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Qualitative Research Ethics: An Heuristic Inquiry Exploring the Meaning and Application of Ethics in Qualitative Research

by

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Abstract

In this study, 10 Canadian qualitative researchers discuss how they identify, understand and manage ethical concerns that arise in ethically important moments that occur over the course of the qualitative research process. Accounts of ethically important moments involving personal struggles, relational challenges and methodological complications are presented in this heuristic inquiry. The dynamic nature of qualitative research ethics is portrayed using a metaphorical balancing scale. On one side are ethical factors that relate to *social* or human aspects of qualitative research. On the other side are ethical factors that relate to qualitative research as *science* and focus on methodological aspects of qualitative research. The emphasis placed on each of these factors varies depending on the nature of the study, the researcher, the participants, the contextual factors influencing the research and the ethical concerns being addressed. Ethical decision-making is full of complexities and goes beyond ensuring no harm is done to conducting research for the purpose of the betterment of people. Qualitative research ethics is also about relational accountability, honoring others' experience and the pursuit of social justice. Qualitative research ethics cannot be separated from the people involved. It is a philosophy and a way of being as a researcher.

Key Words: Qualitative research ethics, ethically important moments, heuristic research, ethical balance

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I want to acknowledge the unfailing support of my husband, our children and their children, my Tuesday night dinner companions, and the friendship of those with whom we dance on Friday night.

To the five PhD students in my learning community, thanks for the opportunities to talk and laugh together as we figured out the difference between ontology, epistemology and our methodologies. May we continue to meet to share our foibles and follies as qualitative researchers in the making!

My relationship with my advisor has provided me opportunities to learn and grow as a human being and in my understanding of what it means to be an ethical qualitative researcher. One of the participants in this study states, “There isn't any question I had some really absolutely wonderful people who – I'm going to say it this way – who really loved me. And because they really loved me, I had the chance to learn from them.” I feel very fortunate to be able to echo his words.

Members of my supervisory committee also played an important role in this study. They engaged me in philosophical conversations and reminded me that at some point, “I needed to stick a fork in it!” and put something onto paper.

Lastly, the participants I worked with in this study were amazing! They provided me with the unique opportunity of collaborating with them in the development of the knowledge generated in this account regarding the meaning and application of qualitative research ethics. Thank you one and all!

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my mother who at 96 years of age could still converse intelligently about the meaning of ethics in research! Her steadfast support and prayers are among my life's greatest treasures.

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Letter to the Reader

Spring 2009

Dear Reader,

Once upon a time, I wrote solely in what I thought was a "scholarly manner." Brain and books ruled. Bodily sensations, hunches, premonitions and life experiences were excluded from these scholarly endeavors. Objectivity and formal language were important and reference to personal experience and subjective knowledge was excluded from my work. Metaphor and creative writing were perceived to be art not science. Then, while trying to find a research method suitable for exploring qualitative researchers' understanding and experience of ethics, I read Clark Moustakas's (1990), Heuristic Research: Design, Methodology, and Applications. *He talked of the importance of creativity and artistry in scientific endeavors and his heuristic approach to research resonated with my own creative, artistic spirit. His attention to the "total person as a research method" (Moustakas, 1967, p. 103) appealed to me and I felt I did not have to ignore my "gut" and emotional responses in order to do good research. I sensed I could be congruent using heuristics. Heuristics invited transparency about who I am as a researcher and my experiences during the research process. I believed this type of transparency would increase the trustworthiness of this work and that appealed to me. Moustakas's respectful approach towards himself and others fit with my personal values and ethics and my professional commitments as a social work researcher.*

The more I read and thought about heuristic inquiry, the louder it called out to me as a potential research method I could use to gain an understanding of how qualitative researchers perceive and implement research ethics. I remember early on telling one of my professors in my doctoral program that I felt like I was having a love affair with Moustakas. I felt a sense of infatuation with Moustakas and his heuristic approach to research but I remember wondering if and how it might actually fit into my life as a researcher. My attraction to heuristic inquiry reminded me of a childhood memory, which still brings a smile to my face.

As a child I learned to love a good story. I had rheumatic fever when I was four and again when I was five. During the months it took me to recuperate, my parents and grandmother would read me stories hour after hour. One of my favorite series was A. A. Milne's (1926/1994) The Complete Tales of Winnie-the-Pooh. *Milne, was more than a good storyteller, he was a playwright, a poet and a political satirist who wrote for and became an editor of the British weekly magazine* Punch. *His tales, inspired by his son's toys, portray characters with rich personalities whose antics ring true to human experience. My favorite character is Winnie-the-Pooh, Pooh Bear for short. I keep a beautifully bound copy of Milne's stories on my desk and I've been surprised how often when pondering some scholarly aspect of this research project I've recalled a truism tucked away in a childhood memory.*

Now, I recognize Pooh is not Einstein and that this bear of "very little brain" is not seen by most to be very "scholarly," even though he spends a lot of

time in his "Thinking Place" and going on "Explores." But, like many taken-for-granted aspects of life, the stories of Pooh Bear hide nuggets of wisdom [1] *that resonate with awarenesses held deep within my being. Take for example, my attraction towards heuristic inquiry. This wasn't an ordinary type of attraction but was the type of attraction referred to by Michael Polanyi (1962), a philosopher far more scholarly than Pooh Bear, as "heuristic passion." Polanyi states that such passion can "foreshadow an indeterminate range of future discoveries" (p. 143). Pooh Bear and Polanyi, a novel team to be sure, both highlight the potential of heuristic passion to lead researchers into "discoveries" that have the potential to make a difference in the lives of individuals.*

However, words like "discovery'' and "discoveries" are tricky little devils. They conjure up ideas in your mind and trick you into believing that their meaning will always be the same. Then their meaning changes, just like that! You think they are just the right words but then you "discover" they have been assigned another task by someone else without your knowledge. As a consequence, the connotative meaning you thought the word possessed when you chose the word has taken on new dimensions or has lost its original significance thus creating the risk of miscommunication when the word is used. Pooh Bear, like myself, struggled with the trickiness of words and recognized that during the process of transforming inspiration and intuition into words, the acuteness and

[1] Authors who have reflected on the philosophical and spiritual wisdom of Pooh include Benjamin Hoff (1982) in *The Tao of Pooh*, Hoff (1993) *The Te of Piglet* and John Tyerman Williams (1995) in his *Pooh and the Philosophers*.

intensity of the writer's awarenesses can be diminished as ideas are impregnated into semantics.

For example, Pooh frequently felt inspired to record his awarenesses of life in song. The struggle he encountered in finding appropriate words for the songs arising in his life is captured in the following quote. "Written down, like this it doesn't seem a very good song," states Pooh. "But coming through pale fawn fluff about half-past eleven on a very sunny morning, it seemed to Pooh to be one of the best songs he had ever sung. So he went on singing it" (Milne, 1926/1994, p. 223).

I feel this way about the word "discover." For me, the word discover connotes the construction of new awareness and knowledge that emerges, or is discovered, in one's consciousness as old and new ideas are put together in different ways as individuals reflect on their experiences and interact with others within their social environment.

In heuristic research the concept of discovery links together two important ideas underlying my decision to use Moustakas's (1990) heuristic research method for this research project. The first idea is that heuristic inquiry has the potential to transform tacit knowledge to propositional knowledge through what Moustakas (1990) refers to as a mental act of discovery. Yvonna Lincoln (2009) refers to this process as a mental awakening. She states that participating in a phenomenological study can "elicit from respondents constructions that they were unaware that they held . . . as research participants recognize feelings,

attitudes, beliefs, values, or other mental dispositions never . . . expressed previously, even to oneself"(Lincoln, 2009, p. 154). This type of knowledge generation is possible due to the fact that much of what we know exists at the tacit rather than the propositional level and as a person engages in research, "some tacit knowledge will become propositional to individuals and stakeholder groups" (Lincoln, 2009, p. 154). Based on these ideas, I see heuristic inquiry as a means of consciousness-raising, which is closely linked to the second reason I chose heuristic research for this study.

The second idea is that this process of mental awakening or discovery is an important step in laying the foundation for social action. Paolo Freire (as cited in Lincoln, 2009, p. 154) refers to this process as conscientizacion, a process of coming to know, that can play a powerful part in changing one's understanding and relationship to one's historical circumstances. Frick (1990) refers to this type of change in consciousness as a significant growth experience. Frick's research supports the idea that this type of change in awareness can influence a person to redefine his or her understanding of him/herself and his or her world. Moustakas (1975) also talks about the changes that occurred in his own life and in the lives of those impacted by his study on loneliness linking personal awareness to social action. The potential heuristic research has for increasing personal awareness and the necessity of such awareness in laying a foundation for social action are two key reasons I have chosen Moustakas's (1990) heuristic approach for this study.

As I sought to understand Moustakas's (1990) approach to heuristic research, I came across a number of other tricky words that can be used in a variety of ways. Among these are words like heuristic, pure, essence and truth. Trying to understand these and other words reminded me of another childhood favorite, Through the Looking Glass and what Alice Found There, *which can be found on de Rooy's (n.d.) webpage entitled, Lenny's Alice in Wonderland Site, http://www.alice-in-wonderland.net/books/2chpt6.html. In* Through the Looking Glass, *Alice runs into Humpty Dumpty and they have a conversation about words. Humpty and Alice's conversation goes like this:*

> *. . . There's glory for you!'*
>
> *'I don't know what you mean by "glory,"' Alice said.*
>
> *Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously. 'Of course you don't—till I tell you. I meant, "there's a nice knock-down argument for you!"'*
>
> *'But "glory" doesn't mean a "nice knock-down argument,' Alice objected.*
>
> *'When I use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean -- neither more nor less.'*
>
> *'The question is,' said Alice, 'whether you can make words mean so many different things.'*
>
> *'The question is,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'which is to be master—that's all'.*

And then in attempt to show Alice his power over words, Humpty Dumpty states:

'When I make a word do a lot of work like that . . . I always pay it extra.'

'Oh!' said Alice. She was too much puzzled to make any other remark.

'Ah, you should see 'em come round me of a Saturday night,' Humpty Dumpty went on, wagging his head gravely from side to side: 'for to get their wages, you know.'

. . . 'You seem very clever at explaining words, Sir,' said Alice. 'Would you kindly tell me the meaning of the poem called "Jabberwocky?"'[2]

This brief and somewhat inane conversation raises important questions about language, articulation and knowledge generation.

Charles Taylor (1989) expresses the importance of words and articulation in a more scholarly manner. He states:

We find the sense of life through articulating it. Moderns have become acutely aware of how much sense being there for us depends on our powers of expression. Discovering here depends on, is interwoven with, inventing. Finding a sense to life depends on framing meaningful expressions which are adequate (p. 18).

I agree with Taylor regarding the importance of articulation in the development of sense making. The process of inventing or framing adequate expressions to capture the meaning of the complexities of life takes place through a complex process that is further explained by Michael Polanyi.

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[2] During an interview one of my co-researchers referred to a quantitative study in which he had been involved in which the made-up language they had people read was referred to as "Jabberwocky." I was intrigued by this reference to Alice and Humpty Dumpty's conversation about words and the constructed meaning of language.

Polanyi (1962) in discussing the art of articulation identifies three things that must be kept in mind when considering how language and meaning interrelate. These are the text itself, the conception suggested by the text, and the experience referred to by the text. Polanyi states that it is human judgment that seeks to adjust these three things to each other and that in the process of articulation a person engages in deciding whether to correct, modify or persist in previous usage of language. A person may decide to reinterpret his or her experience based on some novel conception suggested by the previously used text, or he or she may become aware of new problems that may need to be addressed in the process of reinterpreting his or her experience. A third option is to dismiss the text as meaningless. Thus, the use of language according to Polanyi, commits one to a double indeterminacy due to a person's reliance on the formalism of language while the person is simultaneously considering and reconsidering the bearing of this formalism on experience. This dynamic, results in a pervasive uncertainty or tacit quality in the character of language and meaning. "We can never quite know what is implied in what we say" (p. 95). The importance of remembering the temporal and fluid nature of articulation is important when we consider that personal knowledge or tacit awareness previously unexpressed can be accessed and expressed through the heuristic research process.

The access and expression of tacit knowledge is an important aspect of heuristic enquiry and Moustakas emphasizes this process primarily from the perspective of the researcher. He refers to "the total person as a research

method" (Moustakas, 1967, p. 103) and states that a phenomenon can only be known "by persons who are open to their own senses and aware of their own experiences" (p. 103). However, he does not leave the epistemological process at the individual level but goes on to say that he "set out to discover the nature of lonely experience by intimate encounter with other persons" (p. 103). The type of encounter with research participants referred to by Moustakas appears to be similar to the type of encounter Lincoln (2009) refers to when she states that participating in a phenomenological study can "elicit from respondents constructions that they were unaware that they held . . . as research participants recognize feelings, attitudes, beliefs, values, or other mental dispositions never . . . expressed previously, even to oneself" (p. 154).

Heuristic research integrates the development of knowledge through self-searching, self-dialogue and self-discovery AND knowledge developed through intimate encounters with other people. This dual focus in knowledge building reflects important elements of constructivist epistemology within heuristic inquiry. Moustakas (1990) suggests that most questions that have personal significance for researchers also have social and perhaps even universal significance (universal is one of those tricky words for me). Thus, the heuristic researcher extends his or her exploration of the personal to include the exploration of the lived experience of co-researchers. The researcher's process of self-discovery and self-disclosure becomes a way of facilitating disclosure from others (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985). The importance of the researcher's relationship with his or her

co-researchers in the development of shared understanding of the phenomenon under review is highlighted by Moustakas (1990) as he describes his experience during his heuristic inquiry into the meaning of loneliness. He states:

> *I became clearly aware that, exhaustively and fully and in a caring way, I was searching for, studying and inquiring into the nature and impact of loneliness. I was closely searching and inquiring into the nature of a human experience, not from a detached intellectual or academic position, but rooted in its integrative, living forms, I became part of the lonely experience of others, involved and interested, while at the same time aware of enlarging themes and patterns. Facts and knowledge accumulated as I listened and later recorded and studied them; but at the same time there were intuitive visions, feelings, and sensing that went beyond anything I could record or know in a factual sense. At the center of each lonely existence were ineffable, indescribable feelings and experiences, which I felt in a unified and essential way. I had, at moments, gone "wide open"— ceasing to be a separate individual, but wholly related to the other person, leaving something behind of my own intuitive vision and comprehension while at the same time taking something away. (p. 95)*

Moustakas portrays heuristic inquiry as more than an individual journey of meaning making or knowledge generation. Rather, he portrays it as an approach to research that generates new understanding and knowledge of a

phenomenon through a process that integrates the understanding and knowledge of the researcher with that of the research participants. Individual accounts of the co-researchers' experiences of the phenomenon are gathered through dialogues that occur between the researcher and the co-researcher. Throughout the heuristic research process, participants "remain close to [their] depictions of their experience, telling their individual stories with increasing understanding and insight. The depictions achieve layers of depth and meaning through the interactions, explorations, and elucidations that occur between the primary researcher and the other research participants" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 19).

Moustakas (1994) describes the depictions or accounts of the co-researchers as comprehensive stories portrayed "in vivid, alive accurate and meaningful language and . . . further elucidated through poems, songs, artwork, and other personal documents and creations" (p. 19). The researcher uses these accounts in the creation of individual portraits that include the biographical background of the research participant and in the composite depiction, which is an amalgamation of the collective accounts of the participants. Verification of the developing understanding of the phenomenon is enhanced as co-researchers review, change and enhance the individual and collective accounts of the phenomenon under review. This process reflects the intersubjective or constructivist nature of knowledge building reflected in the philosophical roots of heuristic inquiry.

I was inspired by Moustakas (1990) to embrace personal aspects of the heuristic research process, which I believe to be critical in knowledge building. "From the beginning and throughout an investigation, heuristic research involves self-search, self-dialogue, and self-discovery; the research question and the methodology flow out of inner awareness, meaning, and inspiration" (p. 11). I further value the integration of creativity into the research process and that printed documents, poetry, creative writing, art and other forms of artistic expression are valued in this method. Moustakas (1990) emphasizes the importance of the researcher and the co-researchers using a wide range of mediums for their exploration and expression of the phenomenon under review.

*Moustakas (1990) builds a bridge between art and science in his recognition that knowledge can be gained and expressed in a multiplicity of creative ways. Creative forms of expression depict the experience of the researcher and the co-researchers and are thus considered to be an important part of the data used in heuristic inquiry. How the researcher presents his or her findings to the world is also an important consideration in heuristic inquiry. I debated about the style of writing I would use in this project and decided to write in a manner I believe reflects the personal and creative nature of the heuristic research process. I have used my research journal, "*Research Reflections,*" to record awarenesses that have come to me over the course of my research. My reflections brought me face-to-face with fears behind the tacit passion that initially drove my research question. These fears found voice as I let myself*

experience physical sensations and used these sensations as a physiological bridge into awarenesses that acquired words as I expressed them in poetry and other forms of creative writing. In order to differentiate my Research Reflections *from the more conventional portions of this document, I have chosen to use italics for excerpts from my journal inserted into this document.*

I have been surprised by how challenging it has been to take the risk of including personal knowledge and creative moments in my written work. My inner critic isn't certain if creative writing has a place in work written in a "scholarly manner." However, Moustakas (1990) states that researchers using the heuristic investigative process may come into touch with new regions of themselves, discover revealing connections with others and through this process be able to see and understand in a different way. Allowing myself to explore new regions of myself and express new understandings about research and research ethics in the pages of my Research Reflections *has opened up an exciting way of learning and understanding for me that complements learning acquired through more conventional approaches. Integrating excerpts from my* Research Reflections *allows those reading my research report to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the process I have engaged in as I have sought to gain an understanding of how qualitative researchers understand and apply research ethics throughout their practice.*

While this research project reflects personal knowledge and understanding, it goes beyond the personal and includes knowledge developed in

conversation with the co-researchers involved in this study. Together with these co-researchers, I have been able to develop new understandings of qualitative research ethics and to create a rich, thick description of what it means to be an ethical qualitative researcher.

Cheers!

Lynda

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Qualitative research can be messy and complicated, full of unexpected moments when the researcher is confronted with having to make decisions about the right thing to do—right now! In these moments, the researcher must assess the situation and put into practice his or her own understanding of what it means to be ethical and do what he or she believes constitutes ethical research practice. Researchers and academics are concerned about qualitative research ethics and a growing number of articles are appearing in qualitative research journals (Conn, 2008; Czymoniewicz-Klippel, Brijnath, & Crockett, 2010; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004) and in bodies of literature related to health sciences (Aita & Richer, 2005; Cutcliffe & Ramcharan, 2002; Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen, & Kiamputtong, 2008b; Houghton, Casey, Shaw, Murphy, 2010; Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden, 2000), social work (Barsky, 2010; Davison, 2004; Drewry, 2004; Hugman, 2005; Mertens & Ginsberg, 2008; Peled & Leichtentritt, 2002), business (Carter, 2002), education (Lather, 2004; Riviere, 2011), sociology (Ells & Gutfreund, 2006; Wood, 2006) and anthropology (van den Hoonaard, 2001). Theoreticians are seeking to define the meaning of ethics in qualitative research and regulatory bodies are examining formal guidelines governing research practice. Despite these efforts, concern exists that these efforts have shifted the onus for ethical research away from researchers and has placed it on policy-makers and institutional committees who are thus perceived by researchers to be responsible for ensuring research is in fact conducted in an ethical manner (Swauger, 2011).

Peled and Leichtentritt (2002) examined ethical thinking and practice in social work qualitative research. They began their work by identifying moral principles they believed would be congruent with social work ethics and qualitative research. After reviewing the literature, they identified four values commonly reflected in 15 different national social work codes of ethics. These values were (a) respect for individual persons, (b) self-determination, (c) promotion of social justice, and (d) work for the interests of others (altruism). They then identified two major schools of thought pertaining to research ethics: (a) positivistic perspective as represented in the biomedical model and in many of the guidelines used by Ethics Review Boards (ERBs), and (b) the relativistic approach as highlighted in ethical perspectives such as feminist communitarian thinking. The final five interrelated assumptions that guided Peled and Leichtentritt's (2002) evaluation of ethical thinking in qualitative research in general and social work in particular are listed below:

1. Research ethics are an integral aspect of the research act and each phase of the research process.
2. Ethical research empowers participants, particularly those of vulnerable and disenfranchised groups.
3. Ethical research benefits participants.
4. Ethical research prevents harm for participants and involved others.
5. Ethical research requires researchers' technical competence (pp.148-151).

Based on these guidelines, Peled and Leichtentritt (2002) conclude that ethical considerations are marginalized in most phases of the qualitative studies published in

social work journals. They further suggest this may be due to deficiencies and inconsistencies that exist in professional codes of ethics. For example, ethical principles are stated in imprecise terms, which make them difficult to operationalize. Ethical principles embodied in professional codes of ethics originate out of social work practices other than research, which means they may not correlate readily with research practices. Another possible explanation for the apparent marginalization of ethical considerations in qualitative social work research relates to how qualitative researchers are educated and trained. Peled and Leichtentritt suggest that research ethics receive only minimal attention in qualitative research courses and that research education places more time and focus on training researchers to think and function methodologically than ethically. They also wonder if journal editors and editorial boards of social work journals may prioritize methods and findings over ethical dimensions of qualitative practice. The concern regarding the importance of ethics for qualitative researchers expressed by these authors raised questions for me regarding the meaning ethics has for qualitative researchers and how qualitative researchers identify and manage ethical concerns that arise during the course of their work.

Mertens and Ginsberg (2008, 2009) in considering the ethical considerations that occur in social research acknowledge "the complexity and urgency of ethical matters in social research" and seek to address many of these concerns in *The Handbook of Social Research Ethics* (2009). Mertens and Ginsberg also acknowledge an overlap between the issues addressed in their handbook and previous work done by leaders in the field, including but not limited to, Peled and Leichtentritt (2002), Van den Hoonaard (2002)

and Ian Butler (2002). However, they do not see this overlap as being problematic. Rather, they see it as an opportunity to bring a wider community into conversation about ethics in social work qualitative research. Through their work they also extend an invitation to others to consider the importance of having social justice as an ethical consideration in social work qualitative research practices.

Standing in the shadow of such giants, I wish to acknowledge myself as a novice researcher who has both personal and professional reasons for conducting this qualitative research project in which I explore how qualitative researchers understand and apply ethics in their research practice. My personal goals rise in part out of my international work experience. Prior to becoming a social worker, I had the opportunity to teach in an international school in Papua New Guinea. While there, I worked alongside field ethnographers who were engaged in linguistic analysis and ethnographic fieldwork. In addition to my teaching I also had opportunities to be involved in community development projects and relief work. The 7 years I spent in this country opened my eyes to the importance of sound, ethical research practice.

Upon my return to Canada, I decided to pursue a Master's degree in clinical social work. In my training I specialized in cross-cultural counseling and I have spent the last 19 years providing counseling services to a diverse group of clientele. In addition to counseling I have been involved in training new clinicians. During this time, I was able to take a 6-month leave of absence from my counseling and training responsibilities and join a team of international social workers working in Kosovo. Our goal was to re-establish and capacity build the Centres for Social Work in Kosovo. This work

opportunity allowed me to engage in a qualitative needs assessment for the Centres. During this experience I was confronted with the need social workers have to be conscious of their own ethical principles and the importance of sound, ethical research practice. Being outside of Canada, my eyes were opened to the fact that individual social workers conducting community-based research are required to make ethical decisions on an on-going basis, often without any other immediate supports.

I had only been in Kosovo a few days when I was confronted with the first of many ethically important moments I would confront while working in that country. Our international team was made up of business and trades people and individuals from human service disciplines including social work. How we approached our goal of capacity building the Centres for Social Work reflected our professional backgrounds and our personal and professional ethics. My personal and professional commitment to people's right to self-determination and collaborative practice quickly came to the fore when some of our team wanted to decide what resources would be provided to each Centre without consulting with the people involved. Those who wanted to act without consultation cited concerns around the immediacy of the perceived needs and limited resources that needed to be "fairly" distributed as the basis for their desire to push forward without conducting any community consultation or needs assessment. I was confronted with the perceived and real power of professionals and my need to consider how I would use my personal and professional power in my work with the personnel in the Centres for Social Work and with those working within the non-government organization I was working with while in Kosovo. This experience raised many other

questions and concerns in my mind but upon my return to Canada these were set aside as I refocused on counseling and the training of clinicians. However, they surfaced again when I decided to pursue doctoral studies in social work.

One of my goals in pursuing a doctorate was to enhance my research skills. I entered the program anticipating doing a mixed methods study in an area closely related to my clinical practice. But my plans changed when I recognized my need to understand more about how qualitative researchers understand and handle the ethical challenges that confront them during their research. As I approached this study I was aware that my goals in carrying out this project were both personal and professional. My personal goal was to gain increased awareness and clarity regarding my own understanding of qualitative research ethics. My professional goal was to complete my dissertation and through my research make a contribution to the increasing body of literature available on the meaning and implementation of ethics in qualitative research. I also hoped to further widen the community of people engaged in the conversation taking place about ethics in qualitative research, particularly qualitative social work research.

In summary, in this heuristic inquiry I will explore the question: How do qualitative researchers understand research ethics and apply this understanding in ethically important moments that occur over the course of the qualitative research process? Ethically important moments, according to Guillemin and Gillam (2004) are "difficult, often subtle, and usually unpredictable situations that arise in the practice of doing research" (p. 262). In these moments, researchers draw upon their own understanding of ethics in making critical decisions pertaining to their research practice.

The participants in this study include 10 Canadian qualitative researchers who have obtained ethics approval from a university's Research Ethics Board and have completed at least one qualitative research study. These researchers have over 115 years of qualitative research experience collectively and have been responsible for multiple millions of dollars of research grants (two researchers alone reported securing over 15 million dollars worth of grants). Nine of the 10 researchers participating in this study have multiple articles published in peer-reviewed journals. Their areas of research include domestic violence, racism and violence, sexual orientation and identity formation, poverty, issues relating to immigrants and refugees, the experience of people living with HIV/AIDS, women in leadership and educational research.

The researcher's personal experiences and awarenesses regarding the phenomenon are also critical in heuristic inquiry. The research question emerges out of a question or concern experienced by the researcher, which has both personal significance and broader reaching importance. The beginning of this study was an embodied sensation, a tacit awareness, which I did not understand. The conception of this study is reflected in the following excerpt from my research journal.

Research Reflection: Bellyaches and Woozles, the Conception of My Study

In the beginning, was a bellyache. It began in class. We were talking about researcher involvement in qualitative research and the nature of qualitative research relationships when my gut tightened and I got a bellyache. I felt drawn to qualitative research like Winnie the Pooh to honey. But the bellyache was real. At that moment, I found myself relating with Piglet, who in his excitement at the prospect of coming face to

face with a Woozle simultaneously feared Woozles might turn out to be Animals of Hostile Intent.

It's interesting that I should think of Pooh and Piglet *when recalling the beginning of my Heuristic "Explore" into research ethics. Perhaps I really shouldn't be surprised as Pooh and Piglet have so much to say about life! For example, in the story,* Pooh and Piglet Go Hunting and Nearly Catch a Woozle *(Milne, 1926/1994), Pooh is intently walking around and around in circles, thinking about something else when he bumps into Piglet, who asks,*

> *"What are you doing?"*
>
> *"Hunting," said Pooh.*
>
> *"Hunting what?"*
>
> *"Tracking something," said Winnie-the-Pooh very mysteriously.*
>
> *"Tracking what?" said Piglet, coming closer.*
>
> *"That's just what I ask myself. I ask myself, What?"*
>
> *"What do you think you'll answer?"*
>
> *"I shall have to wait until I catch up with it," said Winnie-the-Pooh (p. 34).*

That's how I felt that day in class, the bellyache was real and intuitively I knew in attending to it I was beginning an Explore. It was leading me somewhere but I would only know what I was tracking when I caught up with it!

I've been on my Explore for almost a year and my hunting has brought me to the place where I realize I must examine the meaning of being ethical during the research process. I am not referring here to following official policies and guidelines that govern

research practice, but rather the decision-making process that occurs in moments during the research process when the researcher gets a "bellyache" or experiences an, "Oh, shoot!" moment. Interesting, I just realized my exclamation has been sanitized in order to meet the requirements of my own internal "Ethics Approval Board" that frequently censors my thoughts and words when writing within an academic context (an excerpt from my Research Reflections *dated February 25, 2009).*

This reflection on the conception of my study highlights the idea of heuristic passion (Polanyi, 1962), which plays a vital role in heuristic inquiry. According to Polanyi, heuristic passion can "foreshadow an indeterminate range of future discoveries . . . . [and] can evoke intimations of specific discoveries and sustain their persistent pursuit through years of labour" (p. 143). My "bellyache experience" was a foreshadowing of an awareness, which subsequently led me to explore the meaning and application of research ethics in qualitative research.

The Focus of This Study

Ethics are considered to be important in all types of research and currently there is considerable discussion in the literature regarding the nature and importance of research ethics in both quantitative and qualitative research. However, much of this literature is theoretical (Antle & Regehr, 2003; Guzenhauser, 2006; Longres & Scanlon, 2001; Mertens & Ginsberg, 2008; Peled & Leichtentritt, 2002) or focuses on concerns related to official policies and guidelines designed to govern research ethics (Drewry, 2004; Ells & Gutfreund, 2006; Lather, 2004; Norton & Wilson, 2008; Riviere, 2011; Shaw, 2003). Thus, in this study I focus on exploring qualitative researchers' understandings of

research ethics and how they interpret and apply this understanding over the course of their research practice.

Qualitative research is used within this study as a generic term to represent a field of inquiry that has a rich history and embodies “a complex, interconnected family of terms, concepts and assumptions” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 3). Qualitative researchers approach their work from various ontological and epistemological perspectives and utilize a wide-range of research methods and approaches. Researchers from different disciplines including education, nursing, sociology, psychology and social work utilize qualitative research. In this study, I draw upon literature from these disciplines and see this study having interdisciplinary applicability. However, I situate this study within the social work discipline as this is my primary professional and academic identification and because I see qualitative research methods as particularly well-suited for social work knowledge building.

As professionals, social workers are committed to addressing the needs and empowerment of people who are oppressed and marginalized within society. Social workers also work with individuals and families facing challenges within their interpersonal relationships and family life. These people’s experiences are important and must be considered in the development and implementation of social work policy and practice. Qualitative research methods provide a means of capturing the lived experience from the perspectives of those who live it and can thus provide critical information that can be used in decisions relating to social work practice. Qualitative approaches can thus be a means of upholding social work’s commitment to promoting social justice and social

change while honouring the diversity that exists within contemporary society (Denzin, 2002; Gilgun & Abrams, 2002). The popularity of qualitative approaches in social work research is evident in the literature; however, concern regarding the place of ethics in these studies has been raised (Peled & Leichtentritt, 2002; Shaw, 2003; Shek, Tang, & Han, 2005). This study relates to the concern expressed above and focuses on exploring how qualitative researchers understand and apply ethics throughout the course of their studies.

Situating This Study within the Literature

This project relates to several international studies found in the research ethics literature (Morse, Niehaus, Varnhagen, Austin, & McIntosh, 2008; Munford, Sanders, Veitch, & Condor, 2008; Peled & Leichtentritt, 2002; Preston-Shoot, Wigley, McMurray, & Connolly, 2008; Shaw, 2003; Shore & Richards, 2007) and several Canadian studies in which qualitative researchers examine either their own experiences relating to research ethics or the experiences of other qualitative researchers (Brogden & Patterson, 2007; Clark, Hunt, Jules, & Good, 2010; Conn, 2008; Connolly & Reilly, 2007; Damianakis & Woodford, 2012; McGinn & Bosacki, 2004; Riviere, 2011; Tilley & Gormley, 2007).

For example, Conn (2008), a medical anthropologist at the University of Toronto, described her complicated journey through the process of obtaining ethics approval. She described her research project as “methodologically unconventional by its being an ethnography of a clinical setting” (p. 501). To further complicate matters, Conn’s study was multi-sited and involved two hospitals and one university. Conn described herself as naïvely thinking that the Research Ethics Board (REB) of her university would readily

approve her study. Prior to approaching her university's REB, Conn spoke with physicians, surgeons and clinicians who worked in the large teaching and research hospital where she was to conduct her study. These individuals were potential participants in her study. According to Conn their initial response to her study was positive and they indicated openness to participating in the research. However, despite the receptivity of the medical professionals at the site where the research would take place, obtaining ethics approval for Conn involved 9 months of submitting, revising and re-submitting written applications for ethics approval; three oral presentations to different hospital divisions; a private meeting with the Chairperson of Conn's university's REB; as well as an open-ended inquiry session held at the hospital during which Conn was "interrogated by the 20-plus members of the [hospital's] REB" (p. 508).

Tilley and Gormley (2007), two educational researchers, also highlight concerns about the ethics review process as outlined in the Canadian Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS, 1998, with 2000, 2002, 2010 updates) and how cultural considerations locally and internationally complicated their ethics review process. Tilley's research was conducted within the Canadian prison system in which the prison culture needed to be considered throughout the research process. Gormley's work was international in nature taking place in Mexico. Her comments regarding her experience of addressing ethical considerations include an excellent discussion of the complexities that must be considered when obtaining approval for conducting international research.

For example, in Mexico a researcher must obtain ethics approval from the relevant government department. If the proposed research is to be conducted within an educational setting, the researcher must obtain approval from the Federal Ministry of Education. However, if the research is to be conducted in a school, the school's principal has the ultimate authority to approve or veto the study. Tilley and Gormley's (2007) article highlights many other important ethical considerations they confronted over the course of their study. They conclude their article by challenging researchers to remember that TCPS guidelines pertaining to informed consent, reciprocity, confidentiality and anonymity must be considered within the cultural context in which the study is to be conducted in order to ensure cultural sensitivity and ethical research practice.

Clark, Hunt, Jules and Good (2010) also discussed the ethical challenges relating to cultural diversity they encountered conducting community-based research with vulnerable youth in rural communities in British Columbia, Canada. They also depicted how the researchers' accountability shifts and changes depending on the context in which they are working.

Tilley and Gormley's (2007) article focuses on educational research; however, the information contained in this article is relevant to researchers from other disciplines. It is also relevant to my study as it highlights the complexity and relevancy of ethical considerations throughout the qualitative research process and extends the focus of research on the ethics of qualitative research practice to include international research.

In McGinn and Bosacki's (2004) study, the authors discussed the experiences and ethical concerns raised by Master of Education students enrolled in a research methods

course in a Faculty of Education in an Ontario university that was taught by the researchers. The students, many of whom were professionals who were interested in conducting research within their workplace, identified the complexities of practitioner research and the potential ethical conflicts that arise when an individual carries multiple roles within the context within which research takes place. The students found the ethical issues involved in research difficult to sort out and valued being mentored by their graduate advisors. Their instructors' attention to ethics over the course of their projects demonstrated to them that research ethics involves more than obtaining ethics approval. Rather, the true test of ethical fitness occurs during research practice when researchers are in the field and faced with an ethical quandary. In these situations, they saw researchers being guided by their own personal and moral commitments.

During my literature search, I found one dissertation in which the author looked specifically at how experienced qualitative researchers constructed their understanding of qualitative research ethics. Sandra Joyce Mace Gaston, a doctoral student at Texas A&M University, conducted this study in 1998. She identified her study as situated within the interpretivist paradigm and as using a qualitative methodology. Her research methods included interviews, observations, and the review of documents provided by participants. She tailored her data analysis along the lines of Lincoln and Guba's (1985) constant comparative method.

In summary, Gaston (1998) found that qualitative researchers defined ethical qualitative research as being an altruistic endeavor during which researchers attend to both the ethic of justice (i.e., ethics based on equality, rights, respect and fairness) and the

ethic of care (i.e., ethics based on engaging and responsive relationships). Gaston concludes that qualitative researchers must be ethical in their intent and purpose for their research as well as in the processes they use while doing their research. In Gaston's study, researchers identified that this understanding of research ethics came through a process of searching for a better way to conduct research, a way that they saw as being more open, inclusive, and more ethical than the traditional model of conducting research (not otherwise defined in Gaston's work). The researchers interviewed reported using a process of critical reflection when their studies did not give them the expected results or made them feel uneasy about their results. In these situations, the researchers reported re-examining the fundamental presuppositions of research, "what they had learned in school, the research practices they used, the treatment of people in research and the usefulness of their research results. Reflection was identified . . . as the means through which their gestalts of research ethics developed" (p. 151). The researchers' critical thinking process also led them to use new methodologies, which the researchers considered more ethical.

Gaston's study (1998) supports the importance of understanding how qualitative researchers construct their understanding of research ethics. Fourteen years have passed since Gaston completed her study and during this time the research environment has changed. Ethical standards for social science research have undergone close scrutiny by various bodies including funders of research and academic and institutional ethics review boards and now delineate ethical expectations for research, including qualitative research. Research Ethics Boards uphold these standards through the ethics review process.

Responses to these developments have varied with critics stating the governance and control of research, in particular qualitative research, jeopardizes academic freedom and potentially marginalizes forms of research that are well-suited to giving voice to the disempowered and marginalized within society (Brogden & Patterson, 2007; Patterson, 2008; van den Hoonard, 2001). However, Ells and Gutfreund (2006) sought to dispel concerns regarding the governance of research in Canada by challenging what they considered to be commonly held myths regarding the Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS). After the release of the TCPS 2nd edition (2010) some of the concern regarding the original policy statement marginalizing qualitative research was reduced. However, questions regarding the conceptualization of research ethics in the TCPS 2 still exist (Riviere, 2011). The controversy surrounding research ethics and my own questions regarding the different meanings of qualitative research ethics catalyzed this study in which I explore 10 qualitative researchers' understandings and application of research ethics.

What This Study Adds

The previously mentioned studies highlight the complexity of contemporary qualitative research and some of the ethical challenges researchers confront throughout the research process. Conn's (2008) and Tilley and Gormley's (2007) work focused primarily on challenges experienced during the ethics approval process and highlighted concerns relating to the TCPS. McGinn and Bosacki's (2004) study explored graduate education students' concerns expressed as part of a research methods course. My research relates to these studies but extends beyond the focus of these studies to consider how

qualitative researchers understand research ethics and how they apply this understanding in their research practice. In this work, I build on McGinn and Bosacki's (2004) work with students and use my study to explore more experienced qualitative researchers' perceptions of influences, formal and informal, that they say helped them feel more prepared addressing ethical concerns in qualitative research practices. While my study is similar to Gaston's work in that we both situate our work within a qualitative framework, I utilize Moustakas's (1990) heuristic approach to research and the participants in this study are Canadian researchers who have obtained approval to conduct their research from a Canadian university's Research Ethics Board.

Research Participants

In this study, I explore the experiences of 10 Canadian researchers who have completed a qualitative research project that has received approval by a Research Ethics Board of a Canadian university. All but one of the participants has published a portion of their research in a professional peer-reviewed journal.

Relationship Between Researcher and Participants

My role as researcher is that of co-explorer. As I reflect back on my journey with my co-researchers I am reminded of the stories my father used to share with me of the hunting trips he had been on with other men. The following excerpt from my *Research Reflections* captures the spirit of the relationships I experienced with my research participants.

Research Reflection: On Research Relationships

As a child, I remember my Dad preparing to leave on his annual hunting trip. We could sense his excitement as he met with the other men who would go hunting with him. They always seemed to know what they were after in a vague kind of way. "Big-game" they called it. However, each year I'd curiously watch as they purchased various types of big-game tags, each tag representing a particular kind of animal that could be tracked and ultimately "bagged and tagged." They never seemed to know exactly which animals they would find on their hunting trip and this didn't seem to trouble them. Instead, they approached each trip open to what their journey would bring them.

A favourite hunting memory was listening to them talk and laugh together as they planned their trip. Each man brought unique knowledge and skill to the team. Big Red was the best cook and he knew how to make food edible in the bush. Dad was the navigator and he always made sure he had his maps and compass in his bag. Other men would go along. I don't remember their names, but I remember stories of how they'd work together and how each man would help haul out the game that had been bagged. Once home, each man shared the game, not necessarily equally, but as I remember it, each one was satisfied with what he took away from the experience.

I don't know if there were specific rules about who would get what from the trip, but I do know that when they came home, they wouldn't have shaved for the entire time they'd been gone and they looked and smelled different than when they left. When a hunting trip was successful, they were all satisfied. When they would came home empty handed, they'd sit on the back porch and swap stories about their adventures trekking

along the riverbeds and through the brush on Brown's mountain (An excerpt from my Research Reflections *dated April 7, 2009).*

This reflection highlights a number of important qualities of qualitative research relationships, which I believe are critical in ethical qualitative research practice. These are (a) the importance of the researcher being engaged with the research participants in a relationship that is mutually respectful, (b) that the expertise and knowledge of all involved throughout the research process is acknowledged, (c) that the research is purposeful and focused, (d) the research is mutually beneficial to all involved, (e) the research is open to exploring and being influenced by what transpires over the course of the research process and (f) the researcher recognizes the outcomes of the research cannot be pre-determined but that those involved will influence the nature and quality of the research process.

The Canadian Context and a Working Definition of Research Ethics

The Canadian Context

My study, while drawing upon international and Canadian literature, took place within Canada and involved Canadian researchers who had experience working with the various levels of governance guiding qualitative research practice in Canada. In Canada, as in the United States and Great Britain, national regulatory bodies have established guidelines and policies to regulate research practice involving human participants. Research Ethics Boards (REBs) of Canadian universities implement the guidelines specified in the Canadian Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethics Involving Human Subjects (TCPS) when reviewing and approving research projects affiliated with their

respective universities (Ells & Gutfreund, 2006; O'Neill, 2011; van den Hoonaard, 2001). These policies have been criticized as being grounded in positivist assumptions and geared towards quantitative biomedical research (Miller & Boulton, 2007; van den Hoonaard, 2001, 2006). However, the Canadian Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethics Involving Human Subjects (TCPS) has recently undergone an extensive review process, which was concluded March 1, 2010. The Interagency Advisory Panel on Research Ethics submitted a final revision of the revised policy to the Agencies for their approval in August 2010 and the revisions were approved in 2010 and TCPS (2nd ed.) was released April 7, 2011. This initiative has played an important role in bringing ethical considerations in research back into the spotlight. Despite the efforts of these regulatory bodies to ensure the ethical quality of research projects, Morse, Niehaus, Varnhagen, Austin and McIntosh (2008) expressed concern that emphasizing procedural ethics and the importance of obtaining of ethics approval from an REB potentially shifts the sense of responsibility for the ethical quality of research onto these formal processes and away from the researcher. Morse and her colleagues reiterate the fact that the onus for ethical conduct in research rests heavily on the shoulders of the researcher. It is the responsibility of the researcher to be constantly vigilant and ready to deal with the unexpected ethical concerns that arise over the course of the research project. In light of the ethical responsibility that rests with the researcher, the purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of qualitative researchers in dealing with these ethically important moments, when the researcher must make a decision about the right thing to do.

A Working Definition of Research Ethics

Research ethics refers to the moral deliberation, choice and accountability of researchers throughout the research process (Edwards & Mauthner, 2002). Guillemin and Gillam (2004) break down research ethics into procedural ethics and "ethics in practice," which they refer to as microethics. Microethics are decisions made in ethically important moments. Ethically important moments in research are described as being "difficult, often subtle, and usually unpredictable situations that arise in the practice of doing research" (p. 262). Procedural ethics, on the other hand, are the official policies and procedures that govern research practice and involve seeking approval from an appropriate ethics committee in order to undertake research involving humans. Microethics, or ethics in practice, are the everyday ethical issues that arise and are dealt with during the course of doing qualitative research.

I believe this differentiation between procedural ethics and ethics in practice is helpful; however, I am concerned that Guillemin and Gillam (2004) imply in their definitions a false dichotomy between procedural ethics and ethics in practice and suggest that ethical concerns occur only after the research design has been formulated and the researcher is ready to seek ethics approval. I am also concerned that Guillemin and Gillam's definition of ethics in practice fails to recognize potential ethical considerations that arise following the completion of data collection.

