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Feminist Reflections on the Relation of Emotions to Ethics: A Case Study of Two Awkward Interviewing Moments

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Key words: awkward moments; discursive positioning; emotions; feminist qualitative methods; interviews; standpoint; reflexivity; research ethics

Abstract: In Canada, social scientists are accountable to ethical guidelines, including the minimization of harm. Simultaneously, they are accountable to an academic community. But what of those moments in the researcher-participant relationship when these principles clash? They have at times done so resoundingly in our careers as qualitative interviewers, especially when we sought to ensure that information we implicitly understood and perceived as crucial would be duly stated by participants for the research record. Such attempts gave rise to deeply awkward interactions rife with emotions that even risked the premature termination of the interviews. In this article, we use methods from a feminist paradigm, and specifically standpoint and discursive positioning theory, to reflexively analyze the ethics in practice surrounding two of our own cases of awkward moments. Our analysis illustrates how the emotions of awkward moments can be symptomatic of everyday ethical conundrums. We particularly consider whether and how our engagement in reflexivity from these two vantage points can mitigate any real or imagined harm. We indicate how the understanding we develop from our analysis can lead to proactive recommendations for researchers to engage with their emotions and conduct themselves more ethically, both in the field and in analyses.

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1. Introduction

In Canada, researchers are required to abide by the "Canadian Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans" (GOVERNMENT OF CANADA, 2017). The particularities of this national framework, one that differs in significant ways from others, sets the horizons for how we are to proceed ethically (VON UNGER, DILGER & SCHÖNHUTH, 2016); we are to respect the core principle of "Concern for Welfare," which includes the minimization of harm. We are simultaneously held accountable to an academic community to which we must contribute knowledge gleaned with integrity. But what of those moments in data collection when these principles clash? They have at times done so resoundingly in our careers as qualitative interviewers, especially when we sought to ensure that information we implicitly understood and perceived as crucial to our research projects would be duly stated by participants for the research record. Such attempts gave rise to deeply awkward interactions between ourselves and participants characterized by a mix of dissonance, discomfort, and antagonism (KNOWLES, 2006; SMYTH & MITCHELL, 2008), and an obvious inability to achieve inter-subjectivity (see also LUFF, 1999). For Katherine, the awkward moment occurred in an interview when a participant made a comment she interpreted as sexualizing. She felt a complex mix of ire, alarm, and amusement. For Amber, it centered on her and the participant's floundering engagement with race. She felt anxious and inept. [1]

Hindsight permits us to be reflexive about the ethical and emotional dimensions intimately tied to these awkward moments. We define ethics in sociology as simply the investigation of the moral codes held by individuals or normalized in society (JARY & JARY, 2000). We appreciate GUILLEMIN and GILLAM's (2004) distinction between procedural ethics, as those codes of conduct governing academic research, and ethics in practice, namely, the ethics that materialize in the ordinary, everyday doing of research. As these scholars observe, being reflexive about researcher and participant interactions underscores these ethics in practice, i.e., respecting, or risking the threat of, autonomy, dignity and privacy (p.275). We also concur with FOUCAULT's (1985, p.25) argument that individuals —whether within or outside the researcher-participant relationship—may conduct and constitute themselves as ethical subjects by responding to the moral code of the relevant prescriptive system (e.g. that of the family, the labor market). Further, we embrace the knowledge that any ethical response—inside or outside the research interview—involves emotions. Informed by feminist philosophers and social scientists interested in how emotion itself constitutes an epistemological resource, we see the *emotionality* of these awkward moments as important and even necessary opportunities for reflexive analysis (JAGGAR, 1989; KLEINMAN, COPP & HENDERSON, 1997; LUTZ, 2002; STANLEY & WISE, 1983). [2]

Our objective in this study is therefore twofold, to first understand awkward moments in researcher-participant relationships, as GUILLEMIN and GILLAM (2004) do, by analyzing the ethics in practice that surround them. Second, we extend GUILLEMIN and GILLAM's original conceptualization of ethics in practice through our desire to also understand how everyday morality in compliance or

opposition to dominant norms and discourses (SEVENHUIJSEN, 1998), even those pertaining to cooperative talk or gift giving (GRICE 1975; MAUSS, 1923), infuses researcher-participant relationships. To pursue both objectives, we prioritize emotion. We specifically advance standpoint theory and discursive positioning as means of reflexively grappling with our awkward moments and untangling their emotional and ethical dimensions. Our "cases" are therefore conduits to a feminist analysis of the power, knowledge, agency, identity, politics, control, discipline and *emotions* caught up in "research" (ROTH, 2004, 2005) and "everyday" ethics. [3]

