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# Living on the Edge: A Humanbecoming Perspective

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*Living on the Edge:*  
A Humanbecoming Perspective

BY  
Robin Peterson-Lund

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Major in Nursing

South Dakota State University

2011

*Living on the Edge: A Humanbecoming Perspective*

This dissertation is approved as a credible and independent investigation by a candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy degree and is acceptable for meeting the dissertation requirements for this degree. Acceptance of this dissertation does not imply that the conclusions reached by the candidate are necessarily the conclusions of the major department.

Sandra Bunkers PhD, RN; FAAN'   Date  
Dissertation Advisor  
Head, Graduate Nursing Department

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Dedication

To my husband, Arnie Lund, my fellow adventurer and my best friend,

To my beloved children, Arne and Skye Lund, whom I cherish,

To my wonderful family, the clan, whose presence is a mighty strength.

With the immeasurable support,

Your love gives me wings to fly.

&

To all those who are *living on the edge* in the frontier

and persevere with pioneering endeavors.

## Abstract

*Living on the edge: A Humanbecoming Perspective*

Robin Rae Peterson-Lund

2011

*Living on the edge* is a universal lived experience. The humanbecoming theory of nursing science guided the study. The purposes of this investigation were to reveal the structure of the experience of *living on the edge*, to understand the lived experience of *living on the edge*, to reveal and gain insight into the unique ways people live their health. This understanding is essential for nurses to value the person's perspective of their personal health and quality of life. The participants were ten persons living in the frontier of the American west. A review of literature evaluated the existing body of knowledge. A synthetic definition through concept inventing has been created (Peterson-Lund, *in press*). The Parse method of dialogical engagement, extraction-synthesis, and heuristic interpretation was utilized to expand understanding of this phenomenon and contribute to nursing science. The research question was: *What is the structure of the experience of living on the edge?* The structure of the experience of *living on the edge* is: *Living on the edge is persevering with pioneering ventures amid perilous remoteness, as vacillating sentiments arise with diverse affiliations.* The findings provided new knowledge of health and quality of life, advanced nursing practice, and presented future direction for research. The experience of *living on the edge* was explored with humankind living within the frontier of the American west.

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## Chapter One

Living on the edge conjures images of danger and exhilaration. Where does one go to live on the edge and how does one feel upon arriving and remain *living on the edge*? To remain on the edge of a precipice is to make a choice to stay there. It demands certainty amid the unknown. It is the face of the Viking laughing with the powering waves of the frozen seas as it crashes against the longboat drenching his face. It is Einstein on the brink of setting known science into turmoil and chaos as his imagination alone creates a laboratory of the entire universe, creation. It is the sheer will and determination of a surgeon saving his own life by entering the internal space of his own abdomen to battle with death. It is the yearning of explorers of earth and aerospace for the silent, wide-open spaces of the frontier.

These questions and images will be explored in the context of the universally lived experience, *living on the edge*, within the framework of the humanbecoming theory, through prose, poetry, art and the spoken word. The stories told by people living in the American frontier will further explicate the phenomenon of interest. The genesis of this research of *living on the edge* arose from a life-long pondering of the personal experience of living in the American frontier and in scholarly dialogue while attending the Humanbecoming Institute in May - June 2009. The universally lived experience of *living on the edge* is explored with persons living in the American frontier through prose, poetry, and art.

**Phenomenon of Interest: *Living on the Edge***

Figure 1

*The Starry Night*



Reprinted with the permission of The Museum of Modern Art (See Appendix A)

Vincent Van Gogh's, *The Starry Night*, (1889) reveals *living on the edge* with the human universe. The village lies quietly as the heavens come alive. With freedom and abandonment the heavenly bodies powerfully dance with the light. Yet it is night. *The Starry Night* challenges the notion that the night is still and dark and the universe lies empty. There is danger evidenced in the foreground with the dark image of the cypress

trees unfolding almost in flames of fire upon the edge of life and death; directly contrasting with the colorful movement of the stars and the night sky. Joyful abandonment and danger share the same experience. On the edge of the cosmos are the stars that beckon one to go deeper- beyond what one can see to the outer reaches and the inner spaces of the human universe. The village lies on the edge between the dichotomous images of light and darkness; stillness and movement; life and death. One can imagine the stories being told and lived to provide meaning in one's life within the immenseness of space. *The Starry Night* invites the human universe- the people, earth, stars and heavenly bodies - to dance with the infinite cosmos that is suggested by the twirling movement of the heavens. The quest for gaining new discoveries and new wisdom arises from venturing into the inner spaces and the aerspaces of the human universe. *The Starry Night* reveals all of creation, all of the universe, *living on the edge*.

### **Voices from the American Frontier: *Living on the Edge***

Evander's story:

*"I think about the time I was living in the Black Hills. I lost my path and had to find my way back. I was living in a small dorm room and couldn't take it anymore. The room was too small and there was too much noise and I just had to get away to be with the land. Something compelled me to go and get away from it all and see if I could find my way through the wilderness at night. So I went out in the middle of the night climbing Harney Peak ...in the mountains. I went out without any real equipment, no flashlight, no tent. Just myself. I wanted to rely on myself so I would know, really know, I could do it. I lost my path and had to rely on landmarks and had to follow the right creek to get to a*



*river. I wanted the challenge of going as far as I could. I didn't think it would be hard to keep the path but I did lose it going down the mountain. I never really got scared. It could have been bad but I knew that I would know what to do. You read signs of the land and stars. It was like stepping off into the unknown.*

*You go there in your head first then your body has to follow. I went off the path intentionally so I could climb a ridge and see further, things like that. That's what's neat. I wouldn't be able to see unless I got off the path. To see unexpected things... different colored moss. I could get a new view of the way back. There are rewards to it because you are out alone with the stars.*

*You have to put in the work to be ok. But I could see the Milky Way and because I knew the creek was getting larger it would take me to the river where I could camp in the trees. But I had to be alone ...I didn't want to follow in someone else's footsteps...even if it was more dangerous. I carried the risk of getting lost but it was worth it. I did get lost and then I could enjoy it for what it was. Because there was challenge involved it made it more satisfying. I mean I could do it in the daylight but then there would be no stars."*

Dean's story:

*"Living on the edge is where you have to sacrifice. This leads to appreciating the simple things and enjoyment of very little... that is knowing the gifts of life. This develops courage not to worry. You value not worrying. Worrying is the worst thing you can do for your mental happiness and health. You learn not to worry – like not having medical help available....You accept with the least angst. You depend on yourself and decide when to ask others to help you.... Living on the edge, I believe, helps you take control of fear and*

*loneliness. You can appreciate everything around you- the land, nature, laughter. You feel satisfied because you can improvise and this gives you strength. You make-do with very little. When you live on the edge you are aware of everything-you can describe in detail the land, nature, people. If you leave living on the edge and move to a city, there is a longing to go back- to live on the edge.”*

Gloria’s story:

*To me, people are living on the edge now. We didn’t back then- things were a lot calmer. People have gotten frustrated. I think it is the sign of the times. Maybe people are frustrated over jobs and the economy being bad. Now they are not respectful or kind. Everywhere people are so frustrated. I feel bad that people don’t watch what they say or do to people. I wish we had a kinder, nicer place. We aren’t as tolerant as a society anymore. We used to help one another. Neighbor helped neighbors and if someone was crabby, you tolerated them and understood them. You accepted who they are. People aren’t that way now. Neighbors are important... you had to lean on each other in order to survive. But maybe it is the attitude or being tough. We all have problems. Life is not perfect so it is how you deal with it. Living on the edge is the way people live now.*

### **Purposes of the Study**

The purposes of this study are threefold. First, understanding the lived experience of *living on the edge* through the lens of Parse’s humanbecoming theory advances nursing science. Secondly, new understandings of how people move on in *living on the edge* can lead to new ways nurses relate with people in a variety of joyous moments and moments filled with struggle and danger. Thirdly, gaining insight into *living on the edge*

will help uncover unique ways people live their health. Understanding their unique ways of living health is crucial for nurses if they are to value the person's own perspective of their health and quality of life.

### **Research Question**

The research question was: "What is the structure of the lived experience of *living on the edge*?"

### **Significance to Nursing and Health**

Scholarly nursing inquiry based upon theoretical foundations advances nursing science. The humanbecoming school of thought provides the perspective and research design. The goal of nursing through the humanbecoming theoretical perspective is to support the quality of life as described by the person/family/community through understanding lived experiences (Parse, 1998, 2001, 2007a). Parse (1998) links the lived experience to health by stating, "the unique perspective of each human being's experiencing the human-universe mutual process is health" (p.23). True presence is a gentle, unconditional witnessing as the person lives their value priorities of health (Parse, 1998).

The significance of this study to nursing by illuminating the meaning of *living on the edge* will provide understanding of the lived experience and enhance quality of life. Accordingly, this non-linear process supports health as described by the person. By dwelling with the meaning of *living on the edge*, human dignity is honored and health is sustained.

### **Nursing Perspective: Parse's Theory of Humanbecoming Human Science**

The humanbecoming theoretical assumptions arise from human science. Human science is the study of human phenomena that evolved from the work of German philosopher, Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911). Dilthey's work influenced the origination of human science in direct distinction from the tenets of natural science (Parse, 2001). While natural science seeks generalized law-based explanations through quantitative analysis; human science strives to understand the phenomena of universally lived experiences (Makkreel, 2008). Natural science holds a reductionist view of the world; whereas human science searches for the universal meaning of reality.

Dilthey's conviction that truth is found in the meaning of the lived experience is expressed in his writings, "The conditions sought by the mechanistic explanation of nature explain only part of the contents of external reality. This intelligible world of atoms, ether, vibrations, is only a calculated and highly artificial abstraction from what is given in experience and lived experience" (Dilthey 1989, p. 203). The humanbecoming theory of Rosemarie Parse affirms human science as a crucial alternative to natural science (Parse, 1998).

### **Simultaneity Paradigm**

The simultaneity paradigm views the human being as a unified whole. Simultaneity in the humanbecoming theory regards the individual as an "indivisible being" (p.4.) connected with the humanuniverse through cocreated rhythms and patterns of change (Parse, 1998). Albert Einstein envisioned the interconnection of humans with the universe. He stated, "*A human being is a part of the whole called by us universe...*"

(Nagler, 1981; Einstein, 2011). The simultaneity paradigm affirms the notion that the human being is inextricably united with the universe (Parse, 1998).

The theory of humanbecoming originated from the work of nursing theorist, Dr. Rosemarie Rizzo Parse. Her initial theoretical efforts were originally entitled the man-living-health theory. This early undertaking in 1981 provided the basis for the evolutionary development of the grand nursing theory of humanbecoming (Douchet & Bourne, 2007).

This was changed to the human becoming theory and subsequently clarified as a fusion of the two words into *humanbecoming*. This word is meant to represent precisely the indivisible interrelationship between the human and the universe (Parse 2006a, 2007b, 2008a).

The philosophical foundations of the humanbecoming school of thought arise from phenomenological-existential philosophy and human science. The phenomenological-existential philosophical influences of Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty are notable influences in the humanbecoming school of thought (Parse, 1998). Further philosophical influences supported Parse's développement of the theory of humanbecoming include existential phenomenology of Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty (Parse, 1981, 2001, 2007b) Dilthey's contributions to human science; and the science of unitary beings nursing theory of Martha Rogers (Parse, 1998).

Humanbecoming philosophy's fundamental tenet asserts the unitary human being participates in health by affirming value priorities in a cocreated experience with the universe. Therefore, the universally lived experience is the research focus in

humanbecoming nursing science.

