**Researching Trauma Narratives: An Investigation of Researchers' Experiences of the
Research Process**

Tarika Reddy

Department of Psychology
University of Cape Town

ABSTRACT

This study builds on insights drawn from empirical findings of "vicarious traumatisation" and "secondary trauma" among clinicians working with individuals who have experienced different kinds of trauma. The study shifts the lens from the clinical context to an investigation of the "secondary" effects of trauma narratives in the context of post-graduate research. Based on interviews with researchers who are post-graduate students, the study explores the following question: How do researchers reflexively engage in the research process when trauma narratives are the object of their investigation? The main aim of the study is to examine the subjective experiences of researchers who are at different levels of post-graduate study, and to explore how they apply the reflexive tool in their qualitative study of trauma narratives. The study is exploratory in nature, and is based on the analysis of rich descriptive data from semi-structured interviews with Honours, Masters and PhD student researchers.

INTRODUCTION

As a young researcher, I became interested in understanding how my contemporaries handle sensitive material in the research process. Building on insights drawn from the empirical findings of "vicarious traumatisation" and "secondary trauma" among clinicians working with individuals who have experienced different kinds of trauma, this study shifts the lens to the "secondary" effects of trauma narratives on post-graduate researchers. The role of the researcher in trauma research is made more difficult because of the nature of trauma itself. Human trauma is complex and has multiple effects. Bloom (1999) states that it is not the trauma itself that does the damage, rather, it is the unique reaction of the individual's mind and body to the traumatic experience, combined with the response of the individual's social group that together create the depth and nature of the damage. In order to understand experiences of trauma for the purposes of research, the researcher is required to engage with the affective language of trauma as well the meanings attributed to those words and experiences. Concepts like; traumatic memory, reflexivity, intersubjectivity, and vicarious traumatisation build the foundation for understanding how trauma narratives affect researchers and practitioners in the field.

Traumatic memory

In conducting research on traumatic experiences, trauma researchers evoke the traumatic memories of participants as part of the data collection process. Therefore it is important that we understand the nature of traumatic memory and how these memories affect individuals. Hunt and McHale (2008) provide a useful discussion of the historical development of traumatic memory. Janet (1925) and Bartlett (1932) are the two pioneer researchers of traumatic memory. Janet was the first scholar who wrote on the treatment of traumatic memory. He explained the distinction between traumatic memory and narrative memory. According to Janet, flashbacks and acts of unconscious repetition are features of traumatic experience that reflect the presence of uncontrollable "memory" of trauma. Janet contrasts this traumatic memory with what he terms "narrative memory." The distinction between traumatic memory and narrative memory is that traumatic memory occurs *as if* the events recalled are happening in the present. By contrast, narrative memory, recalls events in their proper context, the past is narrated as the past. Janet argued that the focus of trauma treatment should be to transform traumatic memory *into* narrative memory.

Bartlett (1932) described memory as construction. Memory is sophisticated; it depends on a range of factors, such as importance, imaginative elaboration and confabulation. He argued that narrative memories develop through interaction between two factors, personal memories and social discourse. Therefore the accuracy of memories depends on both the personal, i.e. the importance of the event, and the social and cultural discourses of the time, i.e. during apartheid, or after 9/11. Hunt & McHale (2008) argue that memory is critical to understanding traumatic stress and that not only are the individual traumatic memories important but broader social and cultural memories as well. In South Africa; few memories are recounted without situating them within our violent and oppressive political history. When a researcher embarks on a project attempting to understand a particular traumatic experience or phenomenon in more detail, they are not only encountering a subject and the singular describable experience but also a complex social context that feeds and brings meaning to the individual's memory. Individual experience is affected by how social discourses impinge on those individual experiences (Hunt & McHale, 2008). Memories in isolation have no meaning. Context is what gives memory meaning. Traumatic memories can therefore not be understood in isolation they must be understood within the context of a narrative, and the broader social context. This is important to trauma research because a researcher cannot simply activate the traumatic incident that they wish to explore. The participant's memory of trauma will invariably incorporate their whole being which includes their social context.

The notion of, the "dialectic of trauma" put forward by Judith Herman (1992), suggests that individuals who have suffered trauma are motivated simultaneously to forget (repression) and to "remember" (through intrusions) the trauma. The former is in order to avoid the painful effects of trauma. The latter, the intrusions or re-emergence of the trauma, can be debilitating because of the painful effects of the traumatic event when it resurfaces in memory, through either speaking about it directly, or speaking about incidents associated with the trauma. Researchers working with traumatic memories need to be sensitive to the contextual nature of these memories and the idea that participants will have both the desire to comply and to resist telling their stories. This understanding will hopefully make researchers more patient and less clinical when extracting information during trauma research. Researchers need to be mindful of re-awakening painful memories in participants without then providing proper support.

Our different backgrounds shape the ways we remember our lives and traumas. South African researchers come from a variety of racial, social and economic backgrounds therefore

the ways in which they respond to research participants and sensitive subject matters will differ based on their culture, prejudices and experiences. In qualitative research it is important to explore issues like reflexivity in order to situate the researcher within the research process.

Reflexivity and intersubjectivity

"Reflexivity" is the condition of taking into account the personality and presence of the researcher within the investigation (Ryan, 2005). There are three types of reflexivity in the social sciences: systematic or personal reflexivity, epistemological reflexivity, and methodological reflexivity.

Systematic/personal reflexivity is the act of the researcher reflecting on themselves and being introspective about the research process. This type of reflexivity is relevant to psychological research because it requires the researcher to be introspective and account for themselves within the research process. Epistemological reflexivity is defined as the researcher's engagement with the research question. It involves constantly examining one's own lived experiences in relation to your theoretical and methodological presuppositions (Ryan, 2005; Colombo, 2003). Finally, methodological reflexivity requires the professional, whether they are teachers or psychologists, to examine their behaviour within their working environment and alter their reactions based on what they observe. Sandelowski and Barroso (2002) explains that reflexivity is the mark of excellent qualitative research, forcing researchers to acknowledge the ways in which they influence research findings thus shaping what will come to be accepted as knowledge. According to Finlay (2005) the research relationship develops in much the same ways as the clinical relationship does and reflexive engagement with the intersubjective relationship is necessary for empathy to exist between researcher and traumatised participant.

"Applied to research, reflexivity is the thoughtful, self-aware evaluation of the intersubjective dynamics between the researchers and researched. It involves critical self-reflection of how the researcher's background, assumptions, positioning and behaviour impacts on the research process (Finlay & Gough, 2003, p.3). The shared space that lies between the researcher and the participant enables empathy. In order for a connection to form the researcher must enter the participants' world and share in their experience of the events they are describing. When a participant recounts their trauma to the researcher, they share that subjectivity. Auerbach and Blatt (2001) define the concept of 'intersubjectivity' as the self forming through

relationships with others in a dialectic process. Human subjectivity evolves out of a dialectical and dynamic tension between two fundamental developmental lines—the need for relatedness and the need for self-definition (Blatt & Blass, 1996). This dialectic provides a theoretical framework for understanding the development of intersubjectivity. An intersubjective relationship of this nature develops between researcher and participant in qualitative research. The idea that the researcher and participant become intertwined and share the experience of the re-telling of the trauma forms the basis of the literature on vicarious traumatisation.