I see procedural ethics, for example, obtaining ethics approval, as a significant aspect of research practice. Thus, in this study, I seek to understand what, if any, ethical concerns arise for researchers during the ethics approval process as well as throughout all

phases of the research process including information dissemination and beyond. I also believe ethical concerns may arise in the awareness of a researcher prior to the formal initiation of a research project. For example, Halse and Honey (2005) discussed their ethical deliberations as they designed their study and considered the ethical implications of the language they would use to describe their participants. Ethical considerations also occurred for me prior to the formal commencement of this research process. Intuitively, I knew I needed to wrestle with my own understandings and experiences related to research and ethics in order to recognize and take ownership for how my awarenesses and experiences might affect how I would conceptualize this study and affect my interaction with others during the research process. The following excerpt from my *Research Reflections* portrays the intensity of my struggle and I share it here as evidence that ethical concerns can arise before a research study is actually commenced.

Research Reflection: I Think I see a Woozle, Ethics, Research and Relationships, a Personal Encounter

Initially, when the bellyache began, the sensations I experienced were familiar to me but I could not articulate the significance or meaning of them. I knew they pertained to the nature of relationships. In particular, relationships in which trust had been established and an understanding existed that I was in the relationship for the purpose of helping those with whom I was involved. For example, I spent from 1980 - 1991 working Papua New Guinea with a Non-Government Organization (NGO). The mandate of this organization included ethnographic and linguistic research and the development of vernacular education and transitional programs designed to assist the integration of the

country's children into national education programs. The organization saw their ethnographic and linguistic research as a means of maintaining the cultures of people whose language and culture were at risk. Community development was also a major focus of the organization. Research was conducted with the local people that focused on the identification and development of community development initiatives that would help better the participants' lives.

This was not a "fly-by-night" operation. Rather people involved had committed their lives to helping others. The organization never entered a new community without an invitation from that community—a value I saw reflecting my own value of a client's right to self-determination.

However, simultaneously, in other parts of the country, companies, who had entered into development agreements with the government of the land, were tapping into the country's resources in ways that over time ended up poisoning river waters, sterilizing crop lands, and leaving people feeling unheard, disregarded and jeopardized within their own land. Attempts to have their concerns heard by those in positions of power were disregarded and finally the people took action and civil war ensued. I left Papua New Guinea at a time in which the country was entrenched in the disruption of war. In some way, I saw myself as the "other," one who was seen in the eyes of the people of that country as a perpetrator, one who had violated their trust and raped and poisoned their land at their expense. However, this image existed in sharp contrast to my understanding of myself as one who loved the land, its people and my awareness that I

was in the country to work alongside of the people of that land in order to enhance their quality of life as they defined quality of life.

Leaving that country was entrenched in heartache impossible to capture in rational thought and words. The country was groaning from the impacts of the civil uprising and expatriates who had given the best years of their professional lives to assist in the development of the country were being targeted as "the enemy" and seen as guilty of betraying the country's trust. For those of us who were involved deeply in the lives of the people of this land, our departure meant that relationships were ruptured, torn apart and intuitively I realized the damage done on many levels could never be restored. The pain was real, regardless of what the world reported in the press. Friends and adopted family members stood at the airport and wept as I boarded the plane that would carry me away from people who had allowed me to enter their lives, become a part of them, and record on paper and in the pores of my being, life in that land. This was not a disembodied ethnography but a lived experience full of thoughts and emotions that make life real and meaningful.

I was only one of many who left the country at that time. Field-ethnographers, educators and community development personnel fled for their lives and as they fled, research that embodied the history and cultural stories of people was lost in the ravages of war. Carefully recorded ethnographic field notes and linguistic analysis plunged to the bottom of the ocean as boats overloaded with people and their possessions sank to the bottom of the sea. Others' research was destroyed by fire as the rebels, intent to reclaim their land, burned and ravaged the possessions of those who had committed years of their

lives to protecting the language and culture of indigenous people's groups. As this occurred, stories were spun in the media about the impact of outsiders on developing countries and indigenous people groups. I left the land confused by the meaning of what was taking place and as I approach this study, I realize that these experiences have influenced my understanding of the research process and research ethics.

Nine years after I left this country, I accepted a position in another country ravaged by war. This time, I was working with an NGO mandated under the auspices of the United Nations to go into Kosovo in order to conduct needs assessments and assist the people in the Region to rebuild essential social services which had been devastated by years of political conflict and ultimately destroyed during the ensuing civil war. I entered the country full of optimism and hope that my efforts would benefit the people of the land in which I was a guest. This time, I had accepted a short-term assignment and knew my personal contribution to the efforts to rebuild this region would be limited. I thought the organization I was with and the efforts of the UN would be sustained for a long enough period of time to see the recommendations of our research and the subsequent goals of our mission fulfilled. This was not to be the case.

Six months into the initiative, the organization I was with decided to terminate the mission and withdrew virtually all of the services previously put in place to assist the people. Once again, relationships were ruptured, trust was broken and once again I left behind people crying at the airport. I left Kosovo in a state of confusion pondering the meaning of what was taking place. This experience has also influenced my understandings and concerns about the research process and research ethics.

Upon returning to Canada, the land of my birth but not consistent residency, I recommenced my work as a clinical social worker and the memories of my confusion about what took place during my involvement as an expatriate professional involved both indirectly and directly with qualitative research practices were only occasionally part of my consciousness. However, recently, I decided to follow my dream of completing a doctoral program in social work with a focus on social work research.

Initially, I thought I would focus my research on clinical concerns and use a quantitative approach in my doctoral dissertation. But these ideas shifted as I engaged in the study of qualitative research and found myself confronted by questions that had been residing inside my being since leaving my first long-term overseas assignment 17 years earlier. I found myself feeling visceral reactions at the thought of engaging with research participants and wrestling with personal questions about the ethics of engaging in qualitative research. Questions about the nature and meaning of relationship in qualitative research became a preoccupation as I struggled to understand how qualitative researchers dealt with the day-to-day struggles researchers encounter within their fieldwork. Before I realized the focus of my research and method of study would change, I became aware within my being that I needed to expand my understanding of the meaning of ethics within the context of qualitative research and look at what this would mean for me if I decided to utilize qualitative research methods to enter into the lives of others in order to gain an understanding of their lived experience (an excerpt from my Research Reflections *dated March 29, 2009).*

For a long time, I felt alone in my concern about the meaning of ethics in qualitative research practice but that changed when I read a student's statement in McGinn and Bosacki's (2004) article. After learning about the types of situations that can arise over the course of qualitative research and the ethical challenges qualitative researchers encounter, she stated she would "just stray far away from research that could border on unethical" (paragraph #47). Her response is not that different from my own initial response to the thought of engaging in qualitative research practice.

I also appreciated the work of Nancy Deutsch (2004) who described her initial discomfort during her early experiences as an emerging researcher and how over time she was able to develop her own identity as a researcher and position herself within the research community. Taking heart from the transparency of Deutsch and the student in McGinn and Bosacki's (2004) study I decided to address my concerns regarding the meaning of being ethical in qualitative research by engaging in this study. I recognize that while I wish to have this study contribute to the knowledge base that currently exists on ethics in qualitative research, I also want to grow personally and professionally as I conduct this study. It will be rewarding to me if this study resonates with other qualitative researchers who may be wrestling with their own concerns about the meaning of ethics in qualitative research practice and if this work encourages them to clarify what ethicality means for them and those with whom they will be involved during their research endeavors.

Selecting a Research Method

Choosing a research method for this study was not an easy process. The research question developed out of what began as an embodied reaction to a tacit awareness of my own need to understand more about qualitative research ethics and how researchers actually integrate ethics into their research practices. Looking back on this initial stage of engagement in the research process, I realize the research question actually chose me as much as I chose it. The subjective nature of this initial experience involved an intensity of emotion that caught me off guard. I was confused by what I was experiencing and used my *Research Reflections* journal as a way to examine my experience and make meaning of it. Initially, I did not know this type of personal experience was a process that was seen to be a legitimate part of any research methodology. Rather, I was simply attending to what I was experiencing. I anticipated the intensity of the emotion and the intellectual upheaval would subside in time and I would continue pursuing my previous plans to do a mixed-methods study related to my work as a clinician.

The emotional intensity reduced as I engaged in the process of reflective writing. Initially, I gave voice to my inner turmoil through poetry. Then I found myself spontaneously reflecting on memories from my own life, which included stories-about-stories. For example, I found myself remembering life lessons found in Milne's stories of Winnie the Pooh and remembered Alice in Wonderland's conversation about words with Humpty Dumpty. I had several lucid dreams relating to relationships I had experienced with people I had worked with in Papua New Guinea and Kosovo. This was a new experience for me and I was surprised at the power these experiences had in my life. My

emotions shifted from anxiety and fear to a quiet sense of determination. The intellectual upheaval settled as thoughts were expressed in words. I began reading the literature on qualitative research ethics and became intrigued by the tensions that existed around this important research foundation. It was at this point in my journey that I was introduced to Moustakas's (1990) book on heuristic inquiry.

Looking back, I believe my initial intrigue with Moustakas's work was in part due to the fact that I felt like I had been introduced to someone who had gone through a similar journey to my own and understood the intertwined nature of the subjective and the scientific. I felt a bond with him as I read his anguishing account of the loneliness he felt as he grappled with the decision of whether or not to consent to his daughter having heart surgery. Moustakas's (1961) heuristic study on loneliness that developed as he reflected on his own experience and the experiences of the children in the hospital resonated with me and I began to see the potential of heuristic research for exploring phenomena of life.

However, as I examined Moustakas's (1990) heuristic research method in more depth I began to wrestle with questions that surfaced as I explored the ontological and epistemological aspects of heuristic research. I will briefly consider each of these areas.

Ontological Considerations

Moustakas (1990) states the philosophical underpinnings of his work are rooted in Husserlian phenomenology. According to Drummond (2008), ontology is the science of objects and in Husserlian phenomenology objects need to be understood as objects of *experience*. Patton (2002) states that Husserlian phenomenology focuses on how people

describe things and experience them through their senses. Anything that presents itself in one's consciousness is of potential interest to the phenomenological researcher, whether the object is real or imagined. According to Husserl, consciousness is the only access people have to the world and to understand one's experience or understanding of the world the researcher must attend solely to the perceptions of those involved in the research project. These perceptions form a person's reality and throughout the research process the researcher focuses on the participants' first-hand descriptions of their perceptions.

The focus on how people describe and experience phenomena is a good fit with my research question in that I wish to explore how qualitative researchers understand ethics. However, merely focusing on perceptions in this research project limits the attention put on contextual factors, which may be influencing peoples' understanding of life's phenomenon. I see understanding and knowledge as being socially situated and more context-dependent. Thus, while I will be asking how researchers understand and describe qualitative research ethics, I will maintain an interest in how they see contextual factors (i.e., policies re research ethics, and professional codes of ethics) influencing their understandings or perceptions of research ethics.

Epistemological Considerations

Epistemologically, I see Moustakas upholding a subjective, internally focused means of knowing (Moustakas, 1990; Patton, 2002). However, Moustakas also emphasizes the importance of engaging with co-researchers in the development of knowledge regarding the phenomenon under review, which suggests that he also sees

knowledge generation as taking place within the context of research relationships. The type of dialogues he has with his co-researchers, and their involvement throughout the process, suggest that he moves between subjective and social means of knowing in his approach. This integration of the subjective and the social raises questions regarding Moustakas's epistemological application of Husserl's philosophical phenomenology (Giorgi, 2006).

Giorgi (2006) argues that Moustakas's (1990) heuristic approach to research does not accurately reflect Husserlian philosophical phenomenology and its epistemological implications. According to Giorgi, Moustakas upholds the involvement of the empirical ego in the development of knowledge. If Giorgi is correct, then the researcher in Moustakas's heuristic research model engages with his or her co-researchers in a temporal relationship in which a co-constructed description of the phenomenon under review is developed. Moustakas's epistemology is problematic for Giorgi (1994) in that it does not fit with conventional Husserlian philosophical phenomenology but rather reflects overtones of constructivism. However, the fact that Moustakas's approach appears to draw on both personal and social means of knowledge generation fits with my own understanding of knowledge development, which bridges phenomenology and constructivism. Moustakas's assimilation of phenomenological and constructivist epistemology is reflected in his methodology and the methods he recommends for data collection and analysis.

In choosing a research methodology for this project I see heuristic research as fitting with my research question and my desire to develop my personal understanding of

qualitative research ethics. The emphasis Moustakas puts on knowledge being reflective and obtainable only through personal experience is important in that it fits with the research question (i.e., how do qualitative researchers understand and apply ethics in practice) and the fact that I, as the primary researcher, wish to integrate my own understanding and experience in the area of qualitative research ethics into my research data. Through this process, I wish to increase my understanding of qualitative research ethics and how they are applied in real life situations. Heuristic research is seen to be an avenue for this type of personal and professional development as seen in Etherington's (2004) research. Etherington's (2004) research focused on heuristic research as a vehicle for personal and professional development and indicates that personal change can be experienced as a result of the researcher being involved in the heuristic research process. Etherington's findings are further supported by the work of Haggerson, Bell, Fuller, Lawrence, Vanosdall, Grube and Hunnicutt (2005). Personal growth is important for me and I would also wish it for those who participate with me in this study, which are reasons I chose heuristic research as the method implemented in this study.

Another reason I chose heuristic research as the method to be used in this study is that previous research supports that heuristic inquiry is well-suited for exploring the experiences of researchers confronting ethical concerns in the field. Beckstrom (1993) developed a proposal for the use of heuristic inquiry to investigate ethical implications of the problems facing adult educators. In his proposal, Beckstrom suggested heuristic inquiry was appropriate for investigating ethical issues because this approach focuses on understanding the participant's lived experience, not as something distanced and

removed, but as experienced within the day-to-day occurrences of those involved in the research. Heuristic research, according to Douglass and Moustakas (1985), is aimed at "revealing the intimate nature of reality . . . as it is" (p. 42) and thus is deemed suitable for exploring the meaning and practice of qualitative research ethics.

Heuristic inquiry differs from other phenomenological approaches in that it requires the researcher to have had direct or indirect involvement with the phenomena being studied. While phenomenology, according to Douglass and Moustakas (1985) encourages a kind of detachment from the phenomenon being investigated, heuristic inquiry emphasizes connectedness and relationship throughout the knowledge building process.

Douglas and Moustakas (1985) see knowledge generated over the course of the study as being "an act of creative discovery, a synthesis that includes intuition and tacit understanding" (p. 43). When the researcher has mastered knowledge of the material that illuminates and explicates the question, the researcher puts the components and core themes into a creative synthesis (Moustakas, 1990). This synthesis may take the form of a narrative depiction that utilizes verbatim materials or it may be expressed in other creative forms such as poems, stories, drawings, or paintings.

As mentioned, heuristic research involves personal awareness and reflection and Moustakas (1990) and Douglass and Moustakas (1985) state heuristic inquiry is more an attitude than a prescribed approach to research. The freedom afforded in this method allows researchers to integrate any methods of discovery they believe will be helpful in illuminating the question under inquiry in the research process. I am also aware of the

power creative writing has in my own learning and am intrigued by the ideas of writing as a form of inquiry (Deutsch, 2004; Richardson & Adams St. Pierre, 2008). Thus, I integrate creative writing practices throughout my study. I also integrate reflexive practices (Etherington, 2004; Guillemin & Gillman, 2004) throughout the heuristic phases of inquiry defined by Moustakas (1990). One of these practices involved my maintaining a research journal, referred to as my *Research Reflections*, in which I reflect on the research process as it unfolds. Another reflexive practice took place when I met with the members of my learning community (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). This was a small group of colleagues who met together to discuss our research projects and what we were learning through this process. This was a safe environment in which to discuss sensitive issues which arose over the course of my involvement in this project. Similar opportunities for reflexive practice occurred on an on-going basis with my advisor.

Ethical Considerations

Moustakas (1990) does not directly address the matter of ethics in heuristic inquiry in his book *Heuristic Research: Design, Methodology, and Applications*. He does, however, allude to a number of important ethical implications that are manifest within the heuristic research process. For example he describes his relationships with his co-researchers as being based on the deep respectful, perhaps even spiritual, principles upheld in the work of Martin Buber (1958/2004). It is within such relationships that Moustakas sees people gaining personal awareness and creating knowledge as they interact with others as beings who bring to the relationship their own knowledges and experiences. In light of the “sacred” nature of relationships, Moustakas emphasizes the

need for the researcher to establish accountability between him/herself and his or her co-researchers. One way this accountability is maintained is through the use of member checks throughout the heuristic research process.

Moustakas (1990) also acknowledges that the researcher carries a great deal of responsibility throughout the heuristic research process. For example, the researcher is responsible for the research design, is given freedom to implement research strategies "on-the-fly" if the researcher believes the strategy will help move the knowledge-generation process forward, develops the descriptions of the participants' accounts of the phenomenon under review and decides how the research findings will be presented upon completion. Moustakas (1990) requires researchers to advise co-researchers regarding what is happening throughout the research process and to provide them opportunity to identify what they see occurring. But he does not elaborate on how this process should occur. Brinkmann and Kvale (2005) advance this type of accountability further and state that co-researchers should not merely be advised or asked about what they believe is occurring during the research process but should be provided opportunity to object to the process and have their input acknowledged in the advancement of the research.

While I uphold the ethical practices alluded to in Moustakas's work, Peled and Leichtentritt's (2002) guidelines also informed my work. These guidelines include a commitment to (a) integrating ethics throughout every phase of my work, (b) respecting and empowering those involved in this project, (c) ensuring this work will benefit not just myself as primary investigator/participant but also others who participate in this study with me, (d) ensuring participants will not be harmed during this study, and (e) carrying

out this research in a competent and responsible manner. Lastly, underlying this work is a personal commitment to the principle of social justice.

In summary, I believe heuristic inquiry augmented with reflexive practices and creative writing has enabled me to examine the meaning of research ethics for qualitative researchers and learn more about their understanding and management of ethically important moments that occur over the course of the qualitative research process.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Ethics refers to various ways of understanding and examining moral life (Edwards & Mauthner, 2002; Hugman, 2005; Israel & Hay, 2006). Three main categories of ethics are (a) metaethics, (b) normative ethics and (c) applied ethics (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). Metaethics relate to the analysis or logic of moral concepts such as "right," "obligation," and "virtue" and how ethical judgments are made. Normative ethics focus on the moral norms that guide or indicate what one should or should not do in different types of situations. Normative ethics are frameworks by which actions are judged as right or wrong, good or bad. However, normative ethics are based on criteria that are variable and in some instances quite contradictory (Israel & Hay, 2006). Applied ethics refer to how normative ethical theories or perspectives are applied to specific issues in particular situations and circumstances.

In this study, I focus on research ethics as a particular form of applied ethics. Situating research ethics within the broader context of normative ethics helps establish the conceptual foundation for this study. Thus, I begin this literature review with an overview of the historical development of several key ethical perspectives for which brief descriptions are provided. This is followed by an overview of the historical development of research ethics, which highlights issues in the controversy surrounding the development of policies and regulatory guidelines currently used to govern research in Canada. Ethics-as-process, a framework discussed by Cutcliffe and Ramcharan (2002) as an alternative approach for evaluating qualitative research proposals is presented. I conclude this literature review by summarizing the findings of key studies that focus on

the application of research ethics in Canada and identifying a need for additional research that would expand our understanding of how researchers in the field actually understand the meaning of being an ethical researcher and how they identify and handle ethical concerns that arise over the course of their work.

The Historical Development of Ethical Perspectives

Hugman (2005), in describing ethical development in Western society, depicts this development as transitioning and transforming through four eras. Each era reflects prevalent over-arching social and religious world-views. The timeframes of these ethical eras are neither specifically defined nor clearly delineated; however, major shifts in ethical thought are evident even though ideas from one era may continue to be reflected across subsequent time periods.

The first era, the classical period or Greek and Roman era, was the period in which classical philosophy in combination with religious polytheism formed the foundations of Western philosophical thought. The second era, the medieval period, saw classical ideas rethought within the social context of theocracy and monasticism. Moral thought was religious in character, predominated by Judeo-Christian philosophy. During the third era, the period of modernity, or the “age of reason,” scientific modes of thinking took precedence over religious approaches in social thought. This period is the era of classical liberal philosophy and ethics became the science of moral life, through which ethicists sought to address the unique ethical challenges wrought by the increased industrialization of society. The fourth era, the post-modern age, is the one we are living in currently. Fragmentation, plurality and diversity are hallmarks of our time. The

skepticism and uncertainty marking our era is seeing a return to and rediscovery of moral ideas from earlier periods and attempts to synthesize competing ethical perspectives are evident within contemporary ethics literature (Hugman, 2005). In the following section, each of these eras will be explored in an attempt to identify key ethical themes or perspectives that resurface as we begin to explore the development and implementation of research ethics.

Ethical Themes from the Classical Period: Virtue and Moral Balance

Moral thought that emphasized virtue or good character as the basis of ethics was predominant among the ancient Greeks (Barsky, 2010; Cahn & Markie, 2009; Hugman, 2005). Moral balance was a major ethical theme during this era. For example, ancient Greek physicians would declare allegiance to the first professional code of ethics, the Hippocratic Oath. This oath centered on the good of the patient, avoiding doing harm, refraining from corrupt self-interest including sexual exploitation and emphasized the need to maintain confidentiality. A “virtuous physician” achieved moral balance by placing the interests of patients and the members of the surrounding society within the margins of health. Virtue as balance required the integration of all aspects of life and a physician who attended to a patient’s physical health while causing harm to other aspects of the patient’s wellbeing was seen to lack moral integrity.

Aristotle (384 - 322 BC) is credited with the idea that virtuous character, in which a person strives for a balance between extremes, can be developed through a systematic methodology of self-development. For example, a person needed to find a balance

between being too just or too compassionate and not exercising these virtues. Aristotle, referred to this process as the "doctrine of the mean" and states,

> I call mean in relation to us that which is neither excessive nor deficient, and this is not one and the same for all . . . virtue aims to hit the mean . . . it is possible, for example, to feel fear, confidence, desire, anger, pity, and pleasure and pain generally, too much or too little; and both of these are wrong. But to have these feelings at the right times on the right grounds towards the right people for the right motive and in the right way is to feel them to an intermediate, that is to the best, degree; and this is the mark of virtue. Similarly there are excess and deficiency and a mean in the case of actions. But it is in the field of actions and feelings that virtue operates; and in them excess and deficiency are failings, whereas the mean is praised and recognized as a success: and these are both marks of virtue. Virtue, then is a mean condition, inasmuch as it aims at hitting the mean . . . But not every action or feeling admits of a mean; because some have names that directly connote depravity . . . these . . . are so called as being evil in themselves . . . there can be no mean or excess or deficiency in the vices . . . however, done, they are wrong. " (Aristotle, 1953, p. 100)

The ancient Greeks understood that virtues could be taught and developed through practice. Virtues were not seen to be natural attributes of human character (i.e., not like a genetic physical feature). The development of a virtuous life resulted from external influences and was subject to conscious choice. Ethics involved the "active pursuit of the

integration between right thought and right action" (Hugman, 2005, p. 4). The primary ethical question of this period was, "What kind of person should I be?"

Ethical Themes from the Medieval Era: Sanctity and Godliness

Medieval philosophy built on the traditions established during the classical period. Ethical debate centered on philosophy of Plato and the rediscovery of Aristotle's ideas through the translation of his works (Cahn & Markie, 2009; Hugman, 2005). The Christian church dominated the thinking of this era and the key figures of this time were monastic scholars. The Hippocratic Oath continued to be referenced. However, even this was conceptualized within the general ethical teaching that applied to all members of the Christian society. Two key theologian-philosophers of this time were Thomas Aquinas and William of Ockham.

Thomas Aquinas's ethical principles reflect a combining of the ideas of Aristotle with the basic principles of Christianity. Aquinas upheld that the highest good was the realization of the purpose for which one was created, which Aquinas proposed was to reveal God's goodness. The highest form of action was the contemplation of God, which Aquinas considered to be done through reason or faith and it reached its height in what Aquinas called "intuition," a coming to God, which was a process "completed only in the world to come, in heaven" (Frost, 1989, p. 90). Aquinas, like Aristotle, promoted the pursuit of a virtuous life through thoughtful deliberation and in bringing one's behaviour into accord with his or her beliefs. Evil, for Aquinas, was the privation of good. "All things created by a good God, aim at goodness. When they fail, evil results" (p. 90).

William of Ockham, while less well-known than Aquinas, is important to this discussion due to his application of Aristotelian logic which laid the foundation for later ethical thought through two propositions (Hugman, 2005). First, William of Ockham proposed human reason was separate from divine revelation and that human reason was the authority for moral values. Second, Ockham proposed the ethical principle which became known as 'Ockham's Razor,' which stated that the simplest ethical arguments should always be preferred and that it is pointless exercise to multiply ethical hypotheses or complicate moral reasoning. Ockham's ideas moved ethical thinking towards a process based upon human reason operating through logical deduction. This shift in Western thought issued in the modern era, and differentiates modernism within industrialized society from other religious/cultural traditions (Hugman, 2005).

Ethical Themes from the Modern Era: Reason and Duty versus Utilitarianism

During the latter part of the medieval era, the differentiation between philosophy and theology continued to develop. Western science and philosophy shifted from being based upon faith in gods or God to "the capacity of human reason, through the application of correct techniques, to determine truths that apply to all classes of subject (whether in the natural world or human society)" (Hugman, 2005, p. 5). The philosophical cornerstones of modernist thought became rationalism, the belief in the capacity of human reason as the basis for understanding the world; empiricism, the approach to knowing the world that seeks truth through objective observation; universalism, the idea of truths that apply to all subjects; and individualism, valuing the individual person as the unit of moral consideration rather than the family or community.

These philosophical cornerstones are reflected in the attempts during the modern era to produce “ethical laws” to replace “divine laws” (Aita & Richer, 2005; Hugman, 2005). Western society became increasingly secularized and epistemologists sought a scientific understanding rather than religious understanding of the natural world, human nature and society. Moral philosophy, in the hands of Kant, sought to establish an ethics founded on rationalism in which abstract and universal principles define right conduct. This ethical perspective has come to be known as deontology (Aita & Richer, 2005; Cahn & Markie, 2009; Helgeland, 2005; Hugman, 2005).

Deontology. Deontology conceptualizes ethical laws as duties. These ethical laws or principles are defined in abstract terms, are general in nature, are seen to be universal and apply equally and impartially to everyone in the same type of situation (Hugman, 2005). Deontological theories are most closely associated with the work of Immanuel Kant (Cahn & Markie, 2009; Hugman, 2005; Israel & Hay, 2006), who argued that humans as moral agents should be respected on the basis of their being a moral agent and in ways that are consistent with human dignity and worth. According to Kant’s ethical perspective, an act’s moral worth depends upon the reason the act is being done. Thus, the good person needs to be doing the right things for the right reasons; and, duty as opposed to self-interest is seen as the legitimizing basis for ethical behavior (Aita & Richer, 2005; Hugman, 2005; May, 1980). In contrast to the deontological perspective, the idea that an action and the motivation behind the action must both be moral, is utilitarianism.

Utilitarianism. Utilitarianism reflects the scientific spirit of the modernist ethical era. It developed as a formal ethical philosophy within the context of the industrialization of the Western world. Rather than centering on principles and duties, this perspective centers on a "rational calculation of the consequences that follow from an act" (Hugman, 2005, p. 6). Utility is seen as that which produces good, pleasure and/or benefit as well as that which prevents pain, evil or unhappiness. This approach looks for what will produce the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people (Aita & Richer, 2005; Helgeland, 2005; Hugman, 2005; May, 1980). Great debates have and continue to seek resolution regarding the meaning and measurability of happiness (i.e., the inclusion of physical, psychological, emotional, cultural and spiritual aspects of experience). As a result, two versions of utilitarianism have developed over time: (a) Act Utilitarianism which is the view that a good person should do what will generate the greatest utility and (b) Rule Utilitarianism which is the view that advocates the adherence to principles and rules that will maximize the utility for society. Utilitarianism, like deontology, "is individualist, rationalist, empiricist and universalist" (Hugman, 2005, p. 7). Both utilitarianism and deontology encompass the principles of individual human rights and personal volition while at the same time situating the individual within the social and political order (Hugman, 2005).

During this era, the caring professions developed. Throughout their development, ethical debates have occurred and the tensions between adherents of the utilitarian (consequentialist approaches) and deontological (non-consequentialist) ethical perspectives have been evident (Israel & Hay, 2006). However, the tensions surrounding

professional ethics in contemporary society surpass the modernist debate between deontology and utilitarianism. Today, ethicists challenge the impersonal idea that reason alone can be the moral foundation for caring professions (Schwickert, 2005) and call for the consideration of emotions and relationships in the development of ethical principles and practices. Many challenge the idea that either deontology or utilitarianism alone or together is a sufficient basis for contemporary professional ethics (Ellis, 2007; Guzenhauser, 2006; Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2000; Rallis, Rossman, & Gajda, 2007). These tensions have been further expanded in the ethical discourse of the postmodern era.

Ethical Themes in the Post-modern Era: Situational, Constructed, Relational and Regulated

The term, "post-modern," is used here to differentiate the time period succeeding the modern era from the term, "postmodern," which is used to refer to an array of perspectives which have come to constitute a philosophical genre commonly referred to as "postmodernism." The post-modern era is considered by Hugman (2005) to be the moment in time of our current existence and postmodern ethics is only one of the ethical perspectives prevalent in contemporary thought. Two other post-modern ethical perspectives that are relevant to our discussion are feminist ethics of care and discourse ethics.

Postmodern ethics. While an exhaustive discussion of the multiplicity of postmodern perspectives regarding ethics lies beyond the scope of this review, I have chosen to present a brief discussion of the work of Zygmunt Bauman, as an example of

postmodern ethics. Bauman, a postmodern sociologist of Polish descent, refers to contemporary existence with its rapid changes as “Liquid Life” (Bauman, 2005). According to Bauman, advances in technology have changed the nature of contemporary relationships and life moves too rapidly for ethical principles and paradigms to have meaning for any length of time (Bauman, 2008). Post-modernity for Bauman is marked with uncertainty in knowledge and values and he sees morality as formulated and occurring in moments in life when individuals are called upon to make decisions regarding how they will act and respond. Bauman abandons the idea of “ethics” which he sees as being associated with universal rules and ethical metanarratives and adopts the term “morality” which he sees as referring to how human beings relate to each other. The concept of the “other” for Bauman is integral to his concept of responsibility and morality (Bauman, 1993). The idea that humans are intrinsically aware of other humans, Bauman refers to as background knowledge. We take this idea for granted, as a truth that does not require testing or proof. It is a non-reflected-upon truth and is seen to be natural. In this space of the taken-for-granted awareness of the other, understanding and reciprocity are seen to be natural. Misunderstanding is un-natural and abnormal and it is misunderstanding that makes us stop, to pause and think, and catalyzes the process of conscious knowledge building. The construction of the social world begins when the taken-for-granted knowledge is disrupted and one must make sense of and deal with the other. Morality is the responsibility one feels when one recognizes the other and attends to the other foregoing aesthetic freedom that is the freedom experienced when one’s attention roams freely unencumbered by the awareness of the other. Thus, morality is the

process of decision-making involved in relating to the others who enter and are part of a person's social space.

Bauman's postmodern concept of morality has been criticized as being constrained by its dyadic nature and the lack of recognition of the third other. However, in my reading of Bauman (1993), I understand him to see the moral act itself as multifaceted and as constituting a "complex network of mutual dependencies" (p. 181) that is created within the social world. Within the social world cross-pressures of socialization (e.g., government rules and regulations) and sociality (e.g., individual's recognition of others) constantly create moral pressures. Bauman states, "The context of life, constantly under the pressure of unhinged and uncoordinated motives and forces, is messy–confused and confusing. It is not easy to be a moral person . . ." (p. 182). While other postmodern philosophers address ethical issues, Bauman's ideas are of particular interest to me when related to the uncertainty and complexity that appear to exist in the realm of research ethics.

Feminist ethics of care. Feminist ethics of care is based on the work of psychologist Carol Gilligan whose research supports the idea that there are two gender-related moralities, morality of justice and morality of care (Held, 1995). The morality of justice centers on conflicting claims and individual rights whereas the morality of care centers on responsibilities in relationship. Gilligan's work challenges the model of moral development popularized by her former mentor, educational psychologist and moralist Lawrence Kohlberg. Kohlberg, like Freud, held the notion that men have a more highly developed moral sense than women. In Kohlberg's model, moral development is

presented as the development of an autonomous self, capable of being motivated by abstract principles understood as a kind of formulaic solution to conflicts of interests. In contrast, in ethics of care moral development is described in terms of the development of self-in-relation. Morality is understood in terms of the preservation of valuable human relations.

Kohlberg's and Gilligan's moral development models reflect important differences in ethical perspectives that can be seen in the debate surrounding the development of research ethics and the governance of research in Canada. For example, Kohlberg's emphasis on principles and formulaic solutions to conflicts of interests relate to the a priori ethical principles and processes embodied in Canadian research policies. However, Gilligan's emphasis on relationship and process are reflected in the arguments of those who uphold research ethics as needing to be more relational in nature (Barsky, 2010; Ellis, 2007; Swauger, 2011) and addressed throughout the research process (Cutcliffe & Ramcharan, 2002; Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2000).

***Discourse ethics*.** Discourse ethics have also come into vogue during the post-modern era. Habermas, a contemporary German philosopher and social theorist, is the leading exponent of this perspective (Banks, 2004). Habermas's work is viewed as neo-Kantian in that Habermas suggests "only theories of morality and justice developed in the Kantian tradition hold out the promise of an *impartial* procedure for the justification and assessment of principles" (Banks, 2004, p. 81). However, Habermas moves beyond the individualistic focus of Kant to recognize the inter-subjective nature of morality "seeing universal moral principles as those that are validated in an ideal system of rational

discourse" (Banks, 2004, p. 81). According to Habermas (1990), communicative interaction is fundamental to morality as it supports and makes possible mutual understanding. Habermas's principles of discourse ethics include the following:

1. Every subject who is competent to speak and act is allowed to participate in the discourse.
2. Everyone is allowed to question any assertion made during the discourse.
3. Everyone is allowed to introduce any assertion they wish to into the discourse.
5. Everyone is allowed to express his or her attitudes, desires and needs, and
6. No speaker may be stopped, by internal or external coercion, from expressing his or her ideas as outlined in the first two points.

Ethical validity, according to discourse theory, is based upon rational, universal and uncoerced consensus. Accordingly, only those norms that are agreed upon by all those concerned are recognized in this perspective as having validity. Habermas recognizes that these conditions are ideal; however, he argues, that in discourse, participants need to act as if these principles were real. Thus, we see that in discourse ethics, inter-subjective communication, based on structures that promote rational consensus has much to offer qualitative researchers who are interested in ethics as process approaches.

The historical development of ethical perspectives within society has seen the meaning of morality and ethics change in ways that reflect the social and political dynamics prevalent during each of the four eras previously discussed. However, ethical perspectives are not mutually exclusive and multiple perspectives co-exist at any given

time. Contemporary ethics are pluralistic in nature and tensions exist between advocates of the different ethical perspectives that currently exist within contemporary society.

As we turn our attention from the development of ethical perspectives over time to the historical development of research ethics, the ethical perspectives previously discussed can be seen in the ethical positions reflected in the work of those developing research ethics. The tensions that exist within the broader social context can also be seen in the debates and controversy surrounding the development and implementation of research ethics.

An Overview of the Historical Development of Research Ethics as Regulated Practice

Ethical review of research is frequently cited as coming into existence in response to the atrocities committed in the name of medical research during World War II (Drewry, 2004; van den Hoonaard, 2001). However, Israel and Hay (2006) challenge this as a misnomer and state that regulations governing medical experimentation existed in Germany/Prussia before the war. Nevertheless, the Nuremberg Code sought to eliminate the use of medical experiments that harmed research participants by codifying scientific and social research and by emphasizing the importance of *informed consent*, *freedom from coercion*, and the insurance of *an appropriate risk/benefit ratio* for the subject as ethical principles (Aita & Richer, 2005). Despite the development and implementation of this Code, over the next 50 years questionable scientific experimentation continued to be carried out on human beings (i.e., soldiers were exposed to atomic blasts, prisoners were used to test medical procedures and drugs of questionable repute were provided to people

in developing countries). As the effects of these experiments became known, often many years later, and lawsuits became more prevalent, the public and the government became acutely aware of the ethical implications of medical research. In response, both professional bodies and governments including those of Australia, Canada, Great Britain and the United States of America, began developing explicit guidelines for research ethics (Glasby & Beresford, 2007; Israel & Hay, 2006; van den Hoonaard, 2001).

Debate and controversy are not new phenomena within the research community (Kuhn, 1970). However, when one looks at the debate surrounding the development, implementation and regulation of research ethics, it is not uncommon to see the "gloves come off." Jackie Powell (2005) states that addressing the topic of values and ethics, "raise[s] questions about how we ought to act and how we ought to behave towards each other" (p. 24) and the moral nature of ethical debates link to people's concepts of who they are individually and collectively and touches on "what we value most about life and living together" (p. 24). The ideology and belief systems underlying these arguments are tied to concepts of good and bad, right and wrong, freedom and control, exclusion and participation, justice and oppression, power and knowledge, the need to regulate human behavior and the need for individuals to develop and act from a position of personal responsibility, to name a few. These are important beliefs that reflect an individual's personal values and understanding of social norms operating within society at a particular time in history and influence a person's understanding of research ethics.

Following the implementation of guidelines for ethical research in the United Kingdom, Australia, the United States of America and Canada, numerous researchers

wrote reflective articles identifying ethical considerations addressed in their studies. I found 28 articles in which qualitative researchers address such concerns in English, peer-reviewed journals. The timeframe for these articles was from 2000 to 2012. This collection of articles may not be exhaustive but it does provide a good representation of the ethical considerations addressed by qualitative researchers that relate to the ethical guidelines for research in effect in these four countries. Many of these authors voice concern regarding a disconnect between procedural ethics as outlined in the official policies and practices in effect in their countries and ethics in practice.

As we turn our attention to the development of research ethics in Canada, it is important to remember that research ethics, like the development of normative ethics in general, reflect values and principles influenced by the social and political dynamics operating within a particular context during a given period of time (Drewry, 2004; Miller & Boulton, 2007).

The Regulation of Research and Research Ethics: A Canadian Perspective

In Canada, work towards the articulation of general ethical principles applicable to research and the development of ethical review boards began in the 1970s. In 1978, the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council adopted recommendations developed by a Consultative Group of the Canada Council (Israel & Hay, 2006). At least two major influences pushed Canadian bodies to continue developing policies to govern research during the next 20 years. These were (a) Canada's desire to react to developments in the United States, and (b) public scandal associated with researchers' integrity. A notorious incident of this sort occurred in Canada in August 1992. Valery

Fabrikant, an engineer at Concordia University, complained to his university, and to the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), regarding demands from colleagues for perceived undeserved co-authorships and other improper scientific conduct. His complaints were left unanswered. Fabrikant took matters into his own hands and murdered four of his colleagues in their offices on a summer's afternoon in August 1992 (Israel & Hay, 2006). How much this event influenced the actual timing of the development of Canadian policies to govern research ethics can only be speculated. However, the involvement of NSERC in the development of Canada's official policy governing research involving human participants cannot be ignored.

During the early 1990s, the Medical Council of Canada (MCC), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSRCC) began developing a Tri-Council Policy on Ethics Involving Human Subjects (the Policy). The first draft of the Policy was issued as a Memorandum on November 26, 1994. However, academics and other researchers opposed the policy as unnecessary, disrespectful of efforts and policies already in place for guiding research practice within Canadian universities and as systematically jeopardizing qualitative research efforts as the guidelines in the Policy were focused on issues and guidelines relevant to biomedical research. The draft seemed to wither away in the heat of the debate (van den Hoonaard, 2001).

Four years later, the Policy resurfaced in a revised form and the three Councils quickly adopted it in 1998. Initially, this revised policy was to govern research projects funded by the three Councils. The Councils gave universities until January 2000 to adopt

the policy as part of their compulsory research review and research ethics approval procedures, which were to be administered by the in-house ethics committees of Canadian universities (Conn, 2008). The Policy was adopted and today, Canadian universities use this policy to cover research projects funded by these three Councils as well as to cover non-funded research (Ells & Gutfreund, 2006; van den Hoonaard, 2001). The Policy does not apply to privately funded institutions whose research is conducted within their institution; however, when privately funded institutions collaborate with academic researchers whose institutions receive funding from one of the three councils represented in the Tri-Council, the Policy applies to those collaborations (Ells & Gutfreund, 2006). While Canadian universities have adopted the Tri-Council Policy Statement, at the time of writing, the Policy remained immersed in controversy.

Deconstructing the Controversy Surrounding the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethics Involving Human Subjects

The controversy surrounding the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethics Involving Human Subjects (TCPS) raises several concerns:

1. The political intent behind this document,
2. The process through which the policy was and continues to be developed,
3. The actual content of the TCPS policy and
4. The implications of this type of policy for research, in particular qualitative research (Ells & Gutfreund, 2006; Lather, 2004; Patterson, 2008; van den Hoonaard, 2001; Wynn, 2011).

For example, the political intent behind the development and implementation of the TCPS has been challenged by Canadian researchers, Brogden and Patterson (2007), who see the policy as reflecting a nostalgic longing "for a simpler way to say what is right and what is wrong, a desire for the comfort of procedure as prescription" (p. 219). This shift towards regulation and proceduralism creates concern that ethical guidelines established by REBs "invoke a false sense of security around 'handling' the ethics of any given research situation . . . our yearning for boundaries may undermine the particulars of research and its complex, dynamic, fluid parameters which demand our ethical scrutiny" (p. 219). The political inference of creating policies and procedures to govern research places the responsibility for ethical research in the hands of policy makers and bureaucrats who are distanced from the actual research process. In order to assure compliance with the ethical guidelines embodied in the TCPS, researchers must obtain ethics approval from their universities' Research Ethics Board (REB). Riviere (2011) argues that REB processes create an unproductive tension between "ethics approval" and being an "ethical researcher" (p. 195). Attempts to address concerns regarding the political and practical implications of the TCPS have raised concerns regarding the process through which the policy was and continues to be developed and implemented.

During the time of the development of the TCPS, Canadian researcher, Donna Patterson (2008), when asked to review and comment on the Tri-Council Policy on Ethics, wrote to her Research Ethics Board (REB) and the new Tri-Council expressing her concerns regarding the marginalization of qualitative research in the policy. The new Tri-Council was made up primarily of medical researchers and academics and medical

and quantitative issues dominated the Policy. Patterson's comments and concerns were left unaddressed by both her university's REB and the Tri-Council. She wondered if the lack of action was related to her gender, the fact that at the time of her queries she did not have tenure and/or her utilization of qualitative research methods. When she asked members of her university's REB for an explanation, she was told her comments were irrelevant as compliance to the new policy was essential or national funding opportunities for engineering and natural sciences would be jeopardized. Opportunity for dialogue was ended and Patterson was left sensing that "some forms of knowing mattered while others did not" (p. 20). Instead of openness and opportunity for discussion regarding what matters in research, the decisions of the policy makers setting the course for the governance of research in Canada were privileged. This raised questions in Patterson's mind regarding which methodologies and practices would be recognized by REBs, how academics might challenge and influence bureaucratic decisions regarding research governance and the power REBs had in determining the meaning of research ethics and the course of research endeavors. Patterson concluded:

> If research is completely overwhelmed by ethics and absorbed by its processes (such as REBs) it cannot transform them (Sarkis, 2000). . . . Researchers on the margins have much to offer about who we are as qualitative researchers and who we might become. REBs should become facilitators of that sharing rather than gatekeepers as qualitative researchers reflect on how methodology directs and shapes what we can know about ourselves and the world around us. (p. 25)

Patterson goes on to state that her experience echoes concerns highlighted in American feminist researcher Patti Lather's description of the intense nature of the conflict surrounding research ethics that Lather refers to as the "Science Wars." Lather challenges government intrusion into research endeavors and exposes the marginalizing effects Research Ethics Boards (REBs) can have on researchers, particularly qualitative researchers. Lather (2004) in her scathing Foucauldian critique of government involvement in regulating educational research in the United States of America (USA) argues that,

> The federal effort to legislate scientific method [may] be read as a backlash against the proliferation of research approaches of the past 20 years of cultural studies, feminist methodology, radical environmentalists, ethnic studies and social studies of science, a backlash where in the guise of objectivity and good science, "colonial, Western, masculine, white and other biases" (Canclini, 2001, p. 12) are smuggled in. (p. 16)

Lather (2004), connects the trends in the USA with trends pertaining to research and research ethics also taking place in Great Britain. Both countries, she proposes, are influenced by paradoxical political dynamics in which governments are dependent upon evidenced-based practice as a way to manage risk and ensure that governments are getting value for money spent, while these same governments hold experts and expert knowledge as suspect. The neoliberal ideologies of neutrality via proceduralism, prevalent within these countries, have given rise to control systems, including policies and codes of ethics, that govern research practices in ways that

support evidenced-based practice and systematically marginalize qualitative studies. While Lather's (2004) critique focuses on American and British situations, Patterson's (2008) and van den Hoonaard's (2006) critiques of Canada's Tri-Council Policy on Ethics Involving Human Subjects (TCPS) support and expand Lather's arguments. Researchers continue to publish critiques that raise concern specifically about the impact of regulatory policies on qualitative research practices (Clark, Hunt, Jules, & Good, 2010; Conn, 2008; Connolly & Reilly, 2007; Cutcliffe & Ramcharan, 2002; Damianakis & Woodford, 2012; Ramcharan & Cutcliffe, 2001; Tilley & Gormley, 2007).