In the development of the theory of humanbecoming, a change of etymology transpired regarding the designation of the person. Parse initially designated the *person* as *man* in 1981. However, *man* was changed to human being in 1992 when the dictionary restricted the meaning of *man* to designate the masculine gender (Parse, 2007b). The meaning later changed to *humanuniverse* whose nature is indivisible, unpredictable, ever-changing within the humanbecoming theory (Parse, 2007).

### **Human Dignity and Humanbecoming**

The epistemology of humanbecoming theory is derived from the foundational belief that humanbecoming arises from personal freedom of choice and respect for human dignity (Parse, 2006c, 2007a, 2010). In addition, humanbecoming ontology reveres the dignity of the human. Human dignity is an “august presence, a noble bearing of inherent uniqueness” (Parse, 2010) made explicit within the theoretical ethos of the humanbecoming school of thought.

Four enduring truths emanate from the ethical tenets as:

- “1. Reverence is solemn regard for human presence.
2. Awe is beholding the unexplainable of human existence.
3. Betrayal is violation of human trust.
4. Shame is humiliation with dishonoring human worth. (p. 258)”.

Reverence respects with solemn regard the limitations and the differences found

in being human. Solemn regard sincerely acknowledges human presence with heartfelt awe and veneration. The rhythms of reverence are found in the connecting-separating all at once with languaging. The languaging of speech, being silent, movement, and being still honors the intentionality and reality of the other. There is unconditional acceptance of the human in their choosings through bearing witness to the unexplainable splendor of human existence.

Betrayal of trust is a violent disregard for the human being that diminishes human dignity and wellbeing. Within the humanbecoming school of thought, betrayal implies a devastation of trust; in that the human's august presence is violated and dishonored. The shifting patterns in betrayal reveal and at once conceal a treasured confidence. In the shocking realization of betrayal, trust and mistrust surface in the languaging of speech and silence. Bereaved humiliation invokes shame in the dishonoring of one's worth. Dishonor "unfolds with the emerging now as a burdensome discomfort in connecting-separating with the other that enables and at once limits possibilities with the relationship..." (Parse, 2010, p. 260). The impact of betrayal upon human dignity is just as important if it is with one person or with a multitude. It is not quantifiable through sheer magnitude of numbers. Betrayal is an immeasurable loss.

Human worth is protected through unconditional acceptance and honoring of the human being. True presence honors the choosings and bears witness with wonderment recognizing the mystery of being human. Therefore, the nurse scientist bears responsibility to sustain human dignity and uncompromisingly protect the human being from betrayal and shame.

Human dignity is not fragile. It is a powerful phenomenon found within all human beings. Human dignity is realized with the story of Dean in sacrificing to attain virtue. Human dignity is illuminated when Gloria's speaks about the loss of kindness in relating with others. Human dignity is discovered when Evander reverently beholds the mountains and the stars at night; and in doing so, he is reverencing himself with the human universe.

### **Ontology of the Humanbecoming Theory**

The foundational ontology of humanbecoming philosophy is comprised of the assumptions, postulates, principles, concepts and paradoxes (Parse, 2011). The foundational postulates of *illimitability*, *paradox*, *freedom* and *mystery* elucidate the principles in the humanbecoming theory (Parse, 2008b, 2011). Illimitability is an "indivisible unbounded knowing" (p. 370) with infinite reach. As the American poet, Walt Whitman, wrote *Leaves of Grass* in 1855, "All goes onward and outward—nothing collapses;" (Whitman, Line 121, 1855). Illimitability occurs with "the all-at-once remembering-prospecting with the moment" (Parse, 2008b, p.370). In *living on the edge*, persons are intimately involved with the moment to moment unfolding of infinite possibilities. Paradox is the recognizable preferred pattern of living expressed as an "intricate rhythm" (Parse, 2008b, p. 371) that is not a contradiction to be resolved but embraced. Paradoxes are to be accepted as an expression of humanbecoming as paradoxical rhythms are 'present all-at-once" (Parse, 1998, p. 22). In *living on the edge*, patterned rhythms are as one dares to explore and risk venturing.

Mystery of life "is the unexplainable that which cannot be completely known



unequivocally” (Parse, 2008b, p. 370). Mystery is an ever present unknowing (Parse, 2008b) that is “inexhaustible and irreducible... arising with ways of shaping possibles as humans participate with humanuniverse” (Doucet, 2009, p. 260). *Living on the edge* is living with mystery as knowing-not knowing emerges with each new experience. Freedom is the liberty of choice in situation. Parse (2008b) affirms freedom as “contextually construed liberation” (p. 370) where humans choose cocreated meaning in affiliation with the humanuniverse. *Living on the edge* is choosing to go forward with the known-unknown.

### **Assumptions**

The humanbecoming assumptions are (Parse, 2011):

The human with universe is coexisting while coconstituting rhythmical patterns.

The human is open, freely choosing meaning with situation, bearing responsibility for decisions.

The human is continuously coconstituting patterns of relating.

The human is transcending illimitably with possibles.

Becoming is human-living-health.

Becoming is rhythmically coconstituting humanuniverse.

Becoming is the human’s patterns of relating value priorities.

Becoming is transcending with possibles.

Becoming is the human’s emerging (p.12).

The assumptions are synthesized into four assumptions to further illuminate the ontology of the theory (Parse, 2011). They are:

Humanbecoming is structuring meaning, freely choosing with situation.

Humanbecoming is configuring rhythmical humanuniverse patterns.

Humanbecoming is cotranscending illimitably with emerging possibles.

Humanbecoming is humanuniverse cocreating a seamless symphony (p. 12).

Humanbecoming structures meaning in situated freedom. Humanbecoming constructs rhythmical patterns while cotranscending illimitably with the emerging now of possibilities. Humanbecoming reveals the intentionality of being human with the humanuniverse.

### **Principles**

The principles of *meaning*, *rhythmical patterns* and *cotranscendence* are illuminated by attendant concepts and paradoxes. The conceptual description of the principle reveals elemental paradoxes that are experienced all-at-once while being human (Parse, 1998, 2007b, 2008b). Paradoxes are seeming contradictions or opposites that reveal the meaning of lived choices (2007b). Paradoxes deepen and enhance the meaning of the theoretical concepts.

The concept of imaging holds the paradoxes of revealing-concealing; enabling-limiting; and connecting-separating. Valuing paradoxes are confirming-not confirming. The paradoxes of languaging include speaking-being silent; and moving-being still. The revealing-concealing concept has the paradox of disclosing-not disclosing. Enabling-limiting paradoxes are potentiating-restricting. The paradox of connecting-separating is attending-distancing (Parse, 2010).

A presentation of the assumptions, postulates, principles, with the attending

concepts and paradoxes are noted in Table 1 (Parse, 2010).

Table 1

*Humanbecoming assumptions, postulates, principles, paradoxes, and concepts*

ASSUMPTIONS	SYNTHESIZED ASSUMPTIONS	POSTULATES	PRINCIPLES	CONCEPTS & PARADOXES
<p>The human with universe is coexisting while coconstituting rhythmical patterns.</p> <p>The human is open, freely choosing meaning with situation, bearing responsibility for decisions The human is continuously coconstituting patterns.</p> <p>The human is transcending illimitably with possibles.</p> <p>Becoming is human-living-health.</p> <p>Becoming is rhythmically coconstituting humanuniverse.</p> <p>Becoming is the human's value priority patterns.</p> <p>Becoming is transcending with possibles</p> <p>Becoming is the human's emerging.</p>	<p>Humanbecoming is structuring meaning, freely choosing with situation.</p> <p>Humanbecoming is configuring rhythmical humanuniverse patterns.</p> <p>Humanbecoming is cotranscending illimitably with emerging possibles.</p> <p>Humanbecoming is humanuniverse cocreating a seamless symphony</p>	<p><b>Illimitability</b> is the indivisible unbounded knowing extended to infinity, the all-at-once remembering-prospecting with the emerging now.</p> <p><b>Paradox</b> is an intricate rhythm expressed as a pattern preference.</p> <p><b>Freedom</b> is contextually construed liberation.</p> <p><b>Mystery</b> is the unexplainable, that which cannot be completely known unequivocally.</p>	<p>Structuring meaning is the imaging and valuing of languaging.</p> <p>Configuring rhythmical patterns is the revealing-concealing and enabling-limiting of connecting-separating.</p> <p>Cotranscending with the possibles is the powering and originating of transforming.</p>	<p><b>Imaging:</b> explicit-tacit; reflective-prereflective <b>Valuing:</b> confirming-not confirming <b>Languaging:</b> speaking-being silent; moving-being still</p> <p><b>Revealing-Concealing:</b> disclosing-not disclosing <b>Enabling-Limiting:</b> potentiating-restricting <b>Connecting-separating:</b> attending-distancing</p> <p><b>Powering:</b> pushing-resisting; affirming-not affirming; being-nonbeing <b>Originating:</b> certainty-uncertainty; conforming-not conforming <b>Transforming:</b> familiar-unfamiliar</p>

## Living on the Edge and Humanbecoming

The first principle in the humanbecoming theory is “**Structuring meaning is the imaging and valuing of languaging**” (Parse, 2008b, p.370, Parse, 2011, p.12).

According to Parse, structuring meaning is coming to know through the concepts of imaging, valuing and languaging. Within the concept of *imaging* are *explicit-tacit* and *reflective-prereflective* paradoxes. Explicit-tacit imaging is coming to know *living on the edge* through utterable reflection and unutterable impending knowing. This envisioning of *living on the edge* is cocreated. For example, in the story, Evander valued his place in the mountains at night imaging the stars and landmarks to guide his path. *Living on the edge* is a way of knowing-not knowing. It reveals how one values seeking the unexplored even if it is dangerous. This is similar to the concept of *venturing forth amid potential peril* that Bunkers (2009) found in the lived experience of taking a risk.

The concept of *valuing* reveals the paradox of *confirming-not confirming*. *Valuing* is the cherished beliefs encountered and acted upon in *living on the edge*. Valuing creates meaning through prized beliefs, choices and validating actions (Parse, 1998) that confirms or does not confirm *living on the edge*.

*Living on the edge* is valuing one’s search for new horizons. For Evander, searching for new horizons in the starry night provided the certainty to navigate his academic life. In Gloria’s story, she values the past horizon of civility. For Gloria present-day languaging does not affirm the other. The spoken word is harsh and unkind arising from a sense of unhappiness and frustration from *living on the edge*. She perceives people as moving toward and remaining at the hard edge of life. Gloria voiced

her regret that no one valued each other as they once were valued as an individual. Gloria believes this lack of reverence is found in the inconsiderate and intolerant patterns of communication between people. Gloria attributes this irreverence to the frustration people are experiencing while living in a difficult economy. Gloria is *living on the edge* of her yesterdays (past horizon) while experiencing joy-sorrow in the emerging now all-at-once.

The concept of *languaging* is associated with the paradoxes of *speaking-being silent* and *moving-being still* (Parse, 2008b, 2011). Languaging structures content and contextual reality in the rhythms of vocalizing communication and in contemplative quietude.

*Living on the edge* is in the language of the humanuniverse. Moving-being still reveals the paradox of moving toward, lingering, or moving away from *living on the edge*. The paradoxes of Evander's *languaging* are found in his *speaking- being silent* away from noise and people by *moving-being still* in communion with the nighttime forest. The rhythm of simplicity provides meaning for Dean so that he may sacrifice and find courage and peace.

