
Ethical Issues in Addressing Inequity In/Through ESL Research

Ena Lee

This article outlines a researcher's struggles with conducting "ethical" research when her case study reveals racializations faced by a minority teacher in a Canadian ESL program. How might becoming privy to research participants' experiences of inequity in ESL education complicate the notion of research ethics when "doing the right thing" runs counter to a researcher's ethical duties of ensuring trust, commitment, and confidentiality? The article speaks to the complexities of research ethics in the light of issues of negotiating researcher/researched identities, conducting anti-racist research, and addressing larger issues of power and inequity in ESL education.

Cet article dresse les grandes lignes des difficultés qu'a connues une chercheuse en poursuivant une recherche « conforme à la déontologie » alors que son étude de cas a révélé la racialisation à laquelle faisait face un enseignant minoritaire dans un programme d'ALS au Canada. Dans quelle mesure le fait de découvrir les expériences d'iniquité qu'affrontent, dans le contexte de la pédagogie en ALS, les participants à une recherche complique-t-il la notion d'éthique en recherche quand « bien faire » va à contre-courant des devoirs que la déontologie impose aux chercheurs : assurer la confiance, l'engagement et la confidentialité? L'article traite de la complexité de l'éthique en recherche à la lumière des enjeux liés à la négociation d'identités chez les chercheurs et les participants, à la recherche antiraciste, et aux plus grandes questions de pouvoir et d'iniquité dans le domaine de l'ALS.

ENA: How do you deal with it?

LISA: Deal with?

ENA: Being a minority teacher. You know, your feeling like you constantly need to defend yourself. How do you deal with it?

LISA: I *don't* deal with, I just, not that I don't deal with it. I don't go out of my way to deal with it. But, I just *deal* with it. You know? There's no "three steps" that I do. It's just that, I, I deal with it because I *have* to. Do you know what I mean? It's just a *natural* thing that I have to deal with and there's nothing that I can really do because I don't want to go *confront* people about it. (Interview, 12/21/2003)

Background: The Case Study

From April 2003 to March 2004, for my doctoral dissertation I conducted a one-year critical ethnographic case study of Pacific University's ESL program involving 14 teachers, three administrators, and 86 students. My interest in researching this particular English-language program stemmed from recognition of its unique pedagogical approach toward teaching language through culture (and culture through language). Specifically, the theoretical underpinnings of the program's pedagogy were informed by the theories of Freire (1973), Kramsch (1993), and Rosaldo (1993) among others and suggested that the pedagogy reflected a critical dialogic approach to language. The research questions investigated how the program's approach to language and culture was conceptualized and how teachers' and students' identities were negotiated in this critical curriculum. Data gathered through questionnaires, focus groups, interviews, and classroom observations with research participants at times, however, revealed discursive essentializations of culture that positioned Pacific University's ESL program's visible-minority students as the racialized *other* (Lee, 2008). In the dissertation study, I analyzed these essentializations as being shaped in part by discourses of culture based on dichotomous categorizations of self and/vs. other (Kubota, 2004; Leki, 2006). Although issues of race and racialization were not primary to my research questions when initially conceptualized, they became more salient to my study as the research progressed. Over the course of the one-year study, the effects of racializing discourses further came to light through Lisa, a visible-minority instructor in the program and one of only two visible-minority instructors teaching in the program at the time. Another was hired two thirds of the way through my study, but when Lisa told me of her racialized experiences, only two visible-minority instructors were in the program. The second instructor, however, was based at an alternate campus and was rarely seen except at an occasional staff meeting.

Lisa was an instructor in her mid-20s born in Japan whose family immigrated to Canada within a year of her birth. She grew up bilingual in English and Japanese and received her master's degree in TESOL at a United States university before returning to Canada to teach. Part-way through my study, she suggested getting together for lunch so that she could seek my opinion about an incident that she had observed between a colleague and a student wherein a discussion about racism in Canada had resulted in the instructor telling the student (rather bluntly, from Lisa's recollection), "Suck it up. So there's racism in Canada. You can't do anything about it" (Research journal, 11/10/03). As McNamee (2001) observed, "It is not uncommonly the case that when one investigates the life-worlds of teachers or pupils the range of knowledge that comes into one's compass far exceed that anticipated in the research design" (p. 320). So began Lisa's sharing of and our subsequent discussions about other instances of racialized discourses stemming from her

own experiences both as a visible minority generally and as a visible-minority English-language educator specifically.

In the introductory data excerpt, Lisa had been telling me about her experiences as a visible-minority ESL educator and being positioned as a non-legitimate native-speaker of English, and therefore as a non-legitimate ESL teacher (Braine, 1999; Kamhi-Stein, 2004; Leung, Harris, & Rampton, 1997). She expressed continued frustration with having to defend herself and her validity not only to her students, but even to her colleagues. I sought to understand Lisa's experiences in relation to the discourses of race pervading the larger field of English-language education: discourses that normatively equate the English language with whiteness (Amin, 2001; Curtis & Romney, 2006; Kubota & Lin, 2006; Lin & Luke, 2006). In identifying the marked nature of racialized identity constructions in ESL/EFL particularly, however, I identified a unique challenge of conducting research in racialized (and racially marked) spaces.

My desire to intervene at the time and bring the racialized discourses to light was sobered by my realization of the possible implications of my actions on participants in the research; that is, by naming processes of racialization occurring in a racially marked space, my actions might serve simultaneously to name those who were being racialized and subsequently to leave these participants open to the possible consequences of this revelation. My struggles with this "guilty knowledge" (McNamee, 2002) thus found me positing how my commitment to confidentiality, trust, and the individual might have simultaneously contradicted my commitment to social justice, equity, and the "greater good" (Burgess, 1989; Kubanyiova, 2008). The analysis that follows speaks to the complexities of research ethics in the light of issues of negotiating researcher/researched identities, conducting anti-racist research, and addressing larger issues of power and inequity in ESL education. While attempting to articulate the complexities of negotiating what it means to do ethical research, however, I am not presuming that the ethical conflicts presented here are generalizable to all research, as all research and research ethics are situated in particular contexts. I do not present the answers, but rather in engaging in a process of researcher reflexivity, I discuss how the possibilities for social justice and advocacy and doing ethical research can sometimes appear to be, but should not be treated as, irreconcilable.