Supporters of the TCPS challenge these critiques. Ells and Gutfreund (2006), for example, agree the union between qualitative research and the TCPS has been contentious. They see some of the criticism of the TCPS as justified while some criticism is seen as misguided. Ells and Gutfreund seek to debunk common criticisms of the TCPS and state their aims in writing their article:

1. To free researchers and REBs from "placing undue restrictions on qualitative research" (p. 361), and
2. To encourage qualitative researchers, REBs and those involved in the on-going development of the TCPS to "move forward under the shared goal of ensuring the highest ethical standards of research are achieved" (p. 362).

Despite the efforts of proponents of a priori approaches for research ethics approval, concern continues to be expressed in the literature that resorting to a predefined and highly prescriptive process of ethics approval may increase the risk that once ethics

approval has been obtained researchers will conduct their studies with little reflection about the ethical implications evident throughout the research process (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 1993; Peled & Leichtentritt, 2002; Shaw, 2003; Shek, Tang, & Han, 2005; Wynn, 2011). Research ethics interpreted in terms of informed consent and "do no harm" may in fact be perceived by researchers as putting the onus for ethical research onto policy makers and regulatory committees rather than on the researcher. Ramcharan and Cutcliffe (2001) and Cutcliffe and Ramcharan (2002) raise concern regarding these matters and in response propose the "ethics as process" approach as a means of reviewing qualitative research proposals.

Ethics as Process

Ramcharan and Cutcliffe (2001) express concern that qualitative researchers' work is treated unfairly and is disadvantaged by ethics committees. They criticize attempts by REBs to codify qualitative research practices as unenforceable and state procedural ethics fail to address the gap between theoretical ethical prescriptions and the ethical realities of fieldwork. For example, in fieldwork, trust between the researcher and the participants needs to be established and maintained over time and informed consent and the right to withdraw from the study needs to be re-established on a regular basis. Ethics as process allows for this type of ethical consideration to be addressed. The ethical assumptions behind this framework are

1. The research process should be sustained with good intention, respect and should not undermine participants emotionally, socially or physically.

2. The time-limited researcher/participant relationship and withdrawal from the field should be managed.
3. The participant's personal contribution and risk should be assessed in light of the personal and wider benefits of the research. This process should be transparent and ongoing.
4. Participants should have opportunity to check how they are represented in field notes and encouraged to change what has been written if necessary.
5. An audit trail should be maintained by the researcher as a record of his or her work (Ramcharan & Cutcliffe, 2001).

These assumptions are based upon the ethical principles of dignity, rights, safety and well-being. Ramcharan and Cutcliffe (2001) also identified a need for ongoing monitoring of qualitative research but they were not clear regarding what this would look like in their 2001 article.

One year later, Cutcliffe and Ramcharan (2002) published a second article in which they further substantiate the ideas presented in their original article based upon the emerging literature in this area. They refer to three field examples to help support their ideas. Two checklists are included in their second article. The first one is for qualitative researchers and basically reiterates the ideas listed earlier. The second checklist reiterates the aforementioned ideas from the perspective of the ethics committee. Cutcliffe and Ramcharan (2002) conclude their second article by stating that while their initial presentations of these ideas to ethics committee members were met with positive

responses, there is need for further development of these concepts and more research is required in order to understand how these ideas are being implemented in the field.

More than a decade has passed since Cutcliffe and Ramcharan (2002) introduced the idea of ethics as process as an alternative approach to qualitative research ethics. After reviewing their work I found myself wondering how these ideas relate to researchers' understandings and management of ethical considerations that arise during the research process. I also questioned the impact of regulatory guidelines and processes on qualitative researchers' conceptualization and application of ethics in their work. Do these guidelines and processes inadvertently increase the risk of researchers overlooking or not attending to ethically important moments that occur during the qualitative research process?

I returned to the literature and did a search using terms including but not limited to "research ethics," "qualitative research ethics," and "research ethics review." Because I was interested in qualitative researchers' understandings and application of ethics, I initially looked for *primary* research in which the investigator explored the topic of research ethics with *experienced* qualitative researchers. This search yielded a very limited number of articles (Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen & Kiamputtong, 2006, 2007, 2008a; Wiles, Crow, Heath, & Charles, 2006; Wynn, 2011) and one dissertation (Gaston, 1998). I found two additional articles in which the authors examined undergraduate and graduate students experiences in conducting qualitative research (Davison, 2004; McGinn & Bosacki, 2004) and one article presented the work of Norton and Wilson (2008) who

examined the continuing review process of 103 Canadian REBs. This article was reviewed as it appeared relevant to ethics as process.

I also found a number of articles (28) written by qualitative researchers from Canada, Great Britain, Australia and the United States in which the authors reflect on ethical considerations addressed during qualitative studies they had conducted. These considerations were discussed in light of the ethics review policies and procedures in effect in their respective contexts. These articles were published in various professional journals spread across a number of disciplines (i.e., medicine, social welfare, sociology, social work and education). The significance of these articles was initially overlooked as they seemed quite disparate. However, upon closer examination, it became apparent that qualitative researchers from all four countries had concerns regarding commonly accepted ethical procedures including evaluating the balance of risk and benefit for participants; potential risk for researchers, transcriptionists and others involved in the research process; informed consent; confidentiality and anonymity; research relationships and the role and responsibilities of the researcher; the need to consider contextual factors in all phases of the research process; the impact of ethics regulation on research methodology; and ethical considerations relating to the ethics review process. Many of these researchers expressed concern that a disconnect exists between formal procedural ethics as outlined in policies and procedures intended to guide research practice and the ethical realities encountered in research practice.

In the following sections, I summarize the three studies done with qualitative researchers and provide an overview of the ethical concerns raised in the reflective

articles. I also include recommendations regarding the research ethics review process made by the researchers.

Research Studies: Qualitative Researchers Talk about Research Ethics and the Review Process

Qualitative researchers are talking about research ethics and the ethics review process and expressing concern regarding the discrepancies that exist between official policy and research practice. However, most are speaking out after they have completed a qualitative study, alone, isolated in their offices. They express their concerns through their finger tips and their ethical worries move from the researchers' minds, bodies and relationships into digital files and folders. Sometimes researchers send their accounts to publishers who filter through the files as they decide which ideas will be published and which will be deleted from their files and folders. Once published, the researchers' concerns remain isolated in the pages of a journal until someone who has paid a subscription or tuition fee to access the literature finds the account and allows the researchers' words to enter the reader's mind, body and relationships. Until then, the power of the researchers' words remains trapped by the very processes intended to give them power to make a difference in the discourse surrounding qualitative research ethics. The following words are my account of what I have read and the messages I have heard as I searched the literature to bring together researchers' accounts of their experiences involving research ethics and the ethics review process. I will begin my account by highlighting three articles in which researchers talk about what they discovered as they talked with other qualitative researchers regarding research ethics in practice.

Research Study #1: Wiles, Charles, Crow and Heath's (2008) Study on Researchers' Understanding and Management of Confidentiality and Anonymity

An accepted practice in ethical research is ensuring confidentiality and anonymity. Wiles, Charles, Crow and Heath (2008), qualitative researchers from Britain, talked with academic and non-academic researchers during 6 focus groups and 31 interviews to find out how these researchers managed confidentiality and anonymity in social research. Those involved in this study talked about feeling compelled to break confidentiality when they perceived participants to be at risk of harm but not feeling breaking confidentiality was necessary in situations involving illegal activities. They also stated that although there is little acknowledgement in the literature of the occurrence of accidental breaches of confidentiality by researchers, such breaches do occur. These violations reportedly occur due to researchers seeking support from people not involved in the research process. Researchers also talked about how they accidentally let confidential information slip when talking with others regarding their work. Complete confidentiality was considered to be impossible and more discussion regarding this matter in research methods classes was recommended.

The challenge of protecting the identity of participants in research reports was also addressed in this study and strategies for maintaining confidentiality identified by the participants included omitting data and changing key characteristics of participants. These strategies were used only if the integrity of the data was not jeopardized. Discussion regarding anonymity revealed that anonymity is not always desired by participants and researchers need to consider how to respect participants' wishes in this

regard. Wiles, Charles, Crow and Heath (2008) conclude that rather than more regulation, employers need to ensure researchers have access to adequate training and support in order for researchers to develop the ethical literacy required to enable them to make appropriate ethical decisions within the context of a specific study.

Wiles, Charles, Crow and Heath (2006) also wrote a reflective article following the completion of the aforementioned study in which they talked about ethical considerations that arose for them while conducting the previously mentioned study. They discussed concerns relating to consent, confidentiality and anonymity which were identified as being of particular interest to the participants (experienced researchers). Informed consent raised discussion among the participants with some expressing concern regarding the process, others refusing to sign the consent form and a number of the participants stating that they were happy to have the researchers do whatever they wanted to with the data. Ownership and confidentiality of research data was of particular concern. Some believed the data belonged to the researcher and saw the participant as having no say over how the information would be analyzed and included in the research report. Others, however, stated the information belonged to the participants and wanted an opportunity to review their data. Some participants requested changes be made to the information shared during the interviews or focus group discussions. Lastly, anonymity was also questioned by a number of the researchers/participants. Some of the researchers interviewed named studies they had conducted and preferred to be identified in the authors' research. Others wished to remain anonymous.

Wiles, Charles, Crow and Heath (2006) also raised concern regarding the increased regulation of research and concluded that the increased bureaucracy and regulation of research is at risk of creating an environment in which researchers are adhering to "empty ethics" (p. 296). Rather, researchers need to attend reflexively to ethical considerations that occur over the course of the research process.

Research Study #2: Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen and Kiamputtong's (2008b) Study on Researchers' Experience Conducting Sensitive Research

Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen and Kiamputtong (2008b) from Australia, used grounded theory methodology incorporating in-depth, face-to-face unstructured individual interviews with 30 Australian public health researchers to examine social scientists' experiences of conducting research on sensitive topics. These researchers identified concern that formal policies and procedures focus on protecting participants but pay little attention to the impact conducting sensitive research can have on researchers and others involved in the research process. They also talked about how the boundaries can become blurred between qualitative researchers and participants that can lead to role confusion, difficulty in leaving the research relationship and physical symptoms of stress, emotional exhaustion and feelings of being overwhelmed which may lead to increased risk of burnout for the researcher. These researchers conclude there is a need for better training, support and supervision for researchers and that guidelines for research practice need to address the potential impact that conducting sensitive research can have on researchers and others involved in the research process.

Research Study #3: Wynn's (2011) Study on Ethnographers' Experience with Ethics Review

Wynn (2011) who also lives in Australia surveyed 315 researchers, 227 of whom were anthropologists and 261 of whom had submitted their research for review by an ethics committee. The purpose of the survey was to gain a sense of ethnographers' experience of the institutional ethics review process; 76% of the researchers surveyed did not consider ethics reviewers to have recommended significant modifications to their research projects. Of the researchers who were asked to make significant changes, 52% considered the requested modifications to be detrimental to the quality of their projects. Those interviewed also expressed concern that policies and procedures governing research are part of an increasing audit culture that exists to protect universities, governments and corporations, rather than research participants. But policies and procedures are enacted by people and one participant expressed concern regarding the ability of

> [b]ureaucracy to turn intelligent researchers into nitpicking bureaucrats who insist on forms being filled in just so . . . some argued that when we sit on ethics committees, we take the critical faculties we hone in our own writing and turn these on our colleagues with petty viciousness. (Wynn, 2011, p. 106)

Wynn (2011) concluded that while the researchers interviewed cared deeply about ethics and took them into account in their research, the mechanisms that institutions have implemented "to supposedly 'safeguard' research participants are often seen as mere bureaucratic tedium" (pp. 109-110).

Reflective Articles: Qualitative Researchers Reflect on Ethics and the Review Process

In addition to the three studies reviewed above, I found 28 articles in which qualitative researchers wrote about ethical considerations they had to manage during their research practice and how the governance of research ethics interfaced with their practice experience. In these articles, the authors focus primarily on evaluating risk and benefit, informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, research relationships, contextual considerations and the impact of the ethics review process on their chosen methodology and their overall experience as researchers.

Theme #1: Balance of Risk and Benefit for Participants, Researchers and Others Involved in the Research Process

Evaluating the risk and benefit for participants is considered in ethics review policies as a necessary part of ensuring that the practice of securing informed consent is meaningful. Houghton, Casey, Shaw and Murphy (2010) conducted a qualitative study with nursing students and examined the role of the clinical skills laboratory in the students' development. The researchers recognized the potential impact for the students of having their instructor conducting research at their clinical skills laboratory site. Due to the potential impact on the students, special accommodations were made to ensure none of the researchers' students were involved in the clinical skills laboratories in which the study was conducted. In the sites selected for the study, a clinical site coordinator met with the students to check with them regarding their willingness to participate in the study and followed up with them regarding the impact of the study on the students.

Warin (2011) examined the development of a “personal self” in children using a longitudinal study which took place over a number of years. During the 14 year timespan of the study, the children’s interests changed and Warin altered the methodology in order to keep the children engaged. Evaluating the risk and benefits for the participants several years in advance in an attempt to fulfill the requirements of the ethics review process was impossible. Warin (2011) concluded that ethical guidelines for research with children need to have a more nuanced framework. In order to maintain an ethical posture throughout the research process, researchers need to integrate the art of reflexivity and exercise ethical mindfulness as the study unfolds. In order to help researchers develop these skills, Warin (2011) recommends ethical dimensions of research illustrating the researcher’s ethical decision-making process be included in research reports published in academic journals.

Evaluating the risks and benefits for researchers, transcriptionists and others involved in the research process is addressed in reflective articles written by researchers from Canada (Clark, Hunt, Jules & Good, 2010; Connolly & Reilly, 2007), the United States (Rager, 2005a, 2005b; Wood, 2006) and Australia (Halse & Honey, 2007; Wray, Markovic, & Manderson, 2007). Several of these researchers discuss the reality of vicarious traumatization for those involved in conducting sensitive research. Researchers, transcriptionists and others involved in the research process need to consider the impact working with traumatic accounts has on their well-being and their work and ensure adequate supports and strategies are utilized (Connolly & Reilly, 2007; Guillemin & Heggen, 2009; Halse & Honey, 2007; Rager, 2005a, 2005b; Wray, Markovic, &

Manderson, 2007). These concerns are exacerbated when researchers work in isolated areas (Clark, Hunt, Jules & Good, 2010; Wood, 2006) or in environments where physical, psychological, or emotional risks to the researcher or others are evident. Risk for all involved in a particular research project needs to be considered prior to engaging in high-risk studies and assessed and addressed throughout the research process.

Risk management in research ethics policy and procedures currently focuses on risk to participants. The researchers reviewed extend risk management beyond formal policies and procedures and encourage researchers to tend to their own self-care and the needs of transcriptionists and others involved in the research process. Self-care strategies may include "collegial support, journaling, reflexive practice, pacing the data collection and accessing the experiences of others who have written or presented about similar experiences" (Connolly & Reilly, 2007, p. 538). According to the authors reviewed, potential risks to researchers and the need for researchers to engage in self-care is seldom addressed in research methods courses.

Theme # 2: Informed Consent

Informed consent is another pillar of research ethics and Miller and Boulton (2007) examine how the concept of informed consent has changed over the last 35 years. They refer to four qualitative studies of parents and children they conducted in the UK at different times during their research careers. In 1972, Boulton, the second author, conducted a study on women's experiences as mothers. Doctors in two areas of London provided her with names of potential participants from their health visitors' lists. Boulton contacted these women directly and invited them to participate in her study. The

women's understanding of the study and their willingness to take part were considered to be essential to the success of the study and their consent and cooperation were sought in this vein. No formal procedures for obtaining their consent were required.

The fourth study conducted by Miller, commenced in 2007 (Miller & Boulton, 2007). In this study, Miller examined men's experiences of the birth of their first child and how they construct their roles and identity as fathers. Approval of the researchers' ethics review committee was required before the research could commence. Potential participants identified themselves by responding to posters placed in shops and work premises which invited those interested to contact Miller either by telephone, email or by using a stamped addressed postcard enclosed in leaflets left with the posters. Most participants opted to complete the postcard and included their email address and mobile phone number as part of their contact information. Email was used as the primary mode of communication. Informed consent was negotiated through this medium and arrangements for interviews were agreed upon in subsequent email exchanges. At the initial meeting, the study was explained again and consent forms were signed in which the men agreed to participate in three interviews to be held over an extended period of time.

Miller and Boulton's (2007) study shows two important trends in the meaning and practices of obtaining informed consent and the governance of research ethics. The first trend is the shift from self-regulation to external regulation and the second is the shift in discourse from moral discourse to a discourse of regulation. These authors conclude, "Rapidly increasing bureaucratization of ethics requirements . . . is in danger of

inculcating a false sense of security while failing to acknowledge the need to deal with individual qualitative interviews in their own terms" (p. 2209).

Concern regarding the bureaucratization of research ethics is also evident in Wiles, Charles, Crow and Heath's (2006) study. These researchers interviewed other experienced researchers regarding their understanding and practice of obtaining informed consent. Interestingly, the researchers who participated in the study varied in their responses to the informed consent process used by Wiles, Charles, Crow and Heath. Some had no issue with it while others refused to sign the consent form offered to them by Wiles, Charles, Crow and Heath and stated they saw the form as unnecessary and as evidence of the move towards the over regulation of research.

Other researchers also reflected on their concerns regarding the process of informed consent and its inability to reflect the nature of the qualitative research process. For example, when a researcher is using an emergent research design it is difficult to establish the point at which consent to the process is "informed" (Brown Wilson, 2011; Etherington, 2007). Once-off consent (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2010) requires the researcher to describe the research design and subsequent processes prior to the outset of the research. This type of a priori process does not fit with a design that develops or changes over time. Warin (2011) raised concern that the research method used in her longitudinal study with children in care varied as the children got older and their interests changed. As time passed, the original consent did not reflect the actual process utilized in her study. To accommodate this type of research reality, Warin (2011) and Houghton, Casey, Shaw and Murphy (2010) suggested that consent needs to be

constantly negotiated with participants to ensure participants understand the purpose of the research and the role of the researcher. Brown Wilson (2011) supported this idea and illustrated how consent needed to be continually revisited during her research with participants who were elderly and/or frail; had cognitive, speech or hearing impairments that varied from day to day; or were experiencing other health or other personal circumstances that fluctuated over the course of the research project.

Informed consent can also be challenging in research studies utilizing participant observation. Houghton, Casey, Shaw and Murphy (2010) conducted a study in Ireland which explored the role of work done in a clinical skills laboratory in preparing nursing students for practice. During this study they utilized participant observation in a setting open to medical staff, patients and family members who were not formally part of the study. Questions were raised concerning who needed to provide consent and what methods of consent were required if consent needed to be obtained (i.e., would written or verbal consent be sufficient).

Researchers working with children and youth identify ethical concerns regarding the informed consent process. Gaining consent from the parents of children and youth may inadvertently create risk for the child/youth. Clark, Hunt, Jules and Good (2010) and Swauger (2011) raised concerns that revealing an adolescent's desire to participate in a study may label the child in a way that could result in negative consequences for the child. If parental consent is unobtainable, the fixed procedures and rules of ethics committees may inadvertently block members of the target population from participating

in a study thus creating an unrealistic sense of homogeneity among the participants (Swauger, 2011).

Researchers also need to be aware of cultural and contextual factors when addressing informed consent. For example, Wood (2006) talked about challenges she encountered when getting and maintaining informed consent with a largely illiterate population for which obtaining written consent could put participants at risk. Czymoniewicz-Klippel, Brijnath and Crockett (2010) conducted international ethnographic studies in which obtaining informed consent from participants in different cultural groups raised questions regarding their ethics committee's requirements. The committee supported the researchers' work and agreed to communal consent provided orally. However, they also required that translated informed consent forms be submitted with the ethics application. Clark, Hunt, Jules and Good (2010) also had to deal with issues relating to who was considered eligible to give consent when information was considered to be owned by the community rather than individuals. Literacy was also an issue that needed to be addressed and in some situations children who were more fluent in the working language of the researchers were involved in explaining the research and informed consent processes to their parents who were required to provide their consent for their children to participate in the study. This raised questions regarding who was really giving consent.

In summary, in the articles reviewed, the researchers raise concerns regarding the complexity of informed consent in contemporary qualitative research practices and

suggest a mismatch exists between the trend towards standardized, universalized ethics procedures and the increasingly complex nature of qualitative social research.

To address the above mentioned concerns, the authors reviewed recommend researchers, participants and members of ethics committees engage in an ongoing dialogue in which a mutual understanding and commitment both to the welfare of individuals and to the advancement of knowledge can be developed and maintained over the course of the research process (Halse & Honey, 2007; Larkin, Dierckx de Casterle, & Schotsmans, 2008; Miller & Boulton, 2007).

Theme #3: Confidentiality and Anonymity

Ethical considerations regarding confidentiality and anonymity are important in research endeavors. Nevertheless, these practices raise ethical questions for qualitative researchers. For example, the very idea that confidentiality can be maintained when working in certain research settings, for example, in small, connected communities (Clark, Hunt, Jules, & Good, 2010; Damianakis & Woodford, 2012) or in care facilities (Brown Wilson, 2011) is questioned. Interviews with residents in care facilities, or with patients in hospitals, need to be arranged in ways that minimize inconvenience to the staff, the resident or patient and provide as much privacy as possible to the participant. Timing of interviews also needs to be flexible in this type of setting (Brown Wilson, 2011).

Maintaining confidentiality and anonymity of participants and protecting the security of the data can be challenging in other situations as well. For example, Wood (2006) found maintaining confidentiality challenging when traveling through military and

insurgent check points. Some of her participants insisted that they wanted their names to be used in the data and Wood found it difficult to find an ethical balance between her wish to respect the interviewee's request and her desire to protect them from perceived danger should they be identified by the wrong people (Wood, 2006). The intensity of doing research in a conflict zone may be considered extreme. However, even in less intense situations researchers need to consider the nature of qualitative research and the challenges that exist regarding confidentiality and anonymity in each phase of the research process.

A paradoxical dilemma exists in qualitative research which involves researchers' desire to obtain personal information in order to have comprehensive data that is evocative as well as informative. Participants may be identified through details of their accounts shared during interviews (Brown & Wilson, 2011; Etherington, 2007; Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2010; Wood, 2006) and the specificity and situated nature of this information increases the risk the participant will be identified when the research report is written (Brown & Wilson, 2011). The risk of people being identified is further exacerbated when qualitative research is conducted within small connected communities (Damianakis & Woodford, 2012). Ellis (2007) highlights differences in ethical considerations in research done with strangers and research conducted with intimate others. For example, the challenge of protecting the identities and relationships with people implicated in personal narratives is a significant ethical challenge when writing an autoethnographic narrative. Considering how the identities of those living or deceased are going to be protected needs to occur (Ellis, 2007).

Three strategies for addressing these ethical challenges are anonymisation, summarizing the personal information and altering the information in ways that allow the person's identity to be protected while maintaining the integrity of the data. The balance between disguise and distortion was discussed by researchers interviewed by Wiles, Crow, Heath and Charles (2008) who stated disguising information should only be done if it does not affect the integrity of the data. Who is responsible for ensuring the protection of participants' identity (i.e., the researcher or the participant through the use of member checks) was not clearly established by the researchers participating in Wiles, Crow, Heath and Charles's (2008) study. Anonymisation through the use of pseudonyms is still the norm (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2010) and limited information on other techniques is available (Wiles, Crow, Heath, & Charles, 2008).

In summary, confidentiality and anonymity are practices often referred to in straightforward terms. However, researchers need to be conscious of how difficult it can be to maintain confidentiality when doing qualitative research. Challenges regarding confidentiality arise in all stages of the research process and need to be considered prior to engaging in a study and over the course of the work. For example, challenges such as accidental disclosure due to the researcher's need for support may be reduced by researchers ensuring they have a support system in place prior to starting their work. For those working in rural or isolated areas this can be a significant challenge. Official guidelines regarding confidentiality are not always helpful as contextual factors may not be fully understood or predictable prior to the researcher commencing the work.

Anonymity is a challenging concept to operationalize in qualitative research (Tilley & Gormley, 2007). Face-to-face and telephone interviews are a primary means of gathering information and anonymity is not possible in these situations. It also appears that participants may be less concerned about maintaining anonymity and confidentiality than previously understood and researchers need to be sensitive to this reality and any potential risks that may occur when participants are identified (Clark & Sharf, 2007).

Theme #4: Research Relationships and the Changing Role of the Researcher

The complexities of relational ethical research are evident and rest at the heart of qualitative research ethics (Etherington, 2007; Kennedy, 2005). Guillemin and Heggen (2009) considered the role rapport and respect play in the negotiation of ethical relations between the researcher and participants. Rapport is necessary for methodological rigour and is a necessary facet of ethical rigour (Guillemin & Heggen, 2009). The relationship between researcher and participant requires the researcher to "negotiate a fine ethical balance between building sufficient trust to be able to probe participants for potential rich data, while at the same time maintaining sufficient distance in respect for the participant" (p. 292). Navigating this balance requires ethical sensitivity on the part of the researcher and a willingness to negotiate the demands of the research methodology when necessary to fulfill the ethical concerns that can arise during the research process.

The type of relationship the researcher has with his or her participants can also be influenced by technological developments, contemporary forms of communication and processes required by research governance (Miller & Boulton, 2007). Research relationships are also influenced by the different roles assumed by the researcher. As

qualitative research has gained popularity, there has been a shift in the role of researcher from that of hierarchical, objective observer to an active participant in fluid and multifaceted relationships (Miller & Boulton, 2007). This has created a potential for blurred boundaries, the multiplicity of roles and role confusion (Bogolub, 2010; Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2010). Researchers and participants may all experience ethical challenges as they define their relationships.

Others in the community in which the research is being conducted may also be confused about the role of the researcher and their relationship with him or her. For example, Wood (2006) conducted a qualitative study in a post-conflict zone in which there was a need for humanitarian relief. Community members often confused her role and thought she was a pastoral worker. She too questioned her role at times and the value of pursuing research over providing humanitarian relief work in a conflict zone (El Salvador).

Ellis (2007) also talked about the relationships she developed with members in a community in the Chesapeake Bay area in which she conducted her first ethnographic study. Her study extended over 6 years during which time she joined in community events and became friends with many of the community members. Over time, community members seemed to forget she was doing research and accepted her into their community as a friend. She writes:

> Looking back now at the role I took on, I do not remember being concerned about my ethical choices. I didn't define myself as deceiving the people I studied. I thought I was doing research the way it was supposed to be done, given the

> research climate of the time. IRB approval for my project, which came quickly when I stated that I would protect identities of community members with pseudonyms, gave me a sense that I was doing ethical research.
>
> I did have concerns that taking on the salient role of researcher might cut off research possibilities because my participants might not talk freely, and I might not have access to all the arenas of life that had opened up to me. If my master status became "researcher," rather than "friend" as researcher, would the close relationships I had formed be affected? I worried that if my role changed, the *Fisher Folk* might feel used and hurt. Perhaps they might deem me a less desirable person to have around, which would hurt me. Who wants to spend time with someone who is out to use you for their own purposes? (p. 7)

Ellis's honesty regarding her ethical conundrum brings home the need for researchers to consider the differences that exist between research with strangers and research conducted with intimate others (Ellis, 2007).

Clark, Hunt, Jules and Good (2010) are Canadian First Nations researchers who conducted research within their own community. Sometimes participants in a study would be related to the researcher or would know the researcher from community contact. Role confusion was a consideration that these researchers needed to address in a variety of situations. For example, obtaining parental consent was problematic due to the researchers' pre-existing relationships. Gaining consent from the parents of adolescents also increased the risk of the participants being labeled negatively when they were known to be associated with a research project occurring within their community.

Research relationships may also be impacted by organizational changes within the research environment and the ethical implications of these changes need to be considered (Preston-Shoot, Wigley, McMurray, & Connolly, 2008). For example, Preston-Shoot, Wigley, McMurray and Connolly saw changes take place within the sponsoring organization/agency which led all parties to believe they could no longer openly and constructively address issues derived from participating in the research project. The project had to be terminated which also raised ethical concerns.

While pre-maturely terminating research relationships raises ethical considerations, all research relationships must come to a close and ethical considerations regarding termination must be considered. One ethical consideration relating to termination is how the research team will appropriately express their appreciation to the participants. Cultural and individual expectations need to be considered at this stage of the research process (Czmoniewicz-Klippel, Brijnath, & Crockett, 2010; Etherington, 2007; Preston-Shoot, Wigley, McMurray, & Connolly, 2008).

Theme #5: Contextual Considerations in Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is context bound. Researchers need to be aware of the influence of contextual factors on their work. For example, Ellis (2007) in her discussion of the ethnography she conducted in a Chesapeake Bay fishing community, talked about how the fact that many of the people in the community were illiterate influenced her research decisions. She states:

> I sometimes found myself thinking that because most of the people with whom I interacted couldn’t read, they would never see what I had written anyway and, if

> they did, they wouldn't understand the sociological and theoretical story I was trying to tell. (p. 8)

A few years later, another professor visited the area in which Ellis conducted her study and read her account of life in the village to members of the community. When some of the community members heard the account they took offense to Ellis's description of them in her research report. Later, when Ellis returned to the village, relationships were disrupted and Ellis was heart-broken over the hurt caused to those who had trusted her as a friend and as a researcher.

Ellis's (2007) account highlights the importance of considering contextual factors in our research decisions and the risk involved in making assumptions regarding the impact of our work on others. Preston-Shoot, Wigley, McMurray and Connolly (2008), on the other hand, highlight the impact others' decisions can have on research endeavors. As mentioned previously, Preston-Shoot, Wigley, McMurray and Connolly conducted a study within an organization in which management changed during the time their research was being conducted. The organizational changes impacted the sense of freedom participants had experienced and they felt they could no longer openly address their concerns regarding the organization. As a result, the research project was terminated prematurely, which caused the researchers to question the ethics involved in this situation.

These two examples highlight contextual considerations that may arise within a specific research setting. However, policies and procedures put into effect by those regulating research also have an impact on researchers and their work.

Theme #6: The Impact of the Ethics Review Process

Qualitative researchers are confronted with a wide-range of ethical considerations over the course of their work. Many of these concerns relate to procedural ethics and are directly impacted by the guidelines and policies governing research practices. Guillemin and Heggen (2009) summarize the concerns of many of the researchers whose work I reviewed. They state that ethical codes and the ethics review process

> become less helpful when it comes to actual research practice. In the everyday process of doing research, researchers may encounter ethical issues which often require immediate action. There is usually little time or opportunity for reflection about what ethical principles are important in a particular situation, undertake deliberative evaluation of the key ethical principles and weighing up of the options for action that arise from these principles. Seeking advice from an ethics committee or referring to an institutional code of ethics is not helpful for the researcher in the field who is faced with these kinds of ethically challenging situations and has to respond. This points to a need for other approaches. (p. 293)

If the researchers cited above are correct that a disconnect exists between the ethics review process and research ethics in practice, then I am left wondering how qualitative researchers really do understand research ethics and how they identify and manage ethically important moments they encounter during their work. How do researchers develop the ethical sensitivity called for by the researchers reviewed? These questions (and more) were the catalyst for this heuristic study. In this study I talked with 10 Canadian qualitative researchers regarding how they understand and apply ethics over

the course of their research. The methodology supporting this work is presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Heuristic Research: An Overview

Heuristic research was developed by Clark Moustakas, now professor emeritus at The Michigan School of Professional Psychology. Moustakas is recognized for his contributions to humanistic psychology and human science research. His research centres on everyday human experiences that have significance in one's life. One of his best-known studies is his heuristic research on loneliness published in 1961. His engaging writing style invites the reader to join with him through the words of his text as a fellow traveler through life. He portrays himself as situated within a personal and professional community and introduces those whose ideas have influenced his thinking and the development of heuristic research methodology. These influential figures include but are not limited to Edmund Husserl, Michael Polanyi, Soren Kierkegaard, Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, Martin Buber and Sydney Jourard. Moustakas also recognizes a host of graduate students who contributed to his understanding and development of heuristic inquiry as the students implemented the principles and practices of heuristic inquiry in their research projects (Moustakas, 1990). Reading his work, I am struck by his openness, humility, the importance he places on relationships and his respect for the experiences and contributions of those who contributed to his understanding and development of heuristic research.

Personally, and as a professional social worker, I feel at home with the humanistic values reflected in Moustakas's work and the fact that his presentation of heuristic research recognizes the importance of the researcher's experience of the phenomenon of

interest as a significant factor influencing the development and implementation of the research process. Additionally, the researcher's personal awareness and understanding of the phenomenon changes or evolves as the research process unfolds, which in turn informs the ongoing research process. This type of iterative research process is appropriate for this study as my research question developed from my desire to wrestle with my thoughts and questions about the meaning of qualitative research ethics and my interest in knowing how other qualitative researchers identify and manage ethical concerns that arise in ethically important moments that occur over the course of the qualitative research process. I also see Moustakas's (1990) approach to heuristic research as fitting within the constructivist framework as outlined below.

Situating Heuristic Inquiry within a Constructivist Research Framework

Situating heuristic inquiry within a constructivist research framework requires clarification regarding the methodological underpinnings of heuristic research. The heuristic methodology as outlined by Douglass and Moustakas (1985) and Moustakas (1990), was developed at a time in research history when humanistic social scientists were striving to acknowledge the importance of the human aspects involved in social research (Allender, 1987; Polkinghorne, 1982). Moustakas (1990) claims Husserlian phenomenology provided the philosophical underpinnings for his work. He refers readers to *Phenomenology, Science and Psychotherapy* (Moustakas, 1988) for more information on Husserl's influence on the development of heuristic inquiry. However, in developing heuristic research Moustakas moves away from the idea of bracketing one's experience and embraces the subjective elements of knowledge building which builds on personal

awarenesses including cognitive constructs, physiological and tacit awareness. I see the focus of the development of knowledge shifting back and forth in heuristic research between subjective and intersubjective processes. Moustakas (1990) emphasizes the subjective in his epistemology while acknowledging the intersubjective or social aspects of knowledge creation. In situating this study within a constructivist framework, I acknowledge the personal and subjective aspects of knowledge building but also emphasize the importance of the social interactions that occur during the research process. This combining of the personal and the social in the development of knowledge is reflected in the constructivist framework as described below.

Ontological Considerations

Constructivists differentiate between social realities and physical realities. What is real is a construction in the minds of individuals (Guba & Lincoln, 1998; Rodwell, 1998). Constructions are socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature. Elements of different constructions may be shared among many individuals and across cultures (Guba & Lincoln, 1998).

Epistemological Considerations

Knowledge consists of those constructions about which there is relative consensus, or at least some movement towards consensus, among those considered competent to interpret the substance of the construction. Multiple knowledges can co-exist when equally competent or trusted interpreters disagree or when social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender factors differentiate the constructs of the interpreters (Guba & Lincoln, 1998). These constructions are subject to continuous

revision (McLeod, 1988) with changes most likely to occur when relatively different constructions are brought into juxtaposition in a dialectical context (Guba & Lincoln, 1998). Thus, knowledge is relativistic and accumulates as more informed and sophisticated constructions are developed as varying constructions are brought into juxtaposition through social interaction or other human experience (Appleton & King, 2002; Guba & Lincoln, 1998).

Methodological Considerations

The inquirer is a "passionate participant" actively engaged in facilitating the multifaceted reconstruction of his or her own constructions as well as playing a role in the reconstruction of the constructions of all other participants (Appleton & King, 2002; Guba & Lincoln, 1998; Rodwell, 1998). Consideration is given to which voices are recognized and acknowledged in the research activities, especially those directed at change (Guba & Lincoln, 1998).

Focus or Source of Change

Change is facilitated as reconstructions are formed and individuals are stimulated to act on them (Schwandt, 1994). Social action occurs as new understandings are developed and individuals and groups are stimulated to bring about desired changes within their environments (Guba & Lincoln, 1998).

Criteria for Evaluating the Quality of a Constructivist Inquiry

Criteria used to evaluate the quality of a constructivist inquiry according to Guba and Lincoln (1998) are trustworthiness criteria including credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability and authenticity criteria including fairness, ontological

authenticity (enlarges personal constructions), educative authenticity (leads to improved understanding of constructions of others), catalytic authenticity (stimulates to action), and tactical authenticity (empowers action).

Ethics in Constructivist Inquiry

Ethics are intrinsic within the constructivist paradigm. There is an incentive towards transparency and hiding the inquirer's intent is destructive to the aim of uncovering and improving constructions. This dialectical methodology provides a strong but not infallible safeguard against deception. The close personal interactions required by the methodology may produce special and often sticky ethical problems including concerns regarding confidentiality and anonymity, as well as other interpersonal difficulties (for more information on the ethical challenges that can arise during qualitative interviews see Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005).

In summary, situating heuristic research within a constructivist framework addresses tensions I see in Moustakas's heuristic methodology. Firstly, Moustakas (1990) does not use the Husserlian idea of bracketing presuppositions in his heuristic approach but rather emphasizes the role of tacit awareness and personal knowledge in research. He also states that the researcher's personal knowledge is expanded as the researcher speaks with others regarding his or her experience of the phenomenon under review. These ideas fit well within the constructivist framework. Finally, he addresses how social change can result as researchers join with other social change agents in challenging institutional policies and practices. This emphasis on change also fits well within the constructivist framework as described above.

Nevertheless, Moustakas (1990) also refers to the researcher discovering the essence/s of a phenomenon which suggests he saw research as a means of identifying pre-existing, universal truths or realities. I believe a tension exists in heuristic methodology between the idea that researchers discover a priori essences and the idea that researchers engage in the heuristic process as a means of facilitating the development of new or more complex constructions through the creativity generated within the social interactions that constitute the heuristic process. I do not see these tensions as being resolved in Moustakas's (1990) work nor do I see a definitive answer provided regarding whether or not Moustakas thought heuristic inquiries produced studies with universal applicability.

If researchers were to place themselves on a continuum where one end of the continuum represented a belief that research had situated applicability and the other end reflected a belief that research had universal applicability, I would position myself closer to the end depicting qualitative research as having situated and context specific applicability. However, I also recognize that people who see themselves as positioned outside of the specific context of the research study may see relevance in a given research project. Thus, I see the determination of relevancy resting with the consumer of the research rather than with the researcher.

Viewing Moustakas's (1990) heuristic approach to research through a constructivist lens addresses the tension between the subjective and social aspects of knowledge generation presented in Moustakas's work. I also believe viewing heuristic research from a constructivist perspective is congruent with social work's emphasis on considering people within their environment. Perception and context are related and

while I do not see it necessary to understand a co-researcher's entire "worldview" I do consider it important to consider what contextual factors the person sees contributing to the phenomenon under review.

Considering Moustakas's (1990) approach to research in this light reinforced my idea that heuristic research was an appropriate research method for me to use in this study. However, before I would commit to embracing heuristic inquiry as portrayed by Moustakas as a suitable research method for my study, I wanted to see learn more about how heuristic inquiry was viewed by social work researchers

Skeletons in the Attic of Heuristic History

My curiosity led me to opening a door within the literature behind which I discovered remnants of an apparent philosophical battle pertaining to heuristic inquiry that took place within the social work research community during the 1990s. The fact that some of the major players in the controversy surrounding heuristics were professors from the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary (Grinnell et al., 1994) and the faculty in which I am currently enrolled as a doctoral student, piqued my curiosity, stimulated a minor degree of internal tension and heightened my desire to understand more about the place of heuristic inquiry in social work research. I felt a little like a young woman considering taking her boyfriend home to meet her parents for the first time. Would my social work research family accept heuristic research as a legitimate research method considering the controversy surrounding heuristics in social work? To make matters even trickier, if I chose to use a model of heuristic inquiry developed by

humanistic psychologists for my study, would they treat my study as an illegitimate outcast?

In order to address these questions, I decided to attend to my internal tension and questions and explore in more depth the controversy surrounding Tyson's (1992) article, "A New Approach to Relevant Scientific Research for Practitioners: The Heuristic Paradigm." I reviewed the literature (Bolland & Atherton, 2002; Grinnell et al., 1994; Heineman-Pieper, Tyson & Heineman Pieper, 2002; Tyson, 1992, 1994) and was fortunate enough to be able to speak with a professor involved in the struggle and another who remembered the heated debates that took place in social work research circles during the 1990s. I was reminded by all these sources that it is important to situate the arguments surrounding heuristic inquiry and the heuristic paradigm within social work, within the broader context of the tensions that brew and periodically break out into philosophical battles within the larger context of scientific research. I believe this underlying tension and constant review of scientific norms and practices reflect the fact that science at best is fallible and as Bolland and Atherton (2002) conclude that "science is a tool for the skeptical and involves critical judgments that are clearly influenced by time and place" (p. 13). Thus, the following bit of history is presented to situate the controversies surrounding heuristic inquiry within an historical context that is laden with personal and professional agendas.

A Little Bit of History

Qualitative research as a whole has a varied and colorful history. While a comprehensive overview of this history is outside the scope of this discussion, I believe it

is important to situate the development of heuristic inquiry, a member of the phenomenological family of research methods belonging to the qualitative clan of research, within this colorful past. Denzin and Lincoln (2008), in their overview of the historical development of qualitative research, describe early forms of qualitative research (e.g., ethnographic studies) as reflecting the agendas of colonizing powers and state that early qualitative studies were used as a tool of colonization.

The idea of colonization calls to mind images of battles, overflowing graveyards filled with skeletons of souls lost in the struggle over land-rights, and the tearing of the soil as victors thrust their tools of battle into the innocent ground and raise their flags and claim their turf. Colonizing practices were however, not only evidenced within the field of early qualitative research, but also within the broader context of social research. Denzin and Lincoln state that by the 1960s "battle lines were drawn within the quantitative and qualitative camps" (p. 2). The pursuing battles for recognition within scientific circles saw quantitative scholars fighting to subordinate qualitative research, which resulted in them claiming a figurative victory and "relegating qualitative research to a subordinate status in the scientific arena" (p. 2). In response, qualitative researchers fought to have their work recognized and argued for research approaches that could be used to explore the complexities of human experience within naturalistic settings while simultaneously promoting humanistic virtues (Allender, 1987; Frick, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1982; Rogers, 1985).

Heuristic inquiry was introduced by Moustakas in his early work entitled *Loneliness* in 1961 and in 1967 he was invited to present his emerging model of research

in Bugental's (1967) edited text, *Challenges of Humanistic Psychology*. Frick (1990), commenting on Moustakas's model of inquiry, states that heuristic inquiry had "a certain appeal of the 1960s, inviting a kind of 'do your own thing' research" (p. 79). However, while encouraging freedom and flexibility throughout the research process, the humanistic values underlying heuristic inquiry, the level of personal commitment required to conduct this type of research and the scientific rigor demanded by Moustakas in his emerging model of inquiry saw his work accepted within the arena of humanistic psychology. Moustakas continued to publish during the 1970s and 1980s and in 1985 published an article with Bruce Douglass entitled "Heuristic Inquiry: The Internal Search to Know.*"* This work helped reinforce and clarify the foundation for heuristic inquiry and was further expanded upon in Moustakas's seminal text on heuristic inquiry published in 1990.