The second principle in the humanbecoming theory is **“Configuring rhythmical patterns is the revealing-concealing and enabling-limiting of connecting-separating”** (Parse, 2011, p.12). The rhythmical patterns contain the concepts of *revealing-concealing; enabling-limiting; and connecting-separating*. These unique rhythms are in constant flow with changing cadences in the humanuniverse. The paradox of revealing-concealing is *disclosing-not disclosing*.

*Living on the edge* is a unique rhythm of life. The human reveals or conceals oneself and one's responses to the present moment and cocreated relationship with the humanuniverse while *living on the edge*. The rhythm of *living on the edge* enables or limits one's actions and responses. *Living on the edge* is connecting to the edge while separating from one's previously lived experiences. Dean's experience of *living on the edge* is an intimate revelation of knowing the humanuniverse through nature, people, and the land. Evander revealed himself to the mountains while concealing himself from his friends in the university dormitory. He cocreated a mutual process of connecting-separating in a paradoxical pattern with the mountains at night and his university life.

The third humanbecoming principle is "**Cotranscending with possibles is the powering and originating of transforming**" (Parse, 2008b, p.370, Parse, 2011, p.12). Cotranscendence includes the concepts of *powering*, *originating* and *transforming*.

Powering involves "*pushing-resisting, affirming-not affirming; being-nonbeing*" (Parse, 2007b, p.309). Powering is a source of strength and is the realization of paradoxical movement. With this movement, change arises to the promise of cotranscendence to the yet-to-be. Powering cotranscends with the possibles while risking being-non-being (Parse, 2007b).

*Living on the edge* is a powerful cotranscendence. Powering for Evander is found in the pushing-resisting against his present living conditions and the light of day. This action compelled him to explore and savor the mountains at night; an unknown world. Dean found that through sacrifice in *living on the edge* he received the paradox of abundant courage, strength, and peacefulness.

*Living on the edge* searches for meaningful existence. Gloria's story directly addresses the paradox of being-nonbeing. She is distressed with disaffirming actions from others. Parse (1998) stated that being is united with non-being, "living what is and what is not-yet all-at-once" (p. 15). Being is "the paradoxical apposition with nonbeing" while nonbeing is the "not-yet known and the potential risk of losing something of value" (Parse, 1998, p. 47). Being requires courage to face non-being arising from the threat of death and rejection of oneself (Bournes, 2000; Bunkers, 2009).

*Living on the edge* is a universal rhythm of paradox. These paradoxical rhythms are found in the humanbecoming theory. The powering process is expressed in Gloria's description of contemporary society being frustrated and unkind; while her earlier memories recalled an easier time of connecting with others. This paradoxical rhythm relates to the pushing-resisting actions that affirmed or did not affirm others. The lack of affirmation that Gloria experiences is in direct contrast to how she remembered life before when she was a little girl. She recollected a time of tolerance, acceptance, and consideration with her neighbors.

*Living on the edge* is a choice amid uncertainty. The concept of originating is associated with the paradoxes of *certainty-uncertainty* and *conforming-not conforming* (Parse, 2008b). Originating is the unique ways of being in the humanuniverse; through moments of certainty-uncertainty and conforming-not conforming. Dean values the moments of certainty-uncertainty as a means of making one courageous and strong that in the end makes his life secure and peaceful.

*Living on the edge* involves transformational change. Transforming is the

deliberate shifting of views in becoming. The transforming paradox is *familiar-unfamiliar* (Parse, 2008b). One chooses new paths for discovery to merge the familiar with the unfamiliar. Evander chose to navigate in the darkness and the starlight on his own. Through this act of cotranscendence with the possibles he was transforming with the *familiar - unfamiliar* ways of *living on the edge*. Dean finds transforming satisfaction in the persistence of sacrifice. Gloria experiences distress in transforming as familiar kindness appears to be replaced with unkindness.

### **Synthetic Definition: *Living on the Edge***

#### **Concept Inventing- Extraction-Synthesis**

Concept inventing provides a strategy to analyze and synthesize concepts through the humanbecoming school of thought (Parse, 2006c). The synthetic definition of *living on the edge* emerged from personal experience of living in and with the frontier; attending the Humanbecoming Institute; dialogue with nurse theorist Rosemarie Parse and attendant scholars; reading prose and poetry; and engaging other art forms. The experience of *living on the edge is risking venturing with sureness-unsureness surfacing with cherished engaging*. At the theoretical level *living on the edge is powering the originating of valuing connecting-separating*.

#### **Living on the Edge**

**First Essence: Risking venturing.** Risking venturing is stepping forward into the unknown regardless of the disquietude that may be experienced. This essence is connected to the third principle of cotranscendence with the possibles in powering. It is associated with the paradoxes of the *pushing-resisting; affirming-not affirming;* and the



experience of *being-non-being* found in the inherent vicissitudes of exploration.

In Lord Alfred Tennyson's poem of *Ulysses* (1842), an epic adventurer, welcomes *risking venturing* as he journeys forth once again in his older age:

“I am a part of all that I have met;  
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'  
Gleams that untravell'd world, whose margin fades  
For ever and for ever when I move.” (Lines 18-21)

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The experience that Ulysses seeks reveals the pushing-resisting of powering into the unknown of an untraveled world. The *pushing-resisting* is found in the faded margins of the unexplored. This world paradoxically beckons him onward through its gleaming; yet enigmatically fades forever before him.

Patrick Overton, an American writer, educator, playwright and poet, echoes this experience. Overton proclaims in *Faith*, his poem, written in 1976,

“When you walk to the edge of all the light you have  
and take that first step into the darkness of the unknown,  
you must believe that one of two things will happen:

There will be something solid for you to stand upon, or,  
you will be taught how to fly” (Overton, paragraph 1, 2010)

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**Second Essence: Sureness-Unsureness.** Sureness- unsureness is found in the collective moments of life in *living on the edge*. This concept represents *originating*

found in the third principle of cotranscending with the possibles. Sureness- unsureness is the knowing-not knowing of inventing unique ways of *living on the edge*. The certainty-uncertainty one experiences arises with the unfolding mystery of exploration. Originating involves creative ways of relating to mystery.

Tennyson (1842) shows this tension between feeling sure and unsure about life when Ulysses recognizes that his spirit is grey and old. He is unsure of himself and what he will find. But he is sure he must follow knowledge no matter where it leads him. Ulysses manifests the paradox of certainty-uncertainty. He is compelled to travel onward beyond his capacity to understand.

“And this gray spirit yearning in desire  
to follow knowledge, like a sinking star,  
beyond the utmost bound of human thought” ( Lines 30-32).

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**Third Essence: Cherished engaging.** *Cherished engaging* is treasuring alliances with individuals, ideas and endeavors in living on the edge. It involves choosing involvements that are exciting and/or distressing in *living on the edge*. It involves exciting and/or distressing choosings in *living on the edge*. Cherished engaging is valuing connecting separating with the humanuniverse.

The essence, *cherished engaging*, is linked with valuing in the first principle of humanbecoming and connecting-separating in the second principle. Cherishing is found in the concept of valuing in the first principle of the humanbecoming theory. Valuing involves “cherished choosings” (Parse, 1998, p.38) of what one aspires to do. Engaging is

found in the second principle of connecting-separating that involves engaging with and being apart from others and activities all at the same time (Parse, 1998) while making choices concerning *living on the edge*.

Cherished engaging is related to Ulysses' declaration about his lived experiences with his beloved comrades (Tennyson, 1842).

“Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'  
We are not now that strength which in old days  
Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are;  
One equal temper of heroic hearts,  
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will  
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.” (Lines 65-70)

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### **Exemplars of *Living on the Edge***

**Living on the edge is powering the originating of valuing connecting-separating.**

The language-art of *living on the edge* encompasses all three principles in the humanbecoming school of thought. It is found in political leadership, literature, natural science, art and poetry. Contemporary scientists and authors have explored living on the edge.

Jeff Corwin, a wildlife biologist, *risks venturing* and engages television viewers with his encounters with the animal world and the environment. His enthusiasm *surfaces with cherishing engaging* that comes from one who listens to the animals and the

universe; not only with his ears but with his heart. This biologist explores frontier areas around the globe. He describes his encounters with animals as a relationship in which he *bears witness* to the unique diversity of animals. He communicates clearly the interconnectedness of humankind with the earth and all living creatures (Corwin, 2003).

John Fitzgerald Kennedy, 35<sup>th</sup> U.S. American President (1917-1963), was tragically assassinated in 1963. During his brief lifetime, he cherished *living on the edge* to face risks and discover unknowns. He stated, “We stand today on the edge of a New Frontier... a Frontier of unknown opportunities and perils, a frontier of unfilled hopes and threats” (1960, para.1).

Living on the edge incurs risk as an elemental passage into new frontiers. Albert Einstein lived on the edge of failure and prominence; exhilaration and exhaustion; as prophet and fool when developing the theory of general relativity. As his mind pushed into new frontiers that revolutionized physics, his research did not require laboratory equipment. It was his mind that carried him to the edge and beyond. When he finalized his theory, he collapsed from profound exhaustion that required weeks to recover from his efforts (Isaacson, 2008).

Leonid Rogozov, a Russian surgeon of a Soviet expedition, risked venturing to the edge of an Antarctic ice shelf to establish a polar base (Rogozov & Bermel, 2009). Due to the descent of winter and the frozen sea, this expedition would remain completely isolated from the world as no ship would return for a year. His endeavors into the frontier of the Antarctic continent brought him to the edge between life and death. He developed appendicitis. As the only physician, he completed the necessary operation on himself

hoping for a chance to survive. He felt the threat of death upon the precise moment of excising his appendix. He wrote, “I grow weaker and weaker, my head starts to spin. . . . At the worst moment of removing the appendix I flagged: my heart seized up and noticeably slowed; my hands felt like rubber. Well, I thought, it’s going to end badly. And all that was left was removing the appendix. . . . And then I realised that, basically, I was already saved.” Through his sheer determination to live *with sureness-unsureness*, he dared to attempt the incomprehensible. A year later he returned home to successfully defend his dissertation and to become a renowned surgeon (p. 1422). This surgeon experienced *living on the edge* of life and death in an intimate way that required courageous action to save his life.

Sacajawea, a Shoshone woman, lived on the edge between the Native American and the *White man’s* world. In 1805, she facilitated Lewis and Clark’s journey through unknown territory on the Missouri River searching for a passageway to the Pacific Ocean shores (Ambrose, 1996).

Sacajawea, sculpted by Alice Cooper in 1905, reveals her spirit of *living on the edge*. With her out-stretched arm, Sacajawea eagerly reaches toward new horizons in *risking venturing*. With her son riding upon her shoulders, she shows him how to honor and



Figure 2:  
Sacajawea sculpture by Alice Cooper:  
Front View  
Photographs by Fritz Liedtke, 2010

welcome the humanuniverse with its risk and promise.

Sacajawea's powerful feet stride forth on the edge of discovery with *sureness-unsureness* that reveals her unique way of connecting-separating with the humanuniverse. Her head and neck leans forward yearning for new discoveries (Figure 1). Sacajawea's buffalo robe flows around her expressing the power of engaging the humanuniverse (Figure 2). Courage and excitement shine in her eyes revealing cherished engaging as Sacajawea seeks *living on the edge*.

### Summary

The challenge for science to have the courage to refuse the confines of natural science is voiced by Gadamer to awaken from our "technological dream" (1983/1998 p.83) that is inadequate in its search for meaning. The presence of technology risks overriding the comprehensive understanding of truth. Human science proclaims truth as the fusion of horizons within an ever-evolving meaning.

The theoretical concepts of the humanbecoming theory compose the nursing perspective through which this research will be conducted. *Living on the edge* is a universally lived experience of health and is understood through the meanings individuals bestow upon this phenomenon.