Racializing ESL Teacher Identity

During one particular interview (12/21/03), Lisa recounted a number of experiences that illuminated the deeply entrenched relationship between conceptions of the English language, race (and racialization), and (il)legitimacy in English-language education. I present two of these stories here in Lisa's own words to provide a context for the discussion that follows about the implications of addressing issues of inequity revealed through one's research.

Story #1: “This is an instructor”

Background. Pacific University’s ESL program’s administrative offices (as well as a few of their classrooms) were located on an upper floor of an office tower at the end of a long corridor. Two entry doors (located approximately 8 meters apart) led into separate areas of the office. The first door that one would reach after leaving the elevator led directly into the instructors’ communal office space, whereas the second (farther) door led into the main reception area for the program, where the program assistant’s desk was located. In an attempt to ensure a sense of privacy and security in the instructors’ area (as it was an unsecured area due to the open layout of, and challenges reconfiguring, the office space), students in the program were requested not to use “the teachers’ entrance” and instead to walk to the farther door (designated as “the students’ entrance”) to access their classrooms. In the data excerpt below, Lisa recounts her experiences of being mistaken for a student by her colleagues during the first weeks of her employment in the ESL program:

LISA: Colleagues that I work with now—a lot of them—have asked me, “Where are you really from?” In the beginning, I even had ... [administrator], the first day I ever taught in this program, I walked through the teachers’ entrance ... and [administrator] actually told me that I had to use the *students’* entrance, so I actually *did* walk in through the students’ entrance. And I walked a-l-l the way around into the teachers’ room and then [administrative assistant] ... was like, “[administrator], this is an instructor.” Things like that have happened to me, which is kind of like, *very* odd for me. And I’ve had instructors do that too [i.e., request Lisa to use the students’ entrance]. Not anymore, because they know me, but in the first, you know, two weeks, I got that a lot.

Story #2: “It was because of the way I dress”

Background. Lisa recalled instances of student resistance in her classrooms that she attributed for the most part to being racialized and positioned by her students as a non-legitimate ESL teacher. I witnessed a particularly telling example (so loud that it was witnessed by two classrooms of students and a number of staff in the program) that resulted in an intervention by one of Lisa’s colleagues (an older white woman) on Lisa’s behalf. Lisa’s reluctance to speak about these kinds of incidents with her colleagues stemmed from her belief that they did not understand the situation (i.e., according to Lisa, they “would just, you know, listen, but they have *nothing* to say about it because they haven’t experienced it before”). This belief was further fueled by her earlier experience of speaking with an administrator about the issue and then proceeding to listen to him or her “[shoot] it right back at me.”

ENA: How do your colleagues react to [your incidents of racialization] when they find out?

LISA: Things like what I just told you?

ENA: Yes.

LISA: Um, some people are very supportive, and they'll actually go talk to that student for me and, um, you know, try and, try and talk to them. But, then again, some instructors, they're, they just *don't* understand where it's all coming from, and then they feel, I get from the instructors maybe they even feel that it's because I *am* un-, not qualified enough. I mean, um, for example, um, when things like that happen with me, and while [administrator] was here, she always brought it back to *me* and said that it was *my* problem and it was because of the way I dress or the way I look ... I think that's not, that's just not appropriate. I don't think it's—I think it's just because I *am* female *and* Asian *and* look young. And I don't think it has anything to do with how I'm dressed or how I look. Maybe it does a little bit, but I don't think it has as much to do with it as how I, um, how I look like. I look like an Asian and I look young. I look younger than I *am*.

It is important to clarify that Lisa's form of dress no doubt reflected her age and her interest in current fashion trends; however, it is equally important to point out that some other instructors in the program of equivalent age dressed in similar (and at times even more casual) fashion. At least to my knowledge, they did not appear to face the same students' challenging as Lisa, nor were they mistaken for students (or at least perhaps not nearly as often as Lisa was). Rather, these instructors seemed revered by students in the ESL program for their stylishness, and their fashion sense did not appear to have any adverse effects on their students' perceptions of them as being good language instructors. So I question the basis behind the difference in experiences between Lisa and her white colleagues.

Guilty Knowledge and Problematizing the Ethical in Research

McNamee's (2001) notion of *guilty knowledge* in research speaks to:

the feelings of guilt that attach when [a researcher] comes to know of harm visited on innocent others, and has no unqualified sense of which way to act. Each way out of the conflict appears to harm some person or institution. (p. 320)

The knowledge can arise from participants themselves through open or accidental disclosure or through the researcher bearing witness to the actions. An example of guilty knowledge was recounted by Burgess (1989), who discussed his researcher-insider knowledge of hiring practices in a university under study. He revealed that candidates who were characterized before being interviewed by the hiring committee as unsuitable for the post were nevertheless interviewed in order to maintain a false image of fairness in the process. McNamee (2002) cites a secondary (hypothetical, but not unrealistic) example of an educational researcher who uncovers inappropriate relations between a teacher and a student of legal age. Although a legal relationship, the power inequity between teacher and student potentially marks the relationship as unethical. In such a case, the ethical notion of harm, however, may befall the student whether the researcher chooses to expose the relationship or not. For example, exposure may significantly affect the present and future reputation of the student (and his or her academic future) directly or indirectly, but failure to expose the relationship permits the possibly exploitive relationship to continue. Numerous scenarios such as whether the relationship is consensual or not (thereby disrespecting the student's autonomy) or whether the exposure may unfairly tarnish the reputation of the school and the larger teaching staff were also considered in McNamee's article, thus illustrating the complexity of guilty knowledge.