Vicarious traumatisation

Vicarious traumatisation is defined as the process through which the therapist's inner experience is negatively transformed as a result of empathic engagement with clients' traumatic material (McCann and Pearlman, 1990). Steed and Downing (1998) explain that therapists working with trauma survivors experience severe effects that are considered distinct from those of other difficult client populations. Therapists exposed to emotionally disturbing images of horror and cruelty that are characteristic of severe trauma experience profound disruptions in their frames of reference, including their basic sense of identity, world view, and spirituality. Their sense of identity is impacted by doing trauma research as they are left wondering what it means to be a man, woman, therapist, spouse, parent or friend. Their basic beliefs about the world are challenged. For instance, they may begin viewing people as dangerous and threatening, malevolent and evil, untrustworthy and unreliable or exploitative and controlling. Their spiritual beliefs may shift, as they may experience new and problematic feelings about the meaning and purpose of life (Canfield, 2005; Dunkley & Whelan, 2006). The large body of literature on this subject deals only with this problem as it pertains to therapists, however researchers are affected in much the same ways. Long & Eagle (2009) state that researchers who are not clinicians would also experience dilemmatic moments during their research processes, since any research context that facilitates in-depth, one-on-one conversation about sensitive issues will likely leave researchers responding to the human pain. There are a range of factors that influence vicarious traumatisation, such as experience, personal trauma history and coping style. These factors also affect the extent to which researchers are affected by trauma material. The problem arises because unlike clinicians who are interested only in listening, researchers have agendas; they are there to collect data. Trauma disclosure in a safe and contained environment where the proper support is provided is sometimes very far from the research experience of trauma disclosure

where there are other motives at play, bringing ethics into question. In South Africa little research has been conducted about the intersubjective relationship between the researcher and the traumatised participant, especially with reference to the ethical dilemmas that arise from that interaction. Reflexivity in qualitative research is an issue that creates grey areas when it comes to ethical considerations.

Ethics in trauma research

Ethical considerations in research are usually limited to informed consent, the right to withdraw at any stage, confidentiality and the right to information about the processes and purposes of the study. There are many grey areas in the issue of ethics considering that it is sometimes not possible to follow ethics in their absolute sense. The ethics of the therapeutic space differ from research ethics and at times it is necessary to bend our understandings of certain ethical codes in order to be able to fit the research needs. Long and Eagle (2009) point out that there is insufficient writing about the interface between research and therapeutic ethics, apart from the fact that similar guiding principles inform both practices, i.e., respect for autonomy, prevention of harm (non-maleficence), and promotion of the best interest of the individual (beneficence). However, there are other ethical concerns beyond these three such as, the competence of the practitioner to conduct research, the rights of the individual versus the rights of the group, the observation of boundaries, and so forth. Although these three additional considerations may seem straightforward theoretically, ethicists are aware of the endless range of dilemmas that may arise in practice, mainly because of the contradictions involved in attempting to adhere to two or more ethical principles at the same time. This question becomes more pertinent in research with participants who have a history of trauma. The nature of qualitative research is to be interested in participants telling their stories. With people who have been traumatised, the subject of investigation is the very experience that can potentially cause them harm. The ethics of research require researchers to "do no harm". Yet, invariably, in their investigation of the "lived" experience of participants with a history of trauma, qualitative researchers will evoke the trauma, forcing participants to confront difficult and stressful emotions. Simultaneously, we know from the concept of vicarious traumatisation that traumatic distress experienced by a participant may affect the researcher. Etherington (2007) describes the vulnerabilities experienced by researchers when using reflexivity. Stating that researchers have to emerge from, "behind the protective barriers of objectivity and invite others to join with us in our learning about being a researcher as well as remaining human in our research

relationship" (Etherington, 2007). The idea of mutual learning in the research relationship is something advocated not only by Etherington (2007) but also Finlay (2005) who says that through the web that is intersubjectivity in the research relationship, one comes to understand that self-understanding and other-understanding are intimately interwoven. Researchers increasingly look to their reflexive engagement in the research process as a means of understanding themselves within the question that they are investigating (Newton 2009). Researchers and participants who work and live in South Africa are affected by this environment. Discussing the values and beliefs that steer our thinking and thus direct the research process will alter the manner in which subject matter is interrogated and interpreted. I am interested in examining postgraduate researchers' experiences of conducting research with participants who have suffered painful or traumatic experiences in their lives. I want to know how they engage reflexively and the kinds of challenges they encountered in their research.

AIM

The aim of my study is to examine researchers' experiences of conducting research with participants who have suffered painful or traumatic experiences in their lives. It explores the accounts of how student researchers considered the issue of reflexivity in their studies, and the challenges they encountered in applying the principle of reflexivity in their research.

METHODS

Qualitative research

This study is an examination of the experiences of students whose post-graduate research projects involved conducting interviews with participants who have suffered painful or traumatic experiences in their lives. Specifically, I am interested in student researchers' understanding of reflexivity, how they considered the issue of reflexivity in their respective studies, and the challenges they encountered in applying the principle of reflexivity in their research. To understand human experience for the purposes of research requires that a researcher engage with the language used to describe experience, the affective and behavioural dimensions of the experience, as well as the topic of inquiry, I have chosen the qualitative research approach because the focus of qualitative research is on the rich accounts of lived experience in order to reach a better understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Willig, 2001; Madill & Gough, 2008). Qualitative research emphasises the subjectivity, individual perspective and context of the meanings that people give to their experiences. Parker (2005) discusses the idea of treating our qualitative research 'subjects' as experts in their own lives. They are therefore best able to convey the experiential information that researchers need in order to create knowledge. When using qualitative research the researcher takes the position of there being no objective truth to be discovered; that is, findings in qualitative research cannot be measured in the objective manner that is applied in laboratory experiments. Rather, the researcher is interested in different meanings, experiences, subjectivities, and perspectives of research participants. The meanings that people attribute to their experiences are explored with reference to how those meanings impact on the way they understand the world. In other words, qualitative research shifts the focus from the laboratory-experimental environment to the context where the phenomenon being studied is human subjectivity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2002; Parker, 2005).

According to Willig (2001) reflexivity is "the process of reflecting upon the ways in which our own values, experiences, interests, beliefs, political commitments, wider aims in life and social identities have shaped the research, as well as the ways the research may have affected and possibly changed us, as people and as researchers" (p. 10). Parker (2005) argues that while the subjective element of research has previously been seen as an impediment that must be cleaned away before a report is written up. A shift has been made in qualitative research

that moves reflexive engagement from being 'merely subjective' to a more self-consciously and deliberately assumed position.