Figure 3:  
Sacajawea sculpture by Alice Cooper:  
Side View  
Photographs by Fritz Liedtke, 2010

The humanbecoming school of thought answers the challenge to search for meaning beyond the limitations of natural science. It is through concept inventing that a synthetic definition of *living on the edge* with those living in the frontier has been cocreated. The concept of *living on the edge* presents a synthetic definition of *living on the edge*. Thus, further research is required to uncover the structure of the lived experience of *living on the edge*.

## Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

A comprehensive review of the literature was conducted to explore the phenomenon of *living on the edge*. No research literature was discovered in the existent literature that explicitly investigated the humanbecoming perspective of *living on the edge*. One theoretical humanbecoming article addressed the theoretical concepts of *living on the edge* through the theoretical humanbecoming principles of concept inventing (Peterson-Lund, *in press*).

The keywords or phrase utilized in the initial literature review were *living on the edge*. The databases employed for this search were Project Muse, JSTOR Arts & Sciences; SAGE Journals Online: Sociological Abstracts (CSA); EBSCO MegaFile; Social Sciences Citation Index (ISI), PsycInfo, Wiley Interscience Journals, Currents (ISI), Arts & Humanities Citation Index. These databases revealed 3,864 results. Exploring CINHALL Plus with Full Text; Medline, PubMed; Health and Psychosocial Instruments, EBSCO MegaFile, and Health Source provided 3,380 records. Repetitious articles from EBSCO Megafile and the other databases were removed. The key word *edgework* produced 34 articles for review from the Web of Science database; with 12 chosen for their saliency and inclusion in this discourse. No time limitations were delineated in this search.

Three themes emerged from the literature content. These themes are: Living on the Edge As A Sacred Place One Travels To Or Where One Lives; Living On The Edge As A Choice In Taking Risks And Surviving Danger; and Living on the Edge As



Engaging With Intense Health Experiences In Which Persons And Nurses Coparticipate.

The keywords and phrases developed from the emergent themes for further review are: edge; pilgrimage; risk; taking a risk; surviving danger; sacred place; intense health experiences; and patient and nurse experiences. To further explicate the themes, these databases using the preceding keywords and phrases were explored: CINHALL Plus, EBSCO MegaFile, Social Sciences Citation Index, Sociological Abstracts (CSA); SocIndex; PsychINFO. Time limitations for this search of theoretical literature included the published years from 2000 to 2011; and the past 5 years were employed for searching academic research literature. Peer-reviewed articles were specified. Historical documents, reference texts and fine art sources were included in the literature search. Pertinent humanbecoming theoretical and research sources were specifically reviewed to ascertain salient contributions for this investigation. Repeated articles and non-English sources were deleted from all the literature search records. A total of 124 reviewed articles and resources were retained for inclusion in this review of the literature.

The scholarly literature was organized according to three themes: *Living on the Edge As A Sacred Place One Travels To Or Where One Lives*; *Living On The Edge As A Choice In Taking Risks And Surviving Danger*; and *Living on the Edge As Engaging With Intense Health Experiences In Which Persons And Nurses Coparticipate*. Within these themes, the general and nursing literature were further delineated according to theoretical and research classifications. A concluding summary regarding the state of the science of *living on the edge* illuminates the reviewed findings of the extant literature.

*Living on the edge* is a journey into the unknown; the mystery of life. It is pushing

against the boundaries of ideas and creativity; of hope and aspirations; of reality and existence. *Living on the edge* ultimately pushes against the boundaries for survival. Searching for the edges opens up new horizons that hold trepidation and joy. Venturing into these borderlands, arriving in new frontier and remaining on the edge is the moment of opportunity to transcend boundaries, to become anew, to transform. Inherent in this journey is the seeking of the borderlands and engaging the wilderness. The quest yields transcendent wisdom, heroic deeds and aspirations for survival in *living on the edge*. However, it concurrently possesses the danger of failure and death. Sometimes one does not survive engaging the mystery; the wilderness found in *living on the edge*.

Classified under general or nursing literature, the sources will be further differentiated according to its theoretical or research intent. The literature review will be thematically discussed according to three themes: *living on the edge as a sacred place one travels to or where one lives; living on the edge as a choice of taking risks and surviving danger; and, living on the edge as engaging with health experiences in which persons and nurses coparticipate.*

### **General Theoretical Literature**

#### ***Living on the edge As A Sacred Place One Travels To Or Where One Lives***

##### **Literature**

*Living on the edge* as a sacred place one travels to or where one lives is found in the general theoretical literature, theology, philosophy and the American frontier. Journeying into new frontiers requires *living on the edge* and innately lies within the young and the old alike that timelessly crosses cultures and epochs. It is found in the

ancient Greek epic accounts of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* by Homer, the writings in the 1800's by French author and philosopher Victor Hugo (1862), the Palestinian poetry of Zwayn (as cited in Amyuni, 1999 ) and in the modern American poetry for children by Shel Silverstein (1974).

In the *Iliad*, Homer portrays Achilles, the Greek hero of antiquity, as the embodiment of the ancient Grecian ideal. The *Iliad* (i.e. Troy) was written by the Greek poet, Homer who lived ca. 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C. In this classical, epic poem, the recounting of his heroic quest is one of *living on the edge* of the polarities of the human condition: between peace and war; the ideal and the fallen; of life and death. Ultimately, by *living on the edge*, Achilles attains redemption as a human being through his compassion for Hector, a fallen enemy.

Achilles' shield is a symbolic emblem of *living on the edge*. The description shows the pastoral scenes of youth dancing with the power of life reflecting an ordered and peaceable society. War is present but displayed only toward the edges of the shield. On the outer edge is the Ocean River that may be interpreted as the river encircling the known world; creation (trans. 1990). This shield symbolizes the realms of *living on the edge* (trans. 1990, 18: Line 558). He wrote about the edge determining one's destiny,

“Our fate, I tell you, *stands on a razor's edge* [added emphasis]: life or death...”  
(trans. 1990, p. 282, lines 10: 204-205);

the edge defining the ideal hero,  
“His heart's so game, his fighting *edge* [added emphasis] so keen, the best of us all...”  
(trans. 1990, p. 284, lines 10.285-286);

and the sharpened edge of valor,

“The shaft of a good- for-nothing coward’s got no point but mine’s got heft and *edge* [added emphasis]” (trans. 1990, p. 309, lines 11.459-460).

*Living on the edge* can be a quest for affirmation despite the struggle of sacrifice and danger; such as flight toward freedom, justice, and love. In *Les Misérables*, Victor Hugo (1862) explores *the edge* of love’s impending promise and the denial of justice in the life of Jean Valjean. Jean Valjean is arrested for stealing bread for his starving sister’s child. After years of imprisonment, he is freed but illegally changes his identity to rescue and raise an orphaned girl, Cosette. He protects her even though it threatens his own freedom. He is relentlessly pursued by the law because of his illegal identity constantly *living on the edge* of being captured and succumbing to disillusionment. Through Cosette, he learns to love and release his bitterness over his experience of injustice. Despite persecution, his life is spent in generosity and kindness in seeking atonement, liberation, and devotion for another.

In *Les Misérables*, Hugo (1862) declares that life is a quest toward the indispensable affirmation of one’s existence (being). As Jean Valjean lies dying he receives the affirmation he desperately sought through his final reunion with his cherished adopted daughter, Cosette, as she is happily married and secure. Valjean’s lifetime pilgrimage of sacrifice for his loved ones becomes more cherished than his safety or survival. By *living on the edge*, Jean Valjean discovers the meaning of his life through sacrifice and love.

*Living on the edge* is found in the prose, poetry and song of many cultures

throughout the ages. This universally lived experience has been explored in the verses of renowned Palestinian poet, Sabah Al-Kharrat Zwayn (Amyuni, 1999). Sabah Al-Kharrat Zwayn, a multi-lingual, Lebanese female poet, tries to combine the edges of language, and space-time in her writings (Amyuni, 1999). Through amplifying staccato rhythms and leaving blank spaces she reveals her struggle to make sense of the tragic insensibility of war. Her poem, *Sur un quai nu*, written in 2003 is translated to “On a naked quay”. A quay is defined as a wharf (nd). A wharf is typically made of stone built on the edge of water; or a harbor for ships (nd). *Sur un quai nu*, fuses the imagery of peace and war with her beloved, “The carnage, I devastate, you devastate, he devastates, We decline the horror” (As cited in Amyuni, 1999, p. 175). It is the edge that harbors devastation or redemption. Zwayn is praised by Amyuni for her fidelity in the face of adversity to find the right words and the right language in which to write (1999). Amyuni stated that Zwayn is thriving in her poetry by *living on the edge* of her nation’s epic struggle in peace and war (1999).

*Living on the edge* as a sacred place one travels to or where one lives is found in the world of children and their distinctive view of the world of wonder and imagination. Shel Silverstein, a contemporary American poet, writes about the experiential world of children in *Where the Side Walk Ends*. In the poem, *The Edge of the World*, children are drawn to explore past imposed boundaries into magical places. Silverstein (1974) sends the reader forth on a pilgrimage into the mysterious unknown of imagination and wonder. In *The Edge of the World* the child defies what she is has been taught. Trusting that she knows the way, she peers over the edge into a mysterious world. This adventurer “...Sat

on the edge where the wild wind whirled,” and “Peeked over the ledge where the blue smoke curls...” (p.89). What she sees is not what she had been taught to expect. What she sees in peering over the edge of the sidewalk is not told; it is a mystery. One must go there oneself to know and discover truth.

### **Philosophy and Theology**

*Living on the edge* encompasses the ontological meaning of one’s place within the cosmos. In philosophy, human beings have been described as *living on the edge* of the frontier, “between matter and spirit, time and eternity...” (Clark, 1996, p.183). The vision of a divinely fashioned human person and the universe living between the edges of creation has been appreciated by philosophers. This unified vision of the human person and creation has been central to such philosophers as Plato of ancient Greece, thirteenth century Zen Master Kyogen (Loori & Tanahashi, 2005), Christian theologian St. Thomas Aquinas of the Medieval Period (1256/1920), author and philosopher Victor Hugo in the nineteenth century (1862), and the Lakota holy man, Black Elk of the twentieth century (1953/1971).

In considering the ancient western philosophical thought of Plato, the existence of the human soul is described as being on the edge between time and eternity. In *Timaeus* 35A, Plato describes the human soul existing as a link between the upper world of the soul and ideas; and the lower world of the body and substance (Plato, trans.1925). Additionally, the human can be considered a focal point between the planes of the eternal spiritual world and the temporal material world (Plato, trans.1925; Clark, 1996).

Further explication of this notion is found in Plato’s *Phaedrus* in which the human

soul has been forcibly compressed within the person by the Demiurge and has two natures; divine and human. The human being is likened to a charioteer with two winged-horses which represent the two natures of the soul. Directed by reason, one horse gazes upward to the heaven of ideas seeking the divine; while the other horse is unruly and rebelliously gazes upon the earth seeking the corporeal, solid ground (Plato, trans. 1892a, 246a-e). The soul in seeking the material, lower world lives below the frontiers of eternity and within the constraints of time. The soul seeking the divine, upper world lives in the frontier of timelessness and soars above time. The human is a frontier being traveling between the edges of creation.

Humans may *live on the edge* of darkness or a new birth of awareness. Plato's allegory of The Cave is a part of a larger work, *The Republic*, in which Socrates attempts to form the concepts of justice and leadership by the perfect ruler (Plato, trans.1888). In this allegory, Plato writes about those *living on the edge* in a darkened cave and the transformative power of knowledge (Plato, trans. 1892b).