Guillemin and Gillam (2004) make the vital distinction between two dimensions of macro- and micro-ethics in qualitative research: "(a) procedural ethics, which usually involves seeking approval from a relevant ethics committee to undertake research involving humans; and (b) 'ethics in practice' or the everyday ethical issues that arise in the doing of research" (p. 263). In the above two cases recounted by Burgess (1989) and McNamee (2002), ethical behavior and notions of conducting ethical research as laid out in policies of university behavioral research ethics boards provide little guidance for a researcher's dilemmas of how to address guilty knowledge. This is due to the macro scope of procedural ethics inadequately highlighting the ethical (read *moral*) dilemmas that are less straightforward and much less easily regulated and/or solved by rule of thumb (Pring, 2001; Small, 2001). This is not to say, however, that I would prefer ethical policies to encompass more micro-perspectives on interpreting ethical behavior. The potentially infinite contexts in which research is conducted makes the notion of a finite and all-encompassing ethical policy a virtual impossibility. Furthermore, any attempt to create an extensive list of ethical parameters to encompass the micro would probably stifle future research and research innovations in ways that would prove more detrimental than beneficial from a broader perspective of progress. Therefore, although research ethics boards and ethical codes are useful for raising general awareness of ethical considerations and assist in preventing the most egregious of research violations, their inherent

usefulness may be limited in some cases. A further example of this can be observed in Dennis' (2009) research with high school English-language learners.

Dennis (2009) described the racial discrimination that Ming-Chu, a female English-language learner (ELL) and student in her study, experienced at the hands of one of her high school teachers, Mr. Strong. As Dennis recounts, "Mr. Strong was quite outgoing about his negative attitude towards ELLs and his desire to retain what he considered to be a 'homogenous' community" (p. 142); as such, he was vocal about not wanting to have to teach ELLs in his classroom and resented having to do so. Subsequently, although aware of the linguistic difficulties that Ming-Chu faced, Mr. Strong would call on her in class and tease her incessantly in acts of public humiliation. Dennis and her research team identified the complexities of their intervention in relation to what forms intervention should/could take, decisions to intervene (or not), and implications of intervention on "complicated and contradictory" (p. 132) notions of ethical research practices.

In the case of the latter ethical consideration specifically, Mr. Strong and Ming-Chu were both participants in Dennis' study; but whereas the researcher on a macro-ethical procedural level (i.e., in relation to university ethical codes) had ethical obligations to both research participants equally, Dennis and her research group's commitment to conducting critical research and advocating for social justice prioritized their micro-ethical (i.e., moral) obligations to Ming-Chu over any obligations they had to Mr. Strong, thus fundamentally shaping their research interventions and eventually leading to Ming-Chu's removal from Mr. Strong's classroom. In Dennis' research, however, I argue that notions of intent (and the overtly racist intentions of Mr. Strong) aid in a more straightforward guiding toward ethical action to address guilty knowledge.

Dennis (2009) and her research team felt able and willing to intervene in Ming-Chu's racial discrimination as the research team "possessed confidence in [their] interpretations of [Mr. Strong's] intentionality" (p. 143) and the gravity of consequences of this intent on the young student. In the case of my research study, on the other hand, I believe it much more difficult for researchers to vilify racializing (read *less overtly racist*) behavior if analyzing such behaviors as representative of, and stemming from, societal discourses and/or broader discourses pervading the field of language education—discourses of which individuals may be unconscious and otherwise unaware—rather than representative of, and stemming from, intentional acts of racial discrimination. An analysis of intentionality in anti-racist research, however, can be a slippery slope if it allows for absolution of racist behavior via pat qualifications of "but they didn't mean to be racist" or the analysis that the "only" consequence of the action was that Lisa was forced to walk a few extra meters more to her desk due to an "unfortunate, but simple and/or understandable"

mistake. Furthermore, by focusing on the intent rather than the effect of discriminatory behavior, we divert attention away from (and as a result minimize) the real consequences (intended or not) of such behaviors and fail to recognize how debates over intention may (in)advertently contribute to the perpetuation of racism. In addition to its contribution to a more critical understanding of anti-racist advocacy, the discussion of intent and effect is pertinent to an analysis of research ethics here as it can also serve to complicate researchers' understandings of the relationship between possible advocacy and notions of harm as understood through macro-ethical codes.

Williams' (2009) study of ethical dilemmas in research practices faced by faculty researchers in his educational institution included the story of a researcher who like Dennis (2009), was made aware of racial prejudice that one of his participants experienced, this time in the workplace. Unlike Dennis, however, the researcher's concerns that his participant's identity would have been known to others in the institution with which he was affiliated led to his ultimate decision not to reveal or act on this unexpected knowledge. The feelings of guilt/guilty knowledge expressed by the faculty researcher between his obligation to support this individual participant and address experiences of inequity, but also his inability to do so without potentially placing the participant at greater risk due to public exposure, weighed heavily on him during his interview with Williams:

Because of the way in which I had to construct anonymity and confidentiality, I can't take this to anywhere in this institution, and say ... *this* is what your institution is like ... I can't say that. I can't go to anybody and say, *look* at what your institution *does* to people. (p. 216)

Such ethical conundrums thus bring to light concerns about how a researcher's intent to advocate *against* harms faced by a participant may concomitantly result in unintended effects that may *cause* further harm to the participant.

Procedural Ethics, Ethics in Practice, and the Process of "Doing no Harm"

According to the university ethics policy by which I was bound for my dissertation research, my ethical duties as a researcher of doing no harm during the course of my study remained first and foremost in my mind. In an excerpt from the introductory "Background & Purposes" section, the policy states:

It is the intention of the University to ensure that, where a human subject is involved in research:

- respect is shown for the dignity of research subjects; ...
- vulnerable persons are protected against abuse, exploitation and discrimination; ...

- foreseeable harms will not outweigh the anticipated benefits;
- research subjects will not be subjected to unnecessary risks of harm, and their participation in research must be essential to achieving scientifically and societally important aims that cannot be realized without the participation of human subjects. (University of British Columbia Board of Governors, 2002)

Although introduction of the policy contains eight points, I excerpt here only the four to which I specifically refer in my analysis below.

As the implied agent of procedural ethics is the researcher himself or herself, the above policy would appear to suggest that my ethical duty as a researcher generally entails no claim of responsibility to Lisa in relation to the conduct of others toward her if not directly caused by or stemming from my research. Closer reading and analysis of the ethics policy in the light of the guilty knowledge to which I became privy, however, expose possible ethical contradictions if viewed with a moral lens and underscore how “certain macroethical principles are inadequate to offer guidelines for situated research practices and can in fact be at odds with microethical considerations” (Kubanyiova, 2008, p. 504). Specifically, I had hypothesized in an earlier article (Lee & Simon-Maeda, 2006) that it was due in part to my insider status as a researcher that Lisa revealed her racialization to me in the first place; but if researchers “have an obligation to the experiences that we expose” (Carter, 2003, p. 33), what are the implications of revelations of inequity for the researcher in terms of ethical research behavior (McNamee, 2002; Mehra, 2001, Tyson, 2003)? How do researchers address this guilty knowledge when the name of this particular research knowledge (i.e., racialization) inherently implies the name of a particular research participant (i.e., Lisa)?

