

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LETTER

PROJECT TITLE: Qualitative study on experiences of autistic people working in academia.

APPLICATION NUMBER: 2020-1507

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Prof Sandra Jones

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in the research project below.

A note about terminology

While many may be more familiar with person-first language (i.e., person with autism) there is clear preference in the autistic community for the use of identity-first language (i.e., autistic person). Identity first language “reflects the belief that being autistic is a core part of a person’s identity. Similar examples of ‘identity first’ language can be found in the Blind and Deaf communities. Thus, this is the terminology used in this document.

What is the project about?

The research project investigates the experiences of autistic people working in academia, aiming particularly to understand the barriers and facilitators of successful academic careers for this cohort. Whilst there is a plethora of research exploring the experiences of autistic students and the difficulties they face, there is a gap in our knowledge of the experiences of autistic persons in academia. This research is novel and will provide a rich dataset of information on the experiences of autistic academics and will allow for the identification of patterns or commonalities in these experiences.

Who is undertaking the project?

This project is being carried out by Professor Sandra Jones, Pro Vice-Chancellor of ACU Engagement. Prof Jones has conducted research on the experiences of autistic people and the development and evaluation of social support and peer support programs. She is also autistic, and the very proud mother of two autistic adult sons. Prof Jones will be responsible for sending out the reflection topics via email and will be on the receiving end of responses.

Are there any risks associated with participating in this project?

The potential risks associated with this project are minimal. However, if you do feel upset by anything raised in the reflection topics, you can contact Prof Jones and will be provided with the contact information for the relevant organisation in your jurisdiction that can provide support or can refer you to an appropriate support.

What will I be asked to do?

Each month, you will be sent an email with a reflection topic (total of 12) related to your career in academia. Each topic will have a return period of 4 weeks, with responses being sent to the return email address. Completion and return of each topic is optional.

How much time will the project take?

The reflection topics will be sent on a monthly basis spanning a period of 12 months. You can spend as much or as little time on writing your response for each topic, or you can choose to not respond to a topic.

What are the benefits of the research project?

There are no immediate benefits to you for taking part; however, it will allow you to reflect on, and share your experiences of being an autistic person in academia. This knowledge will be used to inform our

understanding of the challenges that you may face, and what supports are helpful when working as an academic. Additionally, at the end of the project you will have the option of being introduced (via email) to the other participants in the study to assist you in building a network of people with shared experiences.

Can I withdraw from the study?

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are not under any obligation to participate. If you agree to participate, you can withdraw from this study at any time without adverse consequences.

How will my data remain confidential?

Responses will be de-identified. Each participant will be allocated a pseudonym for analysis and publication of the data. Participants' emails will be deleted from the system following deidentification of the responses and inclusion in the Word document. Participants will have the option to read any segments of material for publication that use their responses and request the removal of any detail that they feel could identify them to others.

Will anyone else know the results of the project?

A brief report detailing the findings from the interviews will be written and made available to all participants upon request. Additionally, we will look to publish the anonymised findings from this research in a monograph and/or peer-reviewed article(s). Prof Jones may refer to the findings of the study in presentations and professional development sessions aimed at promoting greater inclusion of, and support for, autistic people in academia.

Will I be able to find out the results of the project?

Yes. The results of the study will be available on request.

Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?

Principal Investigator: Prof Sandra Jones Sandra.Jones@acu.edu.au or Ph: (03) 9953 3709

What if I have a complaint or any concerns?

The study has been reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University (review number 2020-108E). If you have any complaints or concerns about the conduct of the project, you may write to the Manager of the Human Research Ethics and Integrity Committee care of the Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research).

Manager, Ethics and Integrity
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Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

I want to participate! How do I sign up?

Please contact Prof Sandra Jones: Sandra.Jones@acu.edu.au or (03) 9953 3709

Yours sincerely,
Professor Sandra Jones
Principal Investigator