The cave described by Plato is a darkened cavern where humans have been chained so they are only able to view the wall in front of them. Behind them is a half-wall. Behind the half-wall are puppeteers and a fire in which shadows are cast upon the wall in front of the chained prisoners. This type of knowledge arises from sensory perception of a limited reality without understanding causation of their observation. Plato then queries what would happen if one of these persons is freed from their chains in order to experience a more enlightened reality and is liberated from the illusory shadows of their darkened confines (Plato, trans.1892b, Line 7. 514).

Resultant awareness is shown by the reluctant pilgrim being freed from his chains and forced from the cave of shadowing illusions into the light of reality. Confusion, bewilderment and initial reluctance to be in this new world eventually leads to illumination and higher forms of knowledge. With the acceptance of being liberated, the power of a just relationship between the freed man and those left in the cave is demonstrated. The freed man returns to the edge and enters the cave to encourage others to leave their familiar life of limitations and venture forward toward a more enlightened relationship with their world (Plato, trans. 1892b). *Living on the edge* involves courage to seek out new horizons and new insights.

*Living on the edge* can embody inherent danger such as a pilgrimage toward truth; whether it entails the physical and/or intellectual realms. Zen Master Kyogen (Xiangyan) (1200-1253) lived in the thirteenth century. He relates the danger and the freedom of enlightenment to a perilous place of hanging over the edge of a “one-thousand-foot cliff” (Loori & Tanahashi, 2005, p.333). In his koan entitled, *Kyogen Mounts the Tree* (Ekai, 1938/2007), he queried, “Zen is like a man hanging in a tree by his teeth over a precipice. His hands grasp no branch, his feet rest on no limb, and under the tree another person asks him: ‘Why did Bodhidharma come to China from India?’ ‘If the man in the tree does not answer, he fails; and if he does answer, he falls and loses his life. Now what shall he do?’”(Ekai, 1938/2007, p. 8).

Kyogen appears to ask his disciples what one is willing to risk to realize enlightenment. To answer the koan, one has to let go of concrete thinking and access intuitive wisdom. Zen teachings emphasize insight and the primary principle to live only



in the present moment and present situation. Action within this situated context is all that matters. The man is hanging on the edge of the answer. To answer the question, one must let go of the situation. *Living on the edge* is found in the pursuit of living in the present and seeking truth.

No theological writings of St. Thomas Aquinas' are found that specifically consider the phenomenon of *living on the edge*. However, Aquinas did ponder the nature of human existence as living between the edges of an eternal and mortal nature. Aquinas states in *Summa Theologiae* (trans.1920), "the human soul retains its proper existence when separated from the body, having an aptitude and a natural inclination to be united to the body" (Q.76, First Article, Reply Obj. 6). St. Thomas Aquinas (as cited in Clark, 1996) likened human nature as a union of two edges. These notions are similar to the writings of Aristotle and Plato (1996). According to Clark (1996) and Verbeke (1976), Aquinas envisioned humans as 'frontier' beings attempting to navigate "on the edge of two worlds, that of the spiritual and that of the corporeal" (Verbeke, 1976, p.195).

At the alliance of the spiritual and corporeal edges, lie the frontier boundaries of human nature. Since human beings are spiritual and material beings, they are able to move the direction of their boundaries to transcend into the eternal or descend into the temporal realities.

Further philosophical exploration of *living on the edge* is found in pondering our place in creation that includes the notion of existence and death (being). By exploring the fundamental metaphysical question, "Why are there beings at all instead of nothing", Heidegger pondered the meaning of existence (Heidegger, 2000, p.8).

This is echoed in Victor Hugo's musings about existence in contrast to nihilism. Hugo answers in *Les Miserables* that the universality of affirmation is more powerful than nihilism. In *The Absolute Goodness in Prayer* (1862), Hugo echoes this assertion, "To NO there is only one reply, Yes. Nihilism has no point. There is no such thing as nothingness. Zero does not exist. Everything is something. Nothing is nothing. Man lives by affirmation even more than by bread" (para.17). *Living on the edge* between affirmation and nihilism, Heidegger and Hugo ponder the meaning of existence.

*Living on the edge* involves engaging with one's place in the environment and with others. This engagement may incur risk and danger; yet it resounds with a communal search for affiliation. Jiddu Krishnamurti, philosopher and writer, contemplated the nature of love as freedom in cherishing the other (n.d.). He noted that life is impoverished if humankind lives without relationship with other beings and nature. Krishnamurti regarded relationships as the most valuable aspect of living and that "Without relationship there is no existence" (1982, para. 10). Therefore, *living on the edge* is answering the inescapable desire to exist in a unique relationship with the world.

*Living on the edge* is designated as a place of terrible power and might where the material and spiritual worlds border each other. Ancient Celtic Christianity acknowledged the sacred power of 'thin places' where heaven and earth touch (Gomes, 1996). Traditional Celtic perspectives accept *living on the edge* of vulnerability to find spiritual renewal and reliance upon the divine (Gomes, 1996; Power, 2006). Franciscan ecotheology is described by Mizzoni (2008) as a theophanic reflection of nature where the liminal edges of the divine is found in creation.

The American Native Lakota cultural traditions hold similar tenets and recognize sacred places where the divine resides or communicates with the Lakota people (Black Elk, 1953/1971). Black Elk, a holy Medicine Man, spoke about these holy places in the Lakota traditional religion. He *lived on the edge* between two worlds; passing from his familiar world into a new world dominated by the wasiču's (white man's) culture. Black Elk choose to speak of these privileged beliefs of the Lakota during a time of spiritual crises for his people in order to bring understanding between two disparate cultures with the hope for a return of harmony in this new discordant world (Black Elk, 1953/1971). He spoke to Joseph Epes Brown about sacred places that hold immeasurable power. He revealed that *living on the edge* of the world is a holy place in which the Thunder Beings (Wakinyan Tanka) commune with all of creation and protects the Sacred Pipe of the Lakota nation (Black Elk, 1953/ 1971). The Thunder Being is living "in a lodge on the top of a mountain at the edge of the world where the sun goes down" (p. 39). The Thunder Being is "...the giver of Revelation..." (p. 39) represented by the symbol of lightning. As with Plato's notion of the human being and soul, the Thunder Being and the Sacred Pipe are the alliance along the edges of creation uniting heaven and earth.

A pilgrimage can be an external, physical journey or a philosophical one that enters into the interior of oneself. Thomas Merton (1915-1968), Cistercian monk and writer, was a mystic that travelled to Asia to explore other religions and connect with Asian religious masters. Merton's physical pilgrimage was the entry into a more important quest of deepening his interior, spiritual journey. This interior journey of spiritual growth becomes a creative experience of grace and love searching for wisdom

(Merton, 1973).

Douglas R. Anderson, author and philosopher, proposes that “philosophy Americana” lives on the edges of academia and culture, marginalized yet vital to American culture and thought. In his collection of essays entitled, *Philosophy Americana: Making Philosophy at Home in American Culture*, Anderson champions the notion that American philosophy can be discovered in the common places of life (2006). This is similar to the humanbecoming school of thought that investigates universally lived experiences (Parse, 1998) as treasures found in the commonly lived occurrences of life.

Anderson emphasized the experiential contributions of the early American philosophers, Emerson, Thoreau, Dewey, and James as well as the unfamiliar American thinkers such as bell hooks, Bugbee, and Davidson (2006). Anderson presents the opinion that American philosophy is found in the quintessential American music genres of rock and roll and country music. He posits that both professional and cultural philosophy have similar quests in seeking meaning in *living on the edge* between the pragmatic and the idealistic aspects of American life.

Some philosophers live on the marginal edges of society. The magnitude of cultural and political influences upon the personal theology and philosophy is notable in the life of philosopher Edith Stein (1891-1942). Edith Stein, a German philosopher of past obscurity and contemporary renown, lived as an outsider. Though an accomplished scholar, she found herself marginalized despite her recognized talent as a lecturer, philosopher, author, and feminist. Scholars contend that this lack of acknowledgement

was due to her Jewish ethnicity and female gender (Maata, 2006). Yet, despite these obstacles of *living on the edge* of recognition, she pushed against the boundaries of her cultural place in the world and risked venturing toward new horizons. In 1933, during a highly politically and militarily turbulent age, she converted to Catholicism and joined the Carmelite Order as Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. In 1942, she was arrested by the Nazi's as a Jew and executed in Auschwitz. She later became canonized as a saint in 1987 in the Catholic Church (2006). As she chose to explore beyond her familiar cultural and academic life, she risked *living on the edge* pursuing truth even in a dictator's regime and created new horizons of existence for herself and the female gender (Maatta, 2006).

### **General Research Literature**

#### **Living on the Edge: As A Sacred Place One Travels To Or Where One Lives**

The American frontier can be considered as a geographical space that provides insight into the phenomenon of *living on the edge*. Stories contain and convey the power of human life to understand the lived experience of being human (Milton, 2004).

Biographies and historical accounts illuminate the lived experiences within the American frontier. Anders Piltz, a Swedish historian (as cited by Eriksson, 2007), advocated that it is only in understanding the historical pathways of human endeavors that humans are able to move forward into the present moment and the yet-to-be. In reviewing the journeys of significant cultural movements and historical incidents of the American frontier, the concept of *living on the edge* as a sacred place to travel to or where one lives will be explored.

*Living on the edge* is exemplified by the explorers of the American frontier such

as the original inhabitants who encountered the initial settlers of the first Euro-American colonies on eastern edge of the continent and later by the ‘mountain men’ in the following century. Mountain men such as Hugh Glass and Jedediah Smith kept pushing the boundaries of civilization. These entrepreneurial individualists explored new territory by living and working on the edge of the rivers and valleys of the great prairie expanse; and, along the sheer-edges of heaven-steeped mountains.

The historical recounting by Nathaniel Philbrick of the 1620 founding of America’s Plymouth colony by the Pilgrims is a journey of arriving and living on the edge of the *New World*. The ship’s winter journey over the Atlantic was fraught with danger. However, landing upon the shores of an uncharted coastline of treacherous shoals and breakers was considered even more hazardous. Arriving at edge of the *New World* literally took them to the *Edge*. The *Edge* is now known as the drop-off line that runs parallel to the shore. Without an accurate map, safely landing was perilous to attempt and highly dangerous. This oceanic landscape is considered their most-likely guide that the Captain followed as they sailed along the coastline. They sought a safe place to land the *Mayflower* (Philbrick, 2006) to begin a new way of life and generating a new nation.

Following the expedition of Lewis and Clark, Jedediah Smith is considered one of the earliest Euro-Americans to venture into the American frontier. He was the first to explore the edges of White River in what is now known as the state of South Dakota. Invalidating society’s collective assumptions about the ‘illiterate wayward mountain man’, Jedediah Smith was well-read and educated. He was renowned for not swearing, smoking or drinking and carried his Bible “in his possibles bag” (Laycock, 1988, p.161).

In the frontier territory of what would later become the state of South Dakota, Hugh Glass, killed a Grizzly bear; though he was mauled and mangled beyond recognition in his efforts (Laycock, 1988). As a phenomenon of *living on the edge*, Manfred's documentary-historical account of this incident chronicles his near demise and tenacious will to survive (1954). Hugh Glass was part of an 1823 expedition travelling in the vicinity of Thunder Butte near the current town of Lemmon, SD. Jim Bridger and Thomas Fitzgerald, became his reluctant guardians. They were chosen to remain behind while the U.S. Cavalry rode off to safety away from enemy warriors. They sat in vigil of what was considered the fading life of Hugh Glass. However, their enemy, the Arikara warriors, was reported to be close by. The subsequent actions of Hugh Glass and his comrades became a renowned narrative in early American history (Laycock, 1988; Manfred, 1954).

