**COMPARISON: CHARACTERISTICS OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF PROJECTS**

*Determining whether a project requires IRB review depends on if it constitutes* ***HUMAN SUBJECT RESEARCH****. Please contact the WMed IRB (*[*irb@med.wmich.edu*](mailto:irb@med.wmich.edu)*) with any questions in making a determination.*

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|  | **HUMAN SUBJECT RESEARCH** | **QUALITY ASSURANCE/**  **QUALITY IMPROVEMENT** | **PROGRAM EVALUATION** | **CLASS/STUDENT PROJECT** | **ORAL HISTORY** |
| **PURPOSE** | Develop or contribute to **generalizable knowledge** (e.g. testing hypothesis) | **Improve a practice or process** within a particular institution or ensure it confirms with expected norms | **Improve a specific program**, only to provide information for and about the setting in which it is conducted | **Provide an educational experience** about the research process or methods | Explain a particular past; does not create generalizable explanations about all that has happened in that topic, nor does it predict the future of that topic; **interviews are a conscious intention of creating a permanent record to contribute to an understanding of the past** |
| **MOTIVATION FOR PROJECT** | Project occurs in large part as a result of individual professional goals and requirements (e.g. seeking tenure; obtaining grants; completing a thesis or dissertation) | Project occurs regardless of whether individual(s) conducting it may benefit professionally from conducting the project | Project not initiated by the evaluator and occurs regardless of whether individual(s) conducting it may benefit professionally from conducting the project | Project occurs as part of assigned course/class work or requirement of an educational program in order to learn a new technique or pass a course/fulfill an assignment | The purpose is to create a historical record of specific personal events and experiences related to a topic at hand; project may also occur as part of individual professional goals and requirements |
| **DESIGN** | Designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge; may involve randomization of individuals to different treatments, regimens, or processes; novel research ideas supported by literature search | Not designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge; generally does not involve randomization to different practices or processes | Not designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge; does not involve randomization of individuals, but may involve comparison of variations in program | Not designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge; design is often an example or template provided by a professor or course book.  NOTE: Although being done for educational credit, if the student develops a scientifically valid, systematically designed study to add new information to an existing topic (e.g. master’s thesis, dissertation), this may be human subject research. | Interview or series of interviews gives a unique perspective on the topic; story or collection of stories to be a variety of particular perspectives; may involve open-ended questions that are tailored to the experiences of the individual narrator; content of interviews is grounded in reflections on the past as opposed to commentary on purely contemporary events; analysis of the stories and/or conclusions drawn about the stories are not part of the design |
| **MANDATE** | Activities not mandated by institution or program | Activity mandated by the institution or clinic as part of its operation | Activity mandated by the program, usually its funder, as part of its operations | Activity mandated by regularly assigned coursework or educational program | Activities not mandated by institution or program |
| **EFFECT ON PROGRAM OR PRACTICE EVALUATED** | Findings of the study are not expected to directly or immediately affect institutional or programmatic practice | Findings of the study are expected to directly affect institutional practice and identify corrective action(s) needed | Findings of the evaluation are expected to directly affect the conduct of the program and identify improvements | Findings of project are not expected to directly affect the program; the project will mainly generate raw data, not generalizable knowledge | Collection of stories are not expected to affect the narrator group, as any conclusions, trends, judgments, or general findings about the stories are not part of the project |
| **SUBJECT POPULATION** | Usually involves a subset of individuals; universal participation of an entire clinic, program, or department is not expected; generally, statistical justification for sample size is used to ensure endpoints can be met | Information on all or most receiving a particular treatment or undergoing a particular practice or process expected to be included; exclusion of information from some individuals significantly affects conclusions | Information on all or most participants within or affected by receiving a particular treatment of undergoing a particular practice or process expected to be used; exclusion of information from some individuals significantly affects conclusions | Can either include all, most, or a subset of individuals; statistical justification may be used in the context to understand the process of subject selection; however, recruitment often utilizes convenience sampling | Narrators are not anonymous individuals or selected as part of a random sample; narrators are specific individuals selected because of their unique relationship to the topic at hand; it is the practice in oral history for narrators to be identified by name |
| **BENEFITS** | Participants may or may not benefit directly – benefit, if any, to individuals is incidental or delayed | Participants expected to benefit directly from the activities | No benefit to participants expected; evaluation concentrates on program improvements or whether the program should continue | Participants may or may not benefit directly; benefit is primarily for the investigator conducting project for his/her own knowledge or fulfillment of educational requirements | Narrators will not benefit directly, as the purpose is not to inform policy, control outcomes, or direct conclusions |
| **DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS** | Intent to publish or present generally presumed at the outset of project as part of professional expectations, obligations; dissemination of information usually occurs in research/scientific publications, grant proposals, or other research/scientific forum; results expected to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge by filling a gap in scientific knowledge or supporting, refining, or refuting research from other research studies | Intent to publish or present generally not presumed at the outset of the project; dissemination of information often does not occur beyond the institution evaluated; dissemination of information may occur in quality improvement publications/forums; when published or presented to a wider audience, the intent is to suggest potentially effective models, strategies, assessment tools, or provide benchmark or base rates rather than to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge | Intent to publish or present generally presumed at the outset of the project; dissemination of information to program stakeholders and participants; may be publically posted (e.g. website) to ensure transparency of results; when published or presented to a wider audience, the intent is to suggest potentially effective models, strategies, assessment tools or provide benchmarks or base rates rather than to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge | No intent to present or publish results beyond the classroom, campus, or educational program; any presentations, posters, or publishing (such as on ScholarWorks) is simply to document completed work/raw data for educational or programmatic requirements and/or to obtain experience | Intent to publish or present generally presumed at the outset of project; oral history interviews are historical documents that are often preserved and made accessible to future historians and members of the public; dissemination typically occurs through presentations, historical publications, or oral history archives (including centers and collections), as opposed to research/scientific publications, grant proposals, or other research/scientific forums |