During the time that Moustakas was developing his understanding and model of heuristic inquiry from a humanistic perspective and based extensively on the ideas of Michael Polanyi, another scientist by the name of Herbert Simon was interested in how people went about making decisions. Simon, an economist, took exception to the dominant view of other economists who saw "rational decision-making as maximizing behavior" (Miller, 2008, p. 935) and claimed that decision makers actually used suboptimal decision *heuristics* to solve problems. Heuristics, according to Simon, were abstracted from the real world and were part of rational consideration. Simon prioritized mental activity in his theorizing and neglected the role of the body. He also separated values from rational consideration and stated that reason was purely instrumental. As

such, reason, or rational consideration, could at best direct us towards an end; however, Simon saw reason as being able to be used in the service of whatever goals a researcher may have, good or bad.

Martha Heineman Pieper (1989) embraced Simon's ideas and argued that social science was best served if researchers were able to consider a range of approaches to their work, which she referred to as heuristics. Based on the ideas of Simon and Wimsatt, Heineman Pieper introduced the controversial heuristic paradigm to social work. Katherine Tyson (1992) joined Heineman Pieper in criticizing social work research conducted from 1949 to 1981 claiming this research was based upon "an outdated, unwarranted, and overly restrictive approach to scientific social work research, which has long been unsatisfying for practitioners. . .[Tyson further stated this approach was] derived from a philosophy of science called logical positivism" (p. 541). Tyson went on to argue that the heuristic paradigm as proposed by Martha Heineman Pieper generated more "useful findings" for social work than the positivistic research paradigm.

Tyson's (1992) critique caught the attention of social work researchers across North America and in response to Tyson's work several social work researchers banded together to challenge Tyson (Grinnell et al., 1994). Tyson's critics argued that Tyson's work created an artificial dichotomy between what Tyson referred to as the heuristic paradigm and positivist research approaches. Tyson's adversaries stated that a selective, or narrow, view of positivism had been used to create a "straw person" that could be attacked leaving researchers with only the heuristic approach as an alternative. "In reality, such important issues cannot be reduced to such a simplistic choice," argued Tyson's

opponents (Grinnell et al., 1994, p. 469). Grinnell and his colleagues further argued that "instead of holding an impassioned subscription to one or the other [heuristic or positivist paradigms], social workers need to consider the quality and type of knowledge that exists relative to the research problem and the context in which the research study is taking place [and know]—the most appropriate research approaches will logically follow" (p. 469).

Bolland and Atherton (2002) revisit the debate between adherents of the heuristic paradigm and those upholding a more positivist approach to science and argue that the passion fuelling the heuristic versus logical positivist debate rests on Kuhn's (1970) ideas of paradigms and paradigm shifts. According to Kuhn, when a paradigm shift occurs within a scientific community, old outdated perspectives die a natural death and scientists gravitate towards new ways of perceiving the world and the associated methodologies that accompany these worldviews. However, according to Bolland and Atherton (2002) this is not the case. Rather "changes in science do not occur as large paradigm shifts but rather through a continual process of refutation" (p. 12). Bolland and Atherton further argue that scientists do not discard all of a previous construction or paradigm but rather refute what they see to be faulty aspects of the framework. This process is on-going and results in knowledge constantly being under review as scientists consider knowledge generation philosophically and pragmatically. Bolland and Atherton also suggest that when philosophy and pragmatics are put to the test, scientists tend to be "more flexible about the 'truth' than philosophers of science say that they are, and willingly recognize that it [truth] changes as various people study a given problem" (p. 12).

In light of Bolland and Atherton's (2002) argument, I agree that the debate surrounding Martha Heineman Pieper's heuristic paradigm is unnecessarily harsh and divisive and believe that the heuristic paradigm as presented by Katherine Tyson (1995), a colleague of Heineman Pieper, offers social scientists an approach that allows scientists to use research methodologies, or heuristics, that fit the research question. However, the differences between Heineman Pieper's heuristic paradigm and Clark Moustakas's approach to heuristic research are noteworthy. Thus, an overview of the heuristic methodology as presented by Moustakas (1990) and Douglass and Moustakas (1985) and an overview of the heuristic paradigm as presented by Heineman Pieper (1989) and Tyson (1995) is included in the following section. I conclude the section by presenting my reasons for choosing Moustakas' framework for heuristic inquiry as the primary methodological underpinnings for my study. However, I also highlight several points from Heineman Pieper and her colleagues I wish to integrate into my research methodology.

Heuristic Inquiry According to Moustakas and Colleagues

Heuristic inquiry is no longer a new approach to qualitative research. Heuristic research methodology was introduced by Moustakas in Bugental's (1967) *Challenges of Humanistic Psychology*. Heuristic inquiry was further elaborated by Douglass and Moustakas (1985) in their article published in the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*. Moustakas's (1990) text further developed the methodology. Douglass and Moustakas (1985) and Moustakas (1990) use terminology that is drawn from other contexts and integrated into the language of heuristic methodology. Heuristic terminology can be

abstract and difficult to understand. An overview of key heuristic terms is provided below.

Heuristic Terminology

Heuristics. According to Moustakas (1990), the word heuristics derives from the Greek word *heuriskein*, which means to discover or to find. The heuristic process is a way of knowing or being informed that arises from within the knower as perception, intuition or sense. What appears or shows itself "casts a light that enables one to come to know more fully what something is and means. In this process, not only is knowledge extended but the self of the researcher is illuminated" (pp. 10-11). In research, Moustakas uses the word heuristics to refer "to a process of internal search through which one discovers the nature and meaning of experience and develops methods and procedures for further investigation and analysis" (p. 9). The process of discovery encountered throughout the heuristic research process leads investigators to new images and meanings regarding human experience/phenomena as well as realizations that are relevant to their own experiences and lives.

Heuristics, as used in the work of Moustakas (1967, 1990) reflects Michael Polanyi's thinking regarding heuristics. Polanyi (1962) differentiates heuristics from the mere routine application of established knowledge. Heuristics according to Polanyi "are the acts of the inventor and discoverer, which require originality and offer scope for genius. . . .Intellectual acts of a heuristic kind make an addition to knowledge and are in this sense irreversible, while the ensuing routine performances operate within an existing framework of knowledge and are to this extent reversible" (p. 77). This point is essential

in differentiating Moustakas's concept of heuristics (i.e., original acts of the researcher that add to knowledge) from Heineman Pieper's (1989) use of heuristics (i.e., problem solving strategies already established as knowledge prior to their use by the researcher) in her development of the heuristic paradigm introduced to social work.

Heuristic passion. Moustakas's work also reflects Polanyi's (1962) concept of heuristic passion. Heuristic passion can evoke "intimations of specific discoveries and sustain their persistent pursuit through years of labour" (p. 143). Moustakas (1990) describes this concept in his discussion of the beginning of the heuristic journey. He states, "I begin the heuristic journey with something that has called to me from within my life experience, something to which I have associations and fleeting awarenesses but whose nature is largely unknown" (p. 13). Moustakas further states this process "requires a passionate, disciplined commitment to remain with a question intensely and continuously until it is illuminated or answered" (p. 15). Frick (1990), in describing his heuristic inquiry into symbolic growth experiences, states his study extended over several years and describes the heuristic passion and commitment required in heuristic inquiry as being very different from "'do your own thing' research" in that heuristic inquiry involves "rigorous definition, careful collection of data, and a thorough and disciplined analysis. It places immense responsibility on the researcher" (p. 79).

Tacit knowing. Moustakas further draws upon Polanyi's (1962) ideas of tacit knowing in heuristic inquiry. Tacit knowing is a basic capacity within a researcher and his or her co-researchers that gives birth to hunches and vague, formless insights that characterize heuristic knowledge generation (Moustakas, 1990).

Indwelling. Indwelling allows the researcher to engage in internal searches for meaning, to entertain thoughts and feelings, and to include them in the development of meaning. Moustakas recommends that when utilizing indwelling to amplify understanding regarding another person's experience, the knowledge generated needs to be reviewed and ratified by that person.

Moustakas's development of heuristic methodology also reflects Maslow's research on self-actualizing persons conducted between 1956 and 1971, Jourard's investigations of self-disclosure conducted in 1968 and 1971, Buber's explorations of dialogue and mutuality that occurred between 1958 to 1965, Bridgman's discussions of subjective-objective truth that took place in 1950, Gendlin's exploration in 1962 of meaning of experiencing and Carl Rogers's work on human science that took place between 1968 and 1985.

Willard B. Frick (1990) professor of psychology at Albion College and associate editor of the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* used heuristic research in his quest to understand significant growth experiences that redefine a person's understanding of him/herself and his or her world. Frick (1990) cited the distinguishing features of heuristic inquiry as being a search for meaning in significant human experience: learning that is "self-directed, self-motivated, and open to spontaneous shifts . . . without the restraining leash of a formal hypothesis" (p. 65); freedom that permits flexibility in the design and implementation of heuristic inquiry; the tacit dimension of knowing, which incorporates the visionary, aesthetic and artistic aspects of consciousness without neglecting the cognitive aspects of knowing; the need to examine all the data in various

creative combinations, the attending to the meanings within meanings while attempting to identify overarching qualities evident in the data and the quest for synthesis through realizing what lies at the heart of all that has been explored.

Frick's (1990) summary of the unique aspects of heuristic research provides a succinct overview of this important approach to knowledge generation. Heineman Pieper and her colleagues describe their heuristic research paradigm in different terms as compared to Frick and Moustakas and a brief overview of their work follows.

The Heuristic Paradigm According to Martha Heineman Pieper and Colleagues

A research paradigm, according to Jessica Heineman-Pieper, Katherine Tyson, and Martha Heineman Pieper (2002) "is a set of fundamental assumptions, beliefs, and values that determines the bases on which we decide what counts as genuine scientific knowledge" (p. 17). In 1989, Martha Heineman Pieper introduced the "heuristic paradigm" to social work as an alternative to positivist approaches to research. Jessica Heineman-Pieper, Katherine Tyson and Martha Heineman Pieper (2002) refer back to Martha Heineman Pieper's original work in their discussion of the merits of the heuristic paradigm for social work research. Thus, I refer primarily to Heineman Pieper's (1989) paper in this discussion.

Heineman Pieper states she builds her heuristic paradigm primarily upon the work of William Wimsatt (1986) and Herbert Simon (for more information on Herbert Simon, see Miller, 2008). She argues that positivist research approaches narrowly define what is appropriate to be examined in research and limit how research is to be conducted. Heineman Pieper further states that the strength of the heuristic paradigm is that it allows

human experiences that cannot be researched using a positivistic approach to be studied. In the heuristic paradigm, as described by Martha Heineman Pieper (1989), the word heuristic is used to identify "any problem-solving strategy that appears likely to lead to relevant, reliable, and useful information" (p. 8). It is important to recognize that this definition implies that heuristics, according to Heineman Pieper, exist in the realm of explicit knowledge (i.e., research paradigms, methodologies and associated methods articulated and then used in the research process) and a particular heuristic is selected through rational consideration by the researcher to inform the research process. This concept of heuristics is consistent with the work of Herbert Simon (Miller, 2008) and differentiates Heineman Pieper's concept of heuristics from Moustakas's definition of heuristics.

Moustakas's use of the word heuristics is based upon Polanyi's concepts of tacit knowledge, which "refer[s] to the unarticulated elements of human knowledge" (Miller, 2008, p. 937). Polanyi (1968, 1969) acknowledges the researcher as an organism that draws upon bodily and mental awarenesses and integrates the researcher's sensing, thinking and acting during decision-making. Mind-body holism is essential in Polanyi's understanding of tacit knowing demonstrated in skillful performances including the art and craft of research. Polanyi's integration of tacit knowledge in the researcher's decision-making process appears to have some cross-over with what Martha Heineman Pieper refers to as the *informed judgment* of the researcher (Heineman Pieper, 1989). However, Heineman Pieper (1989) does not see any type of research heuristic generating an accurate account of reality and states,

> In contrast to the logical positivist assumption that the five senses give us direct reports of reality, reality is actually constructed through the interpretations of sensory experience within a preexisting framework of meaning. In other words, knowledge is to some extent perceiver dependent. (p.15)

Thus, according to Jessica Heineman-Pieper, Katherine Tyson and Martha Heineman Pieper (2002), while heuristics are ways of perceiving, knowing and solving problems, all heuristics, including those utilized in both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, inevitably lose and distort different kinds of information. Thus, all heuristics, or research methodologies, are

> inescapably purpose and context relative . . . . In preserving more of some kinds of information, heuristics entirely jettison other kinds of information. When the reality of interest . . . does not generate information of the kind the heuristic preserves, that reality cannot be known using that heuristic. (pp. 22-23)

According to the heuristic paradigm, there are no privileged realities and no superior ways of knowing (i.e., no one heuristic is superior to another heuristic). All research methodologies are seen to lose and distort some information during the process of gathering and analyzing data in systematic ways referred to by Heineman-Pieper, Tyson and Heineman Pieper as systematic biases.

These tenets, according to Heineman-Pieper, Tyson and Heineman Pieper (2002) have significant implications for social research. First, all research involves systematic biases and these biases can only be managed when researchers identify and manage them. Second, biases are reduced and “truth” promoted by diversity and inclusiveness that

welcomes a “full-range of questions, methods, approaches, and value positions” (p. 23). Based upon this assumption, Heineman-Pieper, Tyson and Heineman Pieper, see the heuristic paradigm enabling social scientists to (a) ask whatever questions they find significant for research and (b) to address these questions using “whatever theories, approaches, systems, data and contexts they find relevant and useful” (p. 23). Third, Heineman-Pieper, Tyson and Heineman Pieper (2002) state that “decisions about research design should not be made at the paradigm level” (p. 23) but should be decided by the individual researcher who is held accountable within the scientific community to explain and justify the choices he or she makes. Thus, researchers use their *informed judgment* to evaluate research and knowledge. Fourth, Heineman Pieper, Tyson and Heineman-Pieper (2002) recognize “that one of the scientist’s most challenging tasks is to truly understand his or her assumptions, values, options and choices, and the implications of these at every step of the research process” (p. 23). A valuable contribution of Heineman Pieper, Tyson and Heineman-Pieper’s heuristic paradigm is the set of tools it offers researchers to assist them with these tasks.

For example, Katherine Tyson (1995) provides standards for theory evaluation which include the scope of the theory, how the theory may be used to explain phenomena and anomalies not addressed in other theories, the logical consistency among theoretical assumptions, concepts and principles and the values reflected within the theory including “its impact on social inequalities and advocacy” (Heineman-Pieper, Tyson, & Heineman Pieper, 2002, p. 24). Tyson (1995) further suggests that systematic biases can be reduced and the robustness of a study increased if researchers examine the phenomenon under

study using alternative heuristics that carry different biases. This strategy allows qualitative researchers to be open to drawing upon the possibilities embodied in the diversity of research techniques and strategies that exist in the different research heuristics. The heuristic paradigm also affords the researcher the freedom to make informed, considered choices throughout the research process. This freedom, however, is not a random exercise. The heuristic paradigm requires the researcher to "share the details of the research process with the rest of the field to allow others to make their own informed judgments about the meaning and value of the research results" (Tyson, 1995, p. 24). These ideas reflect the broad, high-level concepts embodied within the heuristic paradigm as presented by Heineman Pieper and colleagues. In conclusion, I see the heuristic paradigm as presented by Heineman Pieper, while based upon different theoretical underpinnings than that of heuristic inquiry as presented in the work of Clark Moustakas, as making a meaningful contribution to social science.

Comparison of Heuristics According to Moustakas and Heineman Pieper

Proponents of heuristic inquiry in psychology (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Moustakas, 1990) and proponents of the heuristic paradigm in social work (Heineman-Pieper, Tyson & Heineman Pieper, 2002; Tyson, 1992), base their thinking upon different philosophical sources. Moustakas's work emphasizes the tacit dimension of knowing that is seen to be foundational to all forms of heuristic discovery (Imre, 1985; Moustakas, 1990). The tacit dimension consists of elements, which Polanyi (1962, 1968) refers to as *subsidiary* and *focal*. The subsidiary factors attract immediate attention and are essential to knowing; however, they are of secondary importance. They are elements of perception

that enter our conscious awareness and are visible and able to be described. While these subsidiary elements represent unique and distinctive elements of the object or phenomenon being focused upon, these factors must combine with the unseen and invisible aspects of the experience or focal elements that make it possible for the wholeness or essence of a phenomenon to be understood or known. This tacit dimension is seen by Moustakas (1990) as underlying and preceding intuition. It is this dimension "that guides the researcher into untapped directions and sources of meaning. Tacit knowing is a basic capacity of the self of the researcher and gives "birth to the hunches and vague, formless insights that characterize heuristic discovery" (Douglass & Moustakas, p. 49). I see this dimension being clearly incorporated into Moustakas's (1990) approach to heuristic inquiry but overlooked in Heineman Pieper's heuristic paradigm.

Heineman Pieper's heuristic paradigm is based upon Herbert Simon's idea of heuristics. Simon defines heuristics in terms of problem-solving strategies that researchers utilize in their work. Miller (2008) claims that Simon's concept of heuristics—problem-solving strategies based upon rational consideration—actually separates reason from values. However, Tyson (1995) and Heineman-Pieper, Tyson and Heineman Pieper (2002) argue that values underlie all research decisions and state that it is critical for researchers to identify and acknowledge the values that influence their decision-making processes throughout all phases of their research endeavors.

While I do not see the heuristic paradigm in exactly the same light as Heineman Pieper, I do see value in the work of Heineman Pieper and her colleagues as they

recognize the importance of the researcher considering (a) his or her chosen research method in light of his or her research question and (b) the suitability of his or her research method for effectively answering the research question. In light of these admonitions, I turn my attention back to Moustakas's presentation of heuristic inquiry and discuss my rationale for choosing this method for my study.

Rationale for Choosing Moustakas's Heuristic Inquiry for My Study

I have chosen heuristic inquiry as defined by Moustakas (1990) as the primary method I will use in my study for the following reasons. Unlike other phenomenological methods, heuristic inquiry requires (a) the researcher to have direct experience with the phenomenon under study, (b) the subject of inquiry must have significance in the life of the researcher and (c) it must have some degree of universal relevance. The focus of my study centres on a deep-seated concern I have regarding the meaning of ethics in qualitative research and how qualitative researchers manage ethical concerns that arise in ethically important moments that occur during the research process.

My concern goes back to personal experiences I had as an international social worker involved in researching the needs of the Centres for Social Work within the Kosovo region following NATO's intervention within that area. I remember the struggles I encountered as I worked through what I now recognize were ethically important moments (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). Reflecting back on those moments, I recognize that while I was adequately prepared to develop and implement a research strategy that was effective and honored my social work values (i.e., including but not limited to the clients' rights to self-determination, respect and human dignity), I was not well-prepared

to deal with the unexpected decisions that were often required to be made in-the-moment over the course of the research project. In particular, I was not well-prepared to handle the ethical implications that arose for me when the organization I was with suddenly decided to withdraw their services from the region. The power of the organization to make decisions independent of those for whom we had conducted the research and were theoretically working in collaboration with as partners in the capacity-building project, left me reeling and feeling guilty that we had abandoned, without due explanation, people with whom we had worked hard to develop trust.

I managed to set aside the feelings of embarrassment, guilt and shame surrounding this experience until I revisited the idea of becoming re-engaged in qualitative research. I knew I needed to address the meaning of ethics in qualitative research and how qualitative researchers identify and manage ethical concerns that arise during the research process. I was aware of the formal regulations currently in place within Canada governing research practice with humans. However, these regulations felt cold and sterile in light of my own experience.

My thoughts and questions about qualitative research ethics remained beneath the surface manifest only as a sense of internal discomfort, until I read Moustakas's (1990) work, *Heuristic Research: Design, Methodology and Applications.* I related to Moustakas's writing and his work helped me realize that I could ground my study in my experience as well as the experience of others. The intensity of the heuristic approach resonated with me and showed me I could be creative within the research process. Using heuristic inquiry freed me to draw upon awarenesses embodied within my very being that

arose in my dreams and came into mind at the most unexpected times. I also appreciated the fact that I was required to approach my study with the commitment and rigor required of all scientific endeavors.

While heuristic inquiry involves an autobiographical element, the researcher is also required to engage with others familiar with the phenomenon. Thus, in this study, I worked with 10 other qualitative researchers interested in research ethics and ethical decision-making in social research. Lastly, I value the accountability built into Moustakas's model of heuristic research. Not only is the researcher accountable to those with whom they work, they are also accountable to others who read their reports and want to follow the decision-making trail that informed the research process. Thus, during this study, I maintained a research journal in which I recorded critical decisions made throughout the research process. I have integrated excerpts from this journal into this document.

The Six Phases of the Heuristic Inquiry Process

Moustakas (1990) describes heuristic research as having six phases. The following descriptions of the six phases of the heuristic research process are taken directly from Moustakas's work.

Initial Engagement

During the initial engagement phase, the researcher becomes aware of a topic, theme, problem or question that represents a critical area of interest for the researcher. This concern calls out to the researcher, holds important social meanings and has compelling personal implications for the researcher. The researcher uses self-awareness

and self-dialogues during the initial engagement phase to discover the topic or question. The research question is developed through the researcher engaging in self-encounters, one's autobiography and awarenesses derived within significant relationships within the researcher's social context. The question lingers within the researcher until the researcher commits to enter into a disciplined process that explores the meanings reflected in the question. During the initial engagement phase, the researcher turns inward and draws upon tacit awareness and knowledge permitting intuition to run freely as the researcher explores the context in which the question is forming and gaining significance.

Immersion

Once the question is defined and its terms clarified, the researcher continuously lives with the question whether awake or asleep. Everything in the researcher's life seems to be organized around the question. The immersion process enables the researcher to grow in his or her understanding and knowledge of the question. Anything connected with the question becomes raw material for immersion. People, places, meetings, readings and nature all offer possibilities for understanding the phenomenon. Processes that facilitate immersion include spontaneous self-dialogue, self-searching, pursuing intuitive clues or hunches, and attending to the mystery and sources of energy and knowledge that are contained within the tacit dimension.

Incubation

During incubation, the researcher retreats from the intense, concentrated focus on the question. This shift of focus allows awarenesses to emerge from the inner tacit dimension.

Illumination

The process of illumination occurs naturally when the researcher is open and receptive to tacit knowledge and intuition. Illumination is a break-through into conscious awareness of qualities and a clustering of these qualities into themes that are inherent in the question. The illumination may be awareness of new constituents of the phenomenon, which adds new dimensions of knowledge. Illumination may also be corrections of distorted understandings or the understanding of previously hidden meanings. Illumination is not a forced activity. Rather, the researcher remains in a receptive mindset and allows insight or modification of previous awarenesses to emerge. Illumination requires a degree of reflectiveness, but it is the tacit dimension that uncovers meanings and essences, opens doors to new awarenesses, creates a synthesis of fragmented knowledge, or discovery of something that has been present for some time yet beyond immediate awareness.

Explication

Once illumination relevant to themes, qualities and components of a topic or question occurs, the researcher enters into the process of explication. During the explication phase, the researcher fully examines what has come into consciousness in order to understand its various layers of meaning. The researcher fully attends to his or her own awarenesses, feelings, thoughts and judgments as a prelude to understanding knowledge derived from conversations and dialogues with others. Concentrated attention is given to the creation of an inward space and discovering nuances of the phenomenon that may be more fully developed through indwelling. In explication, a more complex

understanding of the phenomenon is achieved and the researcher becomes ready to pull the components of the phenomenon together into a whole experience.

Creative Synthesis

The sixth phase of heuristic inquiry is the process of creative synthesis. The researcher enters this process fully aware of all the data, its major constituents, qualities and themes. The researcher holds the meanings and details of the phenomenon derived through explication as he or she moves towards developing a creative synthesis of the experience under study. However, the creative synthesis is achieved through tacit and intuitive powers. The creative synthesis usually takes the form of a narrative depiction incorporating verbatim materials; however, it may also be expressed as a poem, story, or some other creative form.

Heuristics, as described by Moustakas (1990) is about problem-solving; however, unlike the problem-solving heuristics described by Heinemann (1995) that are derived from sources external to the researcher, Moustakas sees the answers to problems as coming from within individuals. The processes involved in heuristic inquiry are well-suited to the exploration of researchers' understandings of research ethics because the awareness and knowledge necessary to comprehend and handle ethical concerns that arise during the research process is found within the researcher and within those with whom the researcher is involved during the qualitative research process.

Moustakas's heuristic approach identifies six phases that occur during the research process. However, I believe Moustakas's heuristic approach to research has an implied seventh phase. This is the phase of application and social action. I see this

seventh phase as being important in heuristic research and supporting social work's commitment to social justice and social action.

Application and Social Action: A Seventh Phase in Heuristic Research

In his book, *Heuristic Research* (1990), Moustakas outlines six phases in his description of the heuristic research process, with the creative synthesis being the final phase of the research. However, in his discussion of the preparation of a heuristic research manuscript he identifies the importance of the researcher presenting the research findings in a way that can be understood and *utilized* by others. He thus indicates that heuristic research moves beyond the comprehension of a phenomenon to being a source of personal growth and a catalyst for social change. For me, the social implications and the recommendations for social action that can be derived from the personal knowledge of the phenomena explicated during a heuristic inquiry are *essential* aspects of heuristic research that should be given more prominence in the description of the heuristic research process.

As Polanyi (1962) has pointed out, "Heuristic passion is . . . the mainspring of originality—the force which impels us to abandon an accepted framework of interpretation and commit ourselves, by the crossing of a logical gap, to the use of a new framework" (p. 159). The potential of heuristic inquiry to catalyze and support personal growth and social change is evidenced in Moustakas's account of his personal growth as he engaged and progressed through his heuristic exploration into the experience of loneliness. It is also supported in the feedback provided in the accounts of the many people whose lives were positively impacted through reading Moustakas's book

Loneliness (1961). The personal and social impact of Moustakas's work is further seen in his book *The Touch of Loneliness* (1975). Accounts of the social changes that were influenced and/or implemented as a result of Moustakas's work include the following shifts in policy and practice.

Changes in Education

Teachers and parents moved to encouraging personal growth and development of children through providing them with learning experiences that utilize art and the humanities as a means of humanizing learning and fostering individuality, autonomy and self-direction. The importance of respecting a child's need for quiet moments in which the child has opportunity to integrate his or her learning in the development of self was also integrated into educational programs.

Changes Within Hospitals

Medical personnel changed their attitudes towards children's cries against separation from parents. Visiting hours were extended in many hospitals and parents were encouraged to remain with their child during surgery and major illness.

Parents of Sick Children

Parents reported becoming more courageous in advocating for their children and being able to be with their children in situations in which the hospital's administration or personnel tried to push them away from their child.

These are only a few examples of the social impact of Moustakas's work. The power of heuristic inquiry to move beyond understanding the personal to instigating social change is an aspect of heuristic inquiry frequently overlooked. I believe heuristic

inquiry offers social scientists an approach to qualitative research that has the potential to move beyond knowledge generation to social action. For me, heuristic inquiry is not an end in itself but is rather a step in the process of social change.

Implications for Social Work Researchers

Social workers frequently work with disenfranchised populations whose experiences are minimized or overshadowed by more dominant social agendas. Research that focuses on the lived experience of individuals and uses findings to propose change—and better yet, leads to change—is valuable. While social scientists are not generally considered to be marginalized persons, the voices of those who are disenfranchised are brought into public awareness through research projects conducted by social workers and other social scientists. Research methods focusing on exposing the experience of the participants certainly need to be conducted in an ethical manner. The driving force behind this project is to provide an account of what ethics means to qualitative researchers, how they apply their understanding in their work, and to conclude by examining potential implications of the findings of this study for the field of qualitative research ethics.

Heuristic Methodology as Applied to the Study of the Meaning and Application of Qualitative Research Ethics

In the following section, I provide a brief description of the context of this study, review my recruitment strategies, introduce the 10 participants with whom I worked during this study, state how I went about gathering the participants' accounts of their experiences, describe the process of analysis and discuss issues relating to the validity of the study.

The Context of My Study

This study focuses on the experiences of 10 Canadian qualitative researchers. All participants conducted their research while having some affiliation with a Canadian university.

Recruitment

Participants in this study were recruited through personal and professional contacts at the University of Calgary, the University of Alberta, the University of Lethbridge and the University of Regina. I sent a personal email to each contact introducing myself and providing a brief description of this study. The email invited the potential recruit to contact me by return email if they wished to obtain further information regarding this study and the Informed Consent form (See Appendix A). This recruitment method generated more than 10 responses and all respondents received a letter of appreciation for their interest. Ten respondents from Alberta were selected to participate in this study. The reason for choosing the respondents from Alberta was based on pragmatics including my work schedule and the cost of time and travel to go to Saskatchewan to conduct face-to-face interviews.

Research Participants

Research participants had minimally completed a qualitative research project approved by a Research Ethics Board of a Canadian university. In order to capture the experience of researchers dealing with ethical issues related to the publication of their research, a portion of the study's participants had some aspect of their research published in a professional peer-reviewed journal. Recognizing many excellent qualitative studies

remain in the gray literature (i.e., unpublished dissertations, thesis or monologues and conference presentations), participants for this study also included researchers who had completed at least one qualitative research project but had not had their work published in a peer-reviewed journal.

Moustakas (1990) suggests that in theory it is possible to conduct heuristic research with only one participant. However, he goes on to state "a study will achieve richer, deeper, more profound, and more varied meanings when it includes depictions of the experience of others—perhaps as many as 10 to 15 co-researchers" (p. 47). In order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of how qualitative researchers understand and apply ethics in qualitative research I engaged with 10 co-researchers from Alberta, Canada in this study.

Data Gathering: Conversational dialogues

The participants' accounts were gathered through face-to-face interviews that consisted of conversational dialogues. An Interview Guide (Appendix B) was created and used as a broad framework for the interview process. However, as Moustakas (1990) suggests, these dialogues also involved the spontaneous generation of questions and the co-researchers participating in a natural and unfolding dialogue with the researcher.

Before conducting my first interview, I read Kvale and Brinkmann's (2009) book on interviewing and appreciated their comments that

> the interview is an inter-subjective enterprise of two persons talking about common themes of interest. The interviewer does not merely collect statements like gathering small stones on a beach. His or her questions lead up to what

> aspects of a topic the subject will address, and the interviewer's active listening and following up on the answers co-determines the course of the conversation. (pp. 192-193)

Understanding the interview process, and later the analysis and the final presentation of the information, as an ongoing dialogue, fit with my constructivist perspective on heuristic research. However, it also caused me to again reflect on the fit between my constructivist perspective of knowledge building and Moustakas's heuristic process. At times, I caught myself wondering if Moustakas understood knowledge building more in terms of gathering small stones on a beach. But as I read his work, I saw him as being vitally engaged in internal dialogue and conversations with others which were dynamic and felt personal and alive. I found myself relating more to his narratives than his small stones from the beach—moments in which I sensed he was trying to portray his heuristic approach in a more positivistic manner. Despite my questions regarding Moustakas's epistemology, I made the decision to continue engaging in my research as a series of on-going conversations that centered on the topic of qualitative researchers' understandings and application of research ethics. Nevertheless, I still felt some tension regarding my decision until I read Moustakas's most recent book.

Clark Moustakas and his daughter, Kerry, joined together in writing about their own lives and their father-daughter relationship in the book entitled *Loneliness, Creativity & Love: Awakening Meanings in Life* (2004). In the Forward/Acknowledgement of this book they state the following:

> The authors of this book have lived in an everyday sense the ideas, values, feelings and thoughts of loneliness, creativity and love.
>
> In regularly scheduled meetings over the period of a year, we met to shape and develop *Loneliness, Creativity and Love.* The meetings provided opportunities for father-daughter—rituals, breaking the fast and sharing our letters, our poetry and music, as well as our narratives conveying lonely life and communion.
>
> We hope this book will inspire the sharing of numinous moments in significant relationships, too often neglected due to the demands of modern life. We also hope that this book will contribute to the bonding of friendships and family connections. (Moustakas & Moustakas, 2004, p. 7)

In this book, it is clear to me that Clark and Kerry Moustakas's work supports knowledge as a constructivist project. They lived the experiences, then met together and developed through mutual sharing their understanding and experience of their father-daughter relationship. The purpose of their work is also clear. Writing their account had personal significance for both of them. Their decision to share their work with others through their book was made in the hope that it would inspire others to attend to the development of meaning-filled relationships.

Clark and Kerry Moustakas's account affirmed my decision to engage in meaning-filled conversations during the interview process. I believe this commitment, blended with Kvale and Brinkmann's (2009) practical suggestions for interviewing, enhanced the knowledge development that occurred in this study. For example,

summarizing during the interview as an initial form of member-checking and a means of further developing the understanding being developed during the interview, had an unexpected effect on the interview. When I summarized and reflected back what I was hearing the participant saying, it slowed down the process and allowed the conversation to develop further at points where either the participant wanted to expand on his or her ideas, or I wanted to explore in a deeper, more comprehensive manner ideas behind the initial information being shared. These reflections and/or summaries also allowed me to acknowledge the emotions the participant and I were experiencing. Our conversations were dynamic as we talked together about their experiences of struggling with ethical issues that arose during their research projects.

In most of the interviews I did not adhere to a strict timeframe but continued until I felt the conversation had come to a natural closing. Most interviews were between 60 minutes to 120 minutes in duration. All interviews were recorded. I transcribed the first two interviews but found it necessary to hire the services of a professional transcriptionist for the remaining eight interviews.

Analysis of Research Data

Moustakas (1990) describes the procedures for analyzing or explicating the research data in a fairly linear, sequential manner. Gather the materials; immerse yourself in these materials and record insights into the meaning of these materials as they emerge in your awareness during this process. Take a break and step back from being immersed in the data and let the information incubate within your being. During this time, do not consciously analyze the material but rather engage in some other activity. Attend to

internal responses the material may evoke during this time. Moustakas also states that during times of letting the material incubate, the researcher may have dreams that relate to the work being done. The researcher attends to these dreams as well as other physiological and emotional responses experienced. This process allows tacit knowledge to emerge and inform the knowledge being accessed through the researcher's interaction with the participants' material. This process continues until the researcher thinks he or she is able to describe in rich detail the participant's experience of the phenomenon. At this point the researcher is ready to develop an individual depiction of the participant's account of the phenomenon. This depiction is returned to the participant for his or her review and any requested changes are made to the depiction. This process is repeated for each participant.

Once all of the individual depictions have been checked, the researcher gathers together all of the accounts and again enters into a time of immersion in the materials until the universal themes and qualities of the experience are internalized. The researcher then proceeds to develop a composite depiction of the experience derived from the accounts of the participants. Once this step is completed, Moustakas indicates the researcher is ready to return to the original raw data in order to choose one or two of the participant's accounts that exemplify the group as a whole. Individual portraits for these people are then developed. These portraits must portray the phenomenon investigated and the person in a vital and unified manner.

The final step in the process of data analysis as described by Moustakas (1990) involves the development of a creative synthesis. This work is guided by the researcher's

spirit of creativity informed by his or her integrated knowledge of the phenomenon. This process is also fueled by the researcher's passion and intuition, which will give rise to a unique portraiture of the phenomenon. This may take the form of narrative depiction, a poem, a story or play or any other creative structure the researcher feels adequately encapsulates the meaning of the phenomenon being investigated.

Heuristics Applied: My Experience of Data Analysis

In keeping with the spirit of heuristic inquiry, I tried to follow the steps outlined above for the analysis of the participants' accounts. I developed an individual depiction for each participant, a composite depiction, and a creative synthesis. However, my processes were not as neat and tidy as implied by the descriptions provided by Moustakas (1990). During my first attempt at developing an individual depiction I found myself feeling disorientated and uncertain about how to go forward. My mind was full of questions and I needed to step back even *before* I actually engaged in the process of data analysis and think through the implications of how I would approach each person's account. Here are some of the questions I wrote in my journal, *Research Reflections*.

Research Reflection: Questions re Analysis

How do I initially organize the raw data? Do I leave it as a conversation with my input into the conversation clearly evident? Do I clean-up the text or leave it more in its original state? What about the readability of the quotations? Can I shift around different parts of the interviews without disturbing the meaning or the reflection of the process? What's the goal? Is it a narrative portrait? How much of me do I insert into the participant's account? (July 13, 2011).

As these and other questions flooded my mind, the sense of disorientation continued and yet my experience felt familiar. I was not sure at first how my being was relating to this new experience. I began attending to the physiological sensations I was experiencing and started describing these to myself. As I did I became aware that the process of immersing myself into the data was evoking within me similar sensations and awarenesses as those I experienced as a novice scuba diver. I love scuba diving and had the privilege of diving in the South Pacific while my husband and I were working in Papua New Guinea. But learning to be a skilled diver involved times of feeling disoriented and learning that I needed to trust the process. I began to put words to my current experience and wrote the following poem in my *Research Reflections* journal.

Research Reflection: Diving into the Data

Mental rehearsing; managing breathing; spitting in mask to clear my vision.

Sitting; gear on, waiting in anticipation.

Rolling backwards into the water!

Chaos, bubbles everywhere, temporary loss of orientation

Staying with it—vision restored.

But we're not at the dive site.

Descent; checking gear; do I need more weight?

Learning to trust; my gear, the dive-master, the guideline for descent.

I reach the dive site; initial contact!

Fish and anemone retract;

A stranger has entered their mist.

Neutral buoyancy; I float

Effortless, once achieved. I become part of the mist.

Fish and animals emerge and I'm able to observe

The wonders in the deep!

I remain in this magical space

Until my dive time is – up.

Ascent.

Memories.

Verbal descriptions, written memoires;

I never truly capture the full experience.

I release the information

Knowing others will never engage in the experience in the same way.

They will ascribe their own understanding and experience to my account

But, some may choose to take up diving! (July 13, 2011)

Immersion Strategies

Recognizing that learning any new skill can create temporary chaos, I allowed myself to experiment with different strategies of immersing myself in the data. I began by just listening to the recordings of the interviews three times in succession. While this strategy is recommended by some researchers who have used heuristic research, I found my mind wandering and I lost my ability to grasp what was being said during the interview. Once I fell asleep. As a result, I switched to listening to the audio recording, only once before I engaged in jotting down handwritten notes as I listened. The third time

I listened to the recorded interview, I entered my thoughts onto the spreadsheet of the transcribed interview which I had created. I then moved through the text of the interview making notes regarding the content of the interview in one column of the spreadsheet and my responses to the content in another.

Kvale and Brinkmann's (2009) words regarding working with "transcripts" were very helpful at this point. They caution researchers, "Do not conceive of the interview as transcripts—the interviews are living conversations" (p. 192). Throughout my analysis I imagined myself interacting with the person speaking in the interview. I taped their names to the side of my computer and imagined them with me in my office as I worked with their material. My notes were like conversational snippets about what I was learning as I began constructing an understanding of the meaning and application of qualitative ethics for each researcher. Below, is a small section of the conversation I had with Mookie and the conversational snippets I recorded as I interacted with Mookie's materials during the data analysis.

Cell #	**Text of Interview**	**Potential Themes**	**Comments**
M91	Interviewee: Definitely, definitely. Um, well, once again, I'll give you another example: I worked with a Master's student who was looking at the experiences of immigrant refugee women who have been impacted by both state and domestic violence. And I'm [heavy sigh] very candid, I said this stuff is hard to take. And I know when I was reviewing this student's transcripts, the same type of feeling. Like this… Uh,	M91 Impact on sense of self-researcher was male. Need for self-care: - emotional and physiological impact, couldn't sleep - Disillusionment with humanity and one's own culture - Need of self-care	Mookie's energy was intense at this point. His expression of his thoughts was choppy. I found myself relating to his intensity as I too have sat in a counselling room with clients who have described the horrors of domestic

	and even in that focus group, ’cause I remember one of the comments I made after being in this two-hour session with this group of six immigrant refugee women, and I remember me saying to – oh, it was amazing that the co-facilitator was also male – and I remember turning to the co-facilitator and saying … “Men, men are such bastards.”	especially in terms of exposure to trauma Importance of relationship building.	violence and with people whose lives have been ravaged by the impact of war and questioned humanity. I too have lost sleep over these things.

The spreadsheets indicating my initial ideas regarding potential themes and my notes were later reviewed and added to as the analytical process unfolded.

Kvale and Brinkmann’s (2009), idea of “thematizing” an interview study was also helpful in my analysis. These authors suggest that during the planning stage of a project the researcher needs to ask questions about the “why” and the “what” of the study before the “how” of the study. This idea resonated with me as I approached the development of the individual depictions for each participant. In response to *why* I was constructing the individual accounts, I answered that I wanted to create an account that maintained the individual participant’s personhood *and* portrayed his or her understanding and application of qualitative research ethics through the use of his or her own words whenever possible. The questions asked during the interview would be used as anchor points for the conversational depictions. Approaching the development of the individual depictions from this perspective felt congruent with my constructivist perspective, my understanding of the importance of articulation in meaning-making, my belief that stories are a sacred trust and the relational nature of the knowledge building that occurred within

this project. In choosing to write the depictions in the words of the participants, I also wanted future readers to sense they were engaging in a conversation with the participants as they read the participants' accounts. I also saw the process of engaging others in thinking about the meaning and application of qualitative research ethics as an important step in ensuring the on-going tensions surrounding qualitative research ethics are addressed by those engaging in qualitative research practice. Thus, answering the why question helped me clarify *how* I would go about constructing the individual depictions.

In creating the individual accounts, I decided the only textual changes I would make would be for the sake of enhancing readability. The accounts would be organized around the questions addressed during the interview and potential themes would be inserted in the accounts as organizational markers. These were important points of clarification that helped me decide to use a narrative format to reflect the conversational nature of the process used to generate the knowledge built during this research project.

Making these decisions prior to developing the individual depictions also informed my thinking regarding the development of the composite depiction. A more in-depth description of how I came to decide to create the composite depiction in a style that reflects a metaphorical Talking Circle, an aboriginal ritual that can be used to develop solutions to problems, is included in the introduction to the composite depiction created for this study. Again, my desire was to maintain the personhood of the participants in the account and to use their words as much as possible in the development of the account. The themes portrayed in the participants' responses to the questions reoccur throughout the development of the Talking Circle. They are reflected in the introductory paragraphs

for each section of the Talking Circle, in the headings inserted throughout the dialogue, and in the summaries provided at the end of each section of the conversation.

Because of the way the individual depictions were developed and the composite depiction portrayed, I did not see a reason to create one or two individual portraits after the development of the composite depiction. These portraits are important in Moustakas's (1990) method as they are a means of portraying "the phenomenon investigated and the persons involved in a vital and unified manner" (p. 52). I see this step in Moustakas's original method as an attempt to preserve the humanity of the participants following a process in which their ideas have been abstracted and amalgamated into an account of the essence/s of the phenomenon, a concept that reflects the influence of Husserl's idea of intersubjectivity (Drummond, 2008). Or perhaps, he got caught up in "gathering small stones on a beach" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

However, approaching heuristic inquiry from a more constructivist perspective, I sought to maintain the personhood of each participant by providing an introduction to the person at the beginning of his or her individual depiction and by using his or her own words as much as possible in the development of the person's account. In light of this, I felt the development and inclusion of individual portraits after the composite depiction would be redundant information. Rather, I moved directly from the composite depiction to the presentation of the creative synthesis. In the creative synthesis, I reflect on my account of the knowledge constructed regarding qualitative research ethics through the real and imaginary conversations occurring during this research project.

Validation and Believability in Heuristic Inquiry

Validation in heuristic inquiry relates to the development and understanding of the meaning of the phenomenon under review. The question used to address the validity of a heuristic inquiry is, “Does the ultimate depiction of the experience . . . present comprehensively, vividly, and accurately the meanings and essences of the experience” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 32)? As primary researcher, I have been involved in every phase of the inquiry process. However, in all phases of this inquiry I tried to remain mentally and emotionally connected with those involved in this study along with me. Maintaining the personhood of each participant, the relational characteristic of qualitative research and qualitative research ethics, has been an important commitment for me throughout all phases of this process. I portray this commitment in my writing style and my choice to present my work in a conversational style wherever possible. This also allows the reader to see the co-creative process of knowledge construction that occurred in this study. For example, as mentioned earlier, the participant’s individual depiction is written in first person, from the perspective of the participant. My voice appears from time to time in the individual depiction in text boxes in order to reflect the interactional process that occurred during the interviews.