The secondary research goal is to explore the ethical dilemmas that arise when research data is based on interviews with participants who have to recount their traumatic experiences. According to information obtained from my supervisor, problems associated with conducting research based on trauma narratives has been debated in the Psychology Department at The University of Cape Town. The concern has been about the ethics of research designs that are likely to re-traumatise participants who have histories of exposure to trauma. In their discussion of this issue Long and Eagle (2009) state that "in the context of sensitive research, the research process inevitably involves at least touching upon affects, conflicts, desires and fears which may not be fully conscious and which may during the course of the interview, offer the participant a different perspective on their reality (p. 39)". This new perspective could likely cause disruptions in the participants sense of self. Understanding the ethical dilemmas faced by students in their study of trauma-related experiences will contribute meaningfully to the debates that may be taking place in psychology departments. Questions about the kinds of research topics that are appropriate for different levels of post-graduate students continue to be important because research is an essential part of postgraduate degrees.

Sample

I purposively selected 5 postgraduate students from the University of Cape Town. Purposive sampling means that participants are chosen because they are the 'best' most optimal candidates for the phenomenon being explored (Bock & Sergeant, 2002). The five participants were referred to me by my supervisor. They were chosen because they all had experience interviewing participants who had suffered traumatic pain and they represented all three levels of postgraduate study.

Small sample sizes are often associated with qualitative research. Marshall (1996) states that the probability sampling techniques used in quantitative research are not appropriate when conducting qualitative research. "Qualitative researchers recognize that some informants are 'richer' than others and that these people are more likely to provide insight and understanding for the researcher (p. 523)". My research required the purposive selection of 'rich' informants that are able to describe their experiences of reflexivity when conducting trauma research. Bock & Sergeant (2002) state that purposive sampling is preferred over probability sampling because it is based on informational, not statistical, considerations therefore its

purpose is to maximize information and not facilitate generalization. Marshall (1996) argues that quantitative researchers often fail to understand the usefulness of studying small samples because of the misapprehension that generalizability is the ultimate goal of all good research. The appropriate sample size for a qualitative study is one that adequately answers the research question. "For simple questions or very detailed studies, this might be in single figures (p. 523)". My research required detailed responses that explored the reflexive experiences of the young researchers and for that reason my sample size of 5 participants representing all 3 levels of postgraduate study is sufficient for the research question I have chosen to explore.

Table 1 below describes the details of the sampling for my study.

	Level of Study	Gender	Nature of Research Study
Participant 1	Honours	Female	Exploring abused women's narratives and the factors that enable them to leave their abusive relationships.
Participant 2	Honours	Female	Exploring the narratives of Xhosa women who have experienced near natal deaths (death within the first seven days after birth).
Participant 3	Masters	Female	Exploring how women make meaning of their experiences of being abused.
Participant 4	PhD	Male	Exploring the dyad between mothers who have experienced interpersonal trauma and their adult children.
Participant 5	PhD	Female	Exploring the narratives of female caregivers, caring for a family member suffering from terminal cancer.

Table 1: Description of Study Sample

Data collection methods and procedures

A semi-structured interview was used to collect my data. This technique is used to collect qualitative data by creating a situation (the interview) that allows the participant the time and scope to discuss their thoughts and opinions on the subject of inquiry. The objective is to understand the participant's point of view rather than make generalizations about behaviour. Semi- structured interviews use open-ended questions. This facilitates flexible

communication between researcher and participant. I built a rapport with my participants and the interview was like a conversation. I prepared my questions beforehand but remained flexible about the order and direction that the interview took during the process. At times I stuck to the prepared questions, and at other times I asked questions that occurred to me during the interview, based on the responses of my participants. The wording of questions was not necessarily the same for all participants as some required me to elaborate more than others. Researchers conducting semi-structured interviews generally use a framework of themes to be explored during the course of the interview (Willig, 2001). Interviews are designed to tap lived experience and the semi-structured format for interviewing constitutes the majority of qualitative research data thus making it compatible with several methods of data analysis (Gough & Madill, 2007; Parker, 2005; Willig, 2001). The semi-structured format is most appropriate for gaining data from my participants because it allows them to say more than what is being expressly asked of them. This allows the information to surpass what the researcher had envisaged and these meanders could create other areas of interest that go beyond what the researcher already knows (Parker, 2005).

I developed an interview guide for my participants (see Appendix A). The guide consisted of 11 questions. The objective of the study was an in-depth understanding of student researchers' conceptualization and experiences of reflexivity. The opening question asked researchers to describe the nature of their study, and the kinds of questions that their research was exploring, so as to contextualize the examples that they will refer to for the remainder of the interview. Participants were then asked what they understood by reflexivity in qualitative research and how they apply reflexive engagement during the process. Thereafter the questions explored examples of memorable challenges that put the researcher in difficult positions during their research process. The final questions dealt with the ethical dilemmas that the researchers encountered during the process, as well as moments during their research that they had to re-evaluate their approach to reflexivity. Using this interview guide I was able to explore my participant's knowledge around this subject matter. I used probing and follow-up questions in order to gain more in-depth clarifications of their answers when it was necessary (Kvale, 1996). The method of interviewing was thus well suited for my proposed study as it goes beyond that which quantitative designs can offer. The face-to-face interview allows my participants to express their opinions in a space which encourages the exploration of meaning, while allowing the researcher to account for their individual affect on the overall research process (Parker, 2005).

I interviewed the participants in my study, in the Psychology Department at the University of Cape Town. All interviews were one-on-one sessions held in available rooms in the Psychology department. Interviews were all conducted in English, and ran for approximately thirty-six minutes each. All interviews ran in accordance with the following schedule; I introduced myself to the participant and explained the purpose of the interview and the outline of what is expected of the participant during the process. Participants were read and signed the consent forms (see Appendix B) that were supplied and had an opportunity to ask questions and clear up any misunderstandings. With the permission of the participants I was able to digitally record all of my interviews using an iTouch. The interview followed the guide provided. The interview ended with a short de-briefing and participants were thanked for their feedback.

The data collected was not only verbal. Finlay (2005) argues that verbal communication and limited bodily expressions can be captured in a transcript however there is a field of communication that occurs between people that can be felt and observed by the researcher and these observations will be incorporated into my analysis of the data. I observed my participants while conducting my research and made mental notes of their responses and bodily reactions during the interview process. I made notes after my interviews of their more subtle reactions and included them in my analysis.

I transcribed each interview myself. Analysis began at the stage of transcription. Braun & Clarke (2006) refer to the transcribing of interviews as a key phase within interpretative qualitative methodology, saying that during the act of transforming verbal data into text, meanings are created and the act of interpretation begins. During the process of transcription I included some non-verbal aspects of communication for example when participants coughed, laughed, knocked on the table and paused to think.