2. Methods

2.1 Data collection

We closely analyze the ethical dimensions of two interview excerpts, involving each coauthor in turn.[1] The first excerpt comes from an interview conducted by coauthor Katherine. During four months of 2008, she had done an ethnography among a Toronto-based theatre group that was rehearsing a play that she had written. At that time, her research question had concerned the relation of the methods used in the theatre to those used in sociology. Following the ethnography, she remained in contact with several of the cast and crew, developing friendship and further working relations with some of them. In 2011, together with Elizabeth QUINLAN, Katherine designed a new research project investigating the precarities of cultural work during the Canadian economic recession (BISCHOPING & QUINLAN, 2013a). To answer this question, Katherine conducted semi-structured qualitative interviews with other cast and crew members of the 2008 play, asking about their career histories and aspirations, and the challenges and joys they experienced in doing cultural work. The excerpt we analyze below comes from the career history portion of an interview conducted with a participant whose pseudonym is "Charles." [4]

The second excerpt comes from an interview conducted in 2010 by coauthor Amber, as part of a research project that she and colleagues were conducting on how Canadian families, made up of members "by choice"[2], supported one another during experiences of low income (GAZSO, McDANIEL & WALDRON, 2016). Seventy individuals from a total of 20 families, recruited so as to encompass diversity in terms of their racialization, ethnicity, citizenship status, gender, sexuality, and family structure, participated in semi-structured qualitative interviews about their networks of social support, the supports they gave and received, and the effects of life events on support relationships. The interview commenced with a brief demographics section, which included a question on how

1 The projects from which we draw our cases were approved by the York University Office of Research Ethics Human Participants Review Committee. Each of these projects involved informed voluntary consent as well as the acknowledgment of researcher responsibility for protecting participant anonymity and preserving confidentiality. Our informed consent documents made it explicit that ours were collaborative research projects; they named all researchers.

2 This term refers to people who "feel like family," which could include kin, fictive kin, personal community, or chosen family.

participants identified themselves in terms of "race," ethnicity, or culture. This question was included as part of the project's diversity emphasis, and specifically because earlier studies had documented how racialized persons disproportionately experience low income in Canada. The interview excerpt that we analyze from this study begins as a participant, whose pseudonym is "Andrew," is asked this question. [5]

2.2 Data analysis

To interpret the ethical dimensions of awkward interview moments, we bring to bear analytic strategies that link the emotions that we experienced in face-to-face interaction to social structures and discourses. While researchers' emotions have been of interest in a variety of intellectual lineages, including interpretative and psychoanalytic ones, our approach is most informed by the feminist canon that began to burgeon in the 1970s. It includes sociologist Arlie HOCHSCHILD's (1975, 1983) revelations about the role that emotions play in everyday labor, anthropologist Michelle ROSALDO's (1984) interrogation of feeling-knowledge binaries and elucidation of how emotions are socially situated, and philosopher Alison JAGGAR's (1989) deconstructions of the ideological underpinnings of supposedly objective social science. Feminist methodologists proposed that epistemological weight be given to what researchers felt during interviews, even —or especially—if it was not voiced "on the record" in ways that would satisfy empiricist standards (STANLEY & WISE, 1983). As feminist practitioners, we, like KLEINMAN (2007), understand investigating our discomfort to be part of connecting the personal to the political.[3] [6]

