

Did You Know – Clarification for Auto-ethnographic, Course-based Activities:

Preamble:

As per a previous “Did You Know” communication, Auto-ethnographic research, or self-study research, requires review and approval from the Brandon University Research Ethics Committee (BUREC). Self-study typically involves a scholarly reflection on one’s own experiences in a particular context. Self-study may involve narratives, reflections and/or analyses of experiences based on the researcher’s observations of, interactions with, or information about other individuals or communities. In self-study, at least the researcher is a research participant.

As per another previous “Did You Know” communication, Course-based research activities intended primarily for pedagogical purposes fall within the jurisdiction of the Brandon University Research Ethics Committee (BUREC). Such research activities are assigned to students for the purpose of teaching them how to conduct research interviews to collect data to be used in a course assignment, or to practice interviewing techniques. Participants in the activities may be exposed to risks (normally minimal risk) as a result of their participation, and may not distinguish these activities from others that meet the definition of research in the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2-2018) (Application of Article 2.1).

Clarification for Auto-ethnographic, course-based activities:

The BUREC received inquiries from faculty about whether auto-ethnographic, course-based activities will require ethics review. The Committee sought interpretation of the TCPS2-2018 and guidance from the Secretariat on Responsible Conduct of Research (SRCR). Based on the response from the SRCR, the BUREC shares the following clarification for such activities:

The TCPS2-2018 defines research as “an undertaking intended to extend knowledge through a disciplined inquiry and/or systematic investigation”. Therefore, any activity whose purpose is, at least in part, considered research, the TCPS2-2018 applies and ethics review is required.

However, for auto-ethnographic course-based activities, there is little chance that the participant, who is also the investigator, may falsely perceive the activity as research. As such, auto-ethnographic course-based activities will normally be exempt from BUREC review that:

- a) are designed specifically and solely for pedagogical purposes,
- b) are not otherwise defined as research, and

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- c) are not intended to extend knowledge (with the expectation that the method, results and conclusions would be able to withstand the scrutiny of the relevant research community).

BUREC recommends that an Ethics Exemption Inquiry be submitted for auto-ethnographic course-based activities so a more thorough review can occur to determine exemption from ethics review. The Ethics Exemption Inquiry form can be found on the BUREC webpage at: www.brandonu.ca/burec.

Other “Did You Know” communications, as well as BUREC Polices and Standard Operating Procedures, application and report forms, and other resource information can be found on the BUREC webpage at www.brandonu.ca/burec.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact BUREC at burec@brandonu.ca.