As Guillemin and Gillam (2004) cogently argue, the paradox of *doing no harm* is complex as:

The potential harms to participants in qualitative social research are often quite subtle and stem from the nature of the interaction between researcher and participant. As such, they are hard to specify, predict, and describe in ways that ethics application forms ask for and likewise, strategies for minimizing risk are hard to spell out. (p. 272; compare Kubanyiova, 2008)

For example, asking Lisa to recount the discrimination that she has faced as a visible-minority language educator may cause her harm in the form of discomfort; simultaneously, not advocating on her behalf may cause her harm if she interprets researchers’ ambivalence toward the inequities that she recounted. In contrast, speaking out on Lisa’s behalf may cause harm if she feels belittled by the need for researchers’ intervention or if researchers’ intervention in her co-workers’ racializing discourses consequently causes

rifts between Lisa and her co-workers that affect the workplace environment. Thus the uncertainty of the effects of researchers' intervention, such as possibly marking Lisa's already marked status in the program further (now as the victim of the program's discourses of racialization) through my actions to address equity issues, required me to reflect considerably on the intricacies of ensuring no harm to Lisa in revealing guilty knowledge vis-à-vis my eventual actions toward this knowledge.

In the following discussion, I analyze the resulting research interventions in terms of the key ethical principles to which I was bound above. In this way, I illustrate how my familiarity with and understanding of ethics as worded in university research ethics policies did not fully prepare me for the complexities and situatedness of ethical issues that might (and did) arise. In so analyzing each of my research interventions, I seek to illuminate concretely the need for a more situated approach to ethics that enhances possibilities rather than envisioning limitations of researchers' advocacy in conducting ethical (and equitable) research.

What's (who's) in a name?

Participating in research and realizing how the researcher would be bound by ethical codes of confidentiality may initially have provided Lisa with a sense of safety so that she could speak more freely to issues of racialization that she experienced as a visible-minority language educator. Part-way through the research, however, I came also to believe that Lisa was seeking not just words of comfort, but a space where she could speak about her experiences as part of the larger social and political structures of her workplace. Due to the role of reciprocity in my research, where the collaborative exploration and negotiation of my research with participants was central to the research process, I thus felt it important to disclose my own experiences as a visible-minority language educator. Naming my own racialization to Lisa engendered an atmosphere of open dialogue both in interviewing and everyday interactions with her throughout my year of data-collection. During these conversations, I also discussed with her my emerging analyses of her racialization in the program, and so hoped "to create an enabling context to question taken-for-granted beliefs and the authority culture has over us" (Lather, 1991, p. 61). In relation to this, I offered my support to Lisa in addressing her experiences in the program either on behalf of or alongside her, but she was hesitant to confront others, probably in recognition of the complexities of dealing with issues of race in particular research spaces. As I felt I understood to some degree her desire for me not to intervene in the incidents of racialization that she revealed, I reiterated to her my commitment to trust and confidentiality in my research with her. At the same time, however, due to the serious nature of the issue at hand (i.e., at its foundation these are anti-racist issues), I felt compelled to identify a middle ground that would

allow me to name (in order to address) what I had observed in the program to my participants without naming Lisa as the impetus for this inquiry.

Decentering Lisa from my naming of racialization in relation to English-language education would allow me to broach the issue with other participants in my study in order to explore more deeply the discourses that were at play in Lisa's experiences. As a university researcher, I was able to speak directly of public incidents that I had observed during my research in the program, including Lisa's hallway altercation with her student (recounted above) and an incident where Lisa's photograph appeared in the program's marketing brochure in a location that seemed to imply that she was a student in the program rather than an instructor (Lee & Simon-Maeda, 2006). However, decentering Lisa in my intervention was facilitated greatly by my own identity as a visible-minority ESL educator as I found myself able to raise broader discussions with many of my participants about what an English-speaker (and inherently an English teacher) looked like and to highlight equating the English language with whiteness and how this socially constructed discourse played out in the field of language education in such concepts as native-speakerness and language teacher legitimacy.

Although my ethical obligations toward Lisa's experiences of racialization in the program specifically may not have been dictated by procedural ethics, facilitating open discussions with Pacific University staff and students about these incidents and discourses of race generally was an ethics-in-practice response to ensuring that both "respect is shown for the dignity of research subjects" and that "vulnerable persons are protected against ... discrimination" (University of British Columbia Board of Governors, 2002). Engaging thus with issues of inequity by "naming (racialization) without naming (Lisa)" served as an example of the situated ethical response that I sought in my desire to ensure my ethical commitments to my participants to do no harm as a researcher while also attending to the discourses that I believed caused them harm otherwise. But as this research intervention was a response to racialization observed in a specific ESL program, and although I believed that my actions might have effected future change through possibly developing greater awareness of discourses of race in my research participants, the localized nature of these actions did not serve to respond to Lisa's feelings of resignation that as an Asian, having to prove herself more than her white colleagues was "a difficult thing to change. I think visible minorities are always going to be treated like a visible minority" (Interview, 12/21/2003).

The concept of catalytic validity in conducting critical research both emphasizes and "represents the degree to which the research process re-orient, focuses and energizes participants toward knowing reality in order to transform it" (Lather, 1991, p. 68; compare Goldstein's, 2003, "critical reflexivity"). In this vein, efforts toward enhancing research reciprocity would in addition

“search for and try to establish enabling conditions, practice, and social relations that are geared to maximizing ... self-fulfillment” (Tickle, 2002, p. 54). Lisa’s poignant statement above hence indicated to me that my intervention’s failure to address and challenge the continued reproduction of discourses of race and racialization in English-language education speaks more broadly to a wider need for attendance to micro-ethical duties as a *critical* researcher. Thus I felt compelled to identify a middle ground again—one that would allow a naming of what was observed in the program, this time in relation to discourses of race and racialization within the larger field of language education.