We now outline the two specific research strategies that we use, and then address what it means to conduct such research rigorously within a feminist paradigm. The first approach is feminist standpoint theory (HARTSOCK, 2003 [1983]; INTEMANN, 2010; PHOENIX & PATTYNAMA, 2006), which holds that the intersection of social locations that we identify with, or are interpellated into, informs our personal histories, opportunity structures, beliefs, values, and feelings. Feminist standpoint theory directs us to be open to the possibility that our positionalities vis-à-vis our participants, for instance with regard to gender, race, occupation, income, age, and sexual identities, may have bearing on the interview (RYAN, 2015). As we analyze the ethical dimensions of the interviewing excerpts, we will reflect on how it may have mattered that we—both leftist feminist white women holding well-compensated tenured or tenure-stream professorial positions, Katherine, age 46 at the time, and Amber age 33—were interviewing Charles and Andrew, whose respective social locations we will introduce in the analyses below. Because HOLLANDER (2004) points out that positionalities extend beyond social locations, to also include researcher's and participants' prior relations, we must note that, by the time of the interview, Katherine and Charles had collaborated on several theater projects. However,

3 Interpretative sociologists such as DENZIN (1984) began to focus on *participants*' subjective experiences around the same time, but as HOLLAND (2007) explains, it was feminists who first drew attention to *researchers*' inner lives. In KLEINMAN's (2007) account, to shift from an interpretative approach to a feminist one primarily meant becoming explicit about her political commitments.

Amber first met Andrew when she interviewed him. Beforehand, she knew only that he experienced low income, was in a committed relationship with a woman whom Amber had recently interviewed, and had agreed that this woman could give Amber his contact information. [7]

The second approach is discursive positioning analysis which prompts us to be reflexive about how researchers and participants experience a discursively situated "reality" and instantiate discourses with the effect of constructing their selves in the interview (DAVIES & HARRÉ, 1990). Here, we define discourse as a "web of meanings, ideas, interactions and practices that are expressed or represented in texts (spoken and written language, gesture, and visual imagery), within institutional and everyday settings" (BISCHOPING & GAZSO, 2016, p.129). For example, rather than bluntly stating, "I'm a white woman and you're not," or "We're both theater people," researchers and participants may express their selves, their experiences, intentions, and feelings through discourses about the meaning of gender and racial self-identifications in contemporary North America, or may instantiate specific practices of talk within the theater. [8]

To be rigorous, a constructionist analysis such as this aims for plausibility rather than certainty (POLKINGHORNE, 2007). It must consider that although we recall our own emotions at these moments so intensely and vividly that we were moved to write this article, we are being reflexive *after the fact.* The meaning we give and therefore the knowledge we produce is inherently subjective (BREUER & ROTH, 2003; MEEK, 2003) but from the feminist paradigm that we use, so is all knowledge; the subjective is to be embraced. Yet, we have no certain access to our participants' perspectives in the moments being studied. Researchers merging psychoanalysis with fieldwork maintain that, especially when we feel consciously or unconsciously defensive, we may project our emotions onto participants in the phenomenon called countertransference (DEVEREUX, 1967; HOLLWAY, 2016; HOLMES 2014; MARKS & MÖNNICH-MARKS, 2003; MEEK, 2003). In a feminist paradigm, this consideration is inflected by a specific concern over what Virginia WOOLF dubbed "fictitious sympathy" (1931, p.xxviii), namely, that researchers may risk overlooking how their own structural privileges situate their feelings (LUTZ, 2002; STANLEY & WISE, 1983). Taken together, these considerations have directed us to write in ways that clearly distinguish our speculations about our participants' experiences from our greater confidence about our own, noting our perception of relevant standpoints in doing so. To better plumb the unconscious elements of our interview emotions, we have drawn on one another's and early readers' insights and questions, in a dialogic and iterative process such as many scholars recommend (HOLLAND 2007; HUBBARD, BACKETT-MILBURN & KEMMER, 2001; KLEINMAN et al., 1997; RUSSELL & KELLY 2002; see MEEK, 2003 for further strategies). Finally, we ground our analysis in research on the structural and discursive factors productive of knowledge—including ones related to our privilege—that may have worked to socially constitute the emotions that we experienced as natural. [9]

3. Findings

In this section, we present our perception of the multiplicity of ethical dimensions in which our two cases of awkward moments are embedded. We are reflexive, first, about Katherine's awkward moment and then about the moment experienced by Amber. We reveal what we see, interpret, and learn about the relation of emotions and ethics in our moments through feminist standpoint and discursive positioning theory. [10]

3.1 "Nine hundred ladies' room walls can't be wrong"

We begin our analysis with the excerpt from coauthor Katherine's career history questions to participant Charles. In what follows, we will provide two quite different interpretations of the ethical dimensions around this excerpt, using feminist standpoint and discursive positioning strategies to do so. The first interpretation is related to the anger and unease Katherine felt in the moment, and the other, to her amusement. [11]

The moment began for Katherine as Charles responded to the routine question that she asked about a job as a director that Charles had done for a theater project. Before the interview took place, both knew that Katherine, the producer and playwright of the project, had hired Charles.