Data analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data collected from the interview process. Braun & Clarke (2006) say "thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail (p. 79)". It is important to note that thematic analysis is not a linear but a recursive process, meaning that one of the steps of the analysis process involves re-running the process. Thus throughout the analysis, I was able to move back and forth between the data and the research question ensuring that all themes included were relevant. This process allowed me to sort and categorize the information remaining sensitive to the 'meaning' of similar terms

being used by different participants (Aronson, 1994; Parker, 2005). Braun & Clarke (2006) provide the breakdown that I followed in order to analyse my data thematically. Firstly, I familiarized myself with the data, which involved reading the transcripts several times, while listening to the audio recording, and noting down initial thoughts and ideas of possible themes. The second and third steps involved finding themes in the data and reviewing them by checking that the quotes selected, speak to the theme that I am trying to describe. The last two steps are to name the themes and report what was found.

It is generally accepted that thematic analysis is an approach applied to other qualitative research approaches such as Narrative, Phenomenological and Grounded Theory. Braun and Clarke (2006) substantiate this notion by arguing that thematic analysis is very widely used, but poorly 'branded' method. Thematic analysis is not a 'named' analysis in the same way as other methods are (e.g. narrative analysis and grounded theory). Although not explicitly claimed, a lot of analysis is essentially thematic analysis, even if named to be something else. The qualitative data collected was contextual, descriptive and rich in nature. The rich detail contained within this data will be described and thereafter my analysis goes beyond the descriptive level and engages in an interpretative process and attempts to "make sense" of the descriptive data (Boyatzis, 1998). "Interpretation is an attempt to make clear, to make sense of an object of study...but how does one know that an interpretation is correct? Presumably it is because what was strange, mystifying, puzzling or contradictory, is no longer so (Peshkin, 2000, p. 5)". I hope to add depth and relevance to my data by interpreting meanings from both the verbal and non-verbal communication that occurred during the interviewing process.

REFLEXIVITY

I would like to specify the role of my own subjectivity within this process and how it has affected the analysis. This research has personal resonance for me because I am a novice researcher myself. As a researcher, I observed that my research was lead by the idea that I do not feel that we are adequately trained in qualitative research. I explored the question of ethics and training with more vigour than was part of my initial proposal. I am also an Honours student and it was required of me to interview participants much older and more qualified than I am. This created power imbalances in my interviews and I often assumed my own lack of knowledge over my participants' lack of articulation.

The space constraints for this project have challenged me, limiting what could be expressed. In the write up of my findings I was conscious to avoid writing up subtle behaviours and the interpretations that I made of those, as opposed to, recognising the bigger more direct themes

that became apparent at the transcription stage of analysis. Again, space constraints made it difficult to explore the subtle, as opposed to the gross.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The emergence of themes in my data began when I was transcribing my interviews. There were two main themes that emerged in all five interviews. I named the first theme the *role dilemma*; this refers to the awareness and struggle experienced by the participants between the role of researcher and that of counsellor/therapist/clinician. The second theme, linked to the first, I called the *ethical dilemma*; this refers to the participants experiences that there are complex ethical issues involved in trauma research because of the nature of the material being discussed. The sample consisted of three levels of postgraduate students; two honours, one masters and two PhD participants. There are common themes that were concentrated in the honours and masters participants and themes that are common in the two PhD participants. Participants 1, 2 and 3 grappled with *issues of power* and feelings of *guilt* associated with that. Participant 4 and 5 expanded their reflexivity to the research process and were dealing with their reflexivity in organizing and prioritizing large quantities of data and the problem of writing up their findings responsibly. There were also themes that emerged depending on the level of *personal involvement with the research material.*

The role dilemma

The role dilemma refers to the struggle experienced by the participants in choosing between the roles of researcher and counsellor/therapist/clinician. Researchers who are also psychology students seemed to experience this dilemma when confronted with the traumatic pain that their participants expressed during their interviews. When my novice researchers heard the trauma narratives of their participants a desire arose to want to help even though as a researcher they had research agendas and they were not qualified to offer the proper assistance. Every participant mentions incidences during their trauma research interviews in which they struggled with the role dilemma in their reflexivity. The situation was slightly different for the two PhD students as one of them is a clinician by profession and the other is a counselling psychologist. According to Long & Eagle (2009) dilemmatic moments described in the ethics surrounding research done by clinician-researchers may well resonate for researchers who are not clinicians, since any research context that involves in-depth conversations, particularly about sensitive material, is likely to present the researcher with often unforeseen moments of responding to human pain (p. 29).

Participant 1 is a female honours student who is doing her first research project on abused women and factors that enable them to leave their abusive relationships. The role dilemma challenged her. She mentions the struggle on more than one occasion during the interview. She initially articulates the challenge by saying:

> *...to relate empathically, for them to understand that I am grasping, that I am feeling, what they're saying. I don't think, firstly I don't think that, some of them, I don't think that they really got that from me, that was the biggest challenge, it's almost like, to not give advice, I'm sitting with all of these ideas of how to, how to be empathic and not give advice.*

She continues to describe the ways in which the role dilemma became even more problematic for her as the interviews continued.

> *I just couldn't stop myself at this one point about this woman who've been telling me her story about being HIV positive, living in a shelter with a child, she doesn't have food every day, and um, I just, what is it, I just, I just I'll just call it splashed out, but I just said that she was really, you could see the sadness in her eyes, I told her oh, and I started to give her, not so much advice, I wouldn't call it advice I would call it motivational words. If I can put it like that, and afterwards I felt so bad, um I felt so insensitive.*

The reason that this seemed to challenge Participant 1 is probably because of a lack of sufficient training and experience. The role of engaging empathically with research participants without falling into the mode of empathic listener is something that both of my honours participants struggled to negotiate.
Participant 2 encountered the role dilemma while working with Xhosa women who had lost their babies to near natal deaths.

> *I think partly was that I interpreted her as not having made much progress in grieving, and so there was a sense of wanting to help her but that's not what the interview was about. In fact that was probably the crux of my, of the difficulty in that interview.*

When asked how much she gave way to the 'sense of wanting to help?' she elaborates:

> *Well there was certainly conscious moderating of it, because you know I slip into this mode of empathic listener, and wanting to say hmm, yes and what happened next and how did this make you feel and what lies underneath that? But, then you start opening up things which you are not going to resolve in one session, so ... (sighs)*

The role dilemma is evident here in more than one way. There is an awareness in this participant that she needs to be behaving 'like a researcher' however she describes the research interview as a 'session' and found herself slipping into the role of empathic listener on more than one occasion during her interviews. This participant is personally involved in her research topic as she has lost a baby of her own. She discloses this information in the interview.