Responding to Reciprocity and Catalytic Validity in Research

Having graduated with a master’s degree in TESOL herself, Lisa was aware of the relationship between academic research and scholarly publication. Her further recognition of the absence of discussions of race and racialization in the field of language education at the time of my research and, therefore, the potential contribution and importance that her narrative could have on the understandings of these issues in ESL became a topic of discussion between us in the latter stages of the study. Scholarly publication in line with research reciprocity would, depending on the publication, offer Lisa varying degrees of input and ownership over the research reporting process. In many ways, therefore, I viewed this research dissemination as a form of catalytic validity as it could serve to enhance Lisa’s own “self-understanding and, ultimately, self-determination through research participation” (Lather, 1991, p. 68). More specifically, I envisaged a written piece as assisting Lisa in potentially effecting change on a number of levels.

1. within self—recognizing the role of her own self-racialization (i.e., resigning to a position of *other* and questioning her own validity and legitimacy as an English-language educator) in the process of social reproduction of race and racialization;
2. regarding self—speaking out against her own racialization;
3. regarding others—speaking up for others who are racialized and/or mobilizing others “against repetition” (Kumashiro, 2002) of racialization and other racial inequities.

I suggested to Lisa two possible forms that research reporting could take: (a) co-authoring a joint publication with me, which would simultaneously overlap with her own investments in English-language education research as at the time of my research; she indicated to me interest in pursuing a doctoral degree in TESOL; or (b) an article written by me where Lisa’s collaboration in the negotiation of meaning would pervade the writing process from the data presented to interpretation to ultimate analysis. Unlike in my intervention discussed above where I was able to decenter Lisa’s name from the process of inquiry and advocacy, however, regardless of the form of research reporting Lisa chose, “naming without naming” in the case of this interven-

tion was no longer an option, bringing to light an additional ethical paradox. In the case of a joint publication with Lisa, the reciprocity of the process in regard to benefits to Lisa as a TESOL scholar herself could only materialize with full self-disclosure of her identity as a co-author. Consequently, any potential benefits that she might obtain from this publication endeavor would need to be weighed against potential harm that might result from this disclosure such as tensions in her current or future workplace or implications for her future graduate studies. The second publication option (i.e., an article written by myself but that still entailed to a certain extent collaboration from Lisa), however, was no less problematic in other ways as the possible naming of Lisa's identity was also at stake.

In relation to procedural ethics, confidentiality during the research process is guaranteed to the best of a researcher's ability. Thoughts that are shared between a researcher and participant are not breathed to another person—that is, until the research is disseminated. In the latter process, responses are made anonymous to protect the identities of the participants. But revelation of participants' identity (read confidentiality) cannot be promised once these thoughts, although protected by pseudonyms, are released into the publication sphere. Ideally, the nature of research dissemination entails both a process of information distribution (by the researcher) and information (re)consumption (by the reader). The researcher, however, retains no power over who may choose to take up this dissemination process and cannot prevent some research participants from reading what other participants may have said in the course of the study. Furthermore, in some research contexts, there may be distinct possibilities that those reading the research and familiar with the research site might be able to piece together who might have said what, especially when some research participants are particularly marked as was the case of Lisa in my research. Thus it was not until 2006, two and a half years after completing the study (and perhaps more significantly, after Lisa's departure from Pacific University's ESL program) that the first written piece centering Lisa's narrative in an analysis of race and racialization in English-language education was published (Lee & Simon-Maeda, 2006).

By the time the article was published, Lisa was no longer in the employ of Pacific University's ESL program. This is paramount to consider, as attempting to publish the article during her tenure in the program would have contravened my commitment of trust and confidentiality to Lisa as she had expressed hesitation about addressing her experiences with others in the program. But publication of the article would name Lisa (not overtly, but contextually to those familiar with the research site such as her colleagues) and might, therefore, have held implications of possible harm relating to her identification. Thus although I may have envisaged research dissemination as a form of researcher intervention against guilty knowledge and potentially

contributing to catalytic validity in my research, conducting ethical research required careful consideration of harm that might subsequently result from research actions including publication in relation to a careful analysis of the notion of harms, benefits, and the greater good.

The Ethics of Intervention and “the Greater Good”

In considering the notion of ethical research, procedural ethics attempts to balance the concern for the collective good of a participant group while recognizing the possibility that individual participants’ contexts may differ as such to warrant further researchers’ consideration and calculation of benefits and harms in terms of ethical behavior. If benefits and harms are recognized as contextual, however, and if in many cases of research benefits and harms are only ultimately known (and experienced) by the research participant and not necessarily the researcher (Kiluva-Ndunda, 2005; Pring, 2001), can researchers ever sufficiently and clearly know, foresee, understand, and control how participants actually benefit (or not) from participating in our research in the short or even long term (Tilley, 1998)?

Kubanyiova (2008) underscores how “applying an a priori definition of ‘greater good’ in the way it is done in macroethical codes of conduct cannot guarantee ethical research practice, as it overlooks the consequences of our choices on the particular individuals” (p. 511). Analyzing my research intervention of publication in regard to the calculations of costs serves to illustrate the problematic of the benefit/harm evaluation in relation to the individual and notions of the greater good. For example, I felt it unethical to proceed with research publication until I knew for certain that Lisa would experience no harm from its release; the possible irony of this publication delay, however, is the simultaneous delay in Lisa (and others who are racialized) experiencing the benefits that might arise from possible positive engagement of the issues presented in the article by her coworkers who, I believed, were both supportive and sympathetic to one another, but may have been unaware of the social constructions of discourses of race, let alone how to engage with them. But in recognizing my inability to reassure Lisa that I would be present to facilitate this theoretical engagement with her co-workers on release of the paper, I believed that the “foreseeable harms [to Lisa would] not outweigh the anticipated benefits” (University of British Columbia Board of Governors, 2002) of publication while Lisa remained as a teacher in the program. When I became aware that Lisa had left Pacific University’s ESL program, however, an opportunity for publication arose that would allow me to name the inequity that I had observed in my research. Indirectly naming Lisa, therefore, would no longer potentially bring her immediate harm as she had already moved on to her next place of work. But on further consideration of research costs, I recognized additional complexity in its calculation.

