IRB

Below you will find my responses to reviewer comments. I address each question directly and in order.

Reviewer 1

This proposal seems like an ethically sound project. However, it really cannot be evaluated until the investigator includes the actual questions that the counselors will be asked to answer. I also request that the investigator specifically define what constitutes reaching a consensus between the participants. Finally, the investigator should include his departmental affiliation on the consent form, information about contacting the IRB Chair, and the disclaimer that the decision to participate will not prejudice tha participants\' relationships with the university.   
A) Questions have been included at the end of the Consent form.

B) A clarification statement was added to better describe what is meant by ‘consensus’.

C) An addition has been made including the lead reseracher’s departmental affiliation.

D) Information about contacting the IRB chair was included in the consent form.

E)A statement was added to emphasize freedom to withdraw from the study without consequence to the participant.

Reviewer 2

I believe that it will be possible to approve this research eventually.  However, currently, I need more data in order to evaluate the proposal.  Additional information also needs to be added to the consent, as noted.  
  
1.  In consent (paragraph 2) you indicate that participants will respond to no more than 3 questions at a time, yet in the synopsis (3, para. 2) you indicate 4 questions.  Which will it be?

This has been clarified and re-stated to indicate 6 questions.  
  
2.  I understand that as in open-ended interviews in much qualitative research, you will be unable to disclose later questions that will arise out of the data analysis.  However, I believe that you do need to disclose the initial 3 or 4 questions (see above), as well as provide examples of the kind/type of questions that might be later follow-up questions (dependent on the data).  Although you indicate in your synopsis (3, para. 2) that the initial questions will be attached to the informed consent form, they are not.

The initial round of questions are now included at the end of the consent form.

3.  The demographic survey (referred to in the recruitment letter, para. 2 but NOT in the consent) needs to included.  You also need to include a description of the survey in the consent form.

The demographic form to be included in this study is included at the end of the consent form.

3.  In the call for the participants (para. 2) and in the consent form (para. 2), you say that the data will be “collated”.  It seems instead that the data will be analyzed.  I understand if you were going for a more participant-friendly term, but collated is very different than analyzed, and I don’t think collation would be enough for you to develop your next round of questions from your data.  And how will they be analyzed “anonymously”? First be aware that data does not have to be anonymous or masked for data analysis; you just need to protect the confidentiality of the participants.  But if you want it to be analyzed without being aware of the participants’ identities, when will you code the data and remove identifying information (this is not described)?  Also, if you do this, the data will not be anonymous, but masked, as you will be aware of who the participants are when you are analyzing the data. And speaking of data analysis….

The term ‘collated’ was replaced with analyze to more accurately describe the process of the study.

The term ‘anonomous’ was removed and confidentiality emphasized to more accurately emphasize the condition of the study.

4.  What form of data analysis will you be using with your qualitative data?  How will you determine that data has reached “consensus”.  I am unfamiliar with the Delphi model itself, but familiar with qualitative research is general.  Is consensus similar to data saturation?  Explain the process and include research citations as would be helpful.  
  
The Delphi method is a qualitative method used to secure agreement in responses. It involves analyzing initial responses for thematic materials. This is followed by respondent reviewing the themes generated and, in most cases, ranking the responses. This process is continued until agreement is reached in the order of ranking. Below are three references that I pulled from web based sources for your review.

[Harold A. Linstone](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harold_A._Linstone) and Murray Turoff, Editors Linstone & Turoff (1975). [*The Delphi Method: Techniques and Applications*](http://www.is.njit.edu/pubs/delphibook/)*: a heavily referenced work on this method with an* [*extensive bibliography*](http://www.is.njit.edu/pubs/delphibook/appendix.pdf)*.*

*Sackman, H. (1974), "Delphi Assessment: Expert Opinion, Forecasting and Group Process", R-1283-PR, April 1974. Brown, Thomas, "An Experiment in Probabilistic Forecasting", R-944-ARPA, 1972* - the first RAND paper.

Bernice B. Brown (1968). ["Delphi Process: A Methodology Used for the Elicitation of Opinions of Experts."](http://www.rand.org/cgi-bin/Abstracts/ordi/getabbydoc.pl?doc=P-3925) : An earlier paper published by RAND (Document No: P-3925, 1968, 15 pages)

5.  I believe that you need to identify the affiliations of all of your co-researchers (not the grad assistant), both in the synopsis and in the consent letter.  Your affiliation also needs to be disclosed in the consent letter.

The affiliation of those involved has been identified in the consent form and the Synopsis.

6.  A specific date needs to be given for data destruction (one year from the completion of data analysis, for example) (consent, para. 1).

This information is provided to the participants in the 3rd paragraph of the consent form.

7.  After you note that participation is voluntary (consent para. 2), you need to spell out that that means that they can withdraw from the research at any time.  You also need to clarify if they can request to have their data removed from the research if they choose to leave.

A statement was added to emphasize freedom to withdraw from the study without consequence to the participant. Additionally, a state was added to note that participants may request to have their data removed from the study,  
  
8.  I believe that they have to sign and print their full name, as well as the date, and there also needs to be a place for your signature and the date.  (A typewritten signature, can I believe be substituted, but I do not believe that initials are adequate).

Given the low risked involved in this study (polling of expert opinion) and that the study is being conducted electronically, signatures will not be obtained by either participants or researchers. Consent by participants will be secured by implication in the completion of the surveys. Further, details for contacting the researchers are clearly stated in the consent form allowing the participants easy access to the researchers if further information is needed. Researcher acknowledgment is implied in the consent form as well.