The completed individual depictions/accounts were returned to the participant for review and changes were integrated into the account before the information was used in in the development of the composite depiction. On-going contact was maintained with all participants with updates of progress sent on a regular basis. At times, questions arose as I was working with their information and I would email them for clarification. On several

occasions I became concerned that the specificity of a participant's information might make it possible for him/her to be identified by those reading my work. In these situations I checked back with the participants regarding the material I wished to use in writing up my work and in all cases the participants agreed I could go ahead and use their material and reassured me that they were not concerned about being identified by the use of the information they had provided. The participants' willingness to respond allowed me to have their direct input into my work as I moved through the research process. I am deeply grateful for their commitment to this research, their words of wisdom and their encouragement throughout this project.

From the commencement of this project, I have maintained a journal entitled *Research Reflections*, in which I recorded my thoughts and experiences as I journeyed through this process. My reflections included narrative accounts, poetry and other forms of creative writing and excerpts from my journal are integrated throughout this study. I also recorded my decision-making process in an on-going email conversation with my advisor. I appreciate my advisor's willingness to be involved in this conversation and her work with me throughout all phases of this work. Her conversations and guidance have been a source of encouragement and support and have contributed to the on-going expansion of my understanding of qualitative research ethics that occurred within this study. Members of my supervisory committee have also reviewed my work and have engaged in conversations with me that have helped me clarify my thinking regarding this work. Along with my advisor, this team of committed academics have supported me and held me accountable as I have conducted this study. For this, I am deeply grateful.

CHAPTER FOUR: TALKING ABOUT QUALITATIVE RESEARCH ETHICS

Imagine turning on your radio and discovering the talk show hostess is interviewing a group of Canadian qualitative researchers about research ethics. Before you have a chance to switch the station, you are caught up in their animated accounts of their experiences and you decide to stay tuned in to learn more. As you listen, you are struck by the personal nature of their accounts. They speak of ethics in vivid terms that reflect emotion, physical responses and internal struggles. They talk about their relationships with their participants and you realize they care about those working with them in their research projects. They speak of social justice and their research making a difference in people's lives. They also talk about their commitment to ensuring their studies are good science! Your mind flashes to scientific laboratories. But, as you listen for a moment longer, you realize the researchers being interviewed do not wear white lab coats and insulate themselves in sterile laboratories. Rather, their boots are covered with the muck of life!

Talking with the researchers engaged in this study regarding their understanding and handling of ethically important moments that arise during the qualitative research process, I gained a new appreciation for qualitative researchers and their work. Their commitment to conducting ethical research that makes a difference in the lives of people impacted by domestic violence, racism, poverty, social injustice, disease and unethical health practices, left my own boots smelling mucky but my spirit uplifted.

Simultaneously, their commitment to ensuring their work was scientifically sound was clear. Sometimes their humanity fought with the demands of science as fatigued

bodies and tired minds struggled to meet timelines without sacrificing the quality of their scientific endeavors. At other times, following their chosen research method threatened the working relationships developed between the researchers and the participants causing them to question the quality of the data gathered. In addressing both subtle ethical nuances and more in-your-face ethical concerns, researchers had to address human or social factors on the one hand, and methodological or scientific factors on the other. The stabilizing factor in their ethical endeavors was often a commitment to the pursuit of social justice and their desire to have their scientific projects do some good for those participating in their research endeavors.

In this chapter, I present the accounts of the researchers' understandings and practice of ethics in qualitative research in three ways. In the first account I present one of the 10 individual depictions developed in this study as an illustration of the personal, in-depth descriptions provided by each participant. Pseudonyms have been used for all participants. I have chosen Eva's depiction as it reflects many of the themes highlighted by other participants. Eva's voice reappears in the second account which is a composite depiction that is presented in the form of an imaginary Talking Circle in which all of the participants' voices are heard as they talk together about qualitative research ethics. Lastly, a creative synthesis highlighting my understanding or synopsis of the points made in the Talking Circle is provided. Here is Eva's account.

Individual Depiction: Eva

Age: 35

Gender: Female

Highest Degree: MSc/Counselling Psychology, BA/Psychology

Research Experience: Eva has 7 years of experience doing qualitative research. A major qualitative study was her Master's thesis in which she used heuristic inquiry. Eva is currently working on her PhD dissertation in which she is also using heuristic inquiry. Her research reflects her interest in the lived experiences of new Canadians.

Key Influences in Ethical Development: The influence of her grandfather and her cultural upbringing were strong influences in Eva's personal understanding of ethics. Going through a civil war and her experiences as a refugee to Canada also influenced her understanding of the world and the importance of community. Social justice and inclusion are critical values reflected in her account.

Ethically Significant Moments: Eva's account highlights personal struggles around the delicate balance researchers need to maintain between attending to their own experiences, the participants' experiences and the dynamics that occur during the research process. She highlights how the research process can quickly shift from *research with* to *research on* participants. Fatigue, the impact of wanting to be done with the research, the desire to be congruent as a person/researcher, adhering to one's research method, and whether to drink or not to drink a coffee with co-researchers all possess ethical implications in Eva's account.

Qualitative Research Ethics in a Nutshell: Connection, collaboration, harmony, unity and being congruent as a person/researcher are ethical principles that shape Eva's understanding of qualitative research ethics. Social justice is also depicted as a foundational aspect of qualitative research ethics.

Eva's Understanding and Application of Qualitative Research Ethics

Eva's Research Experience

My experience as a researcher began during my Master's degree. I knew then that quantitative research wasn't for me and that I wasn't a statistics-type person. The thought of looking at numbers and categorizing people according to statistical significance was really not appealing to me. But, also, I wasn't open to doing qualitative research that seemed disconnected from the researcher. That's how I gravitated towards heuristics.

Lynda: What else appealed to you about qualitative research?

On a theoretical level, it was about having an opportunity to really look at an individual's experience in detail, in-depth, from that person's point of view. That person wasn't labeled as a number amongst numbers. There was a person in front of me that I would interview and I would get a life experience from that person. I felt my voice mattered, and the only way my voice could come through research would be by using qualitative research. Other kinds of research didn't provide me that space. But then the conflict was, how do I do that?

I'm very open and vocal about my experiences and so many different methodologies, like phenomenology and grounded theory, didn't cut it. They were interesting. They were methods I could use, but then again I was missing that personal

connection. I felt I needed to be personally connected to my research and the experiences I'm researching in order to do good research. Back when I started, heuristics was the only method that we learned about that used the researcher as a participant. It validated what I wanted to do. Heuristics brought a bridge between the humanistic and phenomenological, the very subjective realm, and for me—lots of people would disagree—the postmodern research experience that allows stories to be told.

Eva's Understanding of Qualitative Research Ethics

Qualitative research ethics, I would define on two levels. When I look at ethics, I look at both personal ethics and some sort of social ethics we have out there with others with whom we are interacting. If we as researchers are to do research that would create some new meaning in the research community or the general public, I think we need to do research that is meaningful for us. I would define myself as unethical if I had gone and done a quantitative study on something unimportant to me just to finish my Master's degree. I believe to do ethical research the research has to be congruent with what is going on for you. But your research is not just for your personal benefit, it's for the benefit of others who may have had the same kind of experience and who haven't had an opportunity to have their story told.

In some ways, it goes hand-in-hand with social justice. I research particular populations in which peoples' voices are extinguished; often it is refugees and immigrants. They haven't had an opportunity to tell their stories. So, I think tending to your own awareness, then moving that experience into a more social arena and

connecting it to others thus providing a space and context for people to tell their stories in interaction with you is as ethical as you can be.

Personhood and Ethics

We live in a world where we are categorized according to the roles we play. For example, in the research community there are researchers and then there are participants. I have always perceived that as here's the expert person doing some sort of research with a group of people who are not experts but who have valuable information that will benefit the researcher and ultimately the research community or the public. For me, that takes away from my personhood in some ways because I don't want to do research as prescribed by the role I play. If I'm a *researcher* and labeled as a researcher, that carries with it certain assumptions about what I need to do and how I need to do. I find I collect richer, more in-depth data if I tend to people as people. Being a researcher doesn't separate me from having an experience, from being a person, from having an identity and from interacting and creating some sort of new knowledge and new context with other people. The connection I felt during my research with my participants, and the connection we have to this day, is quite different from having them fill out questionnaires.

That's the beauty of heuristics. It allowed me to sort through my own experience. In some ways, sorting through it before interviewing a participant helped me come to terms with certain things, helped clarify certain things, created new understandings and allowed me to tell a story from a certain perspective, the perspective that was working for me at that particular point. On the other hand, it allowed for a collective story to be

created. Everybody had an opportunity to talk about his or her experiences individually and then create a collective story. I think everything we do in life is a collection of stories.

Lynda: So let me see if I've got this. What you're saying is that acknowledging your involvement in the research process allows you to be ethical. You don't have to dis-position yourself, remove yourself from the process, or act in a way that's unnatural or forced for you, or is prescribed by something external to yourself. I did hear you say that the external may become part of your experience and integrated into a process that is ethical for you, because of the responsibility you have to acknowledge how your own personal influences shape the choices you make and how you interact. Anything else there?

There are multiple ways we can interpret and define what ethics and research mean for us. I also think there are some universal prescriptions that we have to follow because there is a limit to how far we can go with our own subjectivity. It can potentially be damaging for a participant. How do we define ethics? I think there shouldn't be one definition. I look at how quantitative research ethics is defined: what is objective and what is not objective. I don't think we are necessarily unethical if we are not objective. Research is a value-laden process. I bring in my own values, no matter how neutral I try and need to be. Ethically, we are responsible for acknowledging that we have experiences with the phenomena we are studying, that we are going through processes that influence

the choices we make with regards to research. I didn't choose to study people who struggle with depression because I have no interest in it; whereas, I have a huge interest and compassion for working with refugees for having had the personal experience of being a refugee. We choose research methods that speak to us as people. I think that acknowledgment needs to be there, that we are persons in the experience, which interestingly aligns with heuristics. The experience of research doesn't just happen and evolve on its own. You are in it. In order to be aware of what you are doing and what actions you are engaging in, you need to acknowledge what your experience is and you need to acknowledge your subjective perspectives that you're bringing in. I believe there is no researcher, no matter how objective you try to be, who can be purely objective. For that reason, I feel more aligned with research that welcomes that subjectivity, that reflexivity, that reflexive sort of practice where you create interactions with participants, where people are invited to use language in ways that tell the stories in meaningful ways for them. But at the same time, you have your own perspectives and have an opportunity to include those perspectives in your research. I don't think it's ever complete, but it's more congruent. It's more open, it's forever integrating new influences and new information. I just don't see doing research without acknowledging my personal role in it and the experiences that come along with it.

Influences on Ethical Understanding

My understanding of ethics has most certainly been influenced by my personal experiences and how my experiences have shaped the way I see the world. Experiences and people were instrumental in developing my values, or passing on the values that drive me. Also, learning about how ethics is portrayed to be completely different from the pure meaning of the word *ethics* and how ethics has evolved into something that is only one way of viewing the world has been important. One of my professors gives an excellent example of this when she says, "When you look at the code of ethics for psychologists that we have in Canada now, it's just one way of interpreting what ethical behavior is for a white Anglo-Saxon person who practices psychology in Canada." Now, for someone who's coming from a completely different context, where ethics is either defined differently or it's not defined at all, that makes no sense.

Factors that influence our understanding of ethics are personal knowledge developed in interaction with everybody else, readings, and tending to your experiences that tell you what ethics might be. I don't want to say ethics are relative but there are different interpretations of ethics.

Lynda: So, when you think about your understanding of qualitative research ethics, what influences do you see shaping your personal understanding?

One of the most influential people in my life was definitely my grandfather. He was a person who had a strong sense of ethics the way I would perceive an ethical person to be. Meaning: doing no harm to anybody; trying to look at events or incidents from multiple angles; trying to understand the other person's point of view; not condoning any

monstrous acts or any kind of tortuous activities; always putting things in perspective where he would look at a person and say, “Okay, well there's that person's experience, there's our experience and then there is a kind of middle experience that we create.” My understanding started there. Then moving on to after the war started, us leaving and me understanding who I was as a person, really shaped how I viewed the war and how I viewed people. It is like having guides that are always with you. Definitely, a lot of what I learned from him has driven what I have done afterwards.

I also think the society in which I lived, where prior to war we learned to live together no matter how different we were, has been an influence. It was symbolic, like the creation of a tribe in itself, where all the nations lived together. My morals weren't necessarily questioned, but people suddenly lived together where they were very different, but they managed. I think those experiences of connection, collaboration, harmony and unity created the knowledge that shapes how I view the world and how I view my personal sense of ethics.

Experiential and Methodological Influences on Eva’s Understanding of Research Ethics

Rather than seeing the integration of personal experience in research as bias (thus of ethical concern), integrating personal experience provided me an opportunity to tell my story. It opened up new avenues to talk to others who had a similar experience, piqued my motivation and interest to know the experience and to know more about people who are in the experience. I think having an opportunity to tell my story through my research, instead of closing my mind as might be expected, really opened up new

avenues. I was just one person, I was a student of diverse cultural background—that was the first time I defined myself as that—and I thought, “Oh my God, if I as a researcher am coming to this insight, what kind of impact would the telling of that story have for somebody else? How many people are there who struggle with this kind of thing? If telling my story was so profoundly helpful for me in research, could it, on some level, be helpful for others?

I think initially I chose to do heuristic research for my own selfish purpose because I wanted to be a participant in my research. I felt this drive, this need to have this out of my system. That's initially how I conceptualized heuristics. I didn't realize [laughs] what kind of process heuristics really was. I think the awareness of wanting to take it beyond was probably occurring gradually, like coming out gradually, where first it was probably this sense of if I have this experience, there are others who have this experience, what is the meaning, what is the purpose of telling that story? How important is it for these people? I did ask them in my research, “Why is it important to tell this story?” Then it moved into the power of story; the power of creating a more collective kind of knowledge. What I like about heuristics is that personal and that collective component.

I think one thing that's definitely clear for me is that we need to ask ourselves why we are doing research. Are we doing research for the sake of doing research and for the sake of finishing our degrees? Or are we doing research because there must be some other purpose to it? Is it to improve practice? Is it to increase knowledge? Is it to create new knowledge? Is it to have people's voices heard? Why are we doing research? Are we doing research that is preferred by us, or are we doing research that is prescribed or

deemed important by others? That's where, I think, for me, the importance of having meaning, personal meaning, and the importance of defining why you're doing research comes into the picture and ties into ethics. If you're doing research just because you have data collected already and you can make it into a research project and publish it for the benefit of having your name out there, I question that as opposed to doing research because it's a preferred way of being a researcher.

We do not exist in a vacuum nor do we exist in isolation. In order to understand our personal experiences and the experiences of others we need to share. For me it's that social interaction that creates the base for collective experiences to be created. People's stories are unique but there are always some things that will be universal. If you stay with just your own story and you never reach out and share it with others nor interact with others about that particular experience, the possibility for becoming aware of those universals, those things that connect us across cultures, across classes, across people, are not going to be there.

Building a Research Community and Qualitative Research Ethics

Lynda: Let me check something out. Are you talking in a different way about the value that you spoke about earlier, of how you were, early on in your life, influenced by this concept of community?

Yes, community is very important to me.

Lynda: And in linking your story with other people's stories, you touch on elements of the phenomenon, but you also create a sense of community? It's interesting, holding onto that idea of the connectedness and the community piece, it brings me back to the place of where I think in a community there are social obligations, or norms or expectations, right? I'm thinking about how that applies to what we've been talking about in your experience as a researcher, in your story linking with other people's stories, and almost like creating this awareness. . .and maybe community isn't the right word. I was thinking about if that was outside of the research experience, if we were thinking about a community, I would be looking and wondering about, what's my role? What are my responsibilities? How does this interaction influence the broader context? Does that relate to qualitative research ethics in some way? I don't have the answer, that's just a question that came up as we were talking.

I think it does relate to qualitative research ethics, because in every community, in every group in which you interact, there are certain rules, regulations, norms according to which the group behaves and acts. In some ways I would say there is a code of ethics by which each group operates. In heuristics, for example, you start from yourself but you then build a community of co-researchers with whom you have done research together. It is that collaborative piece. In some way doing heuristics, as subjective as it may be, is a process of building the ethics code as you go, of what works for people and what doesn't work. In some ways, you're checking in with co-researchers and you're taking out

information that is not accurate. You're including information that makes sense to them. You are taking out part of the stories they don't want shared. You support, you share, you integrate, and you do things together. In some way you build your own code of conduct in that process. That sense of community, sense of sharing, sense of collaboration, definitely relates to how we build ethics and how we view ethics and how we define ethics to be in relation to our research.

In interviewing my co-researchers we built our own little community. We were studying acculturation and ethnic identity reconstruction, which was a difficult experience to examine. But at the same time, we sort of recreated our sense of self. For me, who I am as a person and who I am as a person in relation to others can never be fragmented. I find my sense of where my research goes and how ethical it seems to me is strengthened when I think of the people who have been influential in my life. My family definitely is the most influential aspect of who I am as a person, how I view people and how I approach people. I just had a conversation with a friend of mine and her husband about the war and how senseless it was. We talked about who would hide whom if the war started again and we were of different nationalities. My sense of, “I'd hide you, regardless!” was very strong. So, I think they also influenced who I was and who I am as a person, in terms of my personal ethics.

When you stretch that into the research community, into the student community, into the counseling community, there are people who have influenced my understanding of ethics. Certainly my mentor has influenced my sense of ethics by encouraging me to search myself at length, to question sometimes why I would go in a certain direction. To

stop me, when I needed to be stopped, when research was becoming my personal vendetta of avenging whatever needed to happen. I remember walking into her office and her saying, “I will never forget how angry you were. But I know now that whenever you go into that place of anger that that's the place you need to sit in on your own. That's the time when you shouldn't be interviewing and you shouldn't be interacting with anybody who will be your potential co-researcher. You need to sit and stew and process.” So, that would be a situation where without that guide I might have gone in a direction which might have caused more grief for someone I was interviewing.

When I was thinking about using phenomenology for my dissertation I had an experience which I see relating to research ethics. My topic was sensitive to me and the phenomenological approach I was considering required me to bracket. I thought, I don't want to bracket, because I can't bracket that. But at the same time, I was saying I don't want to talk about that! But, I thought I was prepared to listen to the experiences of others. I remember sitting at work pondering on this question in my cubicle for days. I'm like, why the hell would I do this? What kind of person would I be if I interviewed people after bracketing minimally my experience and I got triggered on multiple levels by hearing their stories? Then I thought, the ethical thing for me to do would be to allow those triggers to spill into my life by really looking at my understanding of my experience, my personal understanding, which would lead me to the point where I could interview and where I could integrate on some level my experience and their experience. That's where I find the best work happens, out of an impulse or a personal crisis of some sort and the need to not make it all about myself, but to make it into something that

creates some new context for how we can understand certain experiences. Will I always have a personal crisis while I'm researching? Probably not! But I need to have that edge and know that if I'm researching refugees, the particular topic related to that needs to be preferred by me and needs to be meaningful to me.

Lynda: There is a level of intensity in that which stands out for me. Whether it's a passion, intensity or an engagement. . .It's like a pull that brings an energy for you and it invites you to be present, not bored and disinterested or so wrapped up in your own experience, emotional experience, crisis, whatever, that you lose sight of the co-researchers' experience and what is happening there. In that process were there moments where you became aware of an ethical consideration or dynamic, an ethically important moment?

I'll give you a metaphor I think describes that. I once went to a Social Work conference on family violence and a Maori counselor from New Zealand talked about murky waters and wild waters and people paddling and not being able to see the shore.

Having to continuously paddle exhausted them. Sometimes my process of deciding to do heuristics again for my PhD is much like that. My initial experience with heuristics was really profound, really intense. This time around, there is more personal crisis and turmoil than there was the first time. I have gone from paddling to thinking, I'm going to throw the oar into the water because this makes no sense, and this is stupid. I'm just going to do it the easy way. Then, I grab the oars again and tell myself, wait a minute, if I paddle long enough the waters will calm and the shore will be visible. Is it the

long way to the shore? Absolutely! But as long as I can see it, then I can continue paddling. That's how this is for me. It is remembering when waters are wild, when the personal crises kick in and I'm so wrapped up in that, it doesn't mean the shore is not there. It just means that whatever crisis or turmoil I am in needs to be calm in order for me to get to that next step. What's more ethical than that, acknowledging that piece, before I move on?

Lynda: In the process of researching with members of your community, were there moments in which you became aware of an ethical consideration or dynamic you needed to address?

Ethically Important Moments

Not many, which was actually interesting. I think it had something to do with interviewing people from my own community and sharing some deeper understanding with my cultural group. The only consideration arose after I had completed quite a bit of my research. I had an initial interview with everyone and then I wrote their stories out after the transcription had taken place. I sent the stories out for everybody to read his or her own story and then to tell me if there was anything he or she would like to add or if there was anything that didn't make sense. That was a really good process and people expressed how profound it was for them to read their story as told from their perspective.

Then I analyzed all of the data and put the themes in a table. There were 75 themes. I sent the list of themes to everybody and then phoned people and we went through the list and checked off whether the themes stood out for them or not. I sensed that for some of the co-researchers it was just about getting through the process. It was

rushed. There was no connection. It was as if they were saying, “We were more connected reading those stories.” The process felt imposed. It was just another questionnaire, you know? When I asked, “Is there any other way we can do this so it will make more sense to you?” There just wasn’t. That's when I asked myself, are you guys doing this because you want to give me the answers you think I'm expecting? Or are you being truthful? There was no way for me to assess that, really. I questioned, is this going to contribute negatively to my data? I think that was one reason I questioned the ethics. That questionnaire was also possibly overwhelming for people. It wasn't explained on my end. I presented it saying, “This is the list of all the things that I have extracted from our transcripts. I'm curious if we can look through it together while we're talking on the phone and you can tell me which ones to check off as applying to you?” It wasn't as personal. I think at that point people started losing interest. When I sent them the creative synthesis and the composite depiction people said, “Oh yeah, this makes much more sense.”

I think the nature of the questionnaire and the process was an ethical consideration. It had the potential to completely ruin the perception of what the research was about for the co-researchers. I felt I was kind of pushing myself to the edge of where I was saying, let me just get it over with. I'll just take their word at face value and I won't question any further whether what they're checking off is meaningful for them. I think the best way to describe it is that up until that point I felt that we were doing research together. Everybody was connected and I felt it was a shared project. Then suddenly, boom, with the questionnaire I was on a deserted island. Six people were really not

motivated to respond and didn't see the point of the questionnaire. Other than a couple of people, I got a lot of affirmative answers. I wasn't initially going to send them the composite depiction and letters I wrote for the creative synthesis. But after that questionnaire I thought, in order to preserve this research I need to go back to what worked for us and what worked was sharing those personal accounts.

I caught myself thinking, but I don't want to bring it up. I want to finish my Master's. Who cares? Who's going to read it anyway? I was getting caught into a position of compromising my personal process and the research process.

Personality and Reactions to Ethically Significant Moments

I'm a reactive person in everything I do. I'll do something impulsively and then go back and try to fix it or change the direction of it. I'm also a processor after the fact. I'm not going to hear something and go home and think about it and then get back to you. I'll first get back to you with something impulsive, then I'll go home process it and go, oh, that wasn't really good. Then I will take steps to rectify whatever damage was done.

Physiological Responses to Ethically Significant Moments

In hindsight, I remember I put all those questionnaires into a folder and I wasn't happy. I didn't feel like I accomplished anything. I put them in the folder and I had that gut feeling of this is just not right, this is not telling me anything.

Another thing I would add to my physiological responses is a physical feeling of restlessness. When I'm restless I know there is something that needs to be tended to, whether it be ethical, personal or whatever. It's a sense of not being able to ground myself and being kind of like the Energizer Bunny, not knowing where to stop, and running in

circles, and knowing that there is something to tend to. I mean, those are moments when your body is saying slow down, stop and listen to me. There is something going on.

Lynda: Hmmm, so, were you aware of that in your research experience, those physiological kinds of responses?

Absolutely! I'm going through a process right now where I began writing my dissertation but I'm not very connected to it. But I'm restless. It's restlessness in the sense that I know that time is being lost. But I also know I'm not right where I need to be. So, it's tending to that restlessness and paying attention to how it changes and being aware of when it can be your motivator or when it becomes a hindrance to the whole process. It's a great indicator of when you need to engage in self-care. I can distinguish between high-energy that leads me to a certain outcome and this restlessness that's like Flintstone when he grabs the car and he runs in one spot. I think those are crucial moments to tend to.

Cognitive Responses to Ethically Significant Moments

There were cognitive responses I also needed to tend to in that situation. I found myself thinking, okay, what do I share? How do I now share something additional that I didn't say I was going to do with people? How do I take another hour of their time in order to have this process resolved? That was my process of thinking of how I would go back and ask them to do yet another thing. It worked out really fine because they were more interested in reading stories than answering the questions.

Lynda: It's almost like there was a violation somehow.

Social Awareness and Response in Ethically Significant Moments

It was the violation of a code that we had established, implicitly or explicitly. I don't think it was a written code. But it was a code of conduct in which we engaged as co-researchers that was flowing, and it was just going. We felt connected. Then suddenly, here comes this questionnaire and bam, I lose that sense of being connected to these people. I start assuming that they are bored and tired. I start creating these interpretations of them that didn't help my process! It just didn't flow. In hindsight, I think that would be a very crucial piece to explore in understanding the experience we were talking about, but I didn't.

Lynda: What would you do instead?

I would have a conversation. Maybe I would have a group conversation. Maybe I would have a discussion, an additional discussion with each one of them about what was the meaning for them of answering that questionnaire? Was there anything else that we could have done? I think I would be transparent, saying that this is how I feel and as a researcher I'm wondering . . . and I'm extending this to you as co-researchers. Is this the way we need to go? Or do we need to repackage this and figure out where we're going? Maybe that would've provided us with some other insights and the understanding of the experience would've gone in some other way. That's what I would do instead. I would tend to the process and that's exactly what I didn't do. I didn't tend to the experience or sub-experience that was occurring at that particular moment. I just wanted to have a clear-cut finish. I was tired. I was getting to the point where I'm like oh, my God, like is this ever going to end? It was very intense for me and I was getting to the point where

incubating wasn't even possible anymore. It was the last piece of my analysis and I think an important aspect of the experience was lost and never tended to. That in itself goes back to ethics, as to how do we tend to our experiences when we do research, right?

Lynda: Yeah. Because it's about a disconnect in which your agenda of needing to get done may have overshadowed the spirit of collaboration.

Yes, absolutely, it became more robotic.

Lynda: What happened to the human element then?

I think at that point, in my mind, they were no longer co-researchers. They suddenly became participants. Do you know what I mean? I was thinking, you need to participate in this particular segment of research and get it over with. I think my inner dialogue was, just do it! That human component was lost at that point.

Power in Ethically Significant Moments

That goes back to ethics and how much power you can exert as a primary researcher. How much you can intentionally or unintentionally oppress the people in your research and how much damage you can do. There's still a context for that—you're the researcher, we're the co-researchers, but you're the researcher. I think that goes back to ethics. You have to always be aware of your power and whose voice is subjugated in that process. I was, I think, on some level intentionally subjugating their voices and thinking, okay, well let's just get through this. Whatever hunches I have are not important, I need to finish this. I need to finish.

Had I not gone back and said, “Okay I think I need to share a composite depiction with them and the letters and see if that relates to them,” had I not done that, I think I wouldn't have had the same results I ended up having. I think for them that was a way of reconnecting. For me it was a way of throwing the life ring into the water and saying, “Here, I screwed up, so let me pull you out.”

In summary, you can't disengage the personal from what is ethical. You have certain personal experiences and personal understandings that will influence your sense of ethics. It's a dance. You are a person; you have certain values, strengths, attitudes, beliefs, understandings and interpretations of the world that will influence how you define ethics. Will there be times when you are borderline between ethical and personal? Absolutely!

Lynda: Uh-huh, so speaking of the personal and the ethical, you referred to self-care. How do you see self-care of the researcher as being connected to ethics?

Self-Care as an Ethical Consideration

I think if you don't tend to those moments when you are struggling, when you are ruminating, or when you are just stuck, the downward slope to becoming unethical is huge. Say for example, I am doing research and someone has triggered me profoundly but I'm too overwhelmed and too tired to attend to my reactions. It's amongst my last interviews and I'm just going to continue on. But I can't sleep at night. I can't do my work. I avoid contact with my co-researchers. I don't want to talk to anybody. Those are moments when you need to take care of yourself, because if you don't, the line between being in trouble and being unethical is really blurry. Those are the moments when you

can say something hurtful to your co-researcher, when you can debate his experience or her experience and dismiss it or discredit it. Those are the moments when you may fail to recognize that you need to step away from that kind of dialogue. Maybe you need a little bit of help. It is easy to overlook those moments when you're driven to finish and you think, there'll be time for me to take care of myself—some time. That's when I think you're in serious trouble.

Lynda: When you think about that fine line and the influences that you experienced, how do you think your formal education and training prepared you for those moments?

Education and Training and Qualitative Research Ethics

When I think about my education and training in research ethics, I don't know how it prepared me for dealing with the things I dealt with as I did my research. If you look at the logistical end of things, there's not nearly enough education around these kinds of things.

Lynda: Which kind of things?

Ethics, dealing with unethical things and dealing with ethical dilemmas in general, even conceptualizing what an ethical dilemma is. There are some things that people view as an ethical dilemma and to me it's clear-cut. Again, it's a subjective process, but I don't know if I was prepared enough. I don't know if I can say that my formal education created a base for me to be the person I am. I don't think so. I think it provided me with certain information that I needed to have. But did it prepare me to deal

with the real world in research? I think there's very little guidance in that. When you're a student and you go into this, there's some sort of expectation placed on you that you already should know what you're doing. Because you shouldn't be at this level if you don't know what you're doing. For me, that is a big problem because I think we should have more conversations like these.

I find that having a community, a group where you can constantly recycle and look through ideas and create new ideas and tend to old ones, really builds your sense of professionalism, your sense of ethics. If you're isolated and it's very easy to be isolated as a graduate student, some things may start losing importance. Your understanding may start changing. We lack academic interaction where students have an opportunity to sit down with their faculty and have these ideas shared and conversations led. I believe new knowledge would be created as well in those conversations. That's what would make it meaningful for me.

Meaningfulness and Qualitative Research Ethics

I think it has to be. I go back to the question of why am I doing this research? If I can't respond to that then I need to question my ethics. As long as you can answer the question of why you're doing this research, for what purpose, and for whom, I think you can then—I don't want to say you're ethical—but you're thinking about what is important and what is ethical.

Lynda: Earlier you mentioned ethics and universality. I haven't quite got a sense yet of what you see as being the universals.

Although I come from the perspective that everybody has his or her own reality and his or her own experiences, I still stick with that idea. I think I would be really sad if I didn't know there are some universal elements that connect people across the world. All babies cry, in every culture, for some reason. That's the perspective from which I'm coming. I think if you tend to your personal ethics, you'll be more aware and more attuned to what ethics are out there. You'll communicate more effectively or more openly, and tend to those things, events and situations that increase that sense of ethics in general.

Time and Space and Qualitative Research Ethics

Lynda: How have time and space factors affected your awareness and application of research ethics?

Time. In terms of time, I previously mentioned the questionnaire and the time constraints I felt around that. I also had conversations with my committee in which I was advised to limit my data gathering strategies due to time constraints. That in itself, I would link to ethics. Being constrained for time can take away from the depth of the research. It's difficult to hear, don't do that because that will take too much time and it will generate too much data. It's really about doing this dance and figuring out at what point is this becoming unethical? At what point will our decisions take away from the people's experiences? Are these people as verbal as we think and we would like them to be? Would they express themselves better through other mediums like paintings, poems and music? At what point do we tend to what the methodology is really about?

Space. When I first wrote my ethics proposal I said, due to the cultural background of the individuals I'm interviewing, it is possible that they would like me to come to their place of residence to do interviews. This would be an informal conversational interview. The ethics committee was fine with that, as long as I was safe. But in my conversations with my advisor, she wondered if I would have a coffee with my participants or not. I said, “It's an informal conversational interview, damn right I'm going to have coffee. Coffee is an important part of the culture. It's an institution. All conversations back home occur over coffee. Coffee is the one thing that connects all those nations there. Do not ask me not to have coffee.” Do we make space constraints and time constraints? Maybe we do. But do we also make certain things that are purely human unethical just because we need to say something about the process?

Lynda: Do you have anything else that you think you would want to comment on?

Eva’s Summary and Conclusion

To summarize, I think you always have to ask yourself why are you doing this research and for whom? What's the purpose? You need to ask yourself that during all of the research stages. It's easy to get lost. Those are tricky situations to be in. You need to always be in touch with what is going on for you and for the others involved in your research. When you need to take a break, take a break. When you need to incubate, incubate. Incubation doesn't have to happen just the way it's written in a book. Incubate when you need to, because there's a reason for it. Tending to your personal needs is very

important. That's the big thing that comes up for me. We need to be able to connect what's personal with what's out there.

In conclusion, any time I have these conversations, it reintegrates me into the qualitative community and I realize this is the right niche for me. I feel more comfortable with my sense of ethics being here. The one thing that stands out for me is that I really am a heuristic researcher. I wonder if I'm ever going to be anything else. The question for me then becomes how many heuristic studies can you really do?

Lynda: I wonder how many heuristic studies there are in any of us [laughs].

On this note, Eva and I ended our conversation and I will end her individual depiction here as well. For Eva, research is a process that calls for the researcher to be congruent with his or her own values and ethics throughout every stage of the process. Her concept of congruency and community and their importance in qualitative research ethics is critical in both her understanding and application of research ethics.

Shifting the Conversation about Qualitative Research Ethics from a One-on-one Conversation to a Group Experience

All 10 individual depictions created in this study provided rich descriptive accounts of the participants' understandings of qualitative research ethics and ethical research practice. Moustakas's (1990) description of data analysis in heuristic inquiry suggests that the processes indwelling and immersion are critical in identifying the essential meanings of the human experience being studied. The tacit dimension of knowing plays a vital role during these processes and is seen by Moustakas to form a

bridge between the implicit knowledge acquired through the researcher's intuitive understanding of the phenomenon and the explicit knowledge expressed in the participants' accounts. The strategies used in the indwelling and immersion processes vary among heuristic researchers. Djuraskovic, in Djuraskovic and Arthur (2010) describes her process as a rhythmic moving between times in which she was reflectively immersed in her own experience and the experiences of those participating in her study and times of stepping back from this reflective process during which she focused on her son and the everyday activities of being a mother. She refers to these times as allowing the information to incubate as tacit dimensions of knowing were accessed. Illumination for Djuraskovic is described as continuing to involve tacit knowing and knowledge or awarenesses that emerged as she began actively organizing the commonalities she was observing into themes. This was done by putting potential themes onto PostIts and sorting them into themes on a wall in her basement.

Carter (2002) describes a data analysis process similar to that which I used. She began by immersing herself in the dialogues contained in the interviews. She then stripped her words from the conversation to create a document that contained only the participant's words. After reading and re-reading these accounts, she selected passages and descriptions that appeared to be most relevant to the research question. These passages were then arranged chronologically to form a narrative which was then used in the creation of the creative synthesis. The variety of strategies used in heuristic data analysis reflects the personal quality of the knowledge generation process critical in

heuristic research. I describe the process I used in developing the composite depiction in the following section.

Composite Depiction

In heuristic inquiry, the researcher pulls together the qualities, themes and meanings inherent in the individual depictions and develops them into a collective account, referred to in Moustakas's (1990) work as a composite depiction. The accuracy of this account is critical and enhanced by the use of exemplary narratives, vivid description, conversations, illustrations and verbatim excerpts that highlight the flow, spirit and dynamics integral within the experience being examined (Moustakas, 1990). As I shifted my focus from being immersed in the participants' individual accounts to looking at the accounts as a collective, I found I needed to develop an organizational framework which I could use as a guide as I went through the process of organizing the individual materials into a collective whole.

I had become very engaged with each person's account while working with it during the months it took to develop each participant's individual depiction. I conducted member checks with the participants regarding the accuracy of their individual depictions and we conversed by email regarding points of clarification. I felt comfortable that the individual depictions adequately reflected the participants' accounts as shared during the interview process. I also felt that including some of the questions I asked during the interview process in the individual depictions helped portray my understanding that the knowledge being generated in the interview process was being influenced and shaped through conversation. With this in mind, I approached the task of pulling together the

composite depiction recognizing my epistemic stance was more constructivist than Moustakas (1990) reflected in his discussion of the researcher's role in the development of the composite depiction.

For example, Moustakas (1990) states the researcher is the only one who is intimately involved enough with the accounts of all the participants to be able to bring together the collective account of the essences reflected in the individual accounts. The researcher's commitment to be faithful to his or her own thoughts and internal processes while simultaneously seeking to preserve the accuracy of the participants' experiences is portrayed by Moustakas as being critical in the development of the composite depiction. While I accept the responsibility I have in the development of this particular collective account, in an ideal situation, I would have brought the participants together in a focus group or a Talking Circle in which we could have all actively participated in the creation of a collective understanding of our experiences as qualitative researchers committed to ethical practice. Carter (2002) had the luxury of actually bringing a number of her participants together and she worked with them in the development of the composite depiction. This type of interaction was not possible during my study due to busy schedules, the time of the year the interviews were conducted and financial constraints. Nevertheless, the idea of maintaining the individual voices while creating a collective narrative stayed with me as I looked for a way to develop this composite depiction in a manner consistent with my constructivist epistemology and my relational understanding of the world. I also realized how important stories are to my understanding of social and

subjective reality and my desire and commitment to respect the stories shared with me during this research project.

Stories for me are a sacred trust and by sharing our personal narratives we share our humanity, form relationships, create new stories and generate knowledge which guides our human interactions. The significance of stories and the power of people gathering together to talk about life with its challenges and accomplishments was amplified for me in two very different settings. During the time I lived and worked in the highlands of Papua New Guinea, I loved going with my family to the mountain village of my "adopted" sister Armandia and her husband Paulo. The pace of life in the village was slower than where we lived and worked. A major event in the day occurred in the evening when the men would gather around a small fire in one of the thatch shelters and share stories. The women were not part of the men's circle. They were busy nursing babies and looking after the children who were already sleeping or playing nearby. As they carried out these responsibilities, they too shared stories of their lives.

As guests, my husband, our two boys and I were provided a room in Armandia and Paulo's home where we all slept. Sometime in the night, my husband would join me in our room and we'd share some of the stories we'd been part of during the evening. One evening my husband came to bed smelling like smoked meat and shared the following account.

"The fire was so small and smoky tonight. I volunteered to go and get more wood so we could make a bigger fire and get rid of some of the smoke, but Paulo said, 'No, Darryl, a big fire pushes people back by its heat. When we have a small fire, people can

be close to the fire and to each other. Friends never build a big fire. They want to be close and hear each other's stories.'" Years have passed since we last visited the village but I still feel a connection with the people who gather around small fires.

After returning to Canada, I decided to return to university. I missed Papua New Guinea, my adopted family and my friends at Ukarumpa. One day a First Nation's elder was a guest in one of our social work classes. He asked us to form a circle around him and in the middle he lit a woven chain of sweet grass. Gently he waved the tiny stream of smoke rising from the sweet grass into the room until it touched each of us and filled the room with its aroma. Quietly he carried the sweet grass around the circle asking those who wished to join in the symbolic cleansing ritual to waft the smoke over their being. Each of us reflected on our own life and as we did we were drawn together. I felt a sense of connection with those touched by the aroma of sweet grass and remembered those in Papua New Guinea who gather around small fires. My worlds felt like they had gently come together and I understood life in a new way. I left the room smelling of smoke, aware that my understanding of the world and human relationships would forever be influenced by the smell of sweet grass and the stories of people who gather around small fires.

These memories came to mind as I wrestled with how to create a collective account of the stories shared by those participating in this study. In preparation for writing this collective account, I had completed a number of important scientific "rituals" associated with heuristic inquiry. The first scientific ritual involved immersing myself in the individual accounts by listening repeatedly to the recorded interviews and reading and

re-reading the interview transcriptions. I recorded initial impressions on a spreadsheet and noted ideas in the conversations that were potential themes. As I moved through the recorded accounts, my spreadsheet became a metaphorical map of our conversations. This map became an artifact in this study and I returned to it repeatedly as I began working on creating this collective account. After a person's individual depiction was complete, it was sent to the participant for review. Two participants declined the invitation to be involved in the member checking process. The others reviewed their accounts and sent them back with comments. When I had a question or they wanted to provide further input or words of encouragement, we spoke by telephone or communicated by email. These contacts further developed the sense of connection I felt with the participants and their stories.

After completing the individual depictions, I circled back to the recorded materials and the transcriptions of the interviews to do a more in-depth thematic analysis of all the accounts. As part of this process, I created a master document in which I merged all of the transcribed interviews into one comprehensive Word document. This enabled me to do key word searches for all the interviews. The words were taken from ideas expressed during the interviews. Some of the words searched were relationship, human, interaction, method, methodology, social justice, and values. This was a helpful tool in the thematic analysis. I would use the word search function as a quick reference to see how often and in what context key words reflected in potential themes were used across all the interviews. When new themes were identified, they were added beside the appropriate cells containing the related pieces of conversation on my master spreadsheet

in order to keep my roadmap up-to-date. The thematic analysis enhanced my understanding of what was being said in the interviews but the information still felt somewhat disparate. This led me to engaging in the next scientific ritual, a question analysis (Morse & Field, 1995). While this type of analytic strategy is not an identified as part of Moustakas's (1990) methodology, I believe it is compatible with heuristics in that it allows the researcher a means of gathering all participants' responses together in a way that allows the researcher to gain a sense of the similarities and patterns across the participants' accounts.

A question analysis (Morse & Field, 1995) is described as an analytic approach useful in studies in which participants are asked the same questions in each interview. In this study, the questions identified in the interview guide were used to provide an overall structure to the interview process, which was conversational in its quality. During our conversations, ideas emerged that were not necessarily directly related to the original question but expanded the knowledge generation process. This spontaneous, conversational style of interview also created a level of openness in the interview that I believe contributed to the rich personal quality of the participants' accounts. Nevertheless, the questions on the guide provided the structure necessary to be able to utilize question analysis as one of the scientific rituals engaged in during this study.

The steps in my question analysis involved sorting participants' accounts by question and creating a Word document in which people's responses, using direct quotes, were organized by question and theme. The themes were drawn from the thematic analysis mentioned earlier and any new themes identified through the question analysis

were noted so they could be included in the development of the composite depiction. I also recorded ideas that came to mind as I worked with the participants' responses. Some of these came from within (internal heuristics) and some came from ideas presented in the literature (external heuristics). The question analysis gave me an increased understanding of the group's ideas but I still felt a bit at sea as to how to pull together all the information into a composite depiction. This feeling of being at sea, led me to engaging in another scientific ritual identified as being critical in heuristic inquiry. I took a break from working with the interview materials for a few days. Moustakas (1990) refers to this as the incubation process.

Stepping away from the content of the interviews, allowed me opportunity to revisit the literature and explore some of my own questions about the research process that had surfaced during my work. I also revisited the first three chapters of my dissertation, which I had set aside when I entered the interview process. Going back and reading what I had written almost 2 years earlier, proved to be very helpful in preparing me to create the composite depiction. I felt grounded again. I realized afresh why I had started this heuristic journey, my aspirations for this study and how important integrating creativity into the research process was to me. I also realized anew my commitment to keeping the accounts connected with people and not reducing their stories to a form of depersonalized data. I revisited my research question and saw within it the organizational structure I needed to pull together this composite depiction. I literally framed the following quotation and placed it in front of me on my desk as I re-engaged in the writing process.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY IS TO EXPLORE THE **MEANING** OF ETHICS IN THE MINDS OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCHERS AND TO DISCOVER HOW QUALITATIVE RESEARCHERS **IDENTIFY AND MANAGE ETHICAL CONCERNS** THAT ARISE IN **ETHICALLY IMPORTANT MOMENTS** THAT OCCUR OVER THE COURSE OF THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PROCESS.