Throughout my benefit/harm analysis, by concentrating on Lisa’s expe-

riences and narrative, I had been centering measurements of cost on Lisa. Discourses of race and racialization as they were theorized in my research, however, investigate the interplay between notions of *self/other* and racialized identities in the light of discourses of whiteness (Lee, 2008; Lee & Simon-Maeda, 2006). Inherent in such analyses, therefore, was a discussion of interplay between the identities of all those participating in my study at Pacific University. Revelation of Lisa's positioning as a racialized *other*, however, inevitably marks her white colleagues as the alluded-to self, even if I theorized lack of intention to racialize and false consciousness around discourses of race and the wider structural and systemic inequities in English-language education. Hence when this form of guilty knowledge arises, to what (or to whom) do I remain committed as a researcher, and how do I decide which decision regarding intervention and action would be more ethical?

Russell's (2005) research that examined students' resistance to schooling can act as a point of comparison here; in her study, the underlying research question clearly indicated her interest in (and focus on) students. Thus balancing her researcher's relationship between students and teachers may have been more transparent to all participants in her research, as participating teachers in her study could at least have inferred from the research question that their students' perspectives might be given prominence over theirs. Similarly, Dennis (2009), in her research, identified her research commitments outright as privileging the needs of the English language-learner above others (i.e., above the teacher participants). Awareness of guilty knowledge in my research, however, came about from the process of collecting data regarding my main research questions (which did not name race and racialization in their formulation), and as such, participating staff and teachers in my study were not aware of the other issues revealed by Lisa (and the students in the program) and in which they were inherently implicated.

Clark and Sharf (2007) propose:

The meaning of "to do no harm" is anything but straightforward. An issue that has generated significant discussion is the impact that what we write about them has on those we study. Sometimes, this means not including material that might be harmful to the informant when read. (p. 401)

However, not including materials that may be deemed harmful to a participant leaves the publication of certain (important) aspects of my research (particularly those involving anti-racist issues) at an impasse. Including Lisa's story, although addressing and advocating against racialization, may cause harm to the instructors in the form of hurt feelings or embarrassment and may cause the instructors to feel that I was violating my ethical commitments to them as equal participants in the research; conversely, omitting Lisa's narrative in order not to cause harm to the other instructors would allow issues

of race and racialization to remain unaddressed and unchallenged, thereby causing harm to Lisa and affecting the overall catalytic validity of the research. Before Lisa's departure from Pacific University, I weighed the possible harm to Lisa above the possible benefits to her and to the greater good in research publication and therefore chose to delay research reporting; after Lisa's departure, however, the possibilities of harm still existed, but shifted to other research participants. A benefit/harm analysis is thus not without challenges in deliberation, for are all costs commensurate and able to be equally weighted in the benefits/harms calculation? And more important, as McNamee (2002) observes, if we are "to gauge costs and benefits, to whom should they attach? Who properly counts in such an equation?" (p. 135).

The dilemma of the equation in my research relates to the nature of racialization. Viewed as a process, racialization requires both an agent of the action and a receiver. As to research reciprocity and the negotiation of meaning with my participants, then, an analysis of racialization from the eyes of one participant can differ from (or even contradict) that of another. As a researcher, I have an ethical duty to give voice to all participants' stories with respect and dignity; as a researcher concerned with issues of anti-racism and equity, however, there is a recognition of the need to reveal (and change) the silences of epistemological racism that have worked to make particular voices more (or less) prominent (Kubota, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2000). For this reason I decided to emphasize Lisa's voice above all others as "reciprocity in research involves privileging the discourses of those in the margins and engaging in activities that aim at moving their issues towards the center" (Kiluvu-Ndunda, 2005, p. 222). Hence while seeking reciprocity in my research generally, I believe that a conscious decision to decenter other instructors' voices in that particular research piece was necessary in a cost analysis of participant benefits, harms, and the greater good.

Following the publication of the article, I engaged in a thoughtful exchange with some Pacific University instructors about the piece and issues of race and racialization in English-language education generally. They inquired about my reasons for not including their voices in the analysis of Lisa's experiences and discussed with me other possible interpretations of Lisa's experiences that differed from my own analysis (e.g., Lisa's style of dress as a cause for her experiences, questioning underlying intentions of the actions behind the experiences, and their desire to assist Lisa but not knowing how to). I detected an air of disappointment in their exchange with me for not being consulted for the piece, but I hoped that they would not interpret my actions as a betrayal of their trust or my commitment to them in my research. Because I was fortunate to have established good relations with Pacific University's ESL program's instructors during my research in the program, I felt able to engage freely and honestly with them about my deliberation process and why I had decided not to include them in reporting this particular re-

search. I did not expect the instructors to accept the reasoning behind my publication decisions, but I hoped that they had heard and considered them and recognized my difficulty with, but also the necessity of, my actions as a researcher. I therefore responded to McNamee's question of "who properly counts?" in an equation of costs and benefits in a situated manner.

Part of my macro-ethical duties to my participants was to ensure that "their participation in research must be essential to achieving scientifically and societally important aims that cannot be realized without the participation of human subjects" (University of British Columbia Board of Governors, 2002). Being able to illuminate how racialization and equity can be reproduced in spaces intended to be critical and equitable would not have been possible without analyzing (and writing about) my participants' actions during my research. Furthermore, without the participation of Lisa and her candor during my research in the program, the important work of challenging race and racialization in English-language education could not have materialized in the first place. Thus the participation of everyone involved in my research counted. Racialization, however, is a process of the unequal weighting of people based on (false) constructions of race; therefore, attempting to weigh the benefits and harms between participants who are unequally weighted in larger societal discourses struck me as inherently unethical. Counted in my equation of costs and benefits, therefore, were those who in most contexts outside my research have historically not been counted or given the opportunity to be counted. So do we have the same ethical responsibilities to all our participants? (Bresler, 1996). My response would be Yes, to the best of our abilities; however, more situated approaches to ethics and ethical codes are crucial to this endeavor.