1	Katherine:	How did you get that job?
2	Charles:	Nine hundred ladies' room walls can't be wrong. "For a good time call –"

Excerpt 1, beginning [12]

Charles' response (line 2) includes common North America idioms, that refer to how public washroom graffiti can provide the telephone numbers of supposedly promiscuous individuals and sex workers. When Charles said this, Katherine understood the comment to jokingly imply that she had hired Charles based on his extensively broadcast sexual reputation. At the moment of this exchange, among Katherine's most passionate feelings were negative ones of ire, occasioned by the feeling that she was being mocked by being unjustly cast as having a sexual harasser's mentality, and deep discomfort at what she took as the unprecedented sexualization of her relationship with Charles. [13]

As we reflect upon this exchange, we see that Charles' line 2 answer may have been occasioned first by a conflict between ethics principles about data fabrication and cooperative conversation. Because Katherine was oriented to the future analysis of the data (MAZELAND & TEN HAVE, 1996), and to the principle that researchers should not fabricate data, but rather, "get it on the page," she had posed a question that flouted moral codes of cooperative conversation (GRICE, 1975). Specifically, she had flouted her responsibility for keeping track of Charles and her shared knowledge, and was asking Charles to flout another

norm by "telling" her something that she already knew (BISCHOPING & QUINLAN, 2013b; STIVERS, MONDADA & STEENSIG, 2011; see also CHAVEZ, 2008, pp.485, 488; DeLYSER, 2001, p.444). By answering as he did in line 2, Charles could be understood, in part, as the upholder of moral codes of how to converse, one who offers what could be seen as new knowledge, namely insight—however joking—into Katherine' subconscious motivation or unvoiced desires. [14]

Precisely why Charles' answer is taken as offensive by Katherine, and why he might have been motivated to offend in the first place is what we wish now to consider. From a standpoint theory perspective, Katherine's question may have highlighted some differences between Charles and her social locations, specifically that from their three years working together, they both know that she has a much higher income and job security, and is one who hires; while his work is precarious and ill-compensated, and he is most often one who *is* hired. A discursive positioning analysis furthers this point. In North America, personal finance is generally discursively constituted as taboo (TOURANGEAU & YAN, 2007). Economic hardship can incur powerful feelings of unworthiness and inability to participate in respected, valued social practices (CHASE & WALKER, 2013; SAYER, 2002, 2005). For cultural workers, this is exacerbated by the profound shame that accompanies failure in a sphere where one's work expresses of one's deepest self (GILL & PRATT, 2008, p.16). Charles, who had stated earlier in the interview that he had given up a prosperous career as a corporate executive to work in the arts, several times elsewhere in the interview voiced his distaste for the financial support he needed from others, whether they might be his parents or even an artist grant program. We speculate that Charles may have felt stung by Katherine's question, which reminded him of his lack of autonomy and his continued need to be hired by others. [15]

Charles' line 2 response could also be understood to underscore further differences between Katherine and himself, specifically in their gender and their age. Discursive positioning theory suggests that, here, we should examine how his answer connects to discourses of masculinity and femininity that can be instantiated in cross-gender researcher-participant relationships (ARENDELL, 1997; SCHWALBE & WOLKOMIR, 2001). Specifically, given the sexual double standard inherent in heteronormative (and hegemonic) masculinity, Charles's response could be seen as enhancing his status. Further, while heterosexual men are socially rewarded for having many younger women as partners, heterosexual women who seek out younger men are stigmatized as "cougars" (MONTEMURRO & SIEFKEN, 2014). Proposing that the middle-aged Katherine is attracted to a man in his thirties could have the effect of diminishing her status.[4] [16]

4 In the course of their working together, and specifically in discussing generational differences in idioms, Katherine and Charles had already roughly established one another's ages.

In turn, in line 3, Katherine invokes a new standpoint, that of a coauthor:

3	Katherine:	You wanna give me your number for my co-author, who's gonna be so appalled when she reads this?
4	Charles:	Oh, good, that's what I was going for.