ETHICALLY IMPORTANT MOMENTS ARE DIFFICULT, OFTEN SUBTLE, AND USUALLY UNPREDICTABLE SITUATIONS THAT ARISE IN THE PRACTICE OF DOING RESEARCH.

During this time of incubating, I considered writing this chapter in a more conventional style. But it felt like a reduction of the humanity of those who shared very personal aspects of their lives with me during our conversational interviews. I re-committed to finding a way to maintain the participants' individuality and the richness of their personal stories while creating this collective account. It was this commitment that led me to write this composite depiction as a conversation occurring during an imaginary Talking Circle.

Pat Paul, an elder for the Tobique First Nation, in New Brunswick, Canada provides the following description of the meaning and purpose of a Talking Circle. In the spirit of a Talking Circle, I contacted Pat by email indicating my desire to use his written description in my dissertation. He responded by granting me permission to use his work

(January 25, 2012) and indicated his desire was that the project go well, far and be meaningful. I wish to acknowledge Pat's contribution to the development of this study and welcome his presence into this imaginary Talking Circle. His description of a Talking Circle can be found on the following page.

TALKING CIRCLE
A PLACE FOR PEACE, HARMONY AND REFLECTION

The Talking Circle is a traditional instrument for dealing with the things that interfere with the normal everyday concerns of a person or their community whether the concern is trivial or serious in nature. The Circle may be applied safely and confidentially to resolve conflicts, misconceptions, disagreements or deeper problems.

It can be taken as both, an opening or a closing of a door, depending on the individual's circumstances or the objective in mind.

A Talking Circle is a place of comfort, wisdom, security and redress. It is where people come in search for new directions, abandoning the old, making amends, righting the wrongs and establishing new pathways for tomorrow.

It is a sacred place that is usually directed by a Circle leader, a mentor or a person of distinct nature and attachment to the spirit realm who intervenes and directs the flow of collective energies in the Circle.

The Talking Circle consists of a number of people, ranging from two to twenty for the best results, gathered together in a circular formation to share ideas, hopes, dreams, cares and energies in total unity and a sacred connection to one another.

It is also a place where individuals come to seek help, support, healing and understanding for any particular discomfort or instability they may have, or has been with them for some time.

The Circle is a protective shield of honesty, trust and comfort.

Confidentiality:

The material brought to the Circle is usually private, personal and/or confidential. As a general rule therefore, all material heard in the Circle stays in the Circle, unless a waiver or consent has been rendered beforehand.

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The description of how and why First Nations People use the Talking Circle to restore harmony to their communities was written by Pat Paul, the publisher and editor of the *Wulustuk Times*, a monthly publication. It was published in the November 2007 issue of the paper.

Pat is a member of the Maliseet First Nation Community of Tobique, located in New Brunswick, Canada. He can be contacted at: pesun@nbnet.nb.ca

This document may be found at: http://www.danielnpaul.com/TalkingCircle-FirstNations.html

The stories shared in the metaphorical Talking Circle that follows are for the most part the participants' own words. I introduce each question to be discussed and provide a summary statement at the end of each section of the dialogue addressing the question. However, I recognize that transforming spoken stories into written language is a transformational process which according to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) produces, "hybrids, artificial constructs that may be adequate to neither the lived oral conversation nor the formal style of written texts" (p. 178). On the up-side, these authors go on to state that "the interviewer's active listening and remembering may work as a selective filter, not only as a bias, but potentially also to retain those very meanings that are essential for the topic and the purpose of the interview" (p. 179). Recognizing the restrictions of written language and the alterations that will occur during the writing process, it is my desire that when this imaginary conversation is complete, those participating and those joining the conversation by reading it will say, "That was a good and useful conversation. I have a richer understanding of how the qualitative researchers involved in this study understand and enact ethics in their qualitative practices. Some of their ideas and experiences resonate with me and I am taking something away from this reading that is useful to me in my practice as a researcher, an instructor, or as a student."

Now, let me introduce you to the people involved in this conversation.

Introductions to the Participants

Kate: Kate is 26-years-old and the youngest member of our group. She has a Master's degree in sociology. She commenced her research during her undergraduate degree in sociology. She conducted an ethnography of heavy metal concert goers and is part of a group of researchers who are currently conducting an multinational qualitative study on financial strain in middle income families in Canada and the United States. Kate has been directly involved in conducting qualitative research for the last 5 years.

Sarah: Sarah is 39-years-old and has a PhD in psychology. She conducted her first research project in 1993 and continued doing some research over the next several years. In 2005 she accepted an academic position in which part of her role as an academic was to conduct research. She has conducted research consistently since then. Sarah's research is primarily conducted within schools and has involved the use of mixed methods, focus groups and occasionally semi-structured interviews. She does not position herself in any particular research camp and states that she has a broad stroke overview of qualitative approaches to research.

Jake: Jake is 34-years-old and has a Master's degree in Social Work. He initially trained as a quantitative researcher and has 10 years of research experience. During his Master's program, Jake began using grounded theory in his research and his subsequent work has focused on domestic violence and concerns related to the lives of new Canadians.

Ken: Ken is 53-years-old and has a PhD in Counselling Psychology. He describes himself as a novice researcher who has completed a school-based quantitative study using

relaxation training with children and his doctoral dissertation in which he used hermeneutics to explore the meaning graduate-level counselling psychology students made of their educational experience.

Leticia: Leticia is 54-years-old and has a PhD in Counselling Psychology. She has two Master's degrees which are in sociology and counselling psychology. Leticia is an academic and has been doing qualitative research for 13 years. Her research includes local, national and international studies. Much of her research focuses on educational issues and concerns relating to immigrant and refugee populations.

Wisetonian: Wisetonian is 73-years-old and has a Master's degree in Social Work and a PhD in Applied Social Studies. He is a retired academic who has 25 years experience conducting quantitative and qualitative research in his academic position. Between 1980 and 1997 he secured approximately 1.3 million dollars in research grants. Wisetonian continued conducting research following retirement and has an additional 20 years experience conducting various types of community-based research. Much of his research focuses on health related issues including hemophilia and the experience of people living with HIV/AIDS. Two days before our interview Wisetonian had returned from a research-based health conference in which he met and worked with a group of researchers continuing to conduct studies around hemophilia and aging.

Eva: Eva is 35-years-old and has a Master's degree in Counselling Psychology. She is currently completing a doctoral program in counselling psychology and is focusing her research on issues relating to immigrant and refugee populations. She has been doing qualitative research for 7 years.

Mookie: Mookie is 58-years-old and has a PhD in Social Work. He also has two Master's degrees, one in history and the other in social work. He has 22 years of research experience and has secured over 8 million dollars in research funding. He has completed 20-25 studies which used qualitative methods as well as mixed methods. Mookie has been a member of his university's Research Ethics Board and has been an ethics reviewer for his faculty.

Phoebe: Phoebe is 62-years-old and has her PhD in Social Work. She has 16 years of research experience and has developed a research department in a community agency which has conducted both quantitative and qualitative studies on practical knowledge relating to social work practice which crosses disciplines.

George: George is 48-years-old and has his PhD in Counselling Psychology. He has 15 years of research experience, which has integrated the use of heuristic inquiry and transcendental phenomenology. He is currently an academic. His research interests focus on identity development and sexual orientation and topics related to same-sex marriage.

Lynda: That's me. I'd like to lie about my age, but that wouldn't be ethical, so I will disclose that I am 62-years-old. I am currently completing a PhD in Social Work at the University of Calgary. I have two Master's degrees, the first is an MA in Social Sciences with a major in cross-cultural leadership and the second is a Master's degree in Social Work. My professional experience combines my interest in clinical social work practice, education and research. My research experience is limited compared to others in this conversation. I have conducted an environmental scan assessing educational needs of domestic violence service providers working with families impacted by domestic abuse

in Alberta. I was also involved in developing a national survey used to assess the educational needs of Canadian clinicians working with clients impacted by domestic violence. My international research experience consists of conducting a community-based needs assessment for the Centres for Social Work in Kosovo following the war in that region.

On a personal note, I have lived and worked in western Canada, in the southern United States, northern Mexico, in the highlands and on the coast of Papua New Guinea (PNG) and in Kosovo. The years I lived in PNG permanently affected my understanding of the importance of relationships and the significance of our stories of life. These influences are evident throughout this work and contributed to my decision to write this composite depiction as a conversation among the researchers involved in this work in the Talking Circle portrayed below.

Talking Circle

Topic: Qualitative Research Ethics

Lynda: Thank you for coming together to talk about our understanding of qualitative research ethics and how we recognize and handle those ethically important moments that occur during our research projects. This discussion is timely, as it extends other conversations taking place among ourselves and our colleagues regarding qualitative research, ethics and issues such as the involvement of regulating bodies in the control and management of research. For example, recently (2010), the three major funders of research in Canada released the second edition of the Tri-Council Policy Statement on research ethics. In 2011 they launched a series of on-line training modules, which are now mandatory training for students submitting ethics applications to the Research Ethics Boards of at least some Canadian universities. For example, the University of Calgary, where I am studying, now requires those submitting ethics applications to the university's Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board (CFREB) to submit a Certificate of Completion for the 3-hour on-line training module provided by the Interagency Advisory Panel on Research Ethics (PRE).

The PRE also offers a series of webinars for researchers and members of university Research Ethics Boards (REBs). I have completed the 3-hour training and participated in the three follow-up webinars offered to date. The efforts of the Panel to have individuals informed regarding their policies emphasizes the importance currently being placed on research ethics within our academic circles and within the sphere of

influence of government funding bodies. These policies are important contextual realities that interface with our practice as Canadian qualitative researchers.

Our conversation today will focus on exploring the meaning of ethics for us as qualitative researchers and will look at how we identify and manage concerns that arise in ethically important moments that occur over the course of the qualitative research process. I will introduce several questions to be addressed in this conversation and will present a summary statement at the point where we sense our conversation is ready to transition to a new question. In the spirit of a Talking Circle, during this conversation we are free to agree and disagree with each other, seek clarification and take away from this experience what is useful and helpful, leaving anything else behind. Let's begin by talking together about the following question.

Question #1: In light of your understanding and experience as a qualitative researcher, what does the term, *qualitative research ethics,* mean to you?

In the conversation that follows, researchers share what qualitative research ethics means for them. Their conversation reveals a commitment to upholding their responsibilities and duties as social scientists, pushing an ethic of care beyond ensuring no harm is done to the point at which the researcher and the scientific community is responsible for ensuring qualitative research benefits the participants, their community and ultimately society. Qualitative research ethics requires researchers to also attend to sound methodological practices while simultaneously attending to the human relationships that are integral to the qualitative research process. The conversation also reveals the complexity of qualitative research ethics. It is not a subject taken lightly by

anyone participating in the Talking Circle. We join the conversation as Wisetonian expresses his initial response to the question.

Wisetonian: (Taking a deep breath.) Oh, yoi.

Kate: Gosh (whispered under her breath) . . . I don't know (spoken softly in a reflective manner) . . . I've got to break it down into each part . . . so, for me, ethics is, and this applies to any sort of research, conducting your research in a way that you leave things or people the way you found them. There could be positive things that come out of the interaction but nothing negative happens. There's no harm to them, there's no harm to you or anything else and you're treating one another in a respectful way. When you introduce the qualitative component, that people part, you are dealing with people's stories, their feelings, and their interpretations of the world so having rapport and things like that are important. Qualitative research ethics is about ensuring that **people** come out of the experience in a positive way; that they're growing and learning about themselves. As well, I'm learning and becoming a better researcher—and nothing bad happens.

Leticia: I agree that the term ethics refers to conducting research in a respectful, informative and contributing way. Some of that is not represented in all codes of ethics. So, ethics to me is about a position one takes as a researcher. It's about a relationship one has with one's participant that is not specified in a code of ethics. Rather, it's a philosophy, a way of being as a researcher in terms of relationship with participants and honoring their experiences. The difference for me in qualitative research is that you get to know and bear witness to experiences in far more detail than you would in quantitative

methods. So, I see the research relationship as being a primary difference between the two general schools of research.

I also agree with another point Kate raised. I think of research as being a transformative process. It may be transformative for participants, or not, depending on their experience. The results of the research may be transformative of an issue or situation depending on how it is used. There is also the potential that it is transformative for the researcher. You bear witness to experiences in ways that you wouldn't otherwise. Depending on how one is reflective about the material, or how that knowledge impacts someone, that can be transformative as well.

Kate's right about codes of ethics. They do bind us to certain behaviours and doing no harm but what if we turn that around and said research should do some good? That becomes contested in terms of good defined by whom? But hopefully, it would be some good or benefit to the actual participants.

Ken: I think Leticia raises an interesting thought regarding qualitative research and the meaning of ethics. I too am interested in understanding people's experiences and the quality of their experiences. Research means you're doing something in a systematic disciplined way. It's not just, let's chat about some stuff and figure out some ideas, right? For our conversations to qualify as research, our work needs to be systematic and disciplined. We are accountable to our ethical standards, our Research Ethics Boards, the standards within our particular professions and for following established practices. If there are no established practices then it would be following a set of established principles. Ethics means accountability: to the educational institutions, our discipline, but

most importantly, accountability to the participants; to treat them well and to ensure we are representing them in the way they want to be represented in our account of the research. There's this line between the ethical and the methodological. I think it's a bit of a false distinction. I think about research as the philosophical basis of the research, the methodological basis and the ethical basis of the research, they all feed each other. The other false demarcation is that which exists between risk management and ethical practice. If you bend over backwards to treat people well, you're managing risk, right? If you bend over backwards as a researcher to be respectful, to not take things for granted and not take people for granted, then you're managing risk.

Wisetonian: Leticia and Ken raise important points. Qualitative research is grounded in experience, which can be looked at in two ways: by going internally and taking apart the meanings of participants' experiences from an almost existentialist perspective or phenomenological point-of-view or by using one of the more "removed" approaches like grounded theory. While ethics, in my mind, is a branch of philosophy pertaining to the rightfulness and wrongfulness of human acts in relation to the human search for the good, when you get into the issue of ethics in qualitative research, there is the absolute obligation to behave ethically in relation to the subject matter *and* the participant. The expertise researchers bring is the knowledge of the rules and regulations and the principles of the methodology. In research, the rightful or wrongfulness of their acts, is how consciously they follow their conscience in the application of those skills.

Ken: I guess that's where the methodological and the ethical might kind of play back-and-forth.

Sarah: That reminds me of a tricky situation I encountered while supervising one of my students. The student was using a qualitative approach which utilized a certain kind of interview with a very small group of participants. The researcher had established a rigorous screening process. A potential participant contacted my student regarding participating in the study but was not selected to participate because of the criteria specified in the screening process. The person was very, very upset that she had not been chosen to participate in the study and called me as the student's supervisor. I felt an ethical obligation as the supervisor of this particular research project to spend a fair amount of time with this lady to help her understand that, in fact, it was not a reflection on her, but a reflection on the study. I didn't want someone to feel badly about herself, to make her feel not good enough. That was a tricky, very tricky situation because I was trying to understand how the potential participant might feel, while at the same time I was recognizing that my student was 100% correct that the person should have been screened out of the study for the reasons clearly outlined in the research method. I was trying to balance the human element with the methodological demands of the study in the most ethical kind of way.

Wisetonian: Your comments, Sarah, highlight how at each stage of the research process the methodology describes how you should proceed. Faithfulness to the methodology **is** the ethics. But the whole essence of the business is a relationship and about how to use yourself in the most appropriate manner to assist people in working through their difficulties. So, every move you're making is intentionally, hopefully, designed for that end. And when we don't we've strayed from really good ethical behavior. You know,

"Well, I shouldn't have said that," or "This was wrong." We do it very clumsily; we all do, because it's a clumsy business. We're not like surgeons who know that if you go and cut right here and then sew it up it'll be all right. It's so different.

Jake: Method is important for me too. But when I think about ethics, I think ethics are about—it's grey—and your decision about how you are going to deal with that. It comes down to what is the good and right thing to do and what processes you use to come to that conclusion.

Eva: I hear what you are all saying, but for me, qualitative research is more about a collaborative process that occurs among those involved in the research project. In every community and in every group with which you interact there are certain rules, regulations and norms according to which the group behaves and acts. I would say there is a certain code of ethics by which each group operates. In heuristic inquiry for example, you start with yourself but you then gradually build a community of co-researchers who do research together. In some way doing heuristics, as subjective as it may be, is a process of building the ethics code as you go, of what works for people and what doesn't work. You're checking in with your co-researchers and you're taking out information that is not accurate and you're including information that makes sense to them. In some way, you build your own code of conduct in that process. That sense of community, sense of sharing, sense of collaboration, definitely relates to how we build ethics, how we view ethics and how we define ethics to be in relation to our research.

George: Equality and the betterment of people are also important for me as a researcher.

Kate: That all sounds great, but there are also external guidelines that we have to consider. There is an external responsibility to others, not just the participants. There is responsibility to university as well, to protect them, to protect me and in that way to protect the university. There is an internal sense of pressure, an awareness that there is something I have to follow. I can't just do whatever I want to do because I think it's the right way to do it. I have to follow some rules if I want to be able to do the things I enjoy doing. While ethical expectations are wrapped up and hugely important in qualitative research, they are also important at the institutional level.

Phoebe: This conversation is interesting to me because I think ethics is about the kinds of things that come up when you have to make the best of a whole bunch of right decisions, choose the best one. Ethics is about how you choose the best one, when there are a number of good choices or when there's no good choice and somebody has to make a decision. They still have to make a decision and they still have to make the right one and please a whole lot of other people waiting for them to make the right decision. To me that's ethics. It sort of stands above the fray; you take a baby step and in each step you think about okay, what's the right thing to do now? The real challenge of ethics is to take a position that is at a higher level than most other decisions would be taken. It's not just following the rules. It's going beyond the rules that sometimes need to be broken, or sometimes you have to advocate for a different kind of a rule. In other cases you have to stay the course. For example in doing research it may be staying the course when other people would fudge it or say, "Oh well, that's okay if we don't do that part, that's okay." In doing qualitative research there are times when the mountain of data is so enormous

and you see it ahead of you and like, “Oh my God, how am I going to get through all of this?” It’s human nature to think about how you can cut corners. But to be ethical would be to say, “Well, but then, I wouldn’t find out what’s really there. I’d miss something.” And so you get yourself situated, grounded again, and you just go bit by bit through the whole thing, even though you’d like to be able to cut some corners.

Ken: I can relate to that!

George: Yeah, it’s important to me too that I get their stories right.

Phoebe: Yes, that was part of the reason why I analyzed by hand, line-by-line. I did that because I just didn’t trust the computer at all. I didn’t think the computer could figure out the richness of what was happening.

Leticia: For me, ethics goes beyond extrapolating data. I’m interested in how research can be applied in promoting social justice. In light of that, I have been trying to, in my work with students, look at ethics as not just a code, but really looking at practice, research ethics as practice. That has taken it a little bit further in terms of questioning the purpose of the research and how the research might be transformative in the lives of the participants. If we follow a value of social justice, that implies something different than just extrapolating data. I realize social justice is a “big term” but if I was to develop a principal of ethics in research pertaining to social justice it would be that research would somehow contribute back to the lives of participants and that is not spoken about directly or strongly in codes of ethics. In my mind, that’s pushing out an ethic of care and an ethic of responsibility in a stronger manner, because right now there’s really no mandate for that.

Mookie: Yes, qualitative research for me is a tool; it's another way to advocate for and on behalf of people, which is important in terms of the pursuit of social justice. So, that's where I'm coming from and that's the connections I make, for sure.

Eva: I certainly agree. And I also recognize that qualitative research may benefit the researcher *but* what you're doing is not just for your personal benefit, it's also for the benefit of others.

Jake: Yes, what's important is what is good for the greater good.

Eva: For sure, you always have to ask yourself why you are doing the research. Who is it for and what is its purpose?

Mookie: That raises the importance of our being accountable as researchers. Accountability is an important driver in qualitative research ethics and one of the ways we are accountable is to consider how our research will be of some benefit to not only the individuals but also to whatever community those individuals belong to. It's not for the sake of doing research just for doing research, that I come from, but I consider in what ways will it benefit the individual participants, their communities, and even at a much more macro level, how will it benefit society? I think we also have to be honest about how it is going to benefit us as individual researchers because we do benefit from having individuals participate in our studies.

Lynda: So accountability goes beyond the necessity for relational accountability during the interaction process to what happens as a result of the research at those different levels you mentioned, individual, community and ultimately, within society.

Mookie: Absolutely, let me provide an example. In the Racism Violence Health (RVH) study, the four main investigators were all of African descent. One of the questions we considered was, “What are we going to do with this research?” The research question wasn’t limited to just individuals because we were looking at it in the context of however one defines African or Black communities in the cities in which we were conducting the study. That question was based on individuals’ experiences; so here’s another group of researchers coming in and our circumstances haven’t changed. We were aware we had to engage the community first. So, one of the first things we did in terms of data collection was to have a series of community forums in each of the cities to share the nature of the research. But more importantly, we gave members of the community an opportunity to share with us and amongst themselves, their concerns in relation to the phenomena that we had identified. Those community forums impacted the nature and some of the questions we posed in terms of the quantitative survey and the nature of our qualitative interview guide. If we hadn’t done these things, we would have been accused as being no different from the other researchers who had worked within their communities.

Another thing we built into our process was that we asked questions of some of our participants regarding how they were impacted by being engaged in the research process. Patti Lather describes that as “catalytic validity.” In our team meetings we actually recorded our discussions, some of which focused on how we were impacted as researchers, Black researchers working with people within our own community. We extended the process of catalytic validity beyond the research participants and looked at how it impacted us as researchers working with quote, “our own community.”

Eva: That story resonates with me. I also conducted my research with other immigrants from my home country. Not only did I need to consider the purpose of the study for me but also how it would be of benefit for them. I also needed to acknowledge my own experience and what I was bringing into the study. No researcher in this world can be purely objective. To do ethical research you have to be congruent. The research has to be congruent with what is going on for you. But, it is not just for your personal benefit, it's also for the benefit of others.

Sarah: It's true. We can never separate the person from the researcher. The person, the researcher, the ethics, they are all in one. I was going to say, that for good researchers, research and ethics aren't separate things. The researcher doesn't **do** ethics, a researcher **is** ethics. But I don't think all researchers are like that and so that's why we need Ethics Boards and ethics policies. A researcher who doesn't have that ingrained as part of his or her person would say, "Well, I'm going to do *this* to get past ethics. But then maybe the way I conduct myself is a little wiggly, right?" That researcher is doing ethics. That researcher is jumping through the hoops. Ethics Boards approve projects *not* people, so I struggle with that.

Leticia: That's what I was referring to when I commented that research ethics to me is about a position one takes as a researcher. It's also about a relationship one has with one's participant that is not specified in a code of ethics.

Sarah: But doing research is never straightforward and when I think about qualitative research ethics, I think about complexity. I think about trying to make rules fit something they don't really fit. And, there's a difference between policy and the implementation of

the policy. The middle ground is communication and the qualitative researcher needs good communication skills. In the end, it comes down to the relationship and communication.

Wisetonian: Yes, the whole emphasis on self-awareness and the use of self in social work is a real core aspect of ethical qualitative research. The skill of the qualitative researcher is in the development of what we would call fundamental social work skills. They don't have to be owned by social work, they're owned by anybody who does that kind of qualitative research work.

Lynda: That's a great lead into a discussion regarding the influences that have contributed to our understanding of ethics, in particular qualitative research ethics. But before we move to addressing that question, let me try and articulate a summary statement of what we are saying regarding our understanding of the term *qualitative research ethics.* I've been making notes as we've talked and here is my summary statement. I'll use ***bold italics*** when I write this to identify that it's my attempt to capture the essence of what we have been saying.

Collective Meaning of Qualitative Research Ethics

Ethics pertains to the perceived rightfulness and wrongfulness of human acts in relation to the human search for the good. Qualitative research ethics is the process of deciding the good and right thing to do throughout the qualitative research process. Doing research is never straightforward and so qualitative research ethics is full of complexities. Sometimes, established ethical guidelines require researchers to try and make rules fit with something

they don't really fit. Acting ethically is not just following the rules; it's going beyond the rules that sometimes need to be broken, or sometimes advocating for a different kind of rule. In other cases it's about staying the course when other people would fudge it or say it's okay to not do a part of the research process. Thus, the real challenge of ethics is to take a position that is at a higher level than most other decisions would be taken and to consider what is good for the greater good. In so doing, there's the strict obligation to behave ethically in relation to the subject matter, the participants and other people involved with and impacted by the research project.

Qualitative research ethics is about relational accountability and the pursuit of social justice throughout the research process. Qualitative research ethics goes beyond ensuring no harm is done to conducting research for the purpose of the betterment of people. If you treat people well you attend to risk management. Equality, connection, collaboration, harmony, unity and being congruent as a person are guiding principles that are important in qualitative research ethics. Qualitative research ethics is also ensuring people come out of the research experience in a positive way. They are growing and learning about themselves, the researcher is learning and becoming a better researcher and nothing bad happens. If there is change, it's positive change. You cannot separate the person from the researcher. Thus, qualitative research ethics is also a philosophy, a way of being as a researcher.

Lynda: Did I get it? Okay, let's talk about the second question to be addressed in our Talking Circle today.

Topic: Influences on Ethical Development

Question #2: What influences have been significant in the development of your understanding of qualitative research ethics?

The participants in this Talking Circle identify three major influences on the development of their understanding of qualitative research ethics. These include: personal influences (i.e., family upbringing, cultural influences and for some, influences they attribute to personality traits); the influence of their professional training including classes in ethics and the influence of professional role models; and lastly, the influence of lessons learned during research experience. We join the conversation as Eva speaks of the influence of her grandfather on her understanding of ethics.

Personal Influences

Eva: One of the most influential people in my life was my grandfather. He was a person who had a strong sense of ethics the way I would perceive an ethical person to be. For him ethics meant really doing no harm to anybody; really trying to look at whatever event, incident, or whatever, from multiple angles and trying to understand the other person's point of view; not condoning any monstrous act or any kind of tortuous activity; and always putting things in perspective. He would look at a person and say, "Okay, well there's that person's experience, our experience and in the middle, experience that we create." I think my understanding of ethics started there.

I also think the society in which I lived influenced my understanding of research ethics. Prior to the war we learned to live together—no matter how different we were. It was symbolic, like the creation of a tribe in itself, where all the nations lived together. My morals weren't necessarily questioned. People who were very different suddenly lived together, but they managed. I think those experiences of connection, collaboration, harmony, and unity created the knowledge that shapes how I view the world and how I view my personal sense of ethics.

Jake: I connect with a lot of what Eva has said as I grew up in a collective environment. But, I've always been very perceptive and intuitive and I'm a firm believer in energy. I describe myself as a chameleon and I know what is going on for somebody else when I notice it in the pit of my stomach. It's almost like this spiritual connection piece. Where does that come from? It could be biological *or* it could be from growing up in a collective environment where you couldn't think as an individual. You have to think about everybody else and how they might be impacted by your behavior and the consequences for you and to them as a group. So, it could be environmental too.

Kate: That's deep (sighing and laughing a little nervously). I don't want to just bring it back to, "That's how my parents raised me—is to be respectful," but I think I've always sort of felt empathy towards other people. I always try to ask myself, "How does it feel to be in that person's shoes?" So, it's about wanting to feel what the other person could be feeling. I never want it to be negative. That's that how I approach things generally . . . that's how I've sort of always been.

Wisetonian: Well, I think my undergraduate philosophy courses were really good and I took 4 years of moral theology. All together I did about 6 or 7 years of studies in ethics. But, more fundamental than that were influences from my upbringing. I grew up in a small prairie community in western Canada and probably the strongest value I came to hold would be in the area of honesty. That honesty was fundamental to pioneer and prairie life. My father had a grocery store and you dealt honestly with customers because they were your bread and butter, and if they didn't deal honestly, well, then, you didn't deal with them, and so forth. I think that whole question of honesty and integrity was instilled in childhood.

Mookie: There are definitely some experiences that have led me, probably directed me, in that pathway. First of all, I'll talk about my family and their experiences. When I talk about my family I'm not talking specifically about my parents, but also my grandparents and my great uncles. I'm a third-generation Black Canadian—Afro-Canadian. My grandparents and great uncles, six of them, came to Canada starting in 1912. They all ended up in Montréal. They were recipients of different forms of racism, overt and covert, but probably more overt. Both my grandfathers were skilled tradesmen, carpenters. For Black men, the best job they could get was working on the railroad as porters.

Recently, I read a fascinating book produced from a PhD thesis written by Sarah Jane Matthew, *North of the Color Line,* where she talks about Black railroad porters on the Canadian Pacific Railway and the Canadian National Railway. So, looking at what they experienced from a male perspective and also looking at one of my grandmothers

and one of my great aunts—one worked in a laundromat under horrendous conditions and my grandmother on my maternal side did what they called “day work,” which is domestic work—I recognize their influence in my life. I was very close to my grandparents, my great uncles and great aunts as I had the privilege of being their first grandson and their first nephew. Seeing what they had to endure—not being able to maximize their full potential—with the exception of my one great uncle who became a minister—but he had to fight. He was more than just a minister; he was everything, a minister, a social worker and a counselor. The battles he took on were for individuals at an individual level who were also dealing with a whole range of systemic issues, such as getting Black women into nursing school, getting Black men into the Canadian military, and all kinds of issues in terms of landlords. I think those were very, very powerful influences, role models and mentors. It's that whole notion of social justice at a family and personal level.

Also, I've always been interested, in what I saw in 1964 or ’65 in Los Angeles in terms of African Americans. Those influences were the reason why at an undergraduate level I was interested in African American history and then at the Master’s level got into African history. Issues of social justice, fairness, and ethics, I think either consciously or unconsciously, have been part of my personality probably since I was 15 or 16-years-old.

More recently, the experience I've gone through in terms of being diagnosed with cancer and having surgery, caused me to think of one of my uncles and my family’s experience. I have a picture of one of my uncles who passed away of cancer. He lived in the flat where my great uncle and my great aunt lived. It's a very elegant picture and it's in my living room. During my recovery, I looked up at his picture and I said, “I'm going

to take it easy in terms of, you know, a slower pace." But, in seeing that picture and reading the book *North of the Color Line*, there was a strong reaffirmation that when I need to stand up in terms of issues of social justice, whatever they are, I'm going to continue to do that.

I have those role models. But it's more than just role models. It's an ethical and moral responsibility that that's what I need to do. I quote Spike Lee (Mookie, in the 1989 movie *Do the Right Thing*[3])—I'm going to *do the right thing* when it comes to issues of social justice. It has those ethical and moral tones, and it applies in terms of the research, and as a researcher.

Lynda: Mookie, I need to just sit with that for a bit . . . the influence of your family . . . inspired you at a very deep level.[4] What other influences have been significant in people's understandings of qualitative research ethics?

Influence of Professional Training

Sarah: Well, I think I'm pretty lucky as a person who is trained as a psychologist. We are required, in fact mandated by our professional bodies, to have a minimum amount of knowledge around ethics. So, I feel like I have a really strong background in ethics going all the way through to a PhD and having an ethics course in all of those different degrees.

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[3] ***Do the Right Thing*** is a 1989 American dramedy, produced, written, and directed by Spike Lee. The movie tells the story of a neighborhood's simmering racial tension, which comes to a head and culminates in a neighborhood riot and loss of life. In 1999, the movie was deemed "culturally significant" by the U.S. Library of Congress, and was preserved in the National Film Registry, one of just five films to have this honor in their first year of eligibility. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Do_the_Right_Thing.

[4] At the time I did the interview, I had no idea of the significance of the pseudonym "Mookie." But, while writing this composite depiction, I took time to look up Spike Lee and *Do the Right Thing*, on the internet (see footnote #3). The ethical and moral questions raised in this movie centre on the meaning of social justice. Mookie, in this account, clearly upholds his commitment to the ongoing pursuit of social justice. I was so moved by his words I wanted to clap, thump the table, and affirm my own commitment to the pursuit of social justice! In my imagination, I envisioned others involved in this project joining with me in affirming the importance of our joint commitment to the pursuit of social justice. Then the clapping stopped. Each of us, in our own time, turned to continue our work.

Quite honestly, I often wonder how other professions get "acculturized" to research ethics.

Leticia: I also had a healthy dose of reviewing codes of ethics as a graduate student, but I have tried to take that a little further in my work with graduate students. I have been trying to look at ethics as not just a code, but really looking at practice, research ethics as practice.

Wisetonian: I had 6 or 7 years of studies of moral theology and ethics. But more fundamental than that was my upbringing that I talked about earlier.

Influence of Supervisors, Mentors and other Professional Role Models

Jake: I think for me it's learning from others, having really good mentors and also seeing what happens to people who are unethical. My supervisor was really good at helping coach me into how to deal with ethical concerns. The university has its ethics that it needs to have in place. That seems to be more on the practical side in terms of data storage, no harm done to the participants, those kinds of philosophies. But I'm not so sure that the Ethics Board can get at all the ethical issues that will come up. I think there's a lot of responsibility on the researcher and the supervisor. That's something my supervisor and I chatted about *all* the time. He was actually quite good. Whenever an ethical issue came up we would meet and discuss it and move forward, so we would kind of co-develop how it should be handled.

Sarah: I feel an ethical obligation as the supervisor.

Eva: But, that isn't always the case. I haven't seen my supervisor for 4 months now.

Lynda: So interaction with a mentor or a supervisor is an important piece?

Eva: Absolutely. My mentor has influenced that sense of ethics by encouraging me to search myself at length. To question why I would go in a certain direction, to stop me, when I needed to be stopped, when my research was becoming my personal vendetta of avenging whatever needed to happen.

Wisetonian: Yes. If I'm doing qualitative research to try to prove that my experience is validated, then that is inappropriate. If I use manipulated validation of my experience as validation of my activism and validation of my crusader rescuer fantasy instincts, then that's unethical behavior. When that occurs, you're not really looking for the experience. You're looking for the things in the experience that you can use as clubs for attacking the oppressors. I think that's probably what many qualitative researchers go through, in that we probably start out that way, but then we find that the methodology imposes a discipline on us that causes us to [laughs] . . . I would argue for its therapeutic effects, that in fact it helps us to work through our own issues, so the issues are no longer so much our own issues as they are in fact the pursuit of truth and the desire to make contributions because of the truth that is found, as distinguished from the scars and the hurts that are seeking revenge. The job of the supervisor is to try to be sure that the methodology is being used appropriately. That's probably also the role of advisory groups. I also think that's an important aspect of member checking and those steps that address the concepts of faithfulness and trustworthiness. Those things are built into the methodology, which are then built into assuring ethical behavior. Helping people to learn is a combination of practice and supervision. It's very much a mentoring business. My lessons in research have led to the absolute conviction that you grow researchers. How?

Through mentoring, the same way that people learn any other trade, if you will pardon the expression. You learn from the masters, by imitation, by assimilation and by integration.

Influence of Research Experience

George: I agree. I think the ethical code for psychologists and the code of conduct has had some influence on me. That's more from the "head" perspective. But, I can never get away from the notion that unless I have something that I can relate to in my experience, I find it really hard to incorporate it into my life. Regarding qualitative research ethics, a lot of that development has really occurred not through something I could read, not through something that someone else can tell me, but it's been through me getting out there and doing it. That which I experience I truly own and that which I don't experience, the best I can ever do is to try to understand it, but it's always out there. Until it's in here and here (points to his head and his heart) it doesn't change my behavior all that much, truthfully. It feels like I'm just following rules, I'm not following who I am. Sometimes the two things do not mesh.

Jake: Yes, and sometimes theory and practice don't mesh either. One of my psychology professors drilled ethics into our heads in every course. I think I took 10 courses from her and in each course we had a whole hour on ethics. But, in all honesty, I think some of this ethics stuff is experiential. You have a policy that talks about how to deal with certain things that might be ethical. You have a textbook that tells you how things should be, but I think when you're in the moment and having to fly by the seat of your pants and make decisions . . . it can change your perception. The ethical process evolves and changes. It's

about being comfortable with that, being mindful of it and knowing your intentions. I think there is a lot of responsibility on the researcher and the supervisor.

Kate: I think I was very lucky; I had really good professors who incorporated actual experiences from a researcher's perspective of doing interviews into the course. Issues were highlighted and sensitivity was highlighted as, "Well, you need to think about this, and think about it in a way that your research could be sensitive for the participant." I'd never experienced doing research, so it was like, "Okay, whatever; it's not going to happen to me." Then when it does, you're like, "Oh crap, I should have prepared better."

Lynda: Kate, that's a great summary of how I'm sure we've all felt from time to time as we are confronted with having to respond in those ethically important moments that arise in the practice of doing research. Perhaps, this is a good time to shift to talking about such moments we've experienced and how we managed the ethical concerns evident in those situations. But before we do, I'd like to take a moment and summarize briefly the influences that we collectively see affecting our understanding of qualitative research ethics.

Collective Account of Influences on Ethical Development

Personal influences are fundamental in our ethical development. As a group, we also recognize the influence of our professional training and the significant role supervisors and other professional mentors have had in our growth as ethical researchers. Lastly, there's nothing quite like the lessons learned as we have moved theory into practice. Experience, guided by good supervision, is a critical aspect of helping prepare researchers to manage ethical concerns that arise over the course of

qualitative research projects. Ethical concerns may be difficult situations to handle and they may be subtle and unpredictable, but they must be addressed.

I am very interested in learning more about these ethical concerns and how we identify and manage them over the course of the qualitative research process. The next three questions actually go together, so feel free to address any or all of these questions.

Topic: Ethically Important Moments

Questions #3, 4, and 5: What has your experience been in considering and utilizing research ethics in your research? What qualities or dimensions of this experience stand out for you; for example, what examples are vivid and alive to you? During these moments, what feelings and thoughts did these experiences generate for you? How did you respond? What events, situations and people are connected with your experience?

In the following cycle of the Talking Circle, the participants identify ethically important moments that occurred during their research projects. Ethically important moments, as defined by Guillemin and Gillam (2004), are "difficult, often subtle, and usually unpredictable situations that arise in the practice of doing research" (p. 262). Jake echoes these ideas and states, "You can never know what dynamics [will] come up, so it is about thinking fast on your feet." Kate talks about dismissing concerns expressed about ethical considerations in research class by telling herself, "That won't happen to me," and then when a participant becomes emotional during an interview, saying to herself, "Oh my God, nobody's ever cried in an interview before, what do I do?"

Other researchers speak of times when ethically important moments arise for them when they are working on their data, alone and fatigued, and they are tempted to cut corners in order to just get done. Doubts flood their minds and they question the significance of their work. As Eva, exclaims in a moment of doubt, “Who’s going to read this shit anyway?” These words and the accounts that follow, reflect the humanity of those doing qualitative research. The accounts seem to be clustered around two major themes: Ethical challenges related to human factors or *social* aspects of qualitative research and ethical challenges related to *scientific* aspects of qualitative research including methodology and the researcher’s adherence to the methodology’s ascribed research methods. The interdependence between the social and the scientific in qualitative research is clearly seen in the ethically important moments identified. We enter the conversation as Leticia shares an ethically-laden experience (a series of ethically important moments) that occurred during a national study involving community members from different ethnocultural groups in which ethics around trust and respect in research relationships become ethical considerations.

Ethical Considerations in Research Relationships

Leticia: I had a very important experience, which I would call a critical incident, where I was on a national research team and we invited ethnocultural community members to provide input into the kinds of questions that would shape the research. The invitation was made with the understanding that they could actually shape those questions. But what became very apparent to me in the process was that this was not the agenda. The agenda was to *convince* ethnocultural communities that the questions and direction of the research project would be a good thing for them. There was a mismatch between the

openness of the invitation and the actual practice. I felt very strongly about the difficulties that posed and how offended one community was. It was a big experience for me and in looking at it now it is an issue of authenticity with participants. There were all sorts of power dynamics involved in that particular issue. You need to be very careful about what you represent to participants, what's possible, and not make invitations or promises that aren't possible to keep.

Lynda: That experience called you to attend to your own understanding of what ethics meant in doing qualitative research.

Leticia: Yes, but it also really spoke to me about the meaning of power connected to ethics, because I felt there was a disempowering of the community members. The researchers held all the power and ultimately we determined or pulled rank in terms of how the research process would unfold. As a result, we lost participation by one ethnocultural community. The lesson for me was the difference between *working* collaboratively and promising collaboration and not following through.

Lynda: Do you remember in that project where that awareness became evident to you, that there was a discrepancy between what you had conceptualized and said and what you were able to do? Do you remember where and when you became aware of that?

Leticia: When I provided feedback to the research team from the community members and heard all sorts of reasons why we couldn’t be flexible, why we couldn’t incorporate their feedback, it became very apparent to me that the intent and action were not matching. I was alarmed. It raised all sorts of questions about my responsibilities on the team, my responsibilities to the communities we were working with and what I could or

could not provide. That was a huge ethical dilemma for me, because I felt that that project did damage to relationships with particular ethnocultural communities. I went through a real range of emotions as well. I remember during the meeting feeling stress and anxiety because it became apparent that I needed to appease the situation, to try and work out those relationships. I felt anger as I discussed these issues with some colleagues around the project, not just local colleagues but at the national level where there seemed to be a lot of inflexibility.

I feel a sense of shame around parts of that project, I do. As a professional, I feel some sort of professional shame. I think it goes back to wanting to be authentic and honorable as a researcher. I think we have responsibilities to the *people* we engage with in our research. Research isn't just about us and our mandates; we really need to be looking at what matters to the people we're researching within our projects.

Lynda: When you think about the feelings that went along with that discovery, I'm interested in knowing if there were any physiological cues you attended to?

Leticia: Well, that would be my sort of normal stress reaction [laughs] where I get that feeling in my stomach, or lots of different thoughts going through my head at the time.

Eva: I relate to Leticia's experience. I had an initial interview with everyone. Then I wrote their stories and sent the stories out for everybody to read so they could tell me if there was anything they would like to add or if there was anything that didn't make sense. That was a really good process because everybody came back with feedback regarding how profound it was to actually read their stories as told from my perspective. When I analyzed all of the data I put the themes in a table. There were 75 themes. I sent the

themes to everybody and then phoned people and went through the questionnaire and checked off whether the themes stood out for them or not. I sensed some of the co-researchers just wanted to get through the process. It was rushed. There was no connection. We were more connected reading those stories. That was more important to them, and this felt just . . . imposed. It was just another questionnaire, you know? That's where I felt, are you guys doing this because you want to just give me the answers that you think I'm expecting? Or are you being truthful? There was no way for me to assess that, really. That's where I questioned if this was going to contribute negatively to my data? That is one thing I don't think I would do again.

Lynda: Uh-huh, so when you recognized this moment of awkwardness and questioned the process of your research, did you see that connecting back to your ethics?

Eva: Yes, because in some ways I think another questionnaire was possibly overwhelming for people. I didn’t explain the purpose of that questionnaire. I presented it as a list of all things that I had extracted from our transcripts and asked if we could look through it together while we're talking on the phone and the person could tell me which ones to check off as applying to them. It wasn't as personal. At that point people started losing interest. I would say ethics-wise it had the potential of completely ruining the perception of what this research was about for the co-researchers. I felt I was pushing myself to the edge where I was saying, “Let me just get it over with.” I wouldn't question any further whether or not what they were checking off was meaningful for them.

I don't know how to explain what was unethical for me. I think what was unethical for me was that at that point I wanted to finish and I caught myself thinking on

few occasions, I don't care what they say. What they say is what they say; I'll take it at face value. I won't question it, even if there is that sense in me saying, “This is not right, you need to bring it up.” I caught myself thinking I don't want to bring it up, I want to finish. Who cares? Who's going to read it anyway? I was getting caught up in that dialogue of, “Nobody's going to read this, who gives a shit whether they answer honestly or not.”

Lynda: So had you become incongruent with your own values at that point?

Eva: I think so, on some level. I didn't feel like I accomplished anything. I had that gut feeling that this is just not right. This is not telling me anything. Then, I went back full circle to thinking okay, what do I share? How do I now share something additional that I didn't say I was going to do with people? How do I take another hour of their time in order to have this process resolved? That was my process of thinking about how I would go back and ask them to do yet another thing. I decided to send them the composite depiction and the creative synthesis. It worked out fine because they were more interested in reading stories than answering questionnaires.

