



## **GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES FOR REVIEW OF RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN CONSOCIATES**

All students intending to integrate research with human consociates in IBS master's theses must follow these guidelines and procedures. The term "consociate" conveys a relationship of mutual respect, which is not only critical for ethical field research, it more accurately describes the dynamic between a researcher and the person with whom they are engaging to understand a topic of inquiry that involves disclosure of personal information. The purpose is to ensure an adequate review of the research regarding two central ethical concerns:

- that human consociates are treated in a manner consistent with their dignity and autonomy—specifically that they consent freely and in an informed manner to participation in the research;
- that they are protected from any risks or harms posed by the research.

The research review is NOT intended to assess either the value of the topic or of the research design. In consultation with your thesis advisor, please tailor "Sample Consent Form: Interviews & Fieldwork" or follow the "Consent Guidelines for Surveys," depending on the nature of the research that will be conducted.

### **STUDENTS MUST RECEIVE APPROVAL OF A FULL REVIEW**

#### **FULL REVIEW**

The student should submit the following. (You MUST address each of the items. You may not need to address the items in exactly the way they are described here, for these are only suggestions. Make sure that your approach for each item makes sense for your research. Consult the sample Human Consociates Protocol, consent form, and, if relevant, interview protocol, following these guidelines for an example of the documents required.)

1. **A Research Overview**, explaining the following (BE AS SPECIFIC AS POSSIBLE):
  - a. **The Nature and Purpose of the Research**: e.g., "My research focuses on the relationship between 'x' and 'y.' For my research on this relationship, I plan to interview 40 consociates regarding their perceptions of 'a', 'b', 'c.'"
  - b. **The Research Procedures**: How will the research be conducted? What will it entail? E.g., "I will interview the consociates in their homes or a place of their own choosing. I intend only one interview per consociate; the interview should last about one hour. I will take notes during the interview; I will only record the interview with the consociate's permission."
  - c. **Consociate Recruitment and Selection**: How will you generate a pool of consociates? How will you contact them?
  - d. **Relationship to the Consociates**: In particular, please consider the power dynamics in this relationship, including your own positionality and that of the consociate. This might include race, ethnicity, gender dynamics, linguistic context (Will you be translating their

words? Are you conducting interviews in the consociate's native language?), age differences, institutional hierarchies (e.g., teacher, pastor), and economic, educational, and religious backgrounds.

- e. **Risks and Benefits:** State what benefits and what risks you perceive the research posing to the consociates.
  - f. **Confidentiality and/or Anonymity:** How will you preserve the confidentiality of the data and/or the anonymity of the consociate and any factors that might identify a given consociate? Confidentiality assures a consociate's identity is protected. Anonymity is only guaranteed when you have a third party interview your consociates. You **MUST** keep the data secured until it is destroyed. Consider the following questions in your overview: *If appropriate, how will you collect and analyze the data to ensure anonymity? If appropriate, how will you officially report the data to ensure anonymity?*
  - g. **Communication with Consociates:** It cannot be overstated how important it is to consider the power dynamics involved in representation and the researcher's moral responsibility to protect consociates from silencing, distorting, or misrepresenting their perspectives. How will you discuss issues regarding power dynamics with consociates? Prior to submitting your thesis, you must supply each consociate with a copy of the research with their contribution highlighted for their consideration. Consociates should have a minimum of two weeks to respond. Should the consociate have any concerns, you should make an effort to address and remedy them. How will you supply each consociate's contribution to them?
  - h. **Copyright Protection:** Indicate on the consent form that you retain all intellectual and commercial rights to the interview and that you freely consent to give the consociate free access to cite or quote the work for the informant's own purposes.
2. A draft **Consent Form**. The Consent Form should be written in layperson's language, with as little professional jargon as possible, so that a layperson/consociate can understand what participation in the research involves and consent (should they desire) to such participation. Please specify the following:
- a. The researcher's name and institutional affiliation, as well as the nature and purpose of the research. e.g., "My name is --- and I am a master's candidate at IBS. I invite you to participate in research I am undertaking for my thesis. I am examining how people think about 'x' in relation to 'y'...."
  - b. A statement of the procedures the research involves for the consociate. This might include interviews (How long? How many? Where will they be held?).
  - c. A statement of the risks and benefits of participation in the research to the consociate.
  - d. A statement indicating how confidentiality and/or anonymity will be maintained. Include a section on the Consent Form for consociates to agree or not agree to waive their right to confidentiality and/or anonymity. Consociates should be informed of their rights. Their signature on this section of the form makes clear that they do not expect nor require confidentiality and/or anonymity. (Note: Anonymity means that neither the public nor the researcher can identify a given response with a particular respondent, whereas confidentiality means that the researcher can identify respondents but promises not to divulge their identities to the public.)
  - e. A statement that the consociate is free not to answer any specific question and is free to terminate an interview or withdraw completely from the research at any time.
  - f. Include how a consociate can contact the researcher, e.g., telephone number or email address.

