



SALFORD HOUSING AND URBAN STUDIES UNIT



Guidelines agreed by the membership of the 2002-2004 ESRC Seminar Series on Eliciting the Views of Refugee People Seeking Asylum

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

We are operating within a context of ever changing policy which can be very difficult for refugee people seeking asylum. These guidelines have been produced because, despite an explosion of research on refugee people seeking asylum, research approaches are in our view very often inappropriate and unethical for a highly vulnerable and ever-changing population.

As a whole, these guidelines attempt to present an 'ideal' research methodology. However, in practice, we recognise that researchers are faced with limitations (often financial) which mean that it is not always possible for them to adhere to all the points that follow. In such circumstances, it would be helpful and ethical for researchers to specify the constraints under which they are working and the consequences those constraints have on the research. Research should be conducted within the professional ethics code of the appropriate professional body, e.g., the Social Research Association, the British Sociological Association, the British Anthropological Association or the British Medical Association.

APPROACH

In general and from the outset, good practice in research:

- recognises that people may see the social world differently. The research need to be open to different ways of seeing, interpreting and acting in the world so that these different ways of seeing the social world are able to be articulated and demonstrated;
- identifies existing research and justifies the usefulness of the new research in terms of benefits to refugee people seeking asylum;
- states clearly the researchers' aims and what they want to try and do with the research

findings;

- sets up procedures ensuring adherence to confidentiality agreements reached with participating refugee people seeking asylum;
- aims to address issues affecting refugee people seeking asylum and therefore allows input from refugee people seeking asylum;
- acknowledges that refugee people seeking asylum have very valuable knowledge about the British system gained from their own experience;
- is open and honest with potential participants about the extent to which the researchers on the project intend to allow participants to become involved in shaping and directing the project;
- report findings using non-discriminatory language. This involves recognising that certain words or phrases that may cause offence should be avoided. Most professional guidelines will offer advice;
- recognises that, whilst researchers cannot control what is done with their research once it is in the public domain, they need to be aware of the wider political context concerning refugee people seeking asylum and responsibly think through the implications and impact of their findings;
- is transparent and pro-active in consultation;
- that intends to consult with, rather than actively engage the participation of, refugee people seeking asylum, is made transparent from the outset.

Specifically, research that intends actively to engage the participation of refugee people seeking asylum, rather than merely consult with them:

- specifies how it is going to ensure the meaningful participation of refugee people seeking asylum in collecting, analysing, reporting and disseminating research data and findings;
- specifies which sections of communities/groups are being involved (e.g., self-appointed leaders, accountable leaders, voluntary organisation representatives, women);
- generates individual and community/group-level capacity building, e.g., helping the development of skills for creating and implementing action plans and/or initiating research themselves and/or advocacy capacity;
- recognises that the refugee people seeking asylum communities/groups are heterogeneous (i.e. there is no one community/group or voice) so that empowering one section of the community/group may cut across the position of another section;
- describes how to include the involvement of refugee people seeking asylum in developing the research plans for feedback to communities/groups or groups who are the focus of the research;
- enables researchers to inform participants of their funding sources, and any conditions associated with acceptance of the funding, and enables participants to give truly informed consent;
- ensures that the project has adequate resources to achieve its aims. This is especially relevant when researching with/about a population group such as refugee people seeking asylum, who may have many reasons to be wary of becoming involved in research/sharing their stories/describing how they feel, and therefore require a large investment in the early stages of the project for them to become involved. In this way,

the 'hard-to-reach' label ceases to function as a catch -all excuse for not involving refugee people seeking asylum;

- describes how to include the involvement of refugee people seeking asylum in developing the research plans for dissemination, and who refugee people seeking asylum want to disseminate to, from the outset;
- conforms to data protection legislation (Data Protection Act 1998);

METHODS

Good practice in research projects:

- prepares and supports community/group researchers adequately by creating regular opportunities for them to reflect on their own research activity with experienced and trustworthy colleagues and by integrating opportunities for the development of themselves and their communities/groups through the research;
- uses appropriate methods as determined by participants' preferences;
- is open to exploring different channels for contacting people for their involvement, i.e., beyond the local community/group/centre;
- recognises that words/concepts can have different meanings across languages and that these differences need to be recognised as effecting the research findings;
- articulates researchers' understanding that the use of different methods can position those involved in power relationships with one another, e.g. relying exclusively on unnecessarily technical or complicated jargon to present quantitative/qualitative data;
- uses methods that draw out the differences in ways of seeing, interpreting and acting on the world, i.e., techniques that make it possible for people to define their world in their own terms and do not assume that the researcher is the only/an expert;
- specifies the consequences that methodologies can have on who it is from refugee people seeking asylum communities/groups who do - or do not - have a voice in the research;
- recognises that the description of personal experiences are valid in their own right, even if this does not build on prior established knowledge, e.g., eviction into destitution is a new experience for refugee people seeking asylum in Britain and the methods selected for use should be chosen for their capacity to release new knowledge.

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