Niehardt memorialized Hugh Glass and his precarious hold on life in his poem, *The Song of Hugh Glass* (1915). Hugh implausibly, "Hung clutching at the bleak, raw edge of life." (p. 15). Even while witnessing Hugh Glass's unyielding epic struggle to remain with life, wavering on the edge of loyalty and infidelity, Bridger and Fitzgerald feared being killed by the Arikara. Though appearing unconscious and struggling with every breath, Hugh Glass was able to hear his comrade's deliberations to abandon him. Violating the bonds of cultural honor, Bridger and Fitzgerald left him; certain of his impending death (Laycock, 1988; Manfred, 1954). Riven by the bear beyond recognition and riven of his horse, gun, ammunition, and blankets, his comrades deserted him to seek safety (Laycock, 1988).

Hugh Glass did not die, but slowly awakened from unconsciousness. He was astonished by the inconceivable realization that he had been abandoned by his comrades with no means of survival. This sundering of the mountain man allegiance to one another was incomprehensible. *Living on the edge* of life sheer will drew him back from the edge of death and betrayal. Crawling insects and berries were his heavenly manna. The maggots of his wounds were his healers. As a mountain man, Hugh Glass, understood well that survival comes through conservation. By conserving his strength and resources he survived. Unyielding, he determinedly crawled down the valley of the Grand River and made his way hundreds of miles over the vast expanse of this uncharted land to the Missouri River (Laycock, 1988; Manfred, 1954).

Hugh's tenacious determination to live was nurtured by vengeance that eventually yielded to forgiveness (Laycock, 1988). This is the archetype of *living on the edge*- the yearning and seeking new frontiers; striving to journey beyond known territory; battling beyond known limits of human endurance and desire; surviving and forgiving injustice. This is the frontiering of the human soul. This is *living on the edge*. The frontiering of human endeavor is *living on the edge*.

The allure to explore civilization's edge while trapping beaver provided in turn reports of the wonders of the American wilderness in the new nation of the Euro-Americans. The extraordinary human achievements and arduous living conditions of the mountain men were in striking contrast to the comfortable existence of the populated settlements at that time. Their desire was to *live on the edge* of new territory. They sought new visions, new places and new feats of human survival on their pilgrimage to the open



frontier of the American west.

While the mountain men explored the edge of their new nation, another people had gone before them centuries earlier. With the influx of the Euro-Americans, the Native American tribes found themselves on the edge of a new era and the loss of their known world.

Tashunka Witko, known as Crazy Horse, was a mystic, warrior, and leader of the Teton Oglala; otherwise known as the Oglala Lakota people (Marshall, 2004; McGaa/EagleMan, 2005). He fought against the U. S. Cavalry and the wasiču (white man) to save his people and the Lakota way of life in the 1800's. He was an opposing leader in the fight at The Little Big Horn in 1876 (Battle of the Greasy Grass) against General Custer in which General Custer and the seventh Cavalry Regiment of the U.S. Army were slain. Tashunka Witko, translated as His-Horse-Is-Crazy, was *living on the edge* of the tragic collision of two cultures and *living on the edge* that tragically ended the Lakota's known way of life.

Known as a visionary, Tashunka Witko is spoken about with great reverence and admiration for his deeds and humility by his people (Marshall, 2004; McGaa/Eagle Man, 2005). This warrior's name is not readily translated and is easily misunderstood. His name implies that he is a person of great spiritual power and is of import to his people. Tashunka means "horse" and is derived from sunka (dog) and ta (ruminating animal) in the Lakota language (Beuchel & Manheart, 2002). Witko holds a spiritual and, therefore, a respectful meaning amongst the Lakota. Witko means "foolish" (Buechel & Manheart, 2002) and this includes the connotation that one possesses the power for sacred visions

(Marshall, 2004; McGaa/Eagle Man, 2005; Fretham & Matson, 2007; Powers, 2010).

Later, after ceremonially seeking a vision, he received a black stone from the Medicine Man, Horn Chips (Fretham & Matson, 2007). He placed this stone behind the ear of his horse to instill in him the same spiritual force given by the Thunder Beings; so that they could be 'one' in battle (2007). Therefore, Tashunka Witko, His-Horse-Is-Crazy, reveals the spiritual power between the man and his horse. In accordance with his first visions as a youth sent by the Thunder Beings, he became the dedicated protector of his people. His generosity in caring for the vulnerable is honored still by his people. Tashunka Witko's military leadership, strategic victories, and heroism are recorded not only by the Lakota but by the U.S. Cavalry (2007). Tashunka Witko in protecting his people from being attacked turned himself into the authorities at Fort Robinson. In 1877, his earlier vision prophesying his death was fulfilled (Marshall, 2004). Tashunka Witko was killed while being held by one of his own people and from the bayonet held by a U.S. Cavalry soldier at Fort Robinson, Nebraska (McGaa/Eagle Man, 2005). Tashunka Witko lived and died *on the edge* of his sacred, spiritual universe and the harsh realities of the material world. Norris writes of the Dakota prairies as a spiritual geography of contrasts where silence is loud and the emptiness of the plains is full of "miraculous things" (1993, p.10).

The themes of living on the edge with exploring new territory are reiterated by Hudson (1988) who reviewed the geospatial aspects of living on the edge through human geography. North American origins of colonial settlers to middle-western frontier populations had unique emigrational flow patterns. Geographical barriers such as

mountain ranges and rivers were expected to cause directional change for population settlements; but this did not occur. These early emigrants settled along the same latitudinal lines as their colonial birthplaces. Hudson's human geographical study suggests attachment to living on the edge as taking risks and as a sacred place where one lives remained with the Euro-American pioneers upon westward emigration.

The humanbecoming school of thought finds its language reflected within the musings of these authors; Norris states that the prairie frontier made her "a human being" (1993, p.11).

However, the prairie will bestow its beauty only after one is tested by the harshness of the land. By living on the edge of sustained hardship, one may find themselves alone but not lonesome; isolated but surrounded by identity; alone but connected to the humanuniverse. Bunkers (2006a) found freedom and creativity in the vastness and silence of the prairie. As cited by Norris (1993), Dan O'Brien writes, "When you get the feeling that the whole world can see you but no one is watching you have come to the grasslands of North America" (p.105).

### **Nursing Theoretical Literature**

#### **Living on the Edge: As A Sacred Place One Travels To Or Where One Lives**

Since the beginning of the new science of nursing, the sacredness of space and place has been recognized. Florence Nightingale advanced the science of nursing when she abandoned family wealth, privilege and respect to study nursing (Niels, 2010). Upon hearing reports of the devastating English casualties in the Crimean war, she organized a group of nurses to travel to the Crimean Peninsula to care for the wounded English

soldiers.

Through her experiences, Nightingale developed five tenets of nursing. The preeminent tenet of nursing, according to Nightingale, was the attention to the environment (1860/1912). The other tenets addressed making hourly rounds, communication with the patient, teaching family members holistic care, and statistical support of outcomes in care. Of these five, Nightingale concentrated upon the patient and the environment as essential healing entities. She ensured fresh air and a clean environment for the patient. Nightingale advocated healing came from caring for the family as well as the patient (Neils, 2010).

Florence Nightingale and the nurses under her direction cared for the soldiers. The manipulation of the environment by placing the nurse in the patient's environment every hour and ensuring fresh air became a hallmark of good nursing care. Rounding became an hourly patient assessment and means of care that saved many lives. She became honored within the sacred place of healing as the "Lady with the Lamp" (Neils, 2010). When modern-day nurses neglect to make rounds to assess and care for the patient, a profoundly negative impact upon the physical and spiritual condition of the patient and family has been noted (Neils).

By recognizing the importance of space and place as a healing environment, Florence Nightingale saved soldiers' lives and founded the modern science of nursing. The environmental nursing theory of Florence Nightingale has made significant contributions in saving patients' lives as the contemporary nurse engages with the environment as a means of healing.

Martha Rogers, a contemporary nursing theorist who developed the science of unitary beings, envisioned the environment as integral and inextricably linked with the person as a pandimensional reality. The person and the environment coexist and are considered open energy fields. The environment is expressed as an accelerating evolutionary motion in which the rhythms of life are becoming faster than previously experienced. The movement of life, as reflected by the Rogerian perspective, is not one of entropy but of ascending growth or syntrophy. The environment encompasses outer space. In one of her most recent written reflections upon the evolution of the unitary beings, Rogers considered the journey of human beings into space as a sacred place where nursing can fulfill their societal duty for human betterment. Rogers envisioned the age of space exploration as a place where diversity is encouraged and human beings will continue to evolve (1992). *Homo spatialis*, as described by Rogers, is the consequence of the evolutionary voyage of the human into space. With space exploration the concept of being human expanded to include the notion of space as a defining attribute of the human- environment as “*homo spatialis*” (p. 27). According to the science of unitary beings, nursing science is a science concerned with the human being. This unitary science is also considered a voyage of continual expansion within the open energy fields of the human-environment.

Nursing theorist Jean Watson developed the theory of human caring. Within this theory, place or environment is important to healing (Watson, 2006). Watson contends that the environment is essential to caring as it creates the space and place for healing including spiritual healing. Feeling dispirited that health care was being controlled by

financial motivations for profit; she withdrew from her scholarly work. Believing that the current restructuring of American health care systems disregarded the essentials of healing through caring, she embarked upon a pilgrimage for renewal and direction. In recognition of the significance of sacred places, Watson felt compelled to walk along an ancient and sacred Christian pilgrimage route in northern Spain called the El Camino. This chosen path for her interior exploration became a meditative walk for her search for renewal. As she searched for markers to find her way along the path, she realized that walking this pilgrim's path became a metaphor for finding her way in her personal and professional life. In facing the challenges along the way, she found renewed conviction to champion the essential needs for patients. Watson warns that nurses must carefully search for the signs to choose the right path that will best serve those in need of healing.

Nursing science has only recently begun contemplating the universally lived phenomenon of *living on the edge* as a sacred space one travels to or lives. Those living in the frontier spaces of South Dakota explored this phenomenon (Peterson-Lund, in press). It is the encounter with the vast spaces of the frontier that illuminates this unique perspective and provides meaning of what it is like to live on the edge. Through the humanbecoming theory process of concept inventing (Parse, 2006c), a synthetic definition of the lived experience of *living on the edge* was constructed. *Living on the edge* is "risking venturing with sureness-unsureness surfacing with cherished engaging" (Peterson-Lund, in press). At the theoretical level, it was found that "*living on the edge* is powering the originating of valuing connecting-separating" (Peterson-Lund, in press). For those living in the frontier of the American west, the experience of *living on the edge*

contains the elements of yearning to take a risk, adventuring with certainty and uncertainty into the human universe, and cherishing the experience whether one survives or not.

### **Nursing Research Literature**

#### ***Living on the Edge: As A Sacred Place One Travels To Or Where One Lives***

A pilgrimage can be a means of spiritual nursing care. While being liberated from ordinary social constraints, a pilgrimage may be a place of *living on the edge* of new awakenings and discoveries. Some patients who are living with a diagnosis of a life-threatening illness will undergo a pilgrimage to a religious or spiritually significant site (Lillie, 2005; Rehnsfeldt & Armen, 2008).