Excerpt 1, middle [17]

Looking back on this, Katherine feels her words were intended to remind Charles that his words, though confidential, are not private. She can disrupt the humiliation that his unwelcome and sexualizing words had incurred by engaging in a feminist project of breaking the silence about them (LORDE, 1984), publicizing them not only to the putatively appalled woman colleague mentioned in the informed consent document, but also to readers of future academic works. But here it is also important to observe that Katherine is deploying a privilege of her academic status—a status again associated with her income and job security—namely her power to represent Charles in formal knowledge production (HOFFMANN, 2007), to squelch him. Charles, in his line 4 response, seemed to Katherine to concede, or at least not to exacerbate the clash that has emerged. [18]

What Katherine does next, however, complicates the interpretation we have given so far. We now turn to our second interpretation of this awkward moment.

5	Katherine:	(*pompously, as if making a speech*) The theater can be a highly sexualized environment.

Excerpt 1, end [19]

Her words may be read as continuing to express the same thought as in line 3, namely, that it is Charles who has erred and that his act may be shunned by an academic audience. However, that Katherine speaks pompously, rather than sadly or angrily, leads us into our other interpretation, one that gives more weight to Katherine's simultaneous feeling of amusement and links it to the relational contexts in which Charles and she know one another. These contexts include a work-based friendship in which they have discovered and discussed a shared penchant for sarcasm and absurdity, and in which Charles has spoken with quiet devotion of his romantic partner. Further, this work is located in the sphere of the theater, where Katherine has observed norms about sexual topics and conduct to be very different from those of the academy. For instance, during her ethnographic research in the theater, she had seen some groups of cast and crew snuggling together in cozy heaps during rehearsal breaks, or an actor passing around what he said was a stuffed kangaroo penis as a curiosity. In light of these friendship and theater contexts, Katherine could also take Charles' line 2 comment as a cooperative, affiliative effort from the standpoint of a friend to brighten a dull and redundant passage of the interview by absurdly and audaciously attributing hyper-sexual personae to Charles and herself. Within the

theater, Katherine might more easily find this purely funny. But during the interview, she was orienting to the transcript's future perusal by a co-author (MAZELAND & TEN HAVE, 1996), she felt accountable to the norms of the academy: she felt that her co-author would expect a sexualizing comment to be no laughing matter. [20]

Although Katherine's *words* in line 5 are critical of the theater, the humorously pompous tone with which she enacts the imagined presentation of the research findings would potentially align her with Charles. Further, the very practice of this spontaneous imagined enactment is in keeping with a theater community's shared standpoint, in that members playfully and spontaneously adopt theatrical voices (BISCHOPING & QUINLAN, 2013b). (Elsewhere in the interview, for example, Charles speaks of himself as "exiting stage left" when he goes to the washroom.) Even Charles' line 4, "that's what I was going for," could be seen as playful—or play-ful, reminiscent of what he might say when directing or writing a play, and assessing whether his intentions were being communicated effectively to an audience. Therefore, all this complicates standpoint theory's understanding that at any instant, a person occupies or is interpellated at a single specific intersection of social locations: for instance, that Katherine, in these lines, is a 46-year-old woman in a tenured academic job doing a research interview. Her words, so critical of Charles and so imbued with the privileges of the academy, may underscore this standpoint and its moral dilemmas. Yet, Katherine is Janus-faced, concurrently utilizing the discursive practices of the theater in order to convey her cooperation with, and affiliation with, her longstanding, like-minded theater collaborator. Notably, Katherine never says that she herself is appalled but rather projects that emotion onto her co-author. [21]

A reader might wonder which of these two interpretations better fits the moment, and whichever of Katherine's emotions prevailed. Because we are now presenting the interpretations in the linear format of a written argument, it may seem as though the first interpretation is the less apt. However, the more Katherine reflects on her experience, the more layers she speculates it might hold. For instance, let us say Charles were to be understood essentially to be adding levity to the moment. Nonetheless, of the myriad humorous comments that Charles might have made to enliven the interview, he made one of a kind that—without precedent or welcome—sexualized their interaction. Moreover, as QUINN (2000) discusses, when a sexualizing remark is framed as a joke, a person who resists it can be criticized for lacking humor. That Katherine experienced Charles' remark as somewhat harmful, and not as merely funny, illustrates the ethical conundrums of interviewing practice. [22]

