NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY
Institutional Review Board
Approval Date: DEC 0 2 2011
Continuing Review Date: DEC 0 1 2012

Letter of Invitation

Greetings! My name is Dilip Kulkarni. I am a student in the Conflict Analysis and Resolution doctoral program at Nova Southeastern University, Fort Lauderdale, FL. As part of my dissertation I am currently conducting a study exploring the influence of culture on international conflict mediators' experiences entitled "Mediator Perception of the Influence of Culture on International Conflicts: A Phenomenological Study". The purpose of the study is to conduct a phenomenological research study of mediators' experiences regarding the influence of culture on the mediation of international conflicts for the purpose of exploring their lived experience as international conflict mediators and what this experience means to them. This study aims to address the following research questions: "How do international conflict mediators describe the influence of culture on the mediation process and outcomes?" and "How do international conflict mediators describe the influence of the cultural contexts on their abilities to successfully resolve international conflicts?"

As this will be a phenomenological research study, I would like to ask you about your international conflict mediation experience. You will be asked only to recount your experience that you determine to be relevant and feel comfortable in sharing with me. Please note that only individuals who are residing in the United Stated and have experience in mediating at least three international conflicts will be selected as participants in this study. Additionally, every individual who agrees to participate in the study will be required to sign an informed consent form.

Based on my beliefs that you are a professional with experience in conducting international conflict mediations, I am extending you an invitation to be a participant in this study. If you agree to be a participant in this study, within the next few months you will be asked to participate in an in-person face-to-face interview of about 120 minutes about your experience in mediating international conflicts. The face-to-face interview would take place at a time that is most convenient for you and at a location selected by you as long as it would be suitable for insuring complete privacy while conducting the interview. In the interview, you will be asked open-ended questions about your experience regarding the influence of culture on your mediation of international conflicts. I may ask you follow-up questions based upon the research objectives of the study. However, you will not be asked to do anything other than participate in the interview review, provide clarification of transcripts, if necessary and review the study findings if you wish. You will not be asked any questions that do not pertain to your experience in mediating international conflicts.

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I will be conducting the interview which will be digitally recorded. I will use headphones for transcribing the recordings of interview in the privacy of my office. Within 90 days from the interview, I will email you any information requiring clarification of the transcript. You will need to provide me via email the requested clarifications, if any within 30 days of the request.

If you do not want the interview to be recorded then you will not be selected as a participant in this study. This audio recording will be available to be heard by my dissertation committee, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and no one else. The original digital recording will be kept securely in a locked cabinet in my office. A copy of the recording will be downloaded onto my password protected personal laptop computer. The recording will be kept for three years from the conclusion of the research and destroyed after that time by being erased from the recorder and deleted from the computer hard drive. Because your voice may potentially be identifiable to anyone who hears the recording, the confidentiality of the things you say on the recording cannot be guaranteed, although I will try to limit the access to the tape as described in this paragraph.

In this study, there is a minimal risk to privacy and confidentiality. I will make every effort to protect your privacy and to preserve your confidentiality through securing the information you provide and through the use of pseudonyms in the transcripts and any excerpts used in the research reports generated from the study. There is also a risk to you of loss of time and earnings, but because you will be able to choose the time and place for the interview, I believe that this risk is minimal. Other than adding new knowledge to the field of mediation of international conflicts, I don't believe that you will receive any direct or indirect benefits. Similarly, other than your time, you will not be expected to incur any cost. You will not receive any payments for participating in this study.

As maintaining your confidentiality is highly important to this study, I will not use your name unless you give me permission to use it. If you do not give me permission to use your name, I will not use any identifying information linking you to this study. In this case your identity will be kept confidential, and only pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity. All information in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. The university's human research oversight board (Institutional Review Board or IRB) and regulatory agencies may review the research records. In order to keep your information private, the recording of your interview and any written or printed document that could identify you will be kept in a locked cabinet in my office. Electronic files will be stored in my password protected laptop computer. The data in this study will be stored for thirty six months after the end of the study, after which it will be destroyed. All printed and written data will be destroyed by shredding. The digital recordings of the interviews will be destroyed by deleting them from

my password protected computer that is secured in my office. Any information stored on my designated flash drive will be destroyed by crushing the flash drive.

You will have the right to leave the study at any time or to refuse to participate in the study. If you choose to withdraw, any information collected from you before the date of your leaving the study will be secured and kept in the research records for three years from the conclusion of the study at which time it will be destroyed. However, you may request that it not be used or that it be destroyed when instructed by you.

Within one year of the time of the interview, I will invite you to review the written findings resulting from the analysis of the data. Subject to your interest in reviewing the findings, I will via email, provide you with a document presenting the findings. I will request you to provide your feedback regarding the findings via email. Your feedback is optional and can be done at your convenience within a period of 30 days. You will have no other involvement.

I have obtained the approval of the Institutional Review Board at Nova Southeastern University (NSU). I will conduct my research in keeping with the guidelines and standards approved by NSU's IRB, taking precautions to protect your confidentiality and privacy. If you have any questions about the research, your research rights, or have a research-related injury, please contact me. If you are interested in participating in this study, or if you have any questions about the study, please contact me at Kulkarni@nova.edu or at 301-829-8539.

Sincerely,

Dilip Kulkarni
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