The Situatedness of Research Ethics

Although my dissertation research and the scholarly contribution that stemmed from a piece of that research have been completed, I continue to reflect on the research process and the complex ethical deliberation that my study entailed. As a novice researcher, I assumed that my university's procedural ethics policy would be the blueprint that I would follow to the letter and that any difficulties that might arise would easily be addressed through this ethical code. The guilty knowledge to which I became privy during the course of my research, however, made the following ethical observations clear to me.

Ethical issues are identity issues

Researchers explore what is of significance to themselves, their identities, and their positionalities (Clark & Sharf, 2007; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Mehra, 2001). Researcher identity thus forms the broader context of the research agenda, and so addressing ethical dilemmas starts with self-awareness

of the complexity of our investments in the research (McNamee, 2002). For example, in the first line of this article, I self-identify myself as conducting *critical* research, indicating that my research was *interested* from a particular ideological standpoint. Discussions, therefore, of my *desire as a researcher* indicate a false separation of identities, as it was also my desire as a visible-minority language educator specifically and a human being concerned with social justice and anti-racism generally that guided my ethical decisions throughout my year of research at Pacific University. As a critical researcher, guilty knowledge led me to reconceptualize the prevention of harm more broadly as I believed that inaction in the light of what I considered a form of discrimination would have been tantamount to unethical behavior. As such, researchers must reflect critically on their identities and positionalities in their ethical deliberations to understand why one researcher's *ethical* may not always be or seem so.

Ethical dilemmas do not (and should not) limit action

When faced with ethical dilemmas such as those analyzed here, Bresler's (1996) question to researchers, "Are there research issues that should not be pursued because they could harm a participant?" (p. 141; compare Pring, 2001) may stop some in their tracks for fear of the outcomes of researchers' intervention on and our ethical obligations regarding the lives of our participants; however, in issues of social justice and equity, Figueroa (2000) asks whether the ethics of "respecting anonymity and confidentiality override anti-racism? Or is the researcher justified in taking action, or even required to do so, against racism ... identified through confidential communications?" (p. 98). Although ethical principles of anonymity and confidentiality make complex the notion of pursuing what is right, they do not necessarily prevent us from taking action (because few things can outright prevent us from taking action). Undoubtedly, awareness of the seeming contradictions and conflicts involved in ethical behavior does not offer much assurance to researchers and their choice of action. *Doing the right thing* thus becomes tenuous and uncomfortable knowledge. Nevertheless, rather than viewing ethical dilemmas as highlighting the limitations for catalytic validity, researchers should view them as indicative of the possibilities for a more informed understanding and development of catalytic validity as more careful and systematic analyses of the notion of doing the right thing may ultimately result in broader-reaching and longer-lasting reciprocity for our research participants.

Researchers' emphasis should be on the development of ethical capacities rather than ethical codes

The examples of research interventions analyzed above highlight how a dependence on ethical codes does not take into account the situatedness of ethics and the complexities of human interaction in the research process. For

this reason, conducting ethical research is challenging as Guillemin and Gillam's (2004) notion of "ethics in practice" illustrates both the need for immediate determination of what constitutes ethical action when the unexpected arises and the sometimes unsettling and unexpected immediacy of these actions (Clark & Sharf, 2007; Russell, 2005). Thus, Kubanyiova (2008) calls for

rethinking research ethics in applied linguistics and developing a more contextualized framework for ethical decision making, central to which is the researchers' awareness of macroethical principles, sensitivity to microethical challenges of the particular research contexts, and a readiness and ability to approach these responsibly. (p. 504)

As there is never a straightforward right or wrong, researchers must learn to assess critically and thoughtfully the risks inherent in any decision and to act responsibly by understanding the importance of guiding principles, values, and notions of personal and social responsibility, for at its base what is deemed ethical rests in the individual.

"I love what I do, but sometimes it's very hard"

Particularly alarming about the stories that Lisa recounted to me was not only the power of these incidents on her at the time of their occurrence, but the level of power they continued to wield over her long afterwards.

ENA: Has it ever gotten to the point where you have rethought your career?

LISA: Yeah. *Definitely*. I've thought maybe I'm *not* qualified because I don't look white. Um, I've come to a point where I think well, maybe my, maybe being a visible minority is not making me the instructor that I should be. And I have that almost every term. In the first month. I wake up and I think, "Oh god, this is not what I should be doing." I think I feel like, oh, there's something ... I don't feel like I have a purpose there when I'm treated like that. And the *constant* reminder like having to *prove* myself to everybody, like the instructors, the students, whoever, just drives me crazy and makes me want to, like, it's just *not* worth all the stress.

ENA: Do you enjoy your job?

LISA: I do. I do enjoy my job. I love what I do, but sometimes it's very hard. (interview, 12/21/2003)

The above exchange no doubt exemplifies the seriousness of how discourses of race and racialization in ESL have affected Lisa. Hearing her contemplate aloud that "this is not what I should be doing" leads me to question whether

a researcher can in good conscience not intervene in what has been revealed, guilty knowledge or otherwise. What were the ultimate effects of discourses of race and racialization on Lisa? Although she pursued ESL as a field of study at a master's degree level and considered continuing on to a doctorate, Lisa has left the field of ESL. I believe that this is a significant effect, as arguably Lisa was more invested in English-language education than many working in the field as she engaged in it as an academic endeavor rather than simply as a career. Although part of her reason for departure was to pursue other avenues of interest, I understood from her that the repetition of the kinds of incidents recounted here was an influential factor in her choice to leave the field.

In reference to the excerpt of the interview at the beginning of this article: Lisa's resignation that there was nothing that she could do about her racialization lies at the crux of the writing of this article as I believe that we really *can* (and should) do something about these discourses of race and racism. I argue that we cannot as ethical researchers allow these incidents to remain "natural" not only to those who racialize, but to those who are racialized (and who internalize and reproduce these discourses themselves). The development of individual researchers' capacity to make situated, ethical decisions will thus enhance the conducting of ethical research that can address both the macro-ethical and micro-ethical issues that arise in the pursuit of social justice and equity in the field of language education.

