. In order to minimise the potential for the researcher to be placed in an ethically problematic situation by being in possession of this information, participants will be asked at the beginning of the interviews not to disclose any clearly identifiable information regarding such activities – this is a strategy which has been employed successfully by other researchers (see Cowburn, 2005).

All recordings of interviews will be uploaded and saved on the University’s secure server; these will be deleted once the researcher has completed his PhD study. All transcriptions will be completed using a University computer. When transcribing the interviews, all participants and any other individuals mentioned, will be issued with pseudonyms to protect their identities. As will the names of places, such as localities or cities that the participants may make reference to. If necessary, the researcher will alter slightly the details of particular incidents in order to maintain anonymity. Once transcribed, all anonymised interview transcripts and researcher’s fieldwork notes will be stored in password protected files.

All personal data such as participants’ real names, contact numbers etc, will be stored in a master document on the University’s secure server.

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, financial incentives will not be offered.

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

YES  X  NO
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?

The researcher will explain to the participants his reasons for wishing to record the interviews: more efficient means of data collection. Provided the participants give their consent, the researcher will use a Dictaphone to record the interviews. If any participants are uncomfortable with this or would prefer a Dictaphone was not used, the researcher will take notes. Participants will be assured that all recordings will stored securely and will be destroyed upon completion of the research – this will be explained both verbally and on the research information sheets. Given the nature of what will be discussed during the interviews, some participants may wish to have the recording device turned off before disclosing particularly sensitive information. In these instances, the researcher will abide by the participant’s wishes and record the data in note form on paper.

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
Title of Research Project:

Men and Violence: contextualising dangerousness in global cultural transformations

I confirm my responsibility to deliver the research project in accordance with the University of Sheffield’s policies and procedures, which include the University’s ‘Financial Regulations’, ‘Good Research Practice Standards’ and the ‘Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue’ (Ethics Policy) and, where externally funded, with the terms and conditions of the research funder.

In signing this research ethics application form I am also confirming that:

- The form is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.
- The project will abide by the University’s Ethics Policy.
- There is no potential material interest that may, or may appear to, impair the independence and objectivity of researchers conducting this project.
- Subject to the research being approved, I undertake to adhere to the project protocol without unagreed deviation and to comply with any conditions set out in the letter from the University ethics reviewers notifying me of this.
- I undertake to inform the ethics reviewers of significant changes to the protocol (by contacting my academic department’s Ethics Administrator in the first instance).
- I am aware of my responsibility to be up to date and comply with the requirements of the law and relevant guidelines relating to security and confidentiality of personal data, including the need to register when necessary with the appropriate Data Protection Officer (within the University the Data Protection Officer is based in CiCS).
- I understand that the project, including research records and data, may be subject to inspection for audit purposes, if required in future.
- I understand that personal data about me as a researcher in this form will be held by those involved in the ethics review procedure (e.g. the Ethics Administrator and/or ethics reviewers) and that this will be managed according to Data Protection Act principles.
- If this is an application for a ‘generic’ project, all the individual projects that fit under the generic project are compatible with this application.
- 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 the Principal Investigator (or the name of the Supervisor if this is a postgraduate researcher project):

***

If this is a postgraduate researcher project, insert the student’s name here:

***

Signature of Principal Investigator (or the Supervisor):

***  Date:

Email the completed application form and provide a signed, hard copy of ‘Part B’ to the Ethics Administrator (also enclose, if relevant, other documents).
Participant Information Sheet – Research on men’s violence

The Research
I want to find out why men behave violently towards other men. To do this, I am interviewing men who have been involved in confrontations and fights with other men. I would like to find out:

• What motivates men to fight other men?
• Why do some men feel it is okay to fight?
• What situations or scenarios make men want to fight or feel the need to?
• What happens before, during and then after a fight?
• How does being involved in fights affect men’s lives?

What will happen during the interview?
The interview will be very relaxed, like a normal conversation. I would like to find out about your:

• Background and life history – where you're from, where you grew up, what you do for a living, your family background etc;
• Experiences of fighting – what happened? How? Why?

I would like to use a recorder during the interview so I don’t miss anything you tell me. I will be the only person who listens to the recording and it will be kept on secure computer system at the University that only I have access to. The recordings will be kept until I finish the research, I will then destroy them. But I won't use a recorder if it makes you feel uncomfortable. If there is a question that you don't want to answer, you don't have to answer it. If you want to end the interview at any point you can. And if you decide that you don't want to be involved in the research, you can withdraw at any time and I will destroy the information you have given me.

Will anyone know I have taken part?
No, what you tell me in the interview is private and confidential; I won't tell anyone that you have taken part in the research.

What will happen to the information you give me?
The information that you give me will be kept safe on a password-protected computer and in a lockable storage unit that only I will have access to. When I write up the information that you have given to me during the interview I will make changes to it, so it will not contain anything that could identify you. When I write about your life in my book I will not say where you are from and I will not use your real name – I will use a fake name when I write about you.

You can contact me using the following details: ***