> *I lost a baby in 1990, my first child and he lived for three days. So I've been involved in speaking to medical students and nursing staff about how to talk with people who have lost babies for the last probably fifteen years...*

Two of the participants in my study were researching topics that they themselves had experienced and this made their reflexive engagement different for them than the other participants I will revisit this theme at a later stage.
Participant 3 is a Masters student, her experience of the role dilemma is something she encountered while doing research with abused women exploring how they make meaning of their abusive relationships.

> *Um, I feel that, you know, it's very tricky, to be a researcher, only a researcher, particularly when you are researching topics like I have, looking at abuse and abused women, and particularly abused women who still are in abusive relationships, and abused women who have just recently moved out. [ ] I kind of think, counselling skills and if you are a counselor that would be the most beneficial because then the women kind of maybe it would enrich the experience of doing the interview, kind of like two in one, or whatever, you can provide the necessary, understanding that it cannot completely be integrated because researchers do have their agendas.*

It's clear to see from this quote that it is the nature of trauma, in this case abuse, which makes the role of the researcher in trauma research more complex. The role dilemma in this case is the recognition that something more is needed in trauma research. Simply engaging as a researcher is clearly felt to be inadequate by this participant.

Participant 4 is a PhD student; who is also a practicing psychotherapist. His research was exploring the dyad between abused parent and adult children. He encountered the role dilemma in his own research.

> *It was always necessary to bracket what could sound like engaging with the role as psychotherapist at the same time as engaging with the role as researcher. So that was always quite a (coughs) quite a difficult boundary to define, but needed constant definition in terms of, what am I doing here? Um, and how is what I'm doing perhaps more aligned with psychotherapeutic ways of being as opposed to being present as a researcher.*

This participant went further later in his interview when he described how it was necessary to monitor the confusion of roles, not only in his engagement with participants, but also his reflexivity extended to how he was writing his research up. When asked if he found himself slipping between the role of researcher and that of psychotherapist? He responded:

> *Totally, constantly, in my engagement in research in the interviews to a lesser extent and to a greater extent in my writing. So the writing would read like, [ ] a psychoanalytic case study. [ ] it needed more of a social scientific bend and less of a voice that's about kind of very subtle nuances of experience and reflections. In a sense the feeling is that this belongs more to the process notes from a session and less to the research process.*

This quote reflects that the role dilemma extends throughout the research process and not just in the data collection phase as other participants have described. The need to be reflexive about the role of the researcher at every point in the process is vital so that the researcher is able to honour their data and present it in the most objective way possible.

Participant 5 a PhD student who encountered the role dilemma in her work with female caregivers of family members with terminal cancer. This participant had experienced the loss

of a family member to terminal cancer. She had looked after her father before he passed away, because of this she was highly engaged in the process of reflexivity.

> *...as I listen to women experiences, it brings up, re-awakens my own issues some of which I still have intrapersonal conflict about. I've not dealt with them and I didn't realize until I did the study so it has meant for me being consciously, you know, aware that there are other factors in play, even as I interact with these women, it is not just a remote experience it's an experience that I have gone through myself so being able to, um, er, you know write about it and speak about it, you know...*

This participant engaged reflexively with the role dilemma throughout the research process when placed in situations of high emotion during her research interviews. She "switched" between roles, and uses the metaphor of wearing different hats to capture the struggle with role confusion. The quote below is illustrative of her struggle to stay in the role of researcher:

> *I am also a therapist, I'm a counselling psychologist by profession and um thinking about the therapeutic role and creating a safe environment for participants to share their experiences and um, so from the beginning you know for me it was clear that you know I would be juggling different hats, [ ] and as I leave the house I'm wonder which hat am I going to wear? Am I going to wear my researchers' hat, my teachers' hat? My psychologists' hat or you know my experiential hat, as a caregiver.*

All of the five participants experienced the role dilemma, as a primary reflexive issue, they all however negotiated methods of dealing with it during their research process. The next theme follows on from this one, because when there is a role dilemma in research there inevitably is an ethical dilemma that follows. However because of the complex nature of trauma research the ethical issues did not only surround the roles but other factors as well.

The ethical dilemma

The ethical dilemma refers to the ways in which participants struggled with ethics during their interviews with traumatised individuals. All five of my participants made reference to

the ethics of trauma research and the ways in which it affected them and where they found themselves in the research process.

Participant 1 is a novice researcher and therefore encountered many ethical issues while conducting trauma research.

> *My most memorable challenge was when this woman just started crying and she just couldn't handle it, and here I am sitting and I didn't know what to do, it was a challenge because I didn't know how to respond, because you are so aware of these ethical boundaries, but then I just reached out and I just touched and I just say, ok um it's fine, it'll be okay and I just hugged her. [ ] That just showed me that, um , even though you are part of a professional body that there is, I wouldn't say like crossing the ethical boundaries, but every case is unique*

This participant also struggled with the ethical dilemma of how to handle the research relationship in terms of keeping in touch with participants and the ethics that surround that.

> *And I feel so bad now, um for not sending them even an sms or just saying something, but then again, I think, I'm thinking about- oh no, maybe it's not appropriate. You know you are always in this dilemma of what is the human thing to do? Like to say: How are you? But then you also thinking about no no no, just leave it there, you will talk or you will see each other when you meet again. It's just… (shrugs) er I don't know.*

The combination of inexperience in conducting research and professional ethical principles, such as issues related to boundaries, created a very difficult space within which to operate for this participant. She was challenged and torn between behaving instinctually and following ethical guidelines and this would have created barriers in her interaction with her participants.

Participant 2 also confronted the ethics dilemma.

> *This was interviewing a woman in lower crossroads, so, we were in her shack, and I had a research assistant with me to interpret and this young woman was*

very guarded, very guarded in my presence. And, um, speaking through an interpreter was also very difficult because I was trying to explain very gently to her why I was doing this and to reassure her that she didn't have to speak if she didn't want to, you know those kind of things. And she just sat quite rigidly, and the three of us were sitting in a kind of triangle, but she positioned herself so that she was turned away from me and she wouldn't meet my eye and what happened was I started talking to her through the interpreter and so saying to the interpreter, please ask her this or I want to know and um, so by the way I was talking creating more and more barriers. And I just couldn't get myself out of it,

One can see in this participant's response that it seems that she was experiencing her professional stance as posing some challenges for the relationship with the participant and it was difficult to establish rapport. It seems also that the problem is exacerbated, rather than lessened, by the presence of the interpreter. On the one hand, she needed the interpreter to bridge the language barrier. On the other hand, however, it seems that the interpreter *created* a barrier that separated her from the participant. The following excerpt from the Participant's responses shows how she reflects actively in the course of the interview, and comes up with strategies to try and remedy the ethical quandary she is confronted with: having sought the assistance of an interpreter to help with collecting her data, the interpreter now becomes a barrier to making meaningful and respectful connection with the participant. She explains:

I became conscious of it so then I tried to look at her directly and say her name [ ] But she wasn't looking at me; she was physically turned away from me so… I didn't feel good after that interview I really felt as though I had invaded her life and I with all of them I have said, I am going to phone you, just to have another conversation, and she said, that she would talk, but that was it she didn't want me to contact her again.

