**School of Psychology**

Ethics form for UG/PGT animal/molecular projects

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| **Project title:** | Elephant Culture |
| **Student:** | Tia Wassell |
| **Supervisor:** | Karen McComb |
| **Start date:** | January 2018 |
| **End date:** | May 2018 |

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| **Project description** (up to 4000 characters) |
| *This section should be in abstract form describing the background, aims and methodology of the project*  It is well known that Elephants as a species are highly emotional, intelligent species that possess an astounding capacity for memory. Additionally, they have a rich understanding of their surroundings which allows them to safely travel long distances, searching for water and discriminating between large numbers of social companions. Research has only recently started to delve deeper into the psychological and behavioral actions of these sophisticated animals. Culture was considered to be exclusive to humans but has recently been seen in other large-brained, mammals such as Orangutans, Chimpanzees, and even Cetaceans. The definition of culture being used in this study is the ability to pass down behavioral information and traditions over generations through social learning. This project will consider the pervasiveness of cultural in behaviours through Elephant interactions.  My project will consider if the variation of behaviours exhibited by wild African Elephants in response to playbacks of voices from known dangerous humans in two different populations is due to cultural differences. Responses to threatening scenarios has always been considered an innate instinct for humans and all animals. It could be considered that the way that we respond to predatory threats can be culturally influenced. The aim of this project is to see how wild African Elephants in two populations in Kenya, Amboseli (McComb et al., 2014) and Samburu (Soltis et al., 2014), respond to well-documented human threats. The experiments carried out use voice recordings of Maasai and Samburu males and played them back to Elephants each of the herds of the respective location. From this, we will see if the two different Elephant populations show similarities and / or differences in behavioural responses to known human predators.  We will examine video records of existing experiments, comparing behavioural responses to the male Maasai voice stimuli, and the male Samburu voice stimuli. From this, we will investigate if the behaviours examined are innate (commonly seen within wild African Elephants from different geographical locations) or culturally specific (only seen within that Elephant population). |

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| **Procedures description** (up to 2000 characters) | |
| *In this section please describe the procedures that have or will take place under a Home Office Licence and their need for ethical approval (e.g. requirements for granting the HO licence).*  This project will use secondary analysis of data of video footage previously obtained through observational field studies of wild African Elephants, provided by researchers of the Elephant Culture Project. The data used are predominantly from McComb et al. (2014) and Soltis et al. (2014). The datasets will cover the behaviours of multiple groups of Elephants in response to human voice stimuli (Maasai or Samburu people). I will be viewing these datasets on my laptop, having obtained them from the previous researchers. Therefore, there will be no direct interactions with the animals, which were filmed in their natural environments under ethical guidelines that minimized stress to the Elephants involved. Playback sequences in the original experiments were brief and each family received only one playback of adult male Maasai or adult male Samburu voices (the threatening stimuli).  Our collaborators in the Elephant Culture Project apply strict ethical guidelines towards the study of animals, with footage being taken from minimum, safe observation distances as enforced by local authorities. This helps to reduce the stress placed upon animals when using research vehicles, as well as allowing Elephants to perform natural behaviours to be recorded for data. | |
| Personal Licence holder: (name of person undertaking these procedures)  Lucy Bates & Karen McComb | |
| Personal Licence no.: | Project Licence no:   |  | | --- | | ERC/46/7 | |

Approval

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| Role | Name | Signature | Date |
| Student | Tia Wassell | twassell | 04/11/2017 |
| Supervisor | Karen McComb & Lucy Bates | KM by email | 8 Nov 2017 |
| Project Licence Holder |  |  |  |