- g. The form should end with a statement that the consociate voluntarily and with understanding consents to participate, followed by signature and date lines.

NOTE: The researcher should keep the original Consent Form signed by the consociate and give a copy of the form to the consociate.

3. A copy of the **survey instrument or schedule of interview questions** used in the research. If the instrument is not yet completed or the interview is to be open-ended, include some sample questions, indicating the nature of the information/data sought from the consociate.
4. A **statement from the student's advisor** verifying that they have read and approved of the protocol being submitted.

### **DEADLINES FOR SUBMITTING REVIEW MATERIALS**

Students should submit research material for review to their advisor, who will distribute the protocol to IBS faculty for approval. Students must receive approval from the IBS faculty before the start of field research. Please plan to submit the proposal by the first of the month (September, October, November, February, March, and April) so that faculty will have sufficient time to review the proposal, which will occur during the faculty meeting on the second Wednesday of the month.

### **COMPLETING THE PROCESS**

The advisor will provide results of the IBS faculty review, which may take up to six weeks. The materials may be approved "as is" or may require changes. Should any changes be stipulated, in most cases, the advisor will make sure revisions are made and should notify the Dean by email. Infrequently, the advisor may require the student to re-submit a revised draft before approving the materials. Finally, if materials are not approved, they will have to be substantially revised and re-submitted to the IBS faculty for approval.

A copy of the approval email will be sent to the student, advisor, and Dean. The Dean will place the approved protocol and supporting documents in the student's academic file.

# **SAMPLE HUMAN CONSOCIATES PROTOCOL**

## **Human Consociates Protocol for Research**

[Researcher's Name]  
Institute of Buddhist Studies  
[Date]

### **Nature and Purpose of the Research**

My research with consociates explores the ways women wield liberating power in their lives. I will examine historical contexts of institutionalized, ritualized, and scriptural obstacles that women have experienced. To enhance my thesis with contemporary western women's perspectives, I will work with four women to develop four case studies. I will interpret their experiences through the hermeneutical lens of the nine principles I formulated for interpreting Buddhist teachings and practices from a women-centered embodied perspective. The first chapter of the thesis explicates these principles. Chapters two and three apply the principles to scriptures and practices, respectively, to animate culturally, historically, and scripturally informed Dharma stories. The four case studies of women will constitute chapter four. The thesis aims to empower people with insights into creative and compassionate ways to navigate injustices.

### **Research Procedures**

We will meet a minimum of four times, usually about two hours per meeting. The interview-conversations can be held in whatever (mutually agreeable) place is best for the consociate, including one or two meetings on Zoom if necessary. I will need to take notes and, if permission is granted, I will record the sessions. The notes and recordings will be solely used for my research purposes. The recordings will not be shared with anyone.

### **Consociate Recruitment/Selection and Interviewer's Relationship to Consociate**

Since this is qualitative research based on relationships of trust, I will invite women I know to participate. I will limit possible consociates to those living in the San Francisco Bay Area. I aim to have two women affiliated with Jōdoshū and Sōtō Zen. I will aim for a balance of ordained and lay women. I will also aim for a balance of white and Japanese ethnic backgrounds.

### **Risks and Benefits**

I believe there is almost no risk involved for any of the consociates. Consociates will be informed about the project and the sorts of questions and themes to be explored before they agree to participate. Consociates will be free not to answer any particular question or request I not include portions of our conversations.

I am aware of the range of emotions and reactions that may arise and will do my best to be respectful and circumspect about my consociates' concerns. All of the consociates will be at least eighteen years old.

### **Confidentiality/Anonymity**

I will know the identities of the consociates, but I will preserve the confidentiality of consociates in any presentations or publications if the consociate prefers to remain anonymous. The interviews will be treated with complete confidentiality. After each interview is completed, I will store the resulting notes/recordings and data files in a secure location.

### **Communication with Consociates**

During the first interview, I will be sure to explain my concern to not silence, distort, or misrepresent their perspective. I will invite my consociate to give me feedback if they have any concerns in this regard. I will repeat my concern at the conclusion of the interview. When I submit my results to my consociates, I will explicitly invite them to address any issues of silencing, distorting, or misrepresenting their perspective. Prior to submitting the thesis for faculty review, I will email the draft to each consociate, highlighting the sections relevant to their contribution and enabling them to respond with any concerns. They will have two weeks to respond.