This participant expresses her concern about the 'invasiveness of research' twice in her transcript. She describes another incident with a different participant where she had the similar sense of having invaded the life of the person.

I was interviewing a woman, a domestic worker [ ] she had been quite weary of the interview which had come through in the telephone conversations with her. [ ] When I got there it was actually fine, we sat in the dining room in the domestic workers house and kind of relaxed into it. [ ] In my opinion her grief, although she lost the baby two years ago, she had, she's very very far from resolving it and um, her response has been to cut herself off from everybody and so she was very tearful actually it was difficult for her to talk about it. Although she had agreed to, and I kept on saying its ok we can stop now but she, somehow there was intent in her to continue. So she was very distressed and cried a lot and that did stress me, I really felt for her and I felt this thing of the invasiveness of research and of the fact that I was in some way inflicting pain on her, or evoking pain rather, not so much inflicting. [ ] So it was a very strongly emotional interview for me.

When participants become emotionally disturbed by the research process it becomes an ethical dilemma. This researcher went on to say that five of her six participants broke down during the interview. This brings up serious ethical concerns about whether or not it is appropriate for honours students to be permitted to research traumatised participants directly, with so little support and experience behind them.

Participant 3 encountered the ethical dilemma strongly related to the role dilemma. But she also expresses the need for more training to handle the trauma that is being discussed in the interviews.

There are times where I feel that um, I could've, especially in the earlier interviews, the honours and the masters, the first few masters that I did, there were times when I felt that I wasn't probably fully equipped to, to to respond most efficiently to certain circumstances, not that I feel that I handled it in a bad way, but you know for example, um, when I women breaks down crying you give her the space to do that, it would be useful to be more, you know to have certain skills, you know um, basic counselling skills that will prepare you for that.

The two PhD students also struggled with the ethical dilemma but for different reasons. Participant 4 struggled with the epistemological reflexivity and the ethics of disclosing the struggle he had to see certain things in the analysis of his research.

> *...a part of myself was really struggling to to let myself see what was happening to this person unless it was really shown to me in a very clear way. So the fact of the abuse um, potentially the horror of it was something that I had been able to not look at, in myself. Ya, and discovering, discovering that was very interesting for me in terms of; where else is this happening? It what other ways am I dissociating from the more painful aspects of this person's or these peoples history? [ ] Um, so as an ethical, as a statement in an ethics chapter, that would need to be there.*

Participant 5 encountered the ethical dilemma while conducting her pilot studies. She interviewed a young lady around the same age as herself. This young woman was taking care of her spouse. Her interviewee told the story in such vivid detail that she found herself transported into her participants' reality. Finlay (2005) describes this phenomena stating that "in one moment researchers might find themselves observing the participant and discover some linking experience that enables the researchers' empathy. In the next moment, they could be sucked down into the deep, experiencing an intense intertwining with the participant (p. 285)". Six days after the interview the same young woman sent a text to my participant informing her that her husband was not doing well and that he had been moved to the high dependency unit.

> *I happened to be in the hospital visiting another patient, doing my own business and I thought to me "I know this is about research but there is a human aspect, somebody is, this is like a cry for help or" I thought well let me go you know and put a hand on her and say you know I'm thinking of you during this difficult time. And I went there and low and behold got caught up in er… as we were standing there the husband took a turn for the worst and we were caught in the middle of a resuscitation and he died right there! [ ] she was talking to me about this six days ago, we were in the middle of scheduling a second interview, he husband just died on us and um, I just want to say*

"wake up" (knocks on the table twice) you know it doesn't end you know you don't die like this!

The experience and understanding of the research relationship in this example starkly contrasts with the ethical dilemmas experienced by participant 1. There is more integration in how this participant deals with herself in the research process. Although she still did face the ethical question after receiving the text from her participant she used a combination of ethical knowledge and instinct to respond to the human plea of her participant and be there for her in her time of need.

Power issues

Power issues refer to the differences in socio-economic statuses, race, and, class between my participants and their interviewees. This was experienced by participants 1, 2 and 3 all of whom are South Africans. Our culturally and racially diverse nation and our history of inequality have left lasting effects on all the people of this country. The participants who experienced this power issue with their interviewees also felt a sense of guilt for having the power in the relationship, and using it to conduct research, which they experienced as being extractive; this is evident in what was said during their interviews.

Participant 3 describes it best:

...you know, the power differentials between myself and the women, in my experiences, you know, interviewing women who are, vast majority are unemployed and really struggling to survive on a day to day level. For me it's a very stark contrast between my economic position and their position. You know, also race factors, um, ja, it's basically trying to think also about how these women would perceive me as a researcher, what are my goals and in this relationship this research relationship, what are both of us going to get out of this process.

During the interview she comments on the extractive nature of research by saying:

well often I would, towards the end of doing my interviews I would see women who I've interviewed before and you know they would greet me and we would walk past and you know then I started actually, you know I thought that my

approach towards people that I studied was friendly and open and that really was kind of a beneficial relationship for both of us. But kind of seeing women after at the shelters after I'd done the work um kind of highlighted to me how unequal these power dynamics were and how it was actually only benefiting me [ ] and, um that kind of made me re-evaluate my whole position with these women and it made we feel very extractive, like I was just taking.

There are other instances during the interview when she described the nature of the differences and how she was perceived by the women at the shelter.

I do know that even these ladies that I'm working with now perceive me to be very, very different from them. You know, as I said before, the financial thing, you know they just assume that I have everything, I can afford everything, I'm well off. [ ] it really makes me realize the, the difference and the power relations, [ ] because they perceive me being in a, better position than they are, ja, so. That's something that you know you can try and make it better but it's never going to disappear.

As a result of the power issue having such an impact on this participant she has since become very involved in the community of women whom she intends to research for her next qualification. Participant 2 experienced the power issue in a similar way her experience was also linked to the ethics of trauma research.

...one of the things I'm very very conscious of is that I'm an older, white, English speaking women, speaking to Xhosa women who are much younger than me, who for the most part, or in fact all of them, are not as affluent as I am, they not as educated as I am. So these are quite big things, it's a big divide to cross. It also relates to issues of power, because as I come in, I'm conscious that I am the one who is kind of in control, if you like and I'm asking a huge thing of these women, because I'm asking them to be vulnerable with me, um, they doing me a favour and I'm not actually paying them. [ ] So I'm conscious that they could be hurt in this process, because of the material they are talking about but also because of this funny kind of power thing.

Participant 1 felt disempowered and emotionally effected by the interviews with her participants. Her guilt was linked to her experience, mentioned earlier, of having given advice and feeling that it was the wrong thing to do in the context of a research relationship.