Another thing I would add to the physical feelings I experience is restlessness. When I’m restless I know there is something that needs to be tended to, whether it be ethical, unethical, personal or whatever. It’s that sense of not being able to ground myself and being kind of like the Energizer Bunny. Those are moments when my body is saying slow down, stop, listen to me, there is something going on. That restlessness can also be a great indicator of when you need to engage in self-care.

Self-Care as an Ethical Consideration

Lynda: Do you see self-care of the researcher as being connected to ethics?

Eva: Absolutely.

Lynda: How so?

Eva: I think if you don't take care of yourself and if you don't tend to those moments when you are struggling, when you are ruminating, when you are just stuck, the downward slope to becoming unethical is huge.

Ken: I agree. Behaving ethically and honoring the perspectives of the participants takes time and attention to detail, when you're in the midst of a busy life. All this detail oriented stuff is so time-consuming and I just want to get done. So, it's time pressure, thoroughness, diligence, all that relates back to self-care. That's when practitioners have ethical lapses and I think that's also when researchers have ethical lapses.

Mookie: In my experience, self-care also relates to being aware of our emotional responses and shifts in our thinking about ourselves and others. I think doing research evokes a range of emotions for example, feelings of anger, being upset and we ask, “How could this be? What type of world do we live in?” How does one handle that type of impact? My research team and I addressed concerns like this while studying racism and violence and we found we needed to talk about these things with our colleagues. It's important to have support systems. We'd also talked about our concerns as a team because I think we all experience these effects. We decided nobody would do more than two interviews in a day. For example, I wouldn't read four or five transcriptions in a row. I put the same limitations on myself because some of the stuff was hard to take.

In our study, on some levels we were insiders but we were also outsiders. When it came to experiences of racism, we were definitely insiders. I remember a team discussion where we talked about how we were researching the experience of others, but at the same time, in a parallel process, we were also researching about ourselves. For example, at different times in my life, I had lived in each of the three sites in which we did the study. I knew what it was like to be one of four Black students in a school of 1500 asking myself the question, “How come there are only four of us?” I think being upfront and acknowledging our thoughts and feelings was why we set limits and attended to the impact of the research on the participants but also ourselves. I have never coined it in this way, but yes, we were the researchers, but we were also research participants. My dialogue with you has allowed me to coin it that way.

Lynda: You were talking about the interface between us as researchers and us as co-participants. It’s interesting how our experiences can parallel the process of the participants. You were also talking about self-awareness and self-care as ethical concerns.

Mookie: Oh, definitely [laughs], definitely.

I'll give you another example. I worked with a Master’s student who was looking at the experiences of immigrant refugee women who had been impacted by both state and domestic violence. I'm [heavy sigh] very candid, this stuff is hard to take. When I was reviewing this student's transcripts, I had the same type of feelings as I had when I was working in the racism and violence project. I remember one of the comments I made to the co-facilitator who was also male, after being in a 2-hour session with a group of six

immigrant refugee women. I remember turning to the co-facilitator and saying, “Men, men are such bastards.” Some of the stuff we heard destroyed some of the myths about the nature of human interaction and the nature of Canadians.

You have to look at it. I think research can have psychological and emotional impacts and for me it also had physiological impacts because I wouldn't sleep. So [PAUSE] we have to build in that element of self-care . . . because if you don't it could be destructive. I see no difference in terms of self-care for researchers when they're dealing with sensitive issues and people who have experienced the gamut of different forms of trauma.

George: I agree with Mookie. I actually lost quite a bit of sleep when I was writing the book that recorded the stories I collected during my research. I worried and thought; Am I doing the right thing? Is it okay? Some of these people are well-known figures and even though I disguised their stories the best I could, you cannot disguise all the details of their lives otherwise you wouldn’t have a story. That’s a risk in qualitative research.

Confidentiality as an Ethical Consideration in Qualitative Research

Sarah: That’s true. It becomes a challenge to protect your participants from being known when a small number of participants are involved in a study. In one study, I ended up with only six participants in a sort of focus group, semi-structured interview. I had to really think about how I was going to present my data, so as not to identify the people who were part of that project. If I could redo that project, I would completely change the consent forms so that if my participants were okay with being identified, there would be a

way for that to happen. I actually lost a lot of richness from the dialogue that happened among that group of people because it was pretty easy to identify who it was.

George: Confidentiality took a new ethical dimension for me when one of my participants died during the course of my research. When I was doing my dissertation, I wanted to interview people who were HIV positive. This one guy was just an amazing individual. He was an artist and had a personality that just really brought me in. So, I spent 3 hours with him. He showed me all of his art and it was just remarkable. When I left I was so uplifted and just excited. He was so dynamic, and he was a schoolteacher. Then he passed away before my dissertation was complete.

I decided to go to his—I think they called it a celebration—so, I went to where that was being held. The place was completely packed and I just sat in the back row. His family was there and the question I had in my mind was this; I have his story and he told me that even his family didn't know much of this story and so I really debated if this was a story that I could share with them? He's dead, but is it a story I could share with his family? Wouldn't that be quite a keepsake, to know some of the things about your child or your brother that you didn't know? I thought maybe they would cherish it. But I also didn't know whether it would be something I could release, whether it would be right to do that. There was some stuff in his story too that might be a bit off-putting to his family. He talked about being abused as a child and I didn’t know how much the family knew about that. It raised a real ethical question for me. I put myself in the position of his parents. If I was the parent of this person who just died and everybody loved, would I want that story? It went into my dissertation and the book I wrote. But his family is

French so what's the likelihood that one of them would pick up either documents and read them in English? There's sadness in that for me. But the sadness is also in not knowing the right thing to do. When you die, does anything change?

I never went and checked it out with the ethics people as I was just caught in the emotion. I spent most of the time crying. In fact in the celebration, people there seemed much more composed than I. Yet, I was the one who knew him the least. That was a strange personal experience for me, to be grieving and to be grieving intensely. Yet I had only known this person for 3 hours. I think some of it, for me, was about my son and daughter. I was attending a university in a city away from my children and I was missing them a lot. I kept going back to the thought that if my son or daughter died and someone had interviewed them a few months before the death and found out positive things about how they developed into a person, I'd sure want to read that story. It would be something I would hold dear for the rest of my life.

Only in qualitative research would I get moved to that degree. We get into the heart and soul of someone and when you get to that level, that's where real connection lies. To not acknowledge that and feel it would be to do it an injustice. I mean, I felt embarrassed for myself. I was glad I was sitting in the back row because it looked like I was probably the closest to this person by my emotional reaction. It was like—these people are celebrating and I'm just a mess (laughs). That was quite an interesting experience.

Jake: Ethical concerns connected to confidentiality are certainly varied. I was reviewing consent and the process of member checking when one of my participants disclosed that

she was in a relationship that involved intimate partner violence. She was concerned for her safety if her partner were to see the information she disclosed to me. I had planned on emailing documents to my participants but I changed my protocols and hand-delivered copies or used a mailbox if that was the participant's preference.

Emotional Vulnerability as an Ethical Consideration

Kate: George's account highlights concerns regarding confidentiality but it also addresses the researcher's emotional vulnerability when involved in this work. Mookie also talked about the powerful emotional, cognitive and physiological responses his team members had when listening to accounts of racism and violence. Leticia talked about the emotional impact of decisions on community members. I want to talk about an experience I had in which I had to deal with a participants' emotions in a public setting.

The participant chose the location for the interview, which was a restaurant. The participant was the most amazing person and so passionate about what she was talking about. She got really invested in the conversation and then she got very upset. We were talking about parenting and the decision to have children and that's what set her off. I was like, "Oh my God, nobody's ever cried in an interview before, what do I do?" I let her talk it out and offered that she could take a break but she just kept talking and talked herself to a less emotional place. It was good.

Jake: Yes, when I did a study with homeless youth some of them came from terrible situations in terms of their family situation. Sometimes they would get triggered and then the process was about putting the participant's needs ahead of the researcher's agenda. It was about ending the questioning, the deep probing when you knew that the person was

going to potentially struggle with what you were about to ask. I think you have to be really in the moment and use your emotional intelligence to gauge how things are going. You might lose some rich data but the ethics are that you don't want to do harm to the person by digging too deep. You need to attend to the client's discomfort. For example, his or her body language, his or her choice in how he or she answers questions, if it's too vague or abstract, and whether or not he or she is engaged in the process. I believe people can be triggered or emotionally impacted and I think it's not fair to them to put them into that space if they're not ready to be in that space. It's important to set a climate of emotional safety at the beginning of the interview. I also think it is important to debrief the interview at the end.

George: Jake is right. How much do we probe in qualitative research? That's something you don't necessarily feel you have ethics clearance for. The depth of probing can take you in all kinds of directions and you can trigger something for somebody that was completely unintentional. How do we as researchers know how far to take it? When is enough, enough? In the spur of the moment when you're interviewing, do you end up crossing a line? How do you know if you've crossed the line? You're trying to do so many tasks at once, it's more intense doing research than it is counselling. The thought comes to mind that we make ourselves vulnerable by doing qualitative research and we make our co-researchers vulnerable. I don't think that tends to be the case in quantitative research. You're distant and removed. But here, everybody becomes vulnerable.

Sarah: Interestingly, people can be emotionally impacted even before they participate in a study. I was supervising a student who was doing a certain kind of interview with a

very small sample of people. She had pretty rigorous inclusion criteria and someone with whom she'd spoken on the phone, was not at all happy that she was not chosen to participate in the study. That person contacted me and was very, very upset. They're willing to participate and then for whatever reasons, they're not chosen to participate. She was feeling rejected and angry, like she was not good enough. So, I feel an ethical obligation as the supervisor of this particular project to spend a fair amount of time with that person to help her understand that, in fact, it's not a reflection on her; it's a reflection on the study. I don't want, as a researcher, to be making someone feel bad about herself or making her feel not good enough. That was a tricky, very tricky situation. I was trying to balance how that participant might feel, while at the same time, my student was 100% correct that that person should have been screened out of the study for various reasons clearly outlined. But there's a human aspect to research that is not just as easy as saying, “No, we don't want you.” You're trying to balance that in the most ethical kind of way. That turned out to be fine, but that was a good hour and a half conversation on the phone, probably doing, quite honestly, a little bit of counseling. What does a researcher who doesn't have the background, what does he or she do? It's hard for me to understand how researchers who don't have the background in some kind of helping manner, who don't have training in having conversations, deal with these kinds of situations.

Wisetonian: The only answer I have to that is that at each stage the methodology describes how you are to proceed.

Methodology as an Ethical Consideration

Wisetonian: Faithfulness to the methodology is the ethics. The whole essence of the business is a relationship and how to use yourself in the most appropriate manner to assist people in working through their difficulties. Every move you're making is intentionally—hopefully—designed for that end. When we don't act in that way, then we've strayed from really good ethical behavior. You know, "Well, I shouldn't have said that," or "This was wrong." We do it [research] very clumsily, we all do, because it's a clumsy business. We're not like surgeons who know that if you go and cut right there and then sew it up it'll be all right. It's so different.

Ken: Yes, sometimes there's a line drawn between methodology and ethics. But I think that's a bit of a false distinction. I think about research as the philosophical basis of the research, the methodological basis and the ethical basis. I sort of divvy it up into three chunks that all feed each other.

Sarah: But it is not always that straightforward. For example, I'm not sure if a person can do pure action research under a university's ethics board. I think the methodology has to be compromised somewhat. I think people who've done ethical action research can have a dialogue about how you remain as true as possible to the methodology while at the same time being as close as you can to the policy of ethics. I think they've tried to operationalize those policies in real time. I think ethics boards can learn from having a dialogue with the researcher regarding the issues and creative ways to deal with them.

George: Using methodology as a basis for qualitative research ethics raises other questions for me. For example, in the method I used, member checks were considered to

be an important element of knowledge building. One of the people I interviewed, a lawyer, when I sent back his story he edited it so much that at the end of it, I wasn't even sure if it was still his story or not. It's like he kind of made the story he wanted it to be, but not the way that I'd heard it. Whose story then am I going to report? My version, which was more accurate, at least at the time I interviewed him, based on the transcript, or, his version, which is the massaged, edited version, which makes him look much better than he was? Whose truths are we going to take? If truth can alter that quickly then so much perception is coming into this. What is the ethic behind that? That the truth, even the truth that we heard right now is not the same truth that someone, upon reflection, believes that truth to be. The ethic of constructing truth is what that is really about. Is there an ethic of constructing truth, if we accept that all truth is constructed? If it's all constructed, then what will be our guiding principle in terms of creating a new truth?

Wisetonian: George's comments regarding truth raise questions regarding methodology, ontology and ethics. The philosophical debate throughout Western history is a debate regarding the nature of reality. Is reality one or many? This is referred to as the One and the Many Debate! If reality is one, there is only objective truth. If many, there is no objective truth. Some answer by saying reality is both one and many. If reality is only *one*, there is only absolutist truth and ethics. If reality is only many, there is no objective truth and ethics is totally subjective. I would hold both are essential! The side of philosophy that I would espouse to would hold that there are objective ethical principles that I guess I would call inviolable. They may be very rare and very few, but they're still there. That gets into the question again of the rightfulness and wrongfulness of things.

Eva: I think there are multiple ways we can interpret and define what ethics and research means for us. But I also think that there are some universal prescriptions that we have to follow, because there is a limit to how far we can go with our own subjectivity. It can potentially be damaging for a participant.

Leticia: I think that is part of helping students understand reflective practice. Researchers need to notice their reactions and to recognize biases by paying attention to their own reactions. As professors, we need to help our students develop their skills around cognitive complexity and keeping multiple tracks going simultaneously. I don't see that happening in research courses. Yet, we are calling upon our students to engage in people relationships as qualitative researchers. That is one of my concerns as an academic. I don't think we go far enough in our professional education about conducting research ethically. We take students through establishing a research question, choosing a method, but I don't know if we go far enough in terms of operationalizing the doing part, and some of the ethical implications there. A lot of that is trial and error. I have had a lot of questions about how well we prepare people for actually conducting research. I think we drop off at a certain point.

I had the opportunity to develop a graduate course that would take this a little bit further and offered that course for about 5 years. That course gave students an opportunity, regardless of what kind of methodology they used in their research, to think more carefully about what does it mean to be a researcher? What are the roles and responsibilities of a researcher? What does relationship as a researcher look like, if we

look at ethics not as a one-time, not just getting your consent through, but behaving ethically throughout the research process?

Lynda: Is that course still being offered?

Leticia: No, it was canceled due to funding constraints.

Lynda: That's sad to me, because what I hear you talking about is the development of the person of the researcher, the development of self-awareness that comes into play during the research process and the ability to attend in multiple ways, simultaneously.

Leticia: Uh-huh, I refer to that as reflective practice. In reflective practice we are more acutely aware of our own behavior and the impact of that behavior on other people. That can help us leverage really good research, but it can also, if gone unnoticed, actually be unintentionally harmful.

Sarah: Leticia raises important points when she talks about reflective practice and ethics. I am also concerned about ethics around qualitative data including who owns the data in qualitative research. The researcher puts the report together *but* most of the report is words or creations that portray the co-creation involved in an interaction, but the researcher claims the report. That's the researcher's report. It's not really though, it's been co-created between the researcher and the participant. Usually, it's the researcher who needs to do something with the report for his or her work. But to me, that's a sticky issue. Let's say there are photographs, images, videos or pottery, whatever there might be that has been co-created in that interaction. Does a researcher get to take that and go off to his conference and claim that as his data? Or is that a creative artifact of an interaction that belongs to both people? I think that's an ethical question. I think those issues only

come to surface when a participant has put his or her whole being into a particular piece of art and the researcher says, “Actually, that’s mine.”

Even if that is explained in the consent form, a participant might not be able to predict how meaningful journaling or artwork or whatever will be until he or she has done it. He or she might not be able to predict that it is going to mean so much to him or her and he or she has already signed over the consent.

This raises another ethical concern for me. For example, I might be in high school, so I’m already a minor, and I might be okay with my videotape that I’ve done in a research project being used for educational purposes. But if I sign the consent, that video can be used 25 years later and I might not be so comfortable with it then. So, I think it’s the responsibility of ethical researchers to consider those things that maybe a participant at that point in time doesn’t think about.

Kate: And to be a researcher, there is that external responsibility to others, not just the participant. There is the university as well. I have a responsibility to protect them, to protect me and in that way to protect the university. I can’t just do whatever I want to do because I think it’s the right way to do. I have to follow some rules if I want to be able to do these things that I enjoy doing. Qualitative research is genuinely concerned about this because it feeds back into validity and things like that. If you’re making ethically bad choices, the data you have may not be quality data and that will feed into the quality of your study. At the institutional level, it’s about making sure that the participant feels protected, respected, so they don’t sue the university or sue the researcher, depending on what sort of insurance you have.

Phoebe: Ethics also goes beyond data collection. At times in qualitative research the mountain of data is so enormous that when you see it ahead of you, you wonder how am I going to get through all of this? As mentioned earlier, I think it is human nature to think about how you can cut corners. To be ethical would be to say, “But then I wouldn’t find out what’s really there. I’d miss something.” Then you would get yourself situated, grounded again and you just go bit by bit through the whole thing, even though you’d like to be able to cut some corners!

Wisetonian: When you were saying that, I was thinking of supervisory roles and responsibilities. The job of the supervisor is to try to be sure that the methodology is being used appropriately and that the various types or parts of the methodology are engaged as they could or should be used. That's also the role of advisory groups. I think that's the role of member checking as well, in terms of the concepts of faithfulness, trustworthiness and so forth. Those things are built into the methodology, which are then built into assuring ethical behavior. Most people don’t violate methodology consciously; they do it more in the beginning because they're not aware of what the methodology is really saying. They don't know it well yet. However, I fully acknowledge that there could be people who are unethical and who just take advantage of people's experiences. That's very cruel.

Phoebe: Yes, I remember getting myself into a situation while doing my dissertation that led to me having a big problem that related to decisions I made regarding my methodology. I didn’t have any bad intention, I was just clueless. In qualitative research you have to write a journal and I'm terrible at journals. I always have been. I used to get

those 5-year diaries and I'd keep them, you know, when I was 12 for like 3 days and then there'd be nothing to write about. It just seemed to me to be completely boring.

Anyway, I hear about this journal expectation and I'm just about beside myself. You've got to be kidding; I have to write a journal? This is what I'm going to fail at. I'm not going to be able to do it. I was in quite a state about this. And that's how the story of my quilt started. I suppose that was an ethical problem, but I never thought about that as an ethical problem, I just knew I had to figure out a way to fix a big problem.

The problem started out innocently enough. I was in an airport; my mother who was with me was feeling sorry for me because I was so busy, working so hard, and doing all these things. I'm early for my plane, so I go in the newsstand and I pick up this magazine. I open it up and there's an article on story quilts. I think, story quilts, there's an idea. Instead of writing a journal, I could make a quilt. I could just make a quilt about the journey of my dissertation. Then at the end when I have to hand in my journal, I'll tell them what I did, and just show my quilt. Maybe I could make it like a little book quilt, or I could make it like a "quilt" quilt. I buy the magazine and I read the article on the plane. I think this is great. I've never made a quilt—I'm a very good sewer. But I've never made a quilt before. I have no idea what I'm doing, but I figure how hard can it be? I say to my mother, who's also a very good sewer, "I think I'm going to make a quilt."

She says, "Why?"

I say, "Oh, it's too hard to explain. I have to make this journal and I thought it would make it easier. I'm going to make a square, like this. I think the first square I'll make as a tree because my employer is supporting me to help me do my dissertation."

Later, my mother hauls out her material and we find this beautiful piece of green silk, and we appliqué it on. I think okay, this is not so bad. Then my second quilt square will be . . . whatever. I'm all happy, because this is creative and it gives me something to do. Actually it's pretty hard work, just being in your head all the time and this is a nice, practical thing to do.

Everything was just going along swimmingly, until I met with my first participant for the second time. By this time, I'd met with 13 people and I was friends with them. You know, you have this kind of conversation and you like these people. You like them. You've forgotten what their real name is and you think they are actually their pseudonyms. You know what they said. You know what stuck out for them with you, the things they said that were really great.

We were just chatting, and I say, “I thought of making a quilt.”

She says, “You are?”

I say, “Yeah, I'm making a quilt. If you were going to be in the quilt, how would you like to be symbolized?” In that moment, I made a gigantic mistake! Of course she tells me and I am doomed.

My poor committee, they have no idea what to do. They say, “You better bring your quilt squares in.” I bring the quilt squares in and they look at them and they say nothing. They look at each other and they are not happy. They say, “Phoebe, we're having enough trouble understanding what hermeneutics is, let alone quilts. What have you done?”

“What do you mean, what have I done?”

Then they explain, “Now, the quilt is in the research. Before it was just like an extra thing you were doing.”

I'm like, well, how bad can that be? I think we've only just begun. I'm so mad. My advisor is mad at me, they're all mad at me. I go and I put those quilt squares in the drawer, slam the drawer and think, “Fine!” Months go by. I'm very upset and I don't know what to do. That's when I go to see Catherine [a presenter at a qualitative research symposium]. I see her presentation about the wedding dresses, and I think, “Okay, this is pretty powerful and I should not be deterred. I should figure out a way to fix this big problem.” Now, I suppose that was an ethical problem, but I never thought about that as an ethical problem. It didn't even occur to me. I didn't have any bad intention, I just was clueless.

Anyway, I think those rules are stupid, like those research rules are stupid. I still do, by the way. I understand the importance of it, particularly with people who would deliberately try to mix up, but that wasn't my intention. I felt like I had to obey rules that were created for the singular few who would try and screw up the process, and that wasn't me. I wanted to do it perfectly. Qualitative research is a very difficult step-by-step process and you have to follow the steps in order to have rigor. I was all about rigor. I wanted it to be real. I didn't want it to be like some sort of crap product in the end. All that work for nothing.

I was mad at myself too. Seriously, those quilt squares were in the drawer for such a long time. It was really bad, it was really bad. My committee never talked to me about it, never said anything, but of course they had to read my chapters, so all of a

sudden, the quilt had to go in Chapter 3 for methodology; it had to go in Chapter 4 because that's the results, the voices of the women. Then it had to go in Chapter 5, because, of course, I was analyzing. At one point, it was like they found me out. I had taken practically every book on quilts out of the public library. I had two stacks that were a good 2 or 3 feet on the floor of my living room and they said to me, “Phoebe, we're a little worried that you're thinking that you're writing a dissertation on quilts.”

I knew I had these books at home and I'm like, “Oh, you don't need to worry about that,” even though I went right home and took them all back to the library. It was true; I was completely entranced with the meaning of quilts.

But it turned out to be very important, to be very necessary, because in the end they threw their hands up and said, “Well, what are we going to do with that quilt information that you've written?”

I said, “How about an epilogue?”

“And you're fine with that?” they ask.

I say, “I'm fine with that. I didn't write a dissertation on quilts.” Then they were happy. They were happy.

But they didn't actually ask about the quilt. They said, “Well how did this happen?”

At the end, I think it was at my defense, I said, “Sometimes a metaphor emerges from the research.” A metaphor emerged from the research and there was nothing I could do about it. They agreed that it was pretty amazing; the language of the women, the language of quilts, and the language of hermeneutics was all the same. It was a metaphor

that emerged from the research and there was nothing I could do about it. I had to go with it. I think if there'd been nothing about quilts in the whole of the dissertation it would have seemed weird. It was pretty funny in that last meeting before I finished my dissertation, the psychologist said, “How's the quilt coming?” This is the first time anyone has asked about the quilt in a couple of years.

“Fine,” I say.

He smiles and says, “When will we get to see it?”

And I say, “When you pass me.”

They laugh and he says, “Well, I'm actually asking because when I read the entirety of the research, it seemed to me that we have to have a picture of the quilt.”

And I'm thinking, “Oh my God, that means I have to get the quilt done at the same time as I have to get the dissertation done.” I really didn't have that many quilt squares done because I'd had that acting out period of time. So I don't say anything.

He goes on to say, “I've just finished reading *Alias Grace* and each of the chapters starts with a quilt square. I'm beginning to understand about quilts. I'm beginning to understand how one thing is connected to another.” Now, who would've thought that this would have come from a man? I didn't say that, but I thought that was pretty interesting.

I think, “Okay, fine. I have to get the quilt ready.” That's when I realized how big it was going to be. Like it's big! My mother just about had a fit when she saw how big it was. I had cut out all these brown paper squares for the squares that were not done yet and I laid it out on this big table that we use for Christmas dinners. My mother came in from the kitchen and said, “Oh my God, Phoebe.”

I said, “I know, I didn't really expect it was going to be…”

“It's too big.”

“It's too late now, l can't make…”

“Can't you cut anything back?

I said, “No, it's gotta be like this.”

“Well, who said?”

And I said, “The women said!”

She decided she was going to help me and because of quilts being done by other women, it seemed like a perfectly okay thing. Then, I thought to myself, can she help me? But, I thought well, they have quilting bees and there are all kinds of different reasons why women help each other, particularly in times of trouble or crisis. So, why not! (Laughter rings throughout the room).

Lynda: Phoebe, your quilt story highlights for all of us how qualitative researchers often struggle to balance methodological considerations with human considerations. Methodological considerations are seen in your commitment to accurately represent the women in your study and to maintain a record of your research journey through the creation of the quilt. You also helped us see the struggle committee members can have when they need to figure out how far to let a student go in being creative and when they need to step in and ensure the research is sound methodologically and ethically. I appreciate your willingness to acknowledge your humanity as a researcher. Many in the circle today have mentioned having emotional reactions at some point during the research process and how these responses have alerted them to a decision, often an ethically-laden

decision needing to be made. Thank you for sharing your story. Are there other ethically important moments others would like to share before we move on?

Funding as an Ethical Consideration

Wisetonian: Yes, I realize moving from quilts to tainted blood and research funding is quite a leap, but I'd like to share an ethically important moment I encountered that pertains to decision-making regarding funding for research. In 1989, a few years ago now, I was funded by the federal government of Canada to conduct a study with people who had contacted HIV through tainted blood distributed by blood system. In 1990, I went to the Red Cross and asked them to cooperate in trying to locate those infected. They refused to cooperate in the study due to concern regarding possible litigation. In 1991, the report was released and the whole thing blew! The Hemophilia Society was very involved and they triggered the national commission on the blood system. However, 4 years later, there was a Red Cross director who was very community conscious and became involved in the strategic planning exercise we did for people with HIV in our city. She came to me in 1995 and asked if we had any research we wanted to do, as they had some research funding. I responded by suggesting that we look at the experience of those living with HIV.

This situation raised ethical questions for me. Why was she doing this? Why did the Red Cross want to give us money to study the experience of people with HIV 5 years later? My answer was because they wanted to show that they knew what they were doing when they did it and as a humanitarian organization, it was maybe the best they could behave. Perhaps, this was a way of moving to make things right and demonstrating that

as a humanitarian organization they were committed to helping people experiencing tragedy in their lives. So, I didn't have a big problem with it. But it was an ethical question for me. There were people who said, "You took money from those bastards? You know, they killed people all over this country and now you go take their money, just to make your career look good?"

Lynda: Wow, this account raises all kinds of concerns for me. You've readily identified an organization that for many Canadians is almost a Canadian icon. A lot of time has passed since the tainted blood tragedy and I wonder about my ethical responsibility towards you and the organization you mentioned.

Wisetonian: The matter was previously published in several sources, a book in which I am quoted, and at least one peer reviewed journal. It's already public, so you have no obligation regarding keeping this history confidential as far as I am concerned.

Lynda: I recognize that this may be so ethically, but personally, I still struggle with this situation. I come from a family where donating blood to the Red Cross is almost as significant as joining the military. In fact, my parents both donated blood during the war to literally keep soldiers alive (my dad and uncles were all in the military). I couldn't wait until I was old enough to give my blood to a worthy cause. However, having said that, the tainted blood scandal was real and your research on the experiences of those impacted by the horrors of having tainted blood in the blood bank reveals the "feet-of-clay" of the Canadian Red Cross and your decision-making process in being involved with them. Nevertheless, do I have the right to bring shame on the organization again, even if it's only in the eyes of a few people who will read my dissertation? When does an

organization have the right to "be forgiven" for their wrongdoings? I'm going to need some time to think about this situation. Does anyone have anything else they would like to comment on?

If not, perhaps this is a good time for me to try and summarize our collective experience in identifying and managing ethical concerns that arise in those ethically important moments that occur over the course of the qualitative research process. As we've talked together, I heard a poem being written in my mind. I share it here as a way of trying to pull together our understanding and experience with ethically important moments. Again, I will use ***bold italics*** to indicate that this is my attempt to pull together our collective experience.

Collective Account of Ethically Important Moments

Ethically Important Moments,

Are subtle, surprising

Arising

When least expected.

Or,

They hit you in the face

When you're caught in the race

To be done!

Ethically Important Moments,

Can be detected but not perfected

In our physiology, our psychology

Or,

Feelings that send us reeling

And wake us to reflect

On what needs

To be done!

Ethically Important Moments

Are about people, relationships

Money and more

Or,

Methodology, reflexivity, accuracy

Validity, believability

And, our struggles deciding what is

To be done!

Ethically Important Moments

Are about social justice,

And respect

Or,

Turning our backs when we have obtained

The data we've taken, ignoring

The changes that need

To be done!

Ethically Important Moments

Are about questions

With few answers

Or,

Answers, with few questions!

Training is needed

There's much

To be done!

This brings us to the last question to be considered in today's talking circle.

Topic: How Time and Space Factors Affect Awareness and Application of Qualitative Research Ethics

Question #6: How have time and space factors affected your awareness and application of qualitative research ethics?

George: I think everything we're doing is time and space dependent. We're bound by time and space. I could not write something like my work if I was living in certain countries that make homosexuality illegal. Context is very important in my work. The timing of my work was also critical. Today, for example, work around homosexuality and same-sex marriage would be more balanced.

Eva: Even the space in which we conduct our research is important. I think when I first wrote my ethics proposal I said that due to the cultural background of the individuals I would be interviewing, it was possible they would like me to come to their place of residence to do the interviews. I also stated that the interviews would be an informal conversational interview. The ethics people were fine with that as long as I was safe. But, I know in my conversations with my advisor, she wondered if I would have a coffee with my participants or not? I said, "Well, it's an informal conversational interview, damn right I'm going to have coffee. Coffee is an important part of our culture. It's an institution. All conversations back home occur over coffee. Coffee is the one thing that connects all those nations there. Do not ask me not to have coffee." I wonder if we make certain things that are purely human unethical just because we need to say something about the process.

Jake: Interesting you should talk about having coffee with your participants. I don't think there is one right answer regarding that matter. Having coffee with participants who weren't really my friends was something I had to work out as well. I decided to not have coffee with them as I wanted to maintain a boundary between research and friendship.

I was also thinking about the differences between the quantitative and qualitative studies I've done and the effects of time and space on my understanding and application of ethics. In my quantitative study, I dropped in and collected data and then dropped out. In the qualitative studies, there was more time invested. I had to spend more time with the participants and with the data. I needed time to sit with the information for a longer period of time and I think it percolated more; I was more immersed in it and there seems

to be more of a human connection to it. So, time and space, in terms of ethics, I had to be a lot more mindful of ethics, percolate ethics, and sort out ethical issues looking at ethics from multiple different angles.

Sarah: Yes, I think there are some fundamentals that wouldn’t change, but I think there would be some pieces that might change depending on the nature of my participants, like how vulnerable they are. With quantitative data, although this is also constantly in flux, it used to be that you could use that data for 5 years, or whatever, but you could only use the data for the purposes outlined in the consent form. If you thought of some other analysis you could do with the data, you were kind of hooped because it didn’t state that purpose in the consent. That's not as clear-cut with qualitative research. Going back to the data 10 years later and looking through it for something else, even though that might be covered in the consent, doesn't feel as comfortable, because the conversation I had, or the interaction I had with that person was not originally for that intent. So for me, it comes down to the purpose and intent of the research. I feel a certain amount of obligation to my participants to respect, even if it's not in the consent, what the understanding was around our conversation.

Mookie: I think there are some differences. First of all, the whole informed consent piece. There's an expectation that we write out the consent forms and have people sign them. There's an assumption that if we expect people to sign things, that's the only way of communicating or giving permission. But when we worked with different African and Caribbean communities, writing was not a primary or the only way of communicating giving consent. What about forms of oral consent?

Kate: I think time is an ethical consideration, especially during the interviews. I have to be respectful of participants' time and their commitment to the project. If I say the interviews are going to take an hour to an hour and a half, it's my responsibility to make sure I stick to that timeframe. As much as it is a conversation, I'm still asking the questions. Regarding space, not every interview I did was in the respondent's home. There were a few situations where we met in a coffee shop and chatted and that was tough because I was researching finances and for a lot of folk that is a sensitive area. I was very concerned about how being in a public place would impact the interview process. I remember one woman, who was a lower-income single parent, chose to meet in a public place where other people could potentially hear what was being said. I thought that was difficult because I didn't want her to feel awkward or uncomfortable. She was fairly open but I remember her getting quiet at one point. We just tried to get through it, not speed through it, but try and get—this sounds kind of awful—but get what I needed to get within those circumstances while minimizing her discomfort.

Ken: In my study, the interviews took place where the participant wanted as well. Sometimes they took place at my practice office and that was fine because it was a private space. Sometimes the interview took place at his or her home, which was his or her call. Sometimes it took place at the participant's workplace, but the space consideration was the participant's choice. Did it ever get ethically tricky? I don't think so. It would have been different if I was doing a qualitative study about someone's experience of domestic violence, or something else that was sensitive.

The other thing that just jumped into my head was the issue of vulnerability. My participants on the continuum of vulnerability were at the low vulnerability end of the continuum. I didn't have any kind of authoritative role. I think time and space factors, or pragmatic factors, might be very well different for more vulnerable research participants talking about more sensitive issues.

One kind of specific and mundane thing was making sure that I had proper space at my home. I bought a new filing cabinet to keep the hardcopy transcripts and the audio recordings on CDs secure. I had workspace at home then and I did a few things to improve it. That was a conscious choice based on a desire to be more ethical.

Lynda: Okay, thanks again to everyone who participated in responding to this question. It seems pretty clear that time and space factors are an influence on our understanding and application of qualitative research ethics. My summary will be brief and in **bold italic**s to differentiate it from the body of our conversation.

Collective Account of How Time and Space Factors Affect Qualitative Research Ethics

We are bound in time and space and our research efforts reflect these factors. What we research, how we conduct our research from the point of planning the project and gaining consent to how we write up our findings, all reflect the influence of time and space. Time is something to be respected, others' time and our own. Changes occur over time and consent cannot be considered to be timeless. Space can refer to location and needs to be considered when addressing confidentiality and the vulnerability of participants. Space can also refer to cultural context, which is

important when considering something as simple as the meaning of a cup of coffee or as complex as informed consent or addressing issues of social injustice.

Lynda: This concludes our Talking Circle for today. Thank you for your participation and the time you have taken to be part in this process of enhancing our understanding of the meaning of ethics for us as qualitative researchers. Today, we have looked at how we collectively identify and manage ethical concerns that arise in ethically important moments that occur over the course of the qualitative research process. Our conversation has revealed differences in our perspectives and some of the tensions that exist when we think about ethics and the work we do as qualitative researchers. It has also revealed the importance each of us places on ethics and that ethics cannot be separated from those who conduct research. As Sarah aptly said, “Researchers, research and ethics aren’t separate things.”

Finally, I wish to go back to a statement Mookie made earlier in this conversation regarding social justice. He said, “When I need to stand up in terms of issues of social justice, whatever they are, I'm going to continue to do that.” For me, and many of you participating in this circle, ethical qualitative research is a means to pursuing social justice. Let us continue to do the hard work of ensuring our qualitative research practice is ethical, methodologically sound, contributes to our understanding of and functions as a tool in the pursuit of social justice.

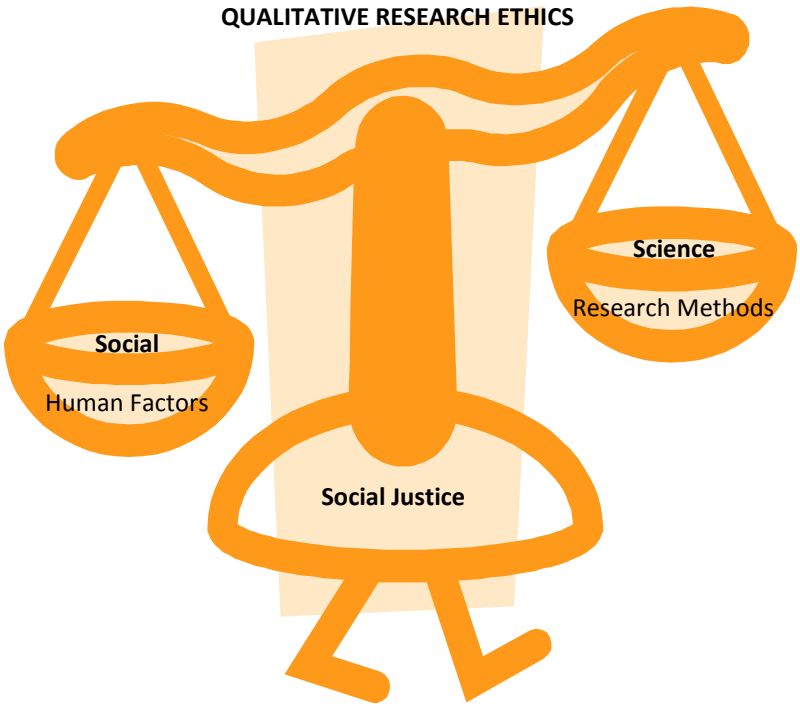
Creative Synthesis

The dynamic nature of qualitative research ethics, as expressed by the participants in this study, may be portrayed using a metaphorical balancing scale. A balancing scale shifts on its pivot point as the weight on either side of the scale changes. On one side of the scale you have ethical factors that relate to the *social* or human aspects of qualitative research. On the other side you have ethical factors that relate to qualitative research as *science* that focus on methodological aspects of qualitative research. Free-standing balancing scales require a base of sufficient substance to keep the apparatus upright as the weight on either side of the scale shifts and changes. The theme of standing up for social justice is highlighted throughout this study and provides a solid foundation for qualitative research ethics.

The dynamic nature of qualitative research ethics is portayed in the diagram below. The balance beam shifts as the ethical implications of the social and scientific factors are considered in each ethically important moment that occurs over the course of a research project. The emphasis placed on each of these factors varies depending on the nature of the study, the researcher, the participants, the contextual factors influencing the research and the ethical decisions that need to be made.

The feet on the scale represent the footprint of qualitative research. The characteristics of the footprint of the research will be manifest in the impact the research has on the lives of the participants, the researcher/s, other stakeholders and the environment in which the project takes place. The quality of the footprint will be shaped by how those involved in the research understand and maintain an ethical balance

between the social and the scientific elements involved in their project in ways that support the pursuit of social justice.



Footprint of Qualitative Research within Context of Research Endeavors

The participants in this study, further report identifying ethical concerns by attending to physiological cues, emotional responses, cognitive dissonance and relational feedback. Once identified, ethical concerns require the researcher to engage in a complex ethical decision-making process, which involves balancing the scale of qualitative research ethics in a way that addresses the social or human factors and the scientific or methodological factors relevant to the situation. The ethical decision-making process is primarily informed by personal ethics learned in every-day life; principles embodied in their professional ethics (i.e., do no harm, respect for the dignity and worth of all people,

self-determination, informed consent and confidentiality); concepts reflected in ethical theories (i.e., utilitarianism, virtue ethics and duty and/or rule bound ethics); and for a few, ethical considerations that occur at the level of meta-ethics (i.e., where one considers questions about ethics itself). The ethical decision-making process is perceived as being enhanced when multiple perspectives are considered. For example, the importance of engaging participants and other stakeholders, including research supervisors, in the decision-making process is emphasized.

Qualitative research ethics cannot be separated from the person of the researcher. Research projects are approved by Research Ethics Boards but people are the research instrument in qualitative research and the onus for ethical qualitative research practice ultimately rests with the person of the researcher. Currently, many of those interviewed see the ethical training of qualitative researchers focusing on the fulfillment of the requirements to obtain ethics approval from the university's Research Ethics Board. This process is described as being perfunctory rather than an exercise that enhances the researcher's understanding of qualitative research ethics. A need for more opportunities for emerging researchers to develop or increase their ethical awareness and skills is identified. Qualitative research courses are seen as focusing on methodological considerations and a need for more attention to the human factors involved in qualitative research is required. Self-care for the person of the researcher is seen to be a vital aspect of ethical qualitative research practice. How this important person of the researcher concern is addressed in qualitative research courses is a topic recommended for further research and development.

CHAPTER FIVE: TALKING ABOUT TALKING ABOUT QUALITATIVE RESEARCH ETHICS

Using *Talking about Talking about Qualitative Research Ethics* as the title for this discussion chapter is a metaphorical play on words. As a counsellor, I am familiar with the clinical intervention that bears this name. It engages a client in a multifaceted conversation during which the client moves between thinking and speaking in the present and thinking and speaking of the past and the future. This complex process allows the client to shift his or her thoughts between multiple aspects of his or her life and to articulate these in a conversation that is taking place in the present but has implications for how the client understands his or her past and how the client anticipates the future. *Talking about Talking about* is a multi-layered conversation that can access and alter many layers of meaning.

In this chapter, I engage in a similar process. I speak in the present about multi-layered conversations that took place in the past as I dialogued with 10 qualitative researchers about their understandings and application of qualitative research ethics. As we talked, the participants also engaged in a multi-layered conversation which moved back and forth through time as they reflected on the meaning qualitative research ethics held for them and how this meaning was reflected in how they understood and managed ethically significant moments they experienced in their work.

I also envision this discussion chapter as a multi-layered conversation in which I talk about the complexities I saw reflected in the participants' accounts. At times, the researchers' accounts resonated with my experiences, and my understanding and theirs

became mixed together in an account which reflects elements of our shared understanding. At some point, I allowed myself to think beyond the words spoken to consider the implications of what had been shared. I am sure my interest in education and training influenced the implications I saw in this project that relate to these endeavors. I also found myself drawn to aspects of the researchers' accounts in which they wrestled with relational aspects of qualitative research ethics. The implications of these struggles were more complicated and caused me to reflect back to my work in Kosovo and re-examine the lessons I learned about research relationships in that experience. Finally, I found myself drawn to the researchers' accounts of how qualitative research ethics related to the person of the researcher. These accounts caused me to pause and reflect on the ethical interface between the personal and the professional. The implications for me and other researchers were easy to identify but I knew intuitively that these personal challenges would also be the most difficult to address.

Finally, in this discussion, I share a number of outcomes from this study. The first outcome is a summary of five ethical concepts that relate to the meaning of qualitative research ethics as identified by the researchers involved in this work. The second outcome is an overview of influences these researchers identified as nurturing their moral and ethical development and the implications of these for the education and training of new researchers. The third outcome is an overview of the characteristics of the ethical decision-making processes portrayed by those involved in this study and the fourth outcome is a framework for considering the complexities of qualitative research ethics that I developed as I journeyed through this research project.

I will begin this conversation by talking about how qualitative researchers understand the meaning of qualitative research ethics.

Five Concepts Reflected in the Collective Meaning of Qualitative Research Ethics

While no single definition for the meaning of qualitative research ethics emerged during our conversations, five concepts were identified as having particular significance for qualitative research ethics. These include

- The relational nature of qualitative research ethics and the need for qualitative researchers to be informed by and sensitive to the relational complexities operant within the research system.
- The need for qualitative researchers to uphold methodological rigor and the fact that ethical research needs to be good science.
- The need for researchers to move beyond focusing on ensuring no harm is done to ensuring their research does some good. Good, according to the participants in this study, needed to be defined by those involved in the study and needed to consider all parties involved in the research including those often considered to be on the periphery of the work (i.e., transcriptionists).
- The complexities of accountability and responsibility that exist for qualitative researchers. Researchers were described as being accountable to the research participants, their academic or research institution, including the REB of that institution, funders, the broader scientific community and society as a whole. The researcher's responsibility

involved both relational and methodological accountability. The complexities of being responsible to different groups amplified the messiness of qualitative research ethics. Finally,

- The importance of the researcher's ethical being and sensitivity and how that is developed.