## **SAMPLE CONSENT FORM: INTERVIEWS & FIELDWORK**

### **Consociate Consent Form**

My name is [Researcher's name] and I am a master's candidate at the Institute of Buddhist Studies in Berkeley. I invite you to be a consociate in my thesis research. The term "consociate" conveys a relationship of mutual respect, which is not only critical for ethical field research, it more accurately describes the dynamic between a researcher and the person with whom they are engaging to understand a topic of inquiry that involves disclosure of personal information.

I am writing a thesis currently titled \_\_\_\_\_. It will illuminate how women can wield liberating power in their lives, even in the context of institutionalized, ritualized, and scriptural obstacles. I developed nine principles for interpreting Buddhist teachings and practices from a women-centered embodied perspective. Applying these principles to animate culturally, historically, and scripturally informed Dharma stories, I aim to empower people with insights into creative and compassionate ways to navigate injustices. I will also include four case studies of contemporary Buddhist women who grew up and live in the United States.

The final chapter of the thesis will focus on the stories of four Buddhist women in the Bay Area. The driving question is: How has the Dharma affected your life journey? I would like you to reflect on how you met the Dharma, how it helped you grow, challenged you, liberated you?

To go deep enough, we would meet a minimum of four times, usually about two hours per meeting. The interview-conversations can be held in whatever (mutually agreeable) place is best for you, including one or two meetings on Zoom if necessary. I will need to take notes and, if you agree, I will record the sessions to be solely used for my research purposes. The recordings will not be shared with anyone.

Your name will not be used in the thesis unless you want it to be used. I am also willing to work with you to find ways to keep your identity private, for I realize there could be aspects of your experience that might inadvertently enable people to discern your identity.

Before I submit the thesis to my committee, I will provide you with a copy of my draft, highlighting passages relevant to your contribution. At this time, please communicate any concerns regarding silencing, misrepresentation, or distortion of your contribution, and I will address them. I request that you share any concerns within two weeks of receiving the thesis.

You will always be free not to answer any specific question or questions, and you can back out of the study at any time.

While I will retain all intellectual and commercial rights to the interview materials (copyright), I freely consent to give you access to the materials pertaining to your interview to cite or quote for your own use.

I can be reached at [phone #] or at [email address].

*Thank you for your participation!*

I, \_\_\_\_\_, voluntarily and with understanding consent to be interviewed by [researcher's name] in her thesis on women liberating Buddhism. I understand that I am free to not answer any specific question(s), and I may terminate the interview and/or withdraw from the research project at any time. I understand that the reporting of my participation in this study will be entirely confidential. I understand that I am free to not answer any specific question(s), and may terminate the interview and/or withdraw from the research project at any time. I understand that the reporting of my participation in this study will be entirely confidential.

\_\_\_\_\_ I consent to the recording of my interview.

*Please sign here* \_\_\_\_\_ *Date* \_\_\_\_\_

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[If the Researcher, instead, does not want to keep the consociate's name and/or responses confidential, they should seek the respondent's approval:]

\_\_\_\_\_ I do NOT agree to waive my right to confidentiality.

\_\_\_\_\_ I DO agree to waive my right to confidentiality.

*Please sign here* \_\_\_\_\_ *Date* \_\_\_\_\_

## **SAMPLE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

### **(Draft) Interview Protocol**

Note to HCP Committee: These are preliminary questions, and the list is far from complete as of yet. I expect interviews to be a bit open-ended, and that other pertinent questions will emerge from the interviews themselves.

1. What has been the biggest challenge in your life as a woman?
2. Did you have a spiritual teacher to help guide you through that time?
3. Were there any Buddhist practices that you found particularly effective or helpful?
4. Were there any friends and family who you could turn to for support?
5. Did you have sufficient financial resources to effectively respond to the situation?
6. Were there any creative activities you found liberating?
7. Did the challenge affect your health?
8. Did you engage in or create any rituals that you found empowering?
9. Were there any Dharma teachings you found particularly helpful/inspiring?
10. Were there any Dharma teachings you found particularly unhelpful or disempowering?
11. In what ways do you wield liberating power in your life?



## **CONSENT GUIDELINES FOR SURVEYS**

If you plan to use a survey instrument, please include the following in your survey:

- Risks and Benefits of participating in the survey
- Confidentiality/Anonymity, specific to your research design
- Statement stipulating that submitting the survey indicates consent