> *I just thought oh gosh, it was really, it was really bad and um, also I found myself, actually I found myself so powerless, when I hear their stories and oh gosh and I was thinking they would say, some of them would say: if you got a job for me please? And I would just be sitting there and if only I could do (long pause) something.*

Objective distancing

This theme refers to the idea that after engaging with your personal reflexivity, that is; your immediate emotional reaction to the material, it is then necessary to distance yourself in order to be objective in your analysis. This theme was only common to the two PhD students, perhaps because they were the only two participants that had reached this stage of analysis at the time of the interviews. Participant 4 describes:

> *…the analysis is about moving away from (pause) moving away from the data in terms of deep emotion within it which is the reflexivity, and towards a more kind of distanced, objectively informed, theoretically informed way of reading the data. Reflexivity tends to become less of an experience as you move along the process, & so the process of analysis becomes less personal as you begin to engage with what theorists say about what is being presented through the stories.*

This idea of objective distancing is part of the reflexive process. This type of reflexivity requires researcher's to be aware of their contribution to the construction of meanings during the research process, and recognition of the impossibility of remaining 'outside of' one's subject matter while conducting research. Reflexivity then, urges us "to explore the ways in which a researcher's involvement with a particular study influences, acts upon and informs such research." (Nightingale and Cromby, 1999, p. 228). Participant 5 struggled with objective distancing in her research process.

There's an element of a bit of objectivity needed in academia for you to you know think straight and represent people's views not through your eye glasses [ ] I've had to step back, you know. [ ] I need to bracket my prejudices, you know step out, acknowledge them so that I can bracket them. [ ] So moving beyond the subjectivity and emotions you know bracketing them to be able to make logical sense. It's like what are the themes that are coming up, engaging it with my head rather than with my heart.

This kind of objective distancing, recognized by the repetition of the term 'bracketing', which shows her struggle, was necessary so that this researcher did not become overly involved and colour the write up of her research with her own prejudices.

Personal involvement with the research

Both participant 2 and participant 5 were personally involved with their research topic in that they had personally experienced the phenomenon that they were studying. Participant 2 had lost her own baby and participant 5 had taken care of father before losing him to terminal cancer. Interestingly, these were the only two participants that kept a journal after their interviews to jot down their emotions and reactions to the participants and their stories.

as soon as I've done an interview I write, sort of freestyle writing, and I try to remember as much as possible of my responses during the interview. [Participant 2]

Personal involvement of the researcher impacted this participant in other ways.

…afterwards on two occasions I found myself crying in the car on the way home just for them and their grief and you know whatever it evokes in me.

Participant 5 was passionate about being reflexive and disclosing all aspects of her personal involvement in the research process. She was always aware that because of her personal involvement with the research she would be affected by the trauma narratives of her participants.

…part of my reflexivity has meant you know, has been writing you know journaling about my experiences. How I'm feeling. My thoughts and what's

going on as I interact with the data and stopping when I feel overwhelmed, [ ]
it's stressful. And I feel like, I'm overwhelmed, you know, this is tragic and all
the stories are ending in death: my goodness!

CONCLUSION

From this analysis, it is clear that post-graduate researchers are challenged by their own reflexivity when engaging with traumatised participants. These accounts demonstrate that researchers struggle most to negotiate and separate the role of researcher from that of counselor/therapist/helper.

Ethical dilemmas of how familiar to be with participants challenged the researchers, some of whom had difficulties operating within ethical boundaries while still remaining human in their interactions. The nature of trauma and the painful emotions that are awoken in the researcher when engaging with the trauma of their participants created role and ethical confusion. Long & Eagle (2009) state that "there is a natural inclination to relate with particular concern as a therapist and yet it is important to be true to the imperatives of the research and the boundaries this suggests between interviewer and interviewee (p. 32)".
Epistemological reflexive ethics concerned the PhD students, who were required to reflect on their data and why it was harder for them to see some things than it was to see others. Forcing them to wonder what else they were blind to in the process of analysis? These reflexive issues all conclude that trauma research is more complex than laboratory/experimental research. The painful emotions and affective language involved in trauma research evoked reactions in researchers.

According to Etherington (2007) power issues permeate every aspect of the research relationship especially when there are current or previous boundary issues created by dual relationships, or where there are issues of race, gender, age, etcetera, etcetera… In this South African context power issues arose from race and socio-economic status most commonly. Feelings of guilt and awareness of the power differentials affected the interaction between researchers and researched. Two participants had personally experienced the phenomena that they were investigating. Their accounts show that this kind of research needs regular supervision and support.

Although this study has shown that researcher inexperience can be damaging when conducting trauma research, my sample was relatively small. I believe more research could be done in this area so that responsible decisions can be made about whether it is ethical to

allow honours students, who may lack the research experience necessary, to work directly with traumatised participants.

REFERENCES

Aronson, J. (1994). A pragmatic view of thematic analysis. *The Qualitative Report*. Available at www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/BackIssues/QR2-1/aronson.html (accessed 7 May 2010).

Auerbach, J. S., & Blatt, S. J. (2001). Self-reflexivity, intersubjectivity, and therapeutic change. *Psychoanalytic Psychology, 18(3),* 427-450

Bartlett, F. C. (1932). *Remembering: An experimental and social study.* Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Blatt, S. J., & Blass, R. B. (1996). Relatedness and self definition: A dialectic model of personality development. In G. G. Noam & K. W. Fischer (Eds.), *Development and vulnerabilities in close relationships.* 309-338. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Bloom S. L. (1999). Trauma theory abbreviated. *Final Action Plan: A Coordinated Community-based Response to Family Violence.* Available at www.sanctuaryweb.com/Documents/Trauma%20theory%20abbreviated.pdf (accessed 9 May 2010)

Bock, T. & Sergeant, J. (2002). Small sample market research. *International Journal of Market Research. Vol. 44.* Quarter 2.

Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). *Transforming Qualitative Information: Thematic Analysis and Code Development.* Sage Publications.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3,* 77-101.

Canfield, J. (2005). Secondary traumatisation, burnout, and vicarious traumatisation: a review of the literature as it relates to the therapists who treat trauma. *Smith College Studies in Social Work, 75(2),* 81-101.

Colombo, M. (2003). Reflexivity and narratives in action research: A discursive approach. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung* (online journal) *4(2).* Available at www.qualitative-research.net/fqs (accessed 5 March 2010).

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2000). Introduction. *The discipline and practice of qualitative research.* 1-32.

Dunkley, J., & Whelan, T. A. (2006). Vicarious traumatisation: current status and future directions. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling, 34(1)* 107-116.

Etherington, K. (2007). Ethical research in reflexive relationships. *Qualitative Inquiry, 13(5),* 599-616.

Finlay, L., & Gough, B. (Eds.) (2003). *Reflexivity: a practical guide for researchers in health and social sciences.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Finlay, L. (2005). Reflexive embodied empathy: a phenomenology of participant-researcher intersubjectivity. *The Humanistic Psychologist, 33(4),* 271-292.

