

Langara Research Ethics Board

Guidelines on Secondary Use of Information

I. Secondary Use of Information

The Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS2) defines secondary use of data as "the use in research of information or human biological materials originally collected for a purpose other than the current research purpose". When researchers wish to use information originally collected for a purpose other than the original or current research purpose, this is referred to as secondary use of information. For example, a data set that is collected for a specific research or statistical purpose might be re-used to answer research questions, or information that is collected as part of a course or program review for evaluation, might be useful for later research.

II. Summary

These guidelines are for both instructors who want to use secondary data in classes, and for researchers who plan to use secondary data in their analyses. The LREB advises getting consent in advance for the use of secondary data initially collected for program review, or for pedagogical purposes. LREB review is required in those circumstances where consent has not been provided for the secondary use of data. In such cases, the LREB will assess whether there is a proper justification for such uses, and the protection of confidentiality. Please refer to the information below for more.

III. Definitions

Secondary use: The use in research of information or human biological materials originally collected for a purpose other than the current or original research purpose.

Anonymous: The information or human biological materials never had identifiers associated with it (e.g. anonymous surveys) and risk of identification of individuals is low or very low.

Anonymized: The information or materials have been stripped of direct or indirect identifiers, a code is not kept to allow future re-linkage, and risk of re-identification of individuals from remaining identifiers is low or very low.

Identifiable: Information is identifiable if it may reasonably be expected to identify an individual, when used alone or combined with other available information. The term "personal information" generally denotes identifiable information about an individual. The assessment of whether information is identifiable is made in the context of a specific research project.

IV. Ethical Considerations

As indicated in the [TCPS2 Section 5.D \(https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/tcps2-eptc2_2018_chapter5-chapitre5.html#d\)](https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/tcps2-eptc2_2018_chapter5-chapitre5.html#d) secondary use of information can avoid duplication in primary collection, reduce the burden placed on participants and researchers, allow for comparison of a sample over time, or allow researchers to apply new methods or hypotheses that were unknown at the time of primary collection. Generally secondary use of anonymous information does not raise any significant ethical concerns regarding additional risks to participants, however if the information for secondary use can

be linked back to individuals then there are concerns about privacy and the need to seek consent. However, secondary use of identifiable information may be permitted in some cases.

V. TCPS2 Guidance

Researchers are encouraged to review the TCPS2 guidance on secondary use of data for more information: [TCPS 2 Article 2.4](#) and [Article 5](#)

- https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/tcps2-eptc2_2018_chapter2-chapitre2.html

VI. LREB Notes for Researchers

A. Secondary Use of Information – Anonymous

- Exempt from REB review.
- If the information collected in the original study is anonymous, and/or the process of data linkage, recording, or dissemination of results **do not** generate identifiable information, then REB review is not required for secondary use of anonymous information.

B. Secondary Use of Information – Non-Anonymous

- REB review is required.
- All use of secondary information that is not anonymous, and/or the process of data linkage, recording, or dissemination of results generate identifiable information will require LREB review.
- Consent may be required. Whenever possible, researchers should attempt to get the consent of participants when the information collected is not anonymous. However, the LREB will consider those situations where researchers are able to demonstrate that obtaining consent from all participants is impossible or impracticable. In such cases, a full board LREB review may be required.

C. Re-Contacting Research Participants

- Researchers who wish to contact participants in previous studies should notify the LREB prior to any attempts to contact and provide justification for re-establishing contact.