When discussing this last concept, researchers contrasted *being ethical* and *doing ethics* and compared decisions made with the intent of outwardly conforming to the regulations and requirements specified by an REB and ethical decision-making based on the researcher's internal moral and ethical understanding and commitment. This concept is reflected in Mookie's comments in which he contrasts what he refers to as mechanistic compliance to procedural ethics and research ethics as a thoughtful process. He states:

> When I think about it . . . going through the ethics application . . . once you've done it a number of times, it becomes a mechanical exercise. Once you get considerable feedback a few times, it not only becomes a mechanical process but it also becomes like a pro forma format, because you're giving them what they're looking for . . . . Ethics cannot solely be a mechanical process; because if it's simply a mechanical process then it's not an ethical process . . . it has to be thoughtful process . . . . If we're not thoughtful, then we are going to do harm to people. So, it's mechanical in that it has to be done, but it has to be a thoughtful process in terms of what you put down on paper and then how you operationalize it.

An Ethical Challenge: The Shift from Ethical Reasoning to Ethical Regulation

Mookie's comments also point to a major ethical challenge confronting qualitative researchers. The implementation of ethical regulation for research practice has resulted in protocols and procedures that have directly affected the requirements placed on researchers. For example, obtaining ethics approval is now required before a researcher can commence his or her research. The covert ethical challenges this has created for qualitative researchers are significant. For example, in order to ensure students can obtain ethics approval from their university's REB and move forward with their research, this procedure has become a major focus in the ethical training of qualitative researchers. The focus of the education is on completing the form so it receives approval. As Mookie so aptly states, "Once you've done it a number of times, it becomes a mechanical exercise." The ethical implications of having ethics become a mechanical process are ominous at best. The complexities of qualitative research require a high degree of ethical sensitivity and thoughtfulness but based on the accounts of those involved in this study, the opportunities to think and talk about the meaning, complexities and operationalization of qualitative research ethics are being subsumed by the emphasis being placed on fulfilling the bureaucratic requirements related to the governance of research practice.

In this process the complexities of research ethics are reduced to a few lines on an ethics application form and the moral agency of the researcher is ignored as the focus shifts from ethical reasoning to ethical regulation. Research ethics become emptied of their meaning, ethical reasoning is no longer needed as ethical research becomes defined

in terms of predefined practices, which may be mere symbols of bureaucracy to those involved in qualitative research endeavors. This phenomenon was brought to my attention recently while conducting a focus group.

The focus group was part of a research project in which the participants were recruited based on their position within a large organization. Due to organizational policies regarding external contractors being restricted from accessing organizational personnel lists, a person in a position of authority over the potential participants was chosen to recruit participants. In the spirit of upholding the principle of informed consent, I prepared a consent form which the recruiter provided to each potential participant in advance of attendance at the focus group session. Prior to beginning the focus group, I again provided the people in the room with copies of the consent. Wanting to ensure everyone was informed about the research process, I gave everyone time to read the consent form and to ask any questions they might have regarding the form or the process. Participants were then asked to sign the form indicating their agreement to participate in the focus group.

When I prepared the consent form, I was aware of how the participants would be recruited and I wondered if some people might feel obligated to attend. But I also thought they were free to decline the request should that be their choice. However, after the focus group participants had convened, it became apparent that some were attending because they felt they were required to be present. Even after we discussed the choice participants had to answer or pass on questions and that they could withdraw from the group at any time, I still sensed the process of obtaining informed consent was merely a bureaucratic

exercise that had little meaning for at least some in the room. This point was reinforced when one of the participants turned to another who was taking time to read the form and said jokingly, “Just sign it!” While others laughed, the participant, who had been reading the form, stopped reading and signed the form.

I made note of the process and asked if there were questions or concerns regarding the form or the process we were going to engage in during the focus group. No one responded and in that moment I made an ethical decision to move forward with discussion despite my questions regarding the meaning of the process we had just completed. After all, I had met the letter of the law and had a signed consent form on file for each participant. But I was still left wondering if the spirit of freedom of choice embodied in the principle of informed consent had been met.

This simple experience illustrates a number of significant points. Firstly, it demonstrates how following protocols and procedures can provide the pretense of ethical process while simultaneously overshadowing underlying ethical considerations. Secondly, it heightens the importance of understanding ethics in terms of process rather than as mere compliance to procedural ethics. Thirdly, it illustrates how ethically important moments often occur when least expected and how the dynamics operating among those involved in these situations reflect characteristics of the environmental culture, relational dynamics and power differentials existing within the research context. Fourthly, it shows the need for researchers to be able to manage these moments and the dynamics surrounding them when they occur. And lastly, it highlights how researchers when confronted with the need to make an ethical decision often do not have opportunity

to review their professional code of ethics, research ethics policy statements or consult with their supervisors or other research team members. In such moments, researchers make a decision based on their moral understanding and ethical commitment. As Jake stated in this study, “You can never know what dynamics will come up, so it’s about thinking fast on your feet.” In order to make good ethical decisions in this type of situation it is important for researchers to have a well-developed understanding of qualitative research ethics and a level of ethical sensitivity and acumen that is informed by multiple sources and well-rehearsed.

Another ethical challenge related to ethical regulation and the protocols and procedures associated with the ethics approval process, pertains to the calculation of the risks and benefits of a qualitative research project. Identifying risks and benefits prior to actually engaging in the research process is difficult. For example, how can one predetermine the impact on research participants of engaging in a process in which previously private aspects of their lives are made public through the research process? How can the impact of listening to recordings of research interviews about participants’ experiences of living with HIV/AIDS, domestic violence, or cancer be anticipated in advance? How can researchers anticipate the temptations they will face when they are alone, tired and the demands of their lives put pressure on them to finish a project regardless of the impact on their work? This type of ethical reality cannot be addressed in two lines on an ethics application form.

These realities require researchers to move beyond conceptualizing research ethics as solely defined by a priori policy statements and professional codes that are

external to themselves. Rather, researchers need to have an internalized, integrated understanding of research ethics, a level of ethical sensitivity that allows them to be attuned to the ethical realities and complexities manifest in qualitative research, and the ability to engage in the moral deliberation required to make ethical decisions throughout the research process. These needs raise questions regarding the process of moral development, the cultivation of ethical sensitivity and the development and refinement of the skills required in ethical decision-making.

Moral Development and the Enhancement of Ethical Understanding

As part of the literature review for this study, I briefly looked at two models of moral development and how they were associated with different schools of ethical thought. Kohlberg's model of moral development emphasizes the development of an autonomous self, capable of being motivated by abstract principles understood in terms of their ability to provide formulaic solutions to conflicts of interests. In contrast, moral development according to Gilligan's model is described in terms of the development of self-in-relation with the focus of morality being on the preservation of valuable human relations (Held, 1995).

Participants in this study indicated a number of influences on their moral development and ethical understanding. Most attributed their moral development to lessons learned in relationships with significant people in their lives: parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts, mentors and supervisors. The participants' accounts reflect the significance of these lessons on their moral development and ethical understanding. However, the importance and foundational quality of these lessons is not

recognized nor built upon in the formal training of researchers. Instead, the emphasis in formal training emphasizes the importance of abstract principles and formulaic solutions to the ethical complexities reflected in qualitative research. This oversight disregards the moral and ethical foundation researchers' report accessing when confronted with an ethically laden situation. This failure to build on researchers' existing understandings of morality and ethics (i.e., personal, relational and values based) creates a chasm between morality and ethics as understood by the emerging researcher entering a research course and the abstract principles and formulaic solutions embodied in the protocols and procedures required by those officially governing research ethics.

My concern regarding the effectiveness of qualitative researchers' formal training to support moral and ethical development was heightened as participants talked about how their formal education failed to prepare them to deal with the emotional intensity and ethical complexities encountered during their research projects. They stated their course work allowed few opportunities for them to engage in meaningful dialogue regarding the meaning of research ethics and the ethical complexities encountered in field work. The implications of these findings for the education and training of qualitative researchers are discussed below.

Dialogue and Ethical Development

The researchers involved in this study stated they needed more opportunities to engage in meaningful dialogue regarding what ethics means for them as they plan, conduct and disseminate their research. As Charles Taylor (1989) states, "We find the sense of life through articulating it" (p. 18). The importance of researchers having

opportunity to articulate their understandings of qualitative research ethics was expressed by a number of people who participated in this study. For example, Ken stated near the end of our interview, “Now I’m really curious about what other people do . . . I actually learned . . . a whole bunch of things . . . I’ve never really thought about this [qualitative research ethics] very much . . . I mean you’ve helped me articulate it in some way . . . that I hadn’t before.”

Mookie also addressed the importance of talking about research ethics. He states, “This was helpful for me because . . . it gave me the space and the opportunity to share my views in terms of research ethics, and in particular qualitative research ethics . . . I think this is an extremely important dimension of our work as researchers and as social workers . . . and your interviewing . . . triggered some things and some thoughts . . . I haven't looked at it in a while . . . I think at some level they've always been part of me. I just appreciated the opportunity of being more focused, and [having] an opportunity to look at it over a range of time and a range of experiences, and a range of different research projects and individuals that I've worked with.”

Eva simply stated, “I think that we should have more conversations like these.” She went on to express her thoughts regarding the importance of having opportunity to talk about research ethics and other pertinent issues that occur during their research endeavors. She states, “I find that having a community . . . a group where you can constantly recycle and look through ideas and create new ideas and tend to old ones . . . really builds your sense of professionalism, your sense of ethics.”

Supervisory and Mentoring Relationships and Ethical Development

Researchers also reported developing their ethical acuity within the supervisory or professional mentorship relationship. For example, Jake states, “My supervisor was really good at kind of helping coach me into how to deal with that [an ethical consideration] . . . there’s no checking back with the Board . . . so there’s lots of responsibility on the researcher and his or her supervisor . . . he [my supervisor] was actually quite good, whenever an ethical issue came up we would just meet and discuss it and move forward, we would kind of co-develop how it should be handled.” Eva also acknowledged the influence of her mentor on her ethical development. “Most certainly my mentor has influenced that sense of ethics by encouraging me to search myself at length. To question why I would go in a certain direction; to stop me, when I needed to be stopped, when this [research study] was becoming my personal vendetta.” However, Eva also pointed out that the quality and frequency of supervision can vary. At the time of our interview, Eva reported she had not seen her supervisor in 4 months. This indicates a need for increased consistency in the supervision of students of qualitative research.

Supervisors also assist researchers in developing their methodological knowledge and skill as social scientists. Methodology and ethics cannot be separated and thus mentorship in research methodology is directly related to the requirements for ethical research. An ethical challenge related to qualitative methodology mentioned by a number of participants, relates to the volume of data researchers need to handle over the course of their research projects. Supervision helps the researcher learn strategies and skills to manage his or her data and to recognize when he or she needs to take a break in order to

avoid death by data. Thus, the role supervisors and mentors have in ensuring that research is methodologically sound and that the needs of researchers and others involved in the study are addressed, cannot be overlooked.

Praxis and Ethical Development

Researchers further develop their ethical sensitivity by engaging in research practice. Throughout this study participants described the importance of engaging in research practice and how doing research taught them about the meaning of qualitative research ethics. Jake summarized the importance of experience in the following words. “The more time you are involved in something, the more opportunities there are for issues to emerge, things you would have never thought about. Different dynamics come up that you'll need to address. So, that gives you that experiential part of research ethics.”

Self-awareness, Reflexivity and Ethical Development

The development of ethical awareness requires researchers to develop reflexive practices that allow them to identify their personal understandings of ethics and to consider the implications of these understandings in qualitative research practice. The importance of being self-aware was well illustrated in the researchers’ accounts. I was particularly interested in the need for self-awareness and self-management as the researchers talked about the impact on them of conducting sensitive research and the multiple demands they experienced while conducting their research projects. Well-developed self-awareness is also necessary in the development of self-care strategies. The need for self-care strategies and personal and professional support needs to be addressed in both course work and on-going supervision.

Well-developed self-awareness is also a necessary element of the ethical decision-making process many researchers described using in ethically significant moments they encountered during their research projects. Ethical decision-making models described in professional codes of ethics and in the work of Kitchener and Kitchener (2009) place an emphasis on reason and the application of increasingly abstract principles as the decision-maker moves through the defined steps or phases of the model. However, the ethical decision-making process described by many of the researchers in this study was described in terms of an embodied process which required them to attend to physiological, emotional, cognitive and relational cues. The need for self-awareness, reflexivity and critical thinking was also reflected in the different elements of ethical decision-making processes described by the participants in this study.

Critical Thinking and Ethical Development

Ethical knowledge and skill is further developed in conjunction with one's ability to engage in critical thinking. The study of professional codes of ethics and research policies and regulations can promote the development of a researcher's critical thinking in the area of ethics. Professional codes of ethics do not necessarily readily inform the complexities of qualitative research practice (Shaw, 2008) and researchers need to be aware of where professional ethics and research ethics intersect and where professional ethics may not address the complexities of qualitative research. Thus, researchers need to critically consider their professional code of ethics and the policy statements relating to research ethics and seriously consider how these will inform and be integrated into their

research practice. Researchers also need to identify points at which the principles and practices embodied in these documents vary from their own and address this variance.

This reflective form of education stands in sharp contrast to education focused on outward conformity to protocols and procedures. Mookie's comment regarding protocols and procedures associated with regulated practice is relevant to this point. "The processes are mechanical in that they must be done but it has to be a thoughtful process in terms of what you put down on the paper and then how you operationalize it." Practice applying the principles and guidelines found in professional codes of ethics and policy statements to case studies and examples that come from actual research practice was described in this study as being a meaningful educational experience that developed the ability of researchers to think critically.

Kate, for example, talks about how beneficial this type of exercise was in helping her develop her understanding of qualitative research ethics. "I think I was very lucky, I had really good professors that incorporated actual experiences from a researcher's perspective of doing interviews into the course . . . these issues were highlighted and this sensitivity thing was highlighted as, 'Well, you need to think about this, and think about it in a way that your research could be sensitive for the participant.'" Kate goes on to express that while the work done in class was helpful, it was not until she began conducting research and ran into ethically significant moments in her work that she realized the importance of her training and her need to be better prepared for the ethical challenges she faced. She states, "but until you actually experience it . . . I was like,

‘Okay, whatever, it’s not going to happen to me.’ And then when it does, you’re like, ‘Oh crap, I should have prepared better’ . . . so now, I’m prepared.”

In summary, this study revealed

- The importance of education and training in the moral and ethical development of qualitative researchers.
- That in order to ensure researchers develop well-rounded ethical acuity, the education of researchers must include more than a cursory overview of the regulation of research ethics and the completion of REB ethics application forms.
- The education and training of researchers need to tend to the moral and ethical development of researchers by (a) incorporating opportunities for meaningful dialogue regarding research ethics, (b) providing consistent, quality supervision, (c) requiring research trainees to be involved in supervised research practice, (d) providing researchers opportunities to develop reflexive skills and increased self-awareness through reflective educational practices and (e) having researchers engage in critical thinking as they study professional codes of ethics and research ethics guidelines.
- Personal lessons learned in life informed researchers’ ethical decision-making process when they were confronted with an ethical challenge during their research. The development of a researcher’s ethical sensitivity needs to acknowledge and build on the person’s existing understanding as the

researcher is introduced to the ethical complexities involved in conducting qualitative research.

Identifying and Managing Ethically Significant Moments: The Art and Complexities of Ethical Decision-making

The art and complexity of a well-developed approach to ethical decision-making can be seen in the different characteristics reflected in the accounts of how the researchers in this study identified and managed the ethically significant moments encountered in their work. For them, ethical decision-making involved

- Being ***aware*** of the ethical implications of qualitative research practices. Developing awareness of the ethical implications of qualitative research practices requires researchers to know themselves, to know the research participants and their capabilities and their potential vulnerabilities, other stakeholders, the purpose of the research, the methodology informing the research project, and the contextual factors that will influence the study and be impacted by the study.
- Being ***informed*** by an integrated understanding of qualitative research ethics based on personal, professional and contextual understandings of ethics.
- ***Attending*** to ethically important moments when they arise and paying attention to their internal awarenesses and the relational dynamics that occur within those moments.
- ***Reflecting*** on the ethical implications of what is occurring in the research process for those involved or impacted by the research. Thinking about what

kind of footprint you want to leave on the research environment is a critical aspect of the ethical decision-making process.

- ***Engaging*** with others in the ethical decision-making process as appropriate. At other times it will be necessary to move quickly from reflecting to acting.
- ***Acting*** ethically. Acting ethically moves the researcher from good intentions to acting in an ethical manner that upholds his or her personal and professional values and ethics.

These characteristics were manifest in the accounts of how those involved in this study identified and managed the various ethical challenges they encountered in their work. Many of the ethical considerations confronted related to aspects of the guidelines, protocols and procedures associated with regulated research ethics. These included the meaning of informed consent, challenges related to anonymity, maleficence and beneficence. However, participants also identified a number of ethical considerations that extended beyond the focus formal policies (i.e., TCPS2 in Canada) place on respect for people, justice and the welfare of others (i.e., participants). Those interviewed talked about research ethics also relating to the person of the researcher and as extending to the welfare of others involved in the research process (i.e., transcriptionists and research assistants). A number of the ethically significant moments they encountered were also personal in nature.

For example, the need for researchers and others involved in research projects to have clearly identified self-care strategies was an ethical consideration they felt needed to be addressed in researchers' education and training and implemented throughout their

practice. Some of the researchers talked about ethically significant moments that occurred when they were tempted to take methodological short-cuts in order to complete their project.

In summary, the wide-range of ethically important moments that occur in qualitative research cannot be addressed comprehensively in formal policies and procedures. While those involved in this study acknowledged a need for research ethics and for researchers to be accountable within the scientific community, it was clear that the researchers' ethical sensitivity and skills were not developed through mere outward compliance with regulatory guidelines, protocols and procedures. Rather, the development of ethical acuity is developed as researchers acknowledge and expand their personal understandings of ethics, engage in educational opportunities that encourage critical thinking and provide opportunities for dialogue, develop openness to being informed by ethical perspectives reflected within the research context and engage in reflective research practice.

The art of ethical decision-making also requires researchers to have well-developed relational skills and a keen sense of responsibility regarding the use of these skills in their research projects. For example, the relationship between the researcher and the participant requires the researcher to "negotiate a fine ethical balance between building sufficient trust to be able to probe participants for potential rich data, while at the same time maintaining sufficient distance in respect for the participant" (Guillemin & Heggen, 2009, p. 292). Navigating this balance requires ethical sensitivity on the part of the researcher and a willingness on his or her part to negotiate the demands of the

research methodology when necessary to fulfill the ethical concerns that can arise during the research process.

The importance of qualitative researchers having multiple forms of on-going support was also revealed in this study and linked to researchers' abilities to maintain ethical conduct throughout the research process. The role supervisors and mentors played in the overall development and support of qualitative researchers was also identified. This support was counter-balanced by the researcher's responsibility to tend to his or her own well-being and ethical conduct. Ultimately, qualitative research ethics involves choices and all involved are ultimately responsible for the decisions they make regardless of what others may be doing around them.

Finally, institutional policies and the requirements of research oversight need to be examined in light of their overt and covert impact on the moral and ethical development of qualitative researchers and the quality of the ethical decisions made by these researchers. Steps need to be taken by researchers, educators and policy makers to ensure research ethics do not become empty bureaucratic tedium (Wynn, 2011) but rather remain a vital aspect of the research process that reflects thoughtfulness on the part of all involved.

Research Reflection: A Framework for Considering the Complexities of Qualitative Research Ethics

As part of this research project, I have maintained a journal entitled *Research Reflections.* One of the entries in this journal reflects my ongoing thoughts regarding the complexities of qualitative research ethics I and other researchers need to consider as we

move through our research projects. I present it here not as a fait de complete but as a means of contributing to the multifaceted conversation that is taking place regarding the meaning and application of qualitative research ethics.

A Framework for Considering the Complexities of Qualitative Research Ethics

In this framework, qualitative research ethics are considered to be value-laden, complex and situated. Ethical decision-making is understood as a multi-faceted process that extends over the course of the research process. As such, this framework

- Allows multiple realities and multiple ethical perspectives to be recognized and integrated into qualitative research ethics.
- Recognizes that qualitative research takes place within diverse contexts and that contextual factors must be considered in ethical decision-making.
- Envisions qualitative research ethics as a fluid, dynamic and iterative process.
- Acknowledges the importance of multiple forms of relationships that exist within the research system and environment.
- Acknowledges the complexities of our existence (i.e., technological advances, globalization, consumerism and pluralism).
- Recognizes the purpose of qualitative research is to generate knowledge and to contribute to social change that enhances the lives of those directly involved in the research and/or those who are impacted by the research.
- Acknowledges that through the qualitative research process all are changed.

Based on these assumptions, in the following chart, I identify some of the complexities I believe qualitative researchers need to consider as they approach and move through the

qualitative research process. Comments and questions relating to each complexity are identified in the commentary provided for each item. I do not consider this to be an exhaustive list. Rather, I see it is a tool to be used to engage qualitative researchers in ethical considerations, conversations and actions that will help ensure research ethics are not relegated to becoming "mere bureaucratic tedium" (Wynn, 2011). As I worked on this framework, I remembered Sarah's words, "Projects are approved not people." It is people who determine the ethical course of qualitative research as they consider and address the complexities that constitute qualitative research endeavors.

A Framework for Considering the Complexities of Qualitative Research Ethics	
Complexity	**Commentary**
Complexities of self	Recognize your personal and professional values, beliefs and experiences that you bring to the qualitative research experience. Check your attitude and aspirations and acknowledge the reasons you are conducting the research. What is the influence of these on how you will design and conduct your research? Is there an ulterior or altruistic motive driving you to do the research? How might these motives influence your ethical stance as you progress through the different stages of the research project? What accountability and support systems do you have and how will you utilize these to assist you in acting ethically throughout the research process? How will you tend to your own well-being during the research project? What internal processes do you tend to when you are confronted with an ethical/moral decision? What interpersonal skills do you possess that will assist you in tending to ethically significant moments that will occur during your research? What personality traits and/or personal habits might assist you or get in the way of you maintaining your desired ethical posture? How will you manage these while involved in research practice?

Complexities of Methodology	Identify the ethical implications of your research methodology. Does your epistemology support an a priori definition of the research process? What is the meaning of informed consent in your chosen methodology? What type of relationship/s will you want to develop with those involved in your project? Is maintaining confidentiality a concern (e.g., small number of participants for in-depth studies)? What challenges will you face when you consider the risk/benefit ratio? What ethical challenges will you need to address in each phase of your study? If your methodology conflicts with the requirements of regulatory bodies how will you address and/or manage these challenges?
Complexities of Ethical Perspectives	Allow the research process to be informed by multiple ethical perspectives and models of ethical decision-making. Ethical decisions relating to the research project take place on multiple levels and are informed by the ethical perspectives of all involved (i.e., participants, community members, researcher/s, research assistants, transcriptionists, academic supervisors, REB committee members, institution and/or organizational personnel, funders, and consumers of the research). Sensitivity to this multiplicity and complexity needs to be maintained and allowed to inform the ethical decisions made over the course of the research process. Engage in ethical conversations and consultation with others in order to enhance the ethical decision-making process. Address ethical conflicts with respect and dignity for all involved in the process.

Complexities of Proximity/Context	Consider the rules of conduct/ethics operant within the local context/s in which the research is being conducted. Utilize these rules before you project rules from "outside." Look at the power dynamics operant within the context and be aware of aligning with oppressive power brokers. Remember this is often easier said than done. Identify liberating forces and consider how these may be accessed and utilized in the development and implementation of your research project. Remember, all is not what it may appear to be. Allow enough time in your research schedule to become familiarized with contextual factors that will have an impact on your research project. Consider the type of footprint you want to leave on the research environment.
Complexities of Personal Involvement and Relationships	Identify the stakeholders involved in the research project and the relationships between the parties. How do these relationships affect the research system and the ethical decision-making process? Seek to engage multiple voices and have multi-layered communications. Consider who is NOT being heard and take steps to be inclusive. Who is most invested? Who stands to gain through this project and who has the most to lose?
Complexities of the Decision-making Process	Who needs to be involved in the decision? Consider those involved in the immediate situation (i.e., ethically significant moment) as well as others who may not be present but need to be involved in the decision-making process. Use as many ways as possible to engage people in the decision-making process. Consider how participants and other parties involved make decisions (e.g., individually or consensually). Err on the side of more process and more involvement rather than less, while remaining sensitive to the needs of those involved. Consider ethics at every stage of the decision-making process and negotiate and deal with conflicts as they arise, or as soon as is expedient.

Complexities of Decisions	Does the decision address the complexity of involvement? Is it congruent with the local (proximal) code of moral conduct and/or ethical standards? If not, identify why not and how the incongruence will be addressed.
Complexities of Distribution and Utilization	Revisit who will potentially be impacted by the distribution and utilization of the research. How will the research findings be distributed? Who needs to be involved? What follow-up process, if any, needs to be in place should consumers have questions regarding the research? How will those who do not agree with the research be acknowledged and respected?
Complexities of Ending/Transforming Relationships	Acknowledge the process the team has been through to date and plan ahead for the termination of the project. What needs to be addressed, for example, contributions to the research and any outstanding needs or tasks? How will relational endings be addressed? Do new relationships need to be formed? How will this process be addressed?

Concluding Remarks

As I draw this study to a close, I find myself reflecting on my own journey as I have participated in this research project. When I started this project, I was uncertain regarding the meaning of qualitative research ethics. I turned to the policies and practices in place and found the controversy surrounding them confusing and concerning. As I conclude this study, my concern has been heightened as I have gained a deeper understanding of the overt and covert implications of the shift from ethical reasoning to ethical regulation that is taking place within the scientific community. I am also concerned about the mismatch between formal policies, protocols and procedures and researchers' experiences in practice and the focus being placed on procedural ethics taking place in university research programs.

Finally, I think qualitative research ethics will never be defined solely by formal policies and procedures. Rather, qualitative research ethics are about who we are as researchers, the values and principles we live by and how these values and principles guide our decisions as we move through our research projects. I do not have final answers to my uncertainties but I do have increased clarity regarding what is important to me as a qualitative researcher. I also have increased confidence in my ability to recognize ethical challenges that may arise during a research project and my need to be humble when I miss something that may be significant for someone else involved with me in a project. At other times, I need to be willing to courageously take a stand against injustice, disrespect and inhumanity. In the end, qualitative research ethics are meaningless without personal commitment and action.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

In this study I explored 10 Canadian qualitative researchers' accounts of how they understood and managed ethical considerations that occurred during completed research projects. Their accounts are personal, contextual and may differ from those of other qualitative researchers.

In heuristic research, researchers are required to have direct experience associated with the phenomenon being examined or to have had a comparable experience. Approaching this study, my experience in conducting qualitative research was relatively limited and I had no previous experience obtaining ethics approval from a university's Research Ethics Board. I had conducted qualitative research within the context of community based practice (i.e., environmental scans relating to domestic violence treatment and needs assessments for the Centres for Social Work in Kosovo). At times during this study, I felt my limited experience restricted my ability to utilize some of the internally focused practices supported in Moustakas's (1990) approach to heuristic research. At other times, my international research experience, especially that of working in a post-war zone, differentiated my work from the experiences discussed by the participants in this study.

A third limitation to this study relates to my exploration of social justice as an ethical principle in qualitative research endeavors. When participants spoke of social justice as an important ethical commitment for them, I assumed I understood what they meant by the term. At times, I got caught up in the participant's experiences related to social justice and failed to explore the meaning of social justice for the individual. I now

see this as a limitation to this study and see this as an area meriting further research. This is especially true in light of the emphasis the principle of justice has in the current Canadian *Tri-Council Policy Statement (2)* guidelines for research ethics.

While Moustakas's (1990) heuristic research has much to offer qualitative researchers, it also has some limitations as a research methodology. Firstly, a real strength of this methodology is the freedom it affords the researcher. Interviews can vary from being unstructured to semi-structured, data analysis can be done using an unlimited number of strategies and the final report can be presented using creative forms of presentation. While I appreciate the freedom afforded in heuristic inquiry, at times I found myself questioning where my ideas and biases interfaced with the participants' experiences. I found myself needing to utilize more structured strategies both during information gathering and during data analysis. For example, as part of the conversational interviews, I referred to my interview guide as a way to ensure I had covered the same questions with all participants. This was an important decision as it allowed me to utilize a form of question analysis during data analysis. I found integrating more structured strategies allowed me to balance intuitive processes with more cognitive forms of analysis.

Secondly, I found Moustakas (1990) failed to provide a clear explanation of the philosophical basis for heuristic research. Moustakas's reference to heuristics being based on Husserl's phenomenological philosophy remained confusing despite my going back to earlier works which Moustakas claimed clarified the philosophical basis for heuristic inquiry. Approaching heuristics from a constructivist perspective, allowed me to position

myself within a philosophical perspective that acknowledges the personal and social nature of knowledge and the knowledge building process which occurs during qualitative research, including heuristic inquiry. Approaching heuristic inquiry from a constructivist perspective allowed me to draw on the strengths of Moustakas's heuristic methodology which are the inclusion of the researcher within the boundaries of the research system, the freedom to access and include tacit awareness as a means of gaining understanding of the phenomenon under review, the integration of creativity and poetic expression throughout the research process, the requirement for the researcher to engage in disciplined and rigorous research practices and the freedom to combine these with helpful strategies drawn from other qualitative research approaches such as thematizing from Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) and question analysis from Morse and Field (1995).

Finally, the demands on the heuristic researcher cannot be overlooked (Djuraskovic & Arthur, 2010). A potential limitation of this approach is the risk that heuristic researchers will not complete their projects or they may become overly invested in their research at the expense of other aspects of their lives.

In summary, Moustakas's (1990) approach to heuristic inquiry provides researchers a perspective that honors researchers' questions and problems and affirms imagination, self-reflection, intuition and the tacit dimension as valid means of constructing knowledge. Heuristic researchers must be willing to make a "passionate yet disciplined commitment" (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985) to their work. The heuristic researcher must be willing to look inwards and draw upon personal knowledge and be open to engaging with others in meaningful conversations regarding the phenomenon

under review. This multi-faceted process allows researchers to develop rich, descriptive accounts of the meaning of everyday human experiences.

In this study, I examined researchers' understandings and management of qualitative research ethics. The participants in this study (10 experienced qualitative researchers from Canada) may be considered an elite group who were well-versed in the meaning of research ethics. But what do we know about how others who are participants in research studies understand and experience research ethics in practice? I propose we know very little and that more research in this area would help us develop a more comprehensive understanding of qualitative research ethics from the perspective of other research participants. For example, a qualitative research study conducted with people who participated in the research projects referred to by researchers in this study, would involve participants living with HIV/AIDS, struggling with poverty, dealing with domestic violence, adjusting to life in a new land, and women in leadership. Understanding more about a wider range of former research participants' experiences of qualitative research would further extend our knowledge of qualitative research ethics. I believe it is time we hear another side of the story!

Letter to the Reader

Summer 2012

Dear Reader,

Three years have passed since I wrote my first letter to you. Three years, that's a long time to be contemplating anything, let alone something as abstract as the complexities of qualitative research ethics. Most people, when they hear what I've been focusing on during this time, acknowledge my interest in ethics with a polite smile and then look to see who else is in the room they can talk to! Why would anyone want to spend three years researching and writing about qualitative research ethics? And what might the person learn that would make any real difference in the world? Good questions. I've been asking myself those questions too!

Let me answer the why question first. Starting out on this journey I had no idea where it would take me and what I would learn along the way. Yes, I had a research question which came into being as I tended to a bellyache that occurred during a research methods class. But I didn't know then what I would experience as I followed those early sparks of what grew into a deep seated yearning or tacit passion to more fully comprehend how other qualitative researchers understand ethics. But why was it so important to me? And what kept my interest over the three years? Initially, it was about me and my need to increase my own understanding about research ethics and the implications of this work in my research practice. As mentioned in my first letter, I'd had some heart wrenching experiences that left me questioning if I would ever engage in

another qualitative research project. I saw the look of betrayal in the eyes of the Director of the Pristina Centre of Social Work when I told him the work of our team was to be prematurely terminated. I felt his anger when he showed up at the office of the agency the day we were loading our boxes into our white UN vehicles as we prepared to leave the region leaving behind unfulfilled promises. In that moment, my personal integrity and morals were questioned. I knew I was merely a pawn in a game someone else was controlling and I knew I did not want to be caught in this type of situation again. I now realize I initially engaged in this research project as a way to try and figure out how I could avoid that kind of situation in the future.

But as I began talking with others about their understandings of qualitative research ethics and heard how they handled ethically significant moments that they faced in their work, I was drawn in by their sincerity, deep caring for their participants, desire and commitment to being good scientists and to using research as a tool in the pursuit of social justice. But this is not an easy quest! Qualitative researchers are confronted with an ethical dilemma. In order to commence their research, they need to adhere to the policies and procedures outlined by policy makers and institutional REBs. But all too often adherence to the requirements of ethical regulation comes at the cost of having their own moral agency minimized and their integrity compromised by the very policies and practices that are associated with ethical research practice. At a time when qualitative research is coming into its own, the complexities of qualitative research ethics are being reduced to what can fit in a space on an ethics application form.

Paradoxically, as researchers tend to the requirements of those responsible for ethical oversight of research, time is taken away from other activities focused on developing their internalized moral and ethical sensitivity. As a result, when they get out into the field many report feeling ill-prepared to recognize and handle the types of ethically significant moments that arise during qualitative research. Simultaneously, the shift from ethical reasoning to ethical regulation emphasizes a priori procedures which fail to address the ethical concerns that arise in qualitative studies. When a researcher wants to get started on a research project, it is all too easy to simply provide the answers you think will get you ethics approval and allow you to engage in your research. At this point ethics has lost its meaning!

The good news is the researchers I talked with in this project were open to exposing the ethical challenges they encountered in their projects. Tears came into George's eyes as he recalled his struggle to decide whether or not he would provide his participant's story of living with HIV/AIDS to the participant's family at the time of the participant's funeral. George's love for his own family heightened his sensitivity to the participant's father, brother and sister and made his decision-making process even more intense. I too had tears in my eyes as he described the emotions he experienced at the funeral as he wrestled with the decision confronting him.

How do we determine appropriate relational boundaries in our work? How do we show respect for a former participant who is dead? When I think about Wisetonian and his decision to accept money from the Red Cross following his releasing the research on the devastating effects on the lives of those impacted by the tainted blood scandal, I

wonder what I would have done with the offer. When I think about the pressure Phoebe felt to compromise her commitment to accurately reflect how the women in her study wanted to be portrayed in her quilt, I wonder if I would have stuffed the quilt in a drawer and made up journal entries at the last minute. How would I manage the emotional intensity of Mookie's study on racism and violence? These are not easy questions and I may continue thinking about them for another three years! Why? Because qualitative research ethics isn't something you can decide you know the answer for once and for all. Rather qualitative research ethics is the moral deliberation that a researcher engages in over the course of his/her work. There are no simple answers for complex questions.

Seek and Ye Shall Find

I searched for an answer and found questions.

I longed for simplicity and found complexity.

I learned codes and policy but struggled with process.

I looked for cognitions and experienced emotions.

I looked for ethics and found moral deliberation.

What have I learned that will make a real difference in the world? Nothing! Learning alone does not bring about change in our world. Change only comes as knowledge is put into action. I will act! I will embrace the questions posed in ethically significant moments. I will open myself up to the complexities embodied in qualitative research and allow them to enhance the process. I will engage in dialogue and seek to ensure all involved are engaged in ethical decision-making that affects them. I will

engage with others who are examining and seeking to address the on-going tensions and challenges reflected in ethical qualitative research practice.

When alone and tempted to cut methodological corners, I will take a break, maybe even sleep, before I make a decision. I will seek support when I sense my methodological integrity needs to be shored up. When my head clears, I'll resume the work of doing good science. I will tend to my emotions, at least most of the time, and when I don't and I later realize I have shut myself off from my feelings, I will engage in small acts of living until I come back to life. Finally, I realize I have a keen sense of justice and compassion (as idealistic as that may sound) and I will be involved in doing what I can, one small act at a time, to better the lives of those impacted by my research.

Now I am finished and after three years of thinking and writing about qualitative research ethics, I am going to pick up my beautifully bound copy of A. A. Milne's (1926/1994) The Complete Tales of Winnie-the-Pooh *and enjoy a "little something" and when I have finished that, I shall go on a fast "Thinking Walk" by myself, or perhaps with a friend. And when I have finished that, I shall return to my "Thinking Place" and do another three years of research on how participants, other than qualitative researchers, understand their experiences of participating in qualitative research. But first I'll have a "little something."*

Regards,

Lynda

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Appendix A

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Informed Consent

Name of Researcher, Faculty, Department, Telephone & Email: Lynda Snyder, Faculty of Social Work, Telephone: 403-210-3472 (Home), 403-616-9508 (Cell), Email: lyndajoysnyder@hotmail.com

Supervisor:

Dr. Sally St. George, Faculty of Social Work, Faculty telephone 403-220-3884 Email: sstgeor@ucalgary.ca

Title of Project: Qualitative Research Ethics: An Heuristic Inquiry Exploring the Meaning and Application of Ethics in Qualitative Research

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This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study.

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this heuristic inquiry is to generate knowledge regarding qualitative researchers' understanding and application of research ethics in practice. If you have completed a qualitative research project that has received approval from a Canadian university Research Ethics Board, you are invited to participate in this study.

What Will I Be Asked To Do?

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in a face-to-face interview that will take the form of a conversational dialogue. During our conversation together, you will be asked to discuss your understanding of the meaning of qualitative research ethics and to recall specific incidents in your research during which you were confronted with ethical considerations and how you handled these situations. You will be asked to describe what these experiences were like for you, including your thoughts, feelings, and course of action. If you can provide excerpts from personal logs and/or research journals that support or illustrate your experiences these would add a richness

and depth to your account. Each conversation is anticipated to take a minimum of 1.5 hours. The information you share with me during the interview will be digitally recorded during our conversation and will later be transcribed. You will be provided an opportunity to review the information shared during the interview prior to it being used further in the research process. You will also be provided an opportunity to review the summary of your information created by the primary researcher.
Your participation is voluntary and you may refuse to participate in this study altogether or in parts of the study. If you wish to withdraw from the study at any time, you may do so by notifying the primary researcher by email. Upon completion of this study, you will receive a gift certificate worth $40.00 to Indigo Books or Amazon.com.

What Type of Personal Information Will Be Collected?

You will be asked to provide your name and contact information (i.e. an email address) to the primary researcher. This information will be kept confidential and will be available only to the primary researcher, the professional transcriptionist and the primary researcher's academic advisor. No personal identifying information will be revealed in this study other than your gender, age, academic discipline and your highest degree.

There are several options for you to consider if you decide to take part in this research. You can choose all, some or none of them. Please put a check mark on the corresponding line(s) that grants me your permission to:

Please indicate your consent for each research activity by placing a check mark beside the activity.	Research Activity
	I consent for the primary researcher to send me an electronic copy of the transcription of the conversation/s I will have with the primary researcher. This transcription will be for my review. I further agree to return the document to the primary researcher with desired changes or corrections made within 1 week from the time the information was sent to me.
	I consent for the primary researcher to photocopy any documents I provide to her as part of her data collection process.
	I consent for the primary researcher to send me an electronic copy of her summary of the information I provide during our conversation/s. Any changes to this information will be made in the document provided to me by the primary researcher and will be returned to the primary researcher within 1 week from the date the information is sent

	to me. If I do not send the primary researcher changes to the summary, this will indicate my acceptance of the summary as an accurate depiction of my experience.
	I consent to information I provide the primary researcher being quoted in the primary researcher's doctoral dissertation and in any future articles, or other written materials the primary researcher may produce. When I am quoted, I would like the primary researcher to refer to me using the following pseudonym _____.

Are there Risks or Benefits if I Participate?

The risks for you in this study are similar to those that might be encountered by you in everyday life. For example, the primary researcher will be using the American email service Hotmail © to send information back and forth to you. Hotmail © is subject to U.S. laws, including the USA Patriot Act. The risks associated with using this service are minimal, and similar to those associated with other social utilities spaces such as Facebook © and MySpace ©.

In recognition of the time you will contribute to this study, you will receive a $40 gift certificate to either Amazon.com or Indigo books upon completion of this research project.

What Happens to the Information I Provide?

Participation in this research is completely voluntary. Information you provide during the interview with the primary researcher will be digitally recorded. All recorded material will be transported in a locked file box and downloaded onto a computer that is password and firewall protected for use by the primary researcher. Either a professional transcriptionist or the primary researcher will transcribe your information. Upon completion of the initial transcription, you will receive by email a copy of the transcribed interview from the primary researcher. You will have 1 week to review the document, make any corrections or changes you desire, and return the electronic document to the primary researcher by email. Once the primary researcher has received the transcribed interview back from you, the primary researcher will create a summary of the interview. This summary will be sent to you for your review. Again you will have 1 week to review the summary and email the document back to the primary researcher. If there are no changes to be made, you do not need to do anything. The primary researcher will wait 1 week for you to send her any desired corrections and after that time will assume there are no changes to be made. She will then proceed to integrate your information into the data gathered during this research project.

Only the primary researcher, the professional transcriptionist and the primary researcher's academic advisor will have access to the raw data you provide. The primary researcher will remove any information that identifies you by name from transcribed

and/or photocopied materials. Upon completion of this research project, all recorded and transcribed information will be stored on an encrypted, password protected USB flash drive. The primary researcher will keep this information for a period of 5 years after which it will be erased or destroyed by the primary researcher.

During the course of this study, should you wish to withdraw from this research, you may advise the primary researcher by email of your intent to withdraw. If you wish to withdraw data provided to date, the primary researcher will fulfill your request by deleting any previously provided information from the data gathered during this research project. If you do not ask for your data to be withdrawn, your data will be used in the analysis.

Signatures (written consent)

Your signature on this form indicates that you 1) understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and 2) agree to participate as a research subject.

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from this research project at any time. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Participant's Name: (please print)_____

Participant's Signature _____Date: _____

Researcher's Name: (please print)_____

Researcher's Signature: _____Date: _____

Questions/Concerns

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact: Lynda-Joy Snyder, MA, MSW, PhD (c)

University of Calgary, Faculty of Social Work
Telephone: 403-616-9508
Email: lyndajoysnyder@hotmail.com
And/Or
Dr. Sally St. George
University of Calgary, Faculty of Social Work
Faculty Phone number: 403-220-3884

Email: sstgeor@ucalgary.ca If you have any concerns about the way you've been treated as a participant, please contact the Senior Ethics Resource Officer, Research Services Office, University of Calgary at (403) 220-3782; email rburrows@ucalgary.ca.

Appendix B

Interview Guide

Interview Process: Heuristic research utilizes conversational dialogue as its primary approach during the interview process. At the outset of the interview, the co-researcher is reminded of the research question for this study. The research question addressed in this study is: How do qualitative researchers understand and apply research ethics over the course of the research process?

Potential Questions:
Once the focus of the interview process has been established through the reiteration of the research question, the co-researcher could be asked a question like the following:

- What is your experience as a qualitative researcher?
- In light of your experience, what does the term "qualitative research ethics" mean to you?

Other questions that might be asked include:

- What has your experience been in considering and utilizing research ethics in your research practice?
- What qualities or dimensions of this experience stand out for you? What examples are vivid and alive to you?
- What events, situations, and people are connected with your experience?
- What feelings and thoughts are generated by your experience?
- What bodily states or shifts in bodily presence occur in your experience?
- What time and space factors affect your awareness and understanding of research ethics?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your understanding and application of research ethics?

These questions are suggestions only. The heuristic process is quite free-flowing and questions are spontaneously generated during the conversational dialogues that occur during the interview process. These questions are then integrated back into the interview process.

Location of Interviews: Interviews will be conducted in a place mutually agreed upon by the researcher and the co-researcher. Generally interviews will be conducted in the office of the person being interviewed. However, some co-researchers may prefer to be interviewed in their homes. In these situations, the researcher will advise her advisor of these arrangements and let her know when the interview has been completed and she is out of the person's home.

Length of Interviews: Heuristic interviews are not timed events. Rather the conversation continues until the researcher and the co-researcher feel the dialogue has come to a natural end. These conversations are usually one to two hours in duration.