Finlay, L. (2006). Dancing between embodied empathy and phenomenological reflection. *Indo-pacific Journal of Phenomenology.*

Herman, J. L. (1992). *Trauma and Recovery.* New York: Basic Books.

Hunt, N., & McHale, S. (2008). Memory and meaning: individual and social aspects of memory narratives. *Journal of Loss and Trauma 13(1)*, 42-58.

Janet, P. (1925). *Psychological healing, Vols 1 & 2.* London: Macmillan

Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: an introduction to qualitative research interviewing.* London: Sage, Chapter 7: The interview situation, pp. 124-135; Chapter 8: The quality of the interview, pp. 144-159.

Long, C., & Eagle, G. (2009). Ethics in tension: dilemmas for clinician conducting sensitive research. *Psycho-analytic psychotherapy in South Africa, 17(2),* 27-52.

Madill, A., & Gough, B. (2008). Qualitative research and its place in psychological science. *Psychological Methods, 13,* 254-271.

Marshall, M. N. (1996). Sampling for qualitative research. *Family Practise, 13,* 522-525.

McCann, I. L., & Pearlman, L. A. (1990). Vicarious traumatisation: a framework for understanding the psychological effects of working with victims. *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 3,* 131-149.

Newton, L. (2009). Reflexivity, validity and roses. *Complicity: An International Journal of Complexity and Education, 6,* 104-112. Available at www.complexityandeducation.ca (accessed 3 March 2010).

Neuman, W. L. (2006). *Social research methods: qualitative and quantitative approaches. 6th Edition.*

Nightingale, D. J., Cromby, J., (1999). (Eds). *Social constructionist psychology: A critical analysis of theory and practice,* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Parker, I. (2005). *Qualitative Psychology: Introducing Radical Research.* NY: Open University Press.

Peshkin, A. (2000). The nature of interpretation in qualitative research. *Educational Researcher, 29(9),* 5-9. American Educational Research Association. Available at http://www.jstor.org/stable/1177087 (accessed 30 September 2010)

Ryan, T. (2005). When you reflect are you also being reflexive? *The Ontario Action Researcher, 8(1).* Available at www.nipissingu.ca/oar/archive-V812E.htm (accessed 3 March 2010).

Ryan, T. (2005). Reflexivity and the reader: An illumination. *The Ontario Action Researcher.* Available at www.nipissingu.ca/oar/relevant_links.htm (accessed on 3 March 2010).

Sandelowski. M., & Barroso, J. (2002). Finding the findings in qualitative studies. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, *34(3),* 213-220.

Steed, L. G., & Downing, R. (1998). A phenomenological study of vicarious traumatisation amongst psychologists and professional counsellors working in the field of sexual abuse/assault. *Australian Journal of Disaster and Trauma Studies.*

Willig, C. (2001). *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology. Adventures in Theory and Method.* Buckingham UK: Open University Press.

APPENDIX A

Interview Schedule

1. Could you tell me about a particular research study that involved interviewing people who have experienced trauma? (trauma by definition evokes difficult emotions)

2. What kinds of questions was the research exploring?

3. What do you understand by reflexivity in qualitative research?

4. How do you apply this concept in your own work?

5. Describe some of the challenges that you have experienced in your work?

6. Describe one moment that is emblematic of those challenges?

7. (What were some of the reasons that you experienced difficulty in these moments)

8. What impact did these challenges have on your study? (listen carefully, looking for the effects on data analysis and changes made to the interview guide, if any)

9. What are some of the ethical dilemmas that issue brought up?

10. (how do you respond to participants who break down during the interview process)

11. Was there ever a moment in the research process where you had to re-evaluate your approach to reflexivity?

APPENDIX B

Consent form

University of Cape Town

Department of Psychology

Consent to participate in a research study

Dear Participant,

Formal title: Exploring Reflexivity and the Ethics of doing Qualitative Research

Study Purpose
You are being asked to participate in a research study being conducted by a researcher from
the Department of Psychology at the University of Cape Town. The purpose of this study is
to conduct an interview with you in order to understand your reflexive engagement with
participants when you have conducted trauma research in the past. The study will also
explore the ethical discomfort that you experienced while doing research with traumatised
individuals.

Study Procedures
You will be interviewed for approximately 60-90 minutes. The interview will be recorded
and will include questions that explore your experiences of doing trauma research. All
information obtained from the study will be kept strictly confidential. There will, in fact, be
no way for the researcher to link the information you provide during the interview to your
name or any other personal information.

Possible Risks
 There may be a risk of loss of confidentiality (privacy) relating to the information you give
during the interview. There are no other known risks specific to this kind of study.

Possible Benefits
There are no direct benefits to you in participating in this study, but I hope that the
information gained will help inform ethical committees about the risks and benefits involved
in researching traumatised participants. The interview might result in participants gaining a
deeper understanding of their own reflexive engagement while researching others' traumas.
It is also a valuable study, as it benefits the field of research by addressing frequently asked
ethical questions.

Voluntary Participation
Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are free to refuse to participate in this
study. Your decision regarding your participation in this study will not affect you negatively
in any way. If you decide to participate in this study, you are free to discontinue participation
at any time.

Confidentiality

Information obtained during this study will be kept confidential. Your name and other identifying information will not be kept with the interview information.

Questions

Any study-related questions, problems or emergencies should be directed to the following researchers:

Dr.   Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela   021-6503430
Miss Tarika Reddy   082 7778299

Questions about your rights as a study participant, comments or complaints about the study also may be presented to the Research Ethics Committee, Human Sciences Research Council, Cape Town, or by telephone to 0800 212 123 (this is a toll-free call if made from a landline telephone; otherwise cell phone rates apply).

I have read the above and am satisfied with my understanding of the study, its possible benefits, risks and alternatives. My questions about the study have been answered. I hereby voluntarily consent to my participation in the research study as described. I have been offered copies of this three-page consent form.

<div align="center">***</div>

_____   _____
Signature of participant   Date

_____   _____
Name of participant (printed)   Witness

<div align="center">* * *</div>

The interview will be recoded and the only person who will listen to the recording is the researcher and her supervisor. Until they listen to it, it will be stored on a password-protected computer. After they have listened to it, it will be destroyed.

I agree that the conversation may be recorded.

_____   _____
Signature of participant   Date

_____   _____
Name of participant (printed)   Witness

Declaration

1.   I know that plagiarism is wrong. Plagiarism is to use another's work and pretend that it is one's own.

2.   I have used the ………………………… convention for citation and referencing. Each contribution to, and quotation in, this essay/report/project/……………… from the work(s) of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

3.   This essay/report/project/………………….. is my own work.

4.   I have not allowed, and will not allow, anyone to copy my work with the intention of passing it off as his or her own work.

5.   I acknowledge that copying someone else's assignment or essay, or part of it, is wrong, and declare that this is my own work.

Signature _____