

## **Suggested Guidelines for Qualitative Research in Small, Identifiable Populations**

Making research results public from qualitative studies using samples from small, identifiable populations (e.g., male kindergarten teachers in rural, Southwestern Ontario) present special challenges to researchers. These public forms include, but are not limited to theses, directed research projects, conference papers or posters, and journal articles. The following suggested guidelines were developed to help researchers make decisions that will lead to the best practice possible in providing research participants with informed consent about the degree of anonymity that they will have in public forms of their data.

1. In Letters of Information to research participants in qualitative studies, include a sentence that informs them that quotations from their interviews (or observations about them from observation studies) might appear in conference papers or published articles about the study.
2. Let participants know that they may request a paper or electronic copy of any paper written about the study.
3. With older participants who have been interviewed, it is helpful to provide research participants with the opportunity to read transcripts of their interviews to check for accuracy of their data. This means that the Letter of Information needs to state that participants will have an opportunity to read transcripts of their interviews, as well as indicating the parameters of their role in reading the transcripts (e.g., do they have the right to change, add, or delete text from their transcript or are they just checking for accuracy in transcription?)
4. When making results public, one way to help with improving anonymity is to describe the sample as a whole in the Method section. Then, in the Results section, each quotation can be introduced generally (e.g., “one participant said”), rather than giving specific descriptors about the person (e.g., “the single-parent father said”). However, if it is important for your analysis to provide descriptors before quotations to distinguish types of people (e.g., ethnic minority teacher vs. EuroCanadian teacher), participants need to be informed about this in the Letter of Information. In other words, participants need to have informed consent about the *degree* of anonymity that you will be able to provide for them. If you cannot guarantee anonymity to participants in public forms of the results, you need to state that in the Letter of Information.
5. Some researchers choose to share an initial interpretation of their data with participants to receive their feedback and may choose to make modifications in their interpretations based on that feedback. If you plan to offer participants this option, it also needs to be specified in the Letter of Information, again clearly stating the participant’s role in this process. For some studies, this option may not be desirable or possible (e.g., B.Ed. students who have left town without a new address).

The following sample Letter of Information is intended to present only one of many possible ways that these issues could be addressed.

## **Classroom Experiences of Male Kindergarten Teachers**

### **Introduction**

My name is Jaden James and I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Western Ontario. I am currently conducting research into the classroom experiences of male kindergarten teachers in rural Ontario and would like to invite you to participate in this research.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The aims of this research are (a) to understand the impact of gender on interactions between male kindergarten teachers and their students, their students' parents, and school administrators; and (b) to explore strategies these teachers use to deal with classroom experiences relating to boys and girls.

### **Study Procedures**

If you agree to participate you will be asked to take part in a one-hour interview in a private room at the local library. You will be given an opportunity to review the transcript from this interview and will be able to delete, modify, or elaborate on any of your responses, if you so choose. This may require an additional one hour of your time.

### **Confidentiality**

The information collected will be used for research purposes only. The data will be kept confidential by storing it in a locked cabinet and will be destroyed when analyses are completed. Results of this study may be published in an academic journal and as a conference paper and may include quotations from your interview. A pseudonym will be used instead of your name and efforts will be made not to disclose your identity. However, it may be helpful for readers to know which quotations came from novice vs. experienced teachers, for example. Because there are a small number of male kindergarten teachers in rural Ontario, this amount of detail means that your anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

### **Risks**

There are no known risks to participating in this study.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions, or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on your employment status.

### **Questions**

If you have any questions about the conduct of the study or your rights as a research participant you may contact the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Western Ontario 519-661-3036 or [ethics@uwo.ca](mailto:ethics@uwo.ca). If you have any questions about this research, or any comments to make now or at a later date, or if you would like a copy of the published results of this study, please contact INSERT NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION OF INVESTIGATOR & FACULTY SUPERVISOR.

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.