3.2 "I don't really think about it"

In our second case, we turn our attention to reflexively considering the emotions and ethics in practice when a topic important to the researcher is ambiguously set aside by the participant. We set the stage for our analysis with the following exchange:

1	Amber:	And did you do your education here in Canada?
2	Andrew:	Yeah. In Toronto.
3	Amber:	In Toronto.
4		And if you were to, our weirdest question of all, if you were to think about your cultural heritage, your race or ethnicity, what would you state it is?
5	Andrew:	I don't really even think of it.

Excerpt 2, beginning [23]

The awkward moment created in this exchange occurs in part because Andrew had defined his cultural heritage, ethnicity and race as not part of his everyday self-consciousness in line 5 when Amber's observation of their differential embodiment of them and standpoints around them suggested it was significant to her research goals. To Amber's eyes, Andrew was Black, but his reply in line 5 was a self-definition of both race and ethnicity she had not anticipated. As we reflect on this awkward moment, we understand it too, to be partially tied to the ethics clash between Amber's commitment to "get the data on the page!" and Andrew's likely and rightful expectation that his participation in the interview was voluntary and its interaction should do him no harm. After all, the interview interaction essentially involves asking the participant for the "gift" of revealing their experiences and perceptions and thereby inviting an intimate understanding of their lives (ROTH, 2005). In western culture, requesting a gift is not ethically normative (see also MAUSS, 1923). [24]

Lines 1-3 illustrate the fairly innocuous question-and-answer pattern established earlier in the demographic component of the interview. Line 4 is where the awkwardness begins to ensue and the impetus arises for reflexively considering emotions and speculating about subjectivity therein from the perspectives of standpoint and discursive positioning theory. Amber prefaces her question about Andrew's self-definition of his "cultural heritage, [your] race or ethnicity" as "weird." Recalling the moment vividly, Amber remembers she found the question peculiar and felt uncomfortable asking it because she could suddenly see how their embodied interaction lay at the crux of questions of social justice and identity politics. Amber's question concerned a topic that, once separated from her standpoint as researcher, can be understood as not always openly and cooperatively interrogated in everyday conversations: one's cultural heritage or race. For white people in particular, color-blindness (GOTANDA, 1991) or color-blind racism (BONILLA-SILVA, 2002) render race a taboo topic in the United

States. The idea that, in a just world, race should not matter and everyone should be treated equally (FOLDY & BUCKLEY, 2014) has become transmuted into a discourse claiming that race already does not matter. TATUM (1992) further shows that from childhood onward, white people are taught to not voice observed racialized differences in bodies in interactions with others.[5] [25]

The same can hold in Canada. As a national newspaper succinctly put it: "If there's one thing Canadians avoid, it's talking about race" (THE GLOBE AND MAIL, 2016). Amber's familiarity with this discourse of color-blindness in her everyday life sharply contrasted with her knowledge and standpoint as a feminist academic, of the harms associated with it, specifically the way it denies the experiential relation of racialized bodies and upholds the false notion that white people are not prejudiced (SUE et al., 2007). To fail to ask the question about cultural heritage or race would have seemed to her to be socially and morally unjust. It is how Andrew responds to the question in line 5 that makes the ethical clash even thornier. [26]

In line 5, Andrew replies "I don't even think about it." If Andrew were white, we might quickly surmise that he was ascribing to this discourse of color-blindness. As it is, we see his answer as perhaps reflecting a standpoint in which his sense of self and identity is not intimately informed by his cultural heritage, ethnicity, or race; he may experience himself as *outside* these considerations, as intentionally breaking away from historically produced categories of race toward an ambiguous, constantly shifting identity (ROCKQUEMORE & AREND, 2002). Or, as a participant who later in the interview identifies his family as from Jamaica, where racializing categories and the associated moral codes can differ from those prevailing in Canada (RAMKISSOON, McFARLANE & BRANCHE, 2008), the terms of Amber's question may not have resonated with Andrew. Amber's reply in line 6 and lines 7-9 unfolded as follows:

6	Amber:	(*quiet nervous laughter*). Perfect. You don't even really think of it. Good. Because a lot of people will be like "Canadian," and a lot of other people will be like, um, "Irish," so however you define yourself?
7	Andrew:	Yes.
8	Amber:	Okay, got it. "Not really think about it" (*writing this down on the demographic questionnaire*). There we go. Okay. Perfect. And here you live with how many other people?
9	Amber:	Ah, just me and Jennifer.