Lillie (2005) studied why those working in palliative care found a pilgrimage to Lourdes, France helpful for the patient with a life-threatening condition. The semi-structured interviews of nine health care workers indicated that a pilgrimage to Lourdes provided a space for autonomy in patient's life to fulfill their wishes and to sustain hope as an important quality of life; to provide meaningful spiritual care; to provide a means of liminality (transition) and build *communitas* (community). The physical journey on a pilgrimage allows for an interior passage where a cure is not mandated but transformative healing provides peace and contentment; a deeper realization of life's meaning.

Rehnsfeldt and Armen (2008) studied the pilgrimages of cancer patients and their caregivers who suffer burn out. The effect of companionship upon the personal meanings of these journeys revealed that companionship is an essential aspect for true healing on a pilgrimage (2008). Without the security of an attending presence, the burden of suffering

intensifies for the cancer patient. In this study where those who were living with cancer and for caregivers who experienced burn out, a sense of nihilism encroached upon their lived experience when feeling alone. A solitary path is a heavy burden to bear when embarking upon a pilgrimage to understand life. Nursing science is dedicated to accompany those upon this physical and spiritual pilgrimage of life.

Hemsley and Glass (2006) studied eleven nurse healers grounding their investigation in Watson's caring-healing paradigm and esoteric spiritual knowledge. In a hermeneutic phenomenological study of eleven self-identified, nurse healers, five essences were revealed: "belonging and connecting" (p.261); "opening to Spirit" (p. 262); "summoning" (p. 264); "wounding and healing journey" (p.264); and "living as healer" (p. 265). The investigators identified a comprehensive theme of "walking two worlds" (p.256). In "walking two worlds" the nurse healer coexists in two sacred places of the material and spiritual planes. This is defined as the journey and the arrival upon an evolutionary passage of mysterious transformation. Hemsley and Glass (2006) support exploring the unconventional paradigm of holistic nursing and acknowledge that nurse healers are *living on the edge* of nursing science and traditional paradigms.

*Living on the edge* as a sacred place one travels to or where one lives is found in nursing research literature. Nursing science sees the power of suffering as a sacred space potentiating the journey for quality of life and acceptance by care providers (Sorrell, 2003).

Suffering is considered *living on the edge* by nursing scientists (Pilkington & Kilpatrick, 2008; Lee, Young, & Doucet, 2009). Lee, Young, and Doucet (2009)



conducted a qualitative descriptive-exploratory study on the meaning of suffering in Korean families deriving the thematic findings from the humanbecoming school of thought. Family interviews on suffering were conducted with two mothers of adult children who were schizophrenic and institutionalized. The participants revealed that suffering was found to be “agonizing trepidation amid calming invigoration, as confident relinquishing of the expected arises with liberating diverse affiliations” (p.157). Suffering is *living on the edge* of existence that holds trepidation and calm; release from demanding expectations; and strong affiliations.

Pilkington and Kilpatrick (2008) employed the Parse research method to explore the lived experience of suffering with twelve elder residents in long-term care facilities. In the humanbecoming theory, the structure of suffering is “unbounded desolation emerging with resolute acquiescence with benevolent affiliations” (p.232). These elder residents are *living on the edge* between desolation and rewarding affiliations.

The mothers of schizophrenic adult children (Lee, Young, & Doucet, 2009) and elders residing in a long-term facility (Pilkington & Kilpatrick, 2008) are *on the edge* of deep pain while contemplating the meaning of their suffering.

Living on the edge as a sacred place one travels to or where one lives is exemplified in the lives and endeavors of these pioneering visionaries found in the historical accounts of scholars, artists, explorers, warriors and healers.

### **General Theoretical Literature**

#### ***Living On The Edge: As A Choice In Taking Risks And Surviving Danger***

*Living on the edge* as a choice in taking risks and surviving danger occurred with

space travel by American astronauts into the frontier reaches of the cosmos. The journeys of the first American, female astronaut, Sally Ride, and the first American teacher and civilian astronaut, Christa McAuliffe, exemplify *living on the edge*. In risking exploratory space travel, one of these astronauts survives and one does not survive the danger of their expeditions. Yet, understanding their choice to accept risks in surviving the danger of human spaceflight is found in their stories of *living on the edge*.

Each astronaut forged a unique path in attaining the highly specialized ability in becoming historical astronauts. To fly into the cosmos, Sally Ride became the first American female astronaut and the youngest American astronaut by pushing against the boundaries of a male-dominated spaceflight program (Mattern, 2006). By choosing to take risks, Sally Ride mastered specific skills in becoming an astrophysicist. In Sally Ride's pursuit of science, she attained a PhD in astrophysics to eventually become a pioneer in escaping to the edge of outer space. Christa McAuliffe was a social science educator from New Hampshire and held a master's degree in education. She sought new challenges and applied to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's program to send a teacher into space (National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), 2007).

In McAuliffe's venture to rocket from earth's gravity, the space shuttle had just reached the edges of earth's gravity when it exploded in the 1986 *Challenger* disaster. She perished with the other astronauts and did not survive her flight to the edge of space. It is here in the aftermath that their paths crossed. Sally Ride had her next expedition cancelled because of the tragedy and became one of the investigators of the incident

(Mattern, 2006; NASA, 2006).

Christa McAuliffe, an educator and mother, risked the danger of space travel after being chosen by NASA. Sally Ride became the first female to break the barriers of earth's gravity in American space travel. Understanding the desire to dare breaking the boundaries of gravity requires understanding why those choose to risk *living on the edge* of peril.

Although each woman travelled divergent paths to become astronauts, they collectively possessed the yearning for new adventures, the capacity for sacrificial dedication to attain the necessary skills, and the undaunting valor to fly to the edge of space. These attributes are required in choosing to take risks and defying danger in *living on the edge*.

Seemingly impossible advantages can arise from adversity in *living on the edge*. It is in the struggle that the human being is able to flourish (Stoltz & Weihenmayer, 2010). Erik Weihenmayer, blind since the age of five, sought out risks and survived danger by climbing the Seven Summits: Mount McKinley, Anconcagua, Mount Everest, Mount Elbrus, Vinson Massif, Mount Kosciusk, and Kilimanjaro (Stoltz & Weihenmayer, 2010). He explains in *The Advantage of Adversity* (Stoltz & Weihenmayer, 2010) that he would dare new endeavors in response to his blindness. Weihenmayer confronted each obstacle in order to survive and experience a more powerful life. Surviving adversity can be a mercilessly exhausting venture. He writes of his first expedition climb of Mount McKinley in which he surpassed his expected physical endurance and was staggering on the edge of collapse. In this place of *living on the edge* he experienced a surprising grace;

“a boundless vitality I hadn’t known I possessed” (2010, p.5). Suffering adversity generates valuable strength for the individual (2010). By choosing to take risks in confronting adversity, one can experience joyful fulfillment and contentment. An inspired life can be realized in *living on the edge* of adversity.

Risk perceptions are discussed in the review of risk literature (Lexton, Smith, Olufemi & Poole, 2005; Hawkes, Houghton & Rowe, 2009). However, perceiving a risk is contextually different from actually taking a risk. While past literature of risk has explored unusual situations (e.g. extreme sport), recent literature reveals that taking risks and surviving danger can include more mundane contexts. In taking a risk in everyday life, Hawkes, Houghton and Rowe (2009) studied risk perception through a multi-method study of comparing diaries and semi-structured interviews. The narrative data from diaries were found to provide similar risks that occurred in everyday life to the semi-structured interview. However, the researchers concluded that the diaries provided a more accurate insight into the important risks about which this population was concerned and, allowed deeper reflection upon risks and their triggers for worrying. The adversity in experiencing the ordinary dullness of life centered upon family problems, societal changes and health issues during daily life. By taking a risk to reflect upon one’s concerns and experience anxiety, the dreariness of life be transformed into a revitalized existence.

### **Edgework**

*Living on the edge* as a choice in taking risks and surviving danger is found in the social science of edgework. Social science has pondered the concept of edgework that is

related to *living on the edge*. Sociologist, Stephan Lyng (1990; 2005) presented an analysis of edgework in contemporary American culture as taking a voluntarily risky action. The groundwork of this analysis is derived from five years of ethnographic study of skydivers by Lyng and Snow in 1986 (1990). While incorporating a synthesis of Marx's and Meade's social theories, the micro and macro levels of experiencing edgework are described by political-economic factors and the emotive characteristics of the thrill-seeking individual (2005).

The individual experience of edgework is emphasized in describing this concept. Lyng's detailed analysis attempts to uncover the individual's emotions, sensations and skills in performing risky activities (e.g. skydiving, mountain climbing, substance-abuse) and high-risk occupations (e.g.) military combat, firefighting and business ventures (1990).

Edgework entails the mastery of skills in order to remain in control while engaged in risky endeavors. Additionally, edgework is considered a voluntary endeavor in which the aim is to come as close to the edge without falling off. This exploration of boundaries requires mastering physical and mental skills (Lyng, 1990; Zwick, 2006; Rajah, 2007; and Librett, 2008). A sense of control is imperative; though Lyng acceded that this control is illusory. By mastering requisite skills a sense of control or management of taking a risk is attained. According to Lyng (1990), taking a risk includes a socially dynamic polarization in the pursuit of risk taking to avoid anarchy or chaos. This polarity is similarly related to the universally experienced paradox of enabling-limiting in the humanbecoming theory (Parse, 2011). The underlying proposition of edgework is that it

is found in the playful activities and work of the modern American. The risk-taking activities in edgework contain extreme states of heightened awareness and anxiety. The intention of edgework is to control chaos, derive pleasure, and survive the experience through elite, expert proficiency over high-risk endeavors.

Lyng (2005) ponders the notion whether pursuit of risk in edgework may be the search for purposeful, existential meaning by American society. The paradox of freedom and regulation are noted in edgework. Edgework is viewed as a quest for autonomy in response to a strongly regulated and constrained social structure found in affluent, modern America (2005).

Initially, edgework was generated within social science in evaluating risk and in an attempt to understand leisure activities. This concept was then extended to multiple disciplines e.g. criminology (Librett, 2008; Ferrell, 2009), public health (Rajah, 2007; Zajdow, 2010), the sociology of sports and leisure (Kjolsrod, 2009), religion/spirituality (Bromley, 2007), economics and computer technology (Zwick, 2006), and in scholarly endeavors (Sjoberg, 2005).

While edgework originally focused upon the economically privileged, other investigations evaluated the existence of this concept in disadvantaged populations (Rajah, 2007; Librett, 2008; Zajdow, 2010).

In a critique of criminology research methods, Ferrell (2009) provocatively states that the discipline of criminology is in a crisis of methodology in a time of social transitions. He proposes the dissolution of methodologies that produce epistemic quantification of unusable data sets and surveys. He posits that these methods are

fraudulent, inadequate, and manipulate research findings. This author supports an ethnography that is dynamic and fluid, e.g. instant ethnography and liquid ethnography. Instant ethnography documents the dynamics of fleeting moments where the thrill of the adrenalin 'rush' is a significant hallmark of edgework in criminology (2009). Ferrell engages in edgework by pushing away the superficially enforced boundaries of the conventionally sanctioned quantitative ethnographic research. He dares to look past the constructed walls of introverted disciplinary circumspection to envision a more precise and adaptable scientific discipline of criminology.

Extreme spiritual practices of religion groups are expressions of transcendence. The rituals of firewalking and serpent handling are explained through the concept of edgework by Bromley (2007). Preparing for these rituals is required to yield an impression of control and power over the dangerous aspects of the ritual to attain salvation, transcendence and holiness. Additionally, these practices when performed achieve power or show proof of one's power over evil. Bromley reports a social rejection by current social media of these dangerous religious rituals. Spiritual edgework is found in diverse religious and spiritual socio-cultural groups (2007). Bromley reports that in contemporary American society, firewalking is primarily practiced by the urban, professional class while snake handling is found amid lower-socioeconomic, rural Christians.