The Author

Ena Lee is a lecturer in the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University. Her current research interests include critical pedagogy and language-teacher education, student and teacher identity in ESL, anti-racist education, and critical EAP. She gratefully acknowledges financial support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for her doctoral research on which this article is based.

References

- Amin, N. (2001). Nativism, the native speaker construct, and minority immigrant women teachers of English as a second language. *CATESOL Journal*, 13(1), 89-107.
- Braine, G. (Ed.). (1999). *Non-native educators in English language education*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Bresler, L. (1996). Ethical issues in the conduct and communication of ethnographic classroom research. *Studies in Art Education*, 37(3), 133-144.
- Burgess, R.G. (1989). Grey areas: Ethical dilemmas in educational ethnography. In R.G. Burgess (Ed.), *The ethics of educational research* (pp. 60-76). New York: Falmer.
- Carter, M. (2003). Telling tales out of school: "What's the fate of a black story in a White world of White stories?" In G.R. Lopez & L. Parker (Eds.), *Interrogating racism in qualitative research methodology* (pp. 29-48). New York: Peter Lang.
- Clark, M.C., & Sharf, B.F. (2007). The dark side of truth(s): Ethical dilemmas in researching the personal. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 13, 399-416.
- Curtis, A., & Romney, M. (Eds.). (2006). *Color, race, and English language teaching: Shades of meaning*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

- Dennis, B. (2009). What does it mean when an ethnographer intervenes? *Ethnography and Education*, 4(2), 131-146.
- Figuroa, P. (2000). Researching education and racialization: Virtue or validity? In H. Simons & R. Usher (Eds.), *Situated ethics in educational research* (pp. 82-100). New York: Routledge Falmer.
- Freire, P. (1973). *Education for critical consciousness*. New York: Continuum.
- Goldstein, T. (2003). *Teaching and learning in a multilingual school: Choices, risks, and dilemmas*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Guillemin, M., & Gillam, L. (2004). Ethics, reflexivity, and "ethically important moments" in research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 10, 261-280.
- Kamhi-Stein, L.D. (2004). *Learning and teaching from experience: Perspectives on nonnative English-speaking professionals*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Kiluva-Ndunda, M.M. (2005). Reciprocity in research: A retrospective look at my work with Kilome women. In F. Bodone (Ed.), *What difference does research make and for whom?* (pp. 221-233). New York: Peter Lang.
- Kramsch, C. (1993). *Context and culture in language teaching*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kubanyiova, M. (2008). Rethinking research ethics in contemporary applied linguistics: The tension between macroethical and microethical perspectives in situated research. *Modern Language Journal*, 92, 503-518.
- Kubota, R. (2002). Comments on Ryuko Kubota's "Discursive construction of the images of U.S. Classrooms." The author responds: (Un)raveling racism in a nice field like TESOL. *TESOL Quarterly*, 36, 84-92.
- Kubota, R. (2004). The politics of cultural difference in second language education. *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*, 1(1), 21-39.
- Kubota, R., & Lin, A. (2006). Race and TESOL: Introduction to concepts and theories [Special issue]. *TESOL Quarterly*, 40.
- Kumashiro, K.K. (2002). Against repetition: Addressing resistance to anti-oppressive change in the practices of learning, teaching, supervising, and research. *Harvard Educational Review*, 72, 67-92.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2000). Racialized discourses and ethnic epistemologies. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 257-277). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lather, P. (1991). *Getting smart: Feminist research and pedagogy with/in the postmodern*. New York: Routledge.
- Lee, E. (2008). The "other(ing)" costs of ESL: A Canadian case study. In C. Davison & S. Arkoudis (Eds.), *Chinese students: Perspectives on their social, cognitive, and linguistic investment in English medium interaction* [Special issue]. *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication*, 18(1), 91-108.
- Lee, E., & Simon-Maeda, A. (2006). Racialized research identities in ESL/EFL research. In R. Kubota & A. Lin (Eds.), *Race and TESOL* [Special issue]. *TESOL Quarterly*, 40, 573-594.
- Leki, I. (2006). Negotiating socioacademic relations: English learners' reception by and reaction to college faculty. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 5, 136-152.
- Leung, C., Harris, R., & Rampton, B. (1997). The idealized native speaker, reified ethnicities, and classroom realities. *TESOL Quarterly*, 31, 543-560.
- Lin, A., & Luke, A. (2006). Postcolonial approaches to TESOL [Special issue]. *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*, 3(2/3).
- McNamee, M. (2001). Introduction: Whose ethics, which research? *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 35, 309-327.
- McNamee, M. (2002). The guilt of whistling-blowing: Conflicts in action research and educational ethnography. In M. McNamee & D. Bridges (Eds.), *The ethics of educational research* (pp. 129-150). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

- Mehra, B. (2001). Research or personal quest? Dilemmas in studying my own kind. In B.M. Merchant & A.I. Willis (Eds.), *Multiple and intersecting identities in qualitative research* (pp. 69-82). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Pring, R. (2001). The virtues and vices of an educational researcher. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 35, 407-421.
- Rosaldo, R. (1993). *Culture and truth: The remaking of social analysis*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Russell, L. (2005). It's a question of trust: Balancing the relationship between students and teachers in ethnographic fieldwork. *Qualitative Research*, 5(2), 181-199.
- Small, R. (2001). Codes are not enough: What philosophy can contribute to the ethics of educational research. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 35, 387-406.
- Tickle, L. (2002). Opening windows, closing doors: Ethical dilemmas in educational action research. In M. McNamee & D. Bridges (Eds.), *The ethics of educational research* (pp. 41-57). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Tilley, S.A. (1998). Conducting respectful research: A critique of practice. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 23, 316-328.
- Tyson, C. (2003). Research, race, and an epistemology of emancipation. In G.R. Lopez & L. Parker (Eds.), *Interrogating racism in qualitative research methodology* (pp. 19-28). New York: Peter Lang.
- University of British Columbia Board of Governors/Vice-President, Research. (2002). *Policy No. 89: Research and other studies involving human subjects*. Retrieved May 15, 2009, from: <http://www.universitycounsel.ubc.ca/policies/policy89.pdf>
- Williams, K.F. (2009). "Guilty knowledge": Ethical aporia emergent in the research practice of educational development practitioners. *London Review of Education*, 7, 311-221.