Excerpt 2, end [27]

5 Others have argued that race *is* seen and spoken of in taken-for-granted ways (PASCALE, 2008) and that other discourses, such as Canadian multiculturalism, apparently embrace ethnic diversity.

Amber's line 6 response was, first, nervous laughter, and, second, an immediate affirmation of "perfect" or "good." We wonder whether Andrew heard these words as acknowledging his right to privacy and to define himself as he saw fit, eschewing categories if he desired. Amber had established, in seeking his consent, that there were no foreseen emotional harms associated with his participation in the interview and that he could decline to answer any question in the interview. When he did decline to answer, he may have thought her laughter undermined this promise. In remembering her laughter and further reflecting on it, Amber now understands it as a response to the emotional stress of perceiving oneself to be doing harm to others (see also MILGRAM, 1963), as a mechanism to curb and cope with anxiety (CHAFE, 2007). The feeling that her laughter exacerbated the already awkward exchange especially unsettled Amber because she understood what was ethically at stake in Andrew's answer: the potential loss of knowledge. By saying "perfect" and good" in line 6 (and even the repeat of "perfect" in line 8), she meant to convey her respect for Andrew's standpoint and to affirm his answer (much as a "thank you" would). However, her immediate line 6 attempt at probing—"a lot of people will be like 'Canadian,' and a lot of other people will be like, um, 'Irish'?"—stemmed from this emotional and ethical conflict: she continued to believe in the importance of race to her research project. [28]

Indeed, deepening our analysis still more through discursive positioning, we can see Amber's nervous laughter as steeped in discourses of race. This was a moment in which both researcher and participant were discursively positioned by Canada's unresolved and inescapable history of settler colonialism, including colonial slavery, silence about its impact on the lives of Canadians today, and continued maintenance of color-blindness and—therefore concealment of white privilege—at the cost of deep social injustice. The palpable presence of race could not be separated from the historical production of race (PASCALE, 2008). As they moved on in line 8, the two of them seemed to come to a place of consensus, to keep the focus on the primary objective of the interview and to learn about how Andrew experiences and manages low income through relations of support. But even this dancing around the question was *doing race* (BEST, 2003). [29]

Finally, Andrew's answer of "I don't even think about it" could be further interpreted to illustrate his awareness of how, given that his rights were protected in the researcher-participant relationship, he had power to direct the interview as he chose (HOFFMANN, 2007). Amber's sense of Andrew's reluctance to discuss how he thinks about his cultural heritage or race could be that he was implying quite simply, "I'm not going to think about it with you." Perhaps Andrew wished to avoid the power imbalances and different conceptualizations of ethics that MARSHALL and BATTEN (2004) see as inherent in cross-cultural research relationships. Or, perhaps he had no interest in speaking intimately with a woman, thereby maintaining normative hegemonic masculinity by simply refusing to be part of a *gendered* power imbalance, one further textured by racial and cultural difference, potentially created by answering Amber's question (PINI, 2005; SCHWALBE & WOLKOMIR, 2001). Lastly, perhaps his motive was more

straightforward, to avoid the "rhetorical incoherence" that BONILLA-SILVA (2002) has found often materializes when white people, socially located amidst privilege associated with whiteness, attempt to talk about race: to wit, line 5 once more. In the interview, Andrew may not have seen it as his responsibility to teach Amber about what it means to be a body that is not white (LORDE, 1984) while experiencing low income. He may have preferred that his main role be to discuss the primary topic at hand. [30]

4. Conclusion: On Saying What You Mean

> "Then you should say what you mean," the March Hare went on.
>
> "I do," Alice hastily replied; "at least—at least I mean what I say—that's the same thing, you know."
>
> "Not the same thing a bit!" said the Hatter. "You might just as well say that "I see what I eat" is the same thing as "I eat what I see!" (CARROLL, 1981, p.54)