The edge between safety and danger is created in an attempt to control the unmanageable and spiritual aspects of being. The dramatic aspect of the ritual in leaving safety and relying upon spiritual power for protection is described by Bromley as a way

of *living on the edge*. Extreme, religious and spiritual rituals challenge the individual to triumph over one's limitations as in firewalking or to confirm one's transcendence in holiness against symbolic evil as in controlling and handling snakes.

The edgework of stock trading and computer technology discusses the sensation of thrill-seeking and experiencing the adrenaline rush as described by Lyng in his seminal work (1990). Zwick (2006) discussed the attraction to the risk of on-line investing in the stock market as an expression of edgework. Authentic personal space of edgework has been extended to the space of virtual reality on the internet in internet stock trading. Risky investing is described as risking above the normative behaviors in stock trading as a means unto itself and not necessarily for financial gain. The extreme risky behaviors are defined as having minimal portfolio diversification, and investing in high-risk industrial markets e.g. biotechnology (Zwick, 2006). Edgework in this context requires the desire of an individual to willingly engage in taking financial risks with their investments. Zwick's (2006) notion that virtual stock trading results from the individual seeking the thrill by taking a financial risk substantiates Lyng's early conceptualization of edgework (1990). Lyng in 1990 postulated that heightened mental states are sought through edgework.

The intellectual risk-taking of edgework is found in the confrontation of organizational, socio-political resistance against the intellectual pursuit of academia, science and democracy (Hamm, 2005; Sjoberg, 2005). Sjoberg recounts his experience in scholarly risk-taking in which his early work in sociology challenged current thought. He relates the demise of scholars who confronted an administration's perceived interference upon academic freedom. His own intellectual work met administrative resistance. Sjoberg



reports (2005) being professionally ostracized. This was a result of his oppositional view against the determined position that promoted sociology narrowly as only a quantitative science. Had his work not achieved academic recognition, his career would have been forfeited.

Hamm (2005) described the professional isolation he experienced as a sociology researcher as a result, in part, of academic polarization of issues. This isolation also arose from his unyielding and unpopular stances; employing an unorthodox, ad hoc methodology; and by not realizing how important his relationships with his colleagues were for his personal and professional life (2005). He recognized that he had been *living on the edge* for so long that he lost his collegial relationships.

However, Hamm articulated the lessons of learned humility without relinquishing his belief in his research or justice for humanity. By *living on the edge* in isolation, he did not agree with departmental research policy and subsequently lost trust with his colleagues. Despite his scholarly achievements he, like Sjoberg, experienced academic reproach and professional regress.

*Living on the edge* is found in seeking new ventures found in establishing the Plymouth colony in the 1600's; the economic and personal ventures of the Mountain Men in the American West, and in the creative innovations of contemporary society while seeking new frontiers. Therefore, exploring the limits of elite, performance capabilities requires mental certitude and daring for the reward of surviving the journey into new frontiers. Those who pursue edgework do so for mastery of skill; to uphold personal convictions, to learn new ways of relating, and to pursue intellectual ideals.

## **Business and Economics**

In the business profession, *living on the edge* is discussed by Pryor (2010a) as the chaos theory of careers. This theory explores the complexity of change and the disquietude that accompanies the uncertainty of career development. Chaos theory in career counseling recognizes the unpredictability and the risk of changing careers (2010a). Pryor described career disruption as *living on the edge*. He advises others to accept and finally to embrace the edge of unexpected change. Successful adaptation is advocated through acceptance and welcoming opportunity to create anew one's life's work and vision (Pryor, 2010b).

Economists investigate the phenomena of *living on the edge*. The literature reveals an international discussion of *living on the edge* as a herald of environmental risks (Morgolis & Nævdal, 2008); urban renewal (Shin, 2008); rural outmigration of human resources (Kusman & Hertz, 2010); fearful living during challenging economic circumstances (Orne, Fishman, Manke, & Pagnozzi, 2000); and fighting the violence of terrorism to provide collaborative crisis management (Tapscott & Williams, 2010) and market equity for the impoverished (De Soto, 2000).

The ethical dilemma in taking risks with the environment is explored by Morgolis and Nævdal (2008). Likening this to *living on the edge* of risking unknown economic and environmental consequences, these economists propose a methodology of risk classification in an attempt to determine environmental policy (2008). The United States Department of Agriculture reports a rise in outmigration and income loss in rural America in the recent past three years (2007-2010). Those *living on the edge* of

population centers experience vulnerability to world economies (Shane et al, 2009) and economic trends (Kusman & Hertz, 2010; McGranahan, Cromartie, & Wojan, 2010).

*Living on the edge* is found in changing environmental and economic states.

In urban renewal efforts, the reallocation of property in Seoul, South Korea resulted in housing and economic hardship for displaced urban- poor residents (Shin, 2008) and in the violent eviction of primarily migrant squatters living in settlements in Karachi, Pakistan (Fernandez, 1994). Both groups remained unable to afford adequate housing. The subsequent higher housing costs despite compensation for the South Koreans did not alleviate their privations. Displacement of the urban poor from their homes and communities serve as reminders by Shin (2008) and Fernandes (1994) of the unpredictable and dangerous elements in changing circumstances while *living on the edge*. Taking risks in urban renewal can result in unpredictable, negative outcomes.

New horizons are envisioned in business ventures. Those willing to take risks recognize the changing aspects of business enterprise in the Western world. The information age has evolved into the conceptual age. Pink asserts in *A Whole New Mind* (2006) that this change is the boundary edge of a new world proclaiming an age of imaginative thinking in contrast to conventional business strategies of reductive and analytical thinking. To navigate and prosper at the leading edge of the future, he states that a “new mind” is mandatory to survive in business. Pink claims that right brain thinking will provide the edge in succeeding as left brain style thinking is insufficient. To address the current conceptual transformation, a renewed integration of the mind is required to move away from relying upon informational data. Taking risks allows for

innovative influences upon global markets.

Tapscott and Williams (2010) claim that global economies are currently experiencing a transitional period of great magnitude. Just as the agrarian society was forced to change during the rise of a superior economy from the industrial age; these authors state that the information age is being propelled into a unique era. This era is one of wikinomics which requires a collective, world-wide, informal collaboration as a requisite response to the global economic crises. Wikinomics has been designated as a collective collaborative enterprise requiring creativity and discipline. Macrowikinomics extends this concept to encompass not only business but all institutions and all societies (Tapscott & Williams).

The spontaneous collective action of human knowledge and sharing of macrowikinomics is demonstrated by the authors' example of an individual's volunteer effort in developing a life-saving computer program called *Ushahidi* (Tapscott & Williams, 2010). Okolloh, a Kenyan attorney and blogger, was willing to take risks to alleviate the suffering of war. To address the numerous reports she received about the violence that erupted in Kenya's civil war, she developed an innovative response. Reports were posted on her website to help people to avoid the violence of civil war. Unable to afford venture capital, Okolloh and volunteer programmers utilized free, open-access software to construct a computer program to track and map reports of warfare violence in Kenya. By marshalling innovative intelligence, the diffusion and speed of critical information was faster than the response by governmental agencies, relief organizations and subsequently provided life-saving information to Kenyans and relief efforts.

Later, in response to the 2010 Haitian earthquake, the director of the *Ushahidi* program, gathered volunteers in Kenya and the United States to work urgently to save lives in one of the largest relief operations in the world's history (Tapscott & Williams, 2010). This open-source crisis mapping program responded to the massive influx of text messages sent by the earthquake victims. Working over 1,640 miles away these text messages were instantaneously translated, triaged and provided to relief organizations. The accelerated relief efforts pushed beyond the boundaries of the inefficient, compartmentalized bureaucracies to organize human knowledge and compassion into a single proficient entity (2010). The Ushahidi volunteers spontaneously created an effective crisis management modality without the presumed need for hierarchical governmental or private sector financing. Ushahidi is not a patented computer-program; but is an open-sourced program for collaboration that extends beyond disaster management to affect government, journalism, health care, finance and international diplomatic institutions across the globe. Macrowikinomics circumvents the past information-sharing paradigm of inefficient, compartmentalized institutions with confined priorities to effectively organize crises-response efforts through collaboration (2010). Taking risks can assist others to survive danger.

An increased awareness of risk can motivate others to assist in human betterment of those at risk (Tapscott & Williams, 2010). Risk awareness can conversely create risk avoidance that can be harmful to the vulnerable. In the United Kingdom, certain populations such as children and the disabled were found to require protection from inaccurate risk assessment. The mortgage industry was found to avoid taking a risk by

obstructing access to housing loans for disabled persons (Hemmingway, 2010). Lexton, Smith, Olufemi, and Poole (2005) found that child protection professionals found it difficult to assess risk of disabled children.

In taking a risk to support the poor in Peru, Hernando De Soto (1989) struggled against governmental and terrorist threat. The innovative proposal of collective collaborative action holds both peril and promise to a society. Hernando De Soto (2000), an economist supportive of capitalism, pondered the success of capitalism found in countries such as the United States. He was dismayed by the poverty of the Peruvian poor. De Soto also noted that other countries were conscious that still were not successfully a part of capitalism as their nations did not achieve broad economic prosperity.

He pondered the source of modern prosperity and poverty asking why this lack of prosperity remained in his country regardless of the economic aid provided to his country while other countries were affluent. De Soto's pilgrimage in the 1980's initially led him to conclude that equitable access to the legal property rights helped attain economic success in capitalism. While previously restricted Communistic societies have opened up their markets, these nations still remained unsuccessful because their countries' populations did not have the same ability to enter into the open market and generate capital; only the elite were engaged in capitalistic business ventures (De Soto, 2000).

De Soto's investigations led him to further conclude that legal land ownership was critical for his country (2000). Through legal land ownership rights, assets could enter the national economy and generate capital. To address the inequality of the

Peruvian economy, De Soto founded the Institution of Liberty and Democracy in Peru (De Soto, 2010). De Soto (1989) risked his life to advocate for formal recognition of land property rights in Peru to promote capital prosperity.

Leading a small convocation of economists and researchers, De Soto and his colleagues defied a communist party and terrorist organization called *The Shining Path* that endangered the political and economic stability of his country. As a target of terrorism, De Soto survived assassination attempts (De Soto, 1989). However, innocent victims were killed when his headquarters were destroyed in a bombing. De Soto emerged victorious from these assaults by reforming Peruvian governmental policy. His reforms elevated millions from poverty to become successful in small business enterprises (De Soto, 1989). By reducing bureaucratic restraints in formal land ownership and applying inclusive principles with capitalism, the Peruvian poor who had been continually *living on the edge* in destitution were able to gain market access and create wealth in a global economy (De Soto, 1989; 2000). The success of his ideas provided him with international recognition and opportunities in advising other international governments on economic growth.

In taking risks, economic and business efforts are capable of transforming and serving societal needs by global collaboration. The expedition of economics in this collective context is *living on the edge* of a new social model in pioneering collaboration for a just and sustainable world seeking new horizons of wealth creation and preservation. Taking economic risks has the potential to help or hinder the vulnerable in surviving danger.

## General Research Literature

### ***Living on the Edge: As A Choice In Taking Risks And Surviving Danger***

*Living on the edge* as a choice of taking risks and surviving danger has been noted in the general research literature of edgework. Librett in 2008 studied the edgework of outlaw bikers and police as similar societal mores and found gender inequality within both subcultures. These groups expressed the elite nature of voluntary risk