A feminist reflexive exercise such as ours means that we, as researchers, are not simply privately gulping in embarrassment over our awkward moments or burying them with our feelings in the vault of "never to be seen field notes." Instead, we hope that it will enable researchers to avoid such moments in the future or, at least, to engage epistemologically with their emotions and to respond to the moments more ethically, whether by being proactive or effecting immediate repairs in the field or later, in analyses. To do either, we draw the reader's attention to the above quotation from "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland," where the March Hare puts it best. We now revisit each of our awkward moments in turn, and reflect on how simply saying what we meant could have forestalled them or responded to them more effectively. [31]

Katherine now understands her awkward moment with Charles to have been occasioned foremost by the asking of a question whose answer she had the epistemic responsibility to know. Katherine could have immediately acted on this responsibility, while simultaneously upholding her research responsibility for "getting the data on the page," by proactively acknowledging that she was breaching a conversational norm and providing her own account for why she was doing so (BISCHOPING & QUINLAN, 2013b), rather than leaving the accounting task to Charles. In fact, as the interview proceeds, she begins to do so. For example, when she asks Charles another possibly-redundant question about their joint theater project, "What made the project look interesting, so my coauthor will know?" she is appending just such an account. Moreover, rather than framing academics as pompous, reprimanding, or exerting a power to represent, this question, too, adheres to the March Hare's call to say what she means. That is, it frames an academic in the way most consistent with Katherine's deepest beliefs, namely, as a seeker of understanding; to use EZZY's (2010) terms, the question might replace a framing of interview as conquest with one of interview as communion. [32]

Amber now sees her phrasing of the question in line 4 as "weird" also because of the convoluted way she presented it. If we imagined this same question on a questionnaire, we could make a case that it has the problems associated with a "double-barreled question": "your cultural heritage, your race *or* ethnicity." This is because, sociologically, race may be thought of as separate from ethnicity or cultural heritage in that it is socially constructed category on the basis of perceived differences in bodies. Further, people can have very different self-definitions of all three. That Amber identifies the question as weird and then asks it weirdly spurred forward the materialization of an awkward moment rather than avoiding it. And yet, assuming Amber still asked the question in this "weird" way —this apparent conflation of terms—she could have still said what she meant and possibly avoided *some* awkwardness. If doing so, she would have followed line 4 with: "I am asking this question because existing research shows that people experience low income differently in Canada and this varies by race and ethnicity." [33]

As well, assuming that the interaction unfolded as it did from lines 1-5, Amber's response in line 6 certainly could have been different. PARK, CAINE, McCONNELL and MINAKER (2016) provide a useful suggestion in their reflexive analysis of the ethical tensions that PARK experienced when completing her dissertation interviews. PARK wonders why, when a question she asked was met with silence, she did not take the opportunity to ask her participant about what mattered to her. Indeed, the authors collectively conclude that researchers are ethically responsible to recognize and address tensions as they arise in order to engage in research ethically. Taking their advice, lines 5 and 6 could have unfolded as follows. To Andrew's response, "I don't even think about it," she would now follow up with: "What does matter to how you see yourself?" [34]

Albeit not preventing the interview's ethical clashes and their painful awkwardness, reflexive hindsight underscores how our feelings are bound up with issues of ethics in practice. We additionally note that, as RILEY, SCHOUTEN and CAHILL (2003) argue, any exercise in reflexivity provides but one of the multitude of possible versions of the presuppositions, interactions, and effects of the researcher-participant relationship. Thus, in any reflections about the interview and dynamics surrounding it, researchers alone are re-making that encounter. That said, we do see that through an application of standpoint theory and discursive positioning we have learned a great deal. These analytic strategies lead us to a deeper understanding of awkward moments and how they are not created simply by clashes in ethical research principles but also by emotional tensions or contentions surrounding practices of everyday morality. In interviews, we and our participants agree to enter the ethical sphere of the academy (e.g., around informed consent), constituted as it is by specific national guidelines (VON UNGER et al., 2016), and find that it does not always cohere with the moral codes of everyday life. As we have shown, through a reflexive exercise, we better understand the personal, political, and academic harms potentially experienced by participants, our own efforts to mitigate these harms, and, most importantly, learn lessons for negotiating those future awkward moments, never intentioned but always possible in the ethics in practice of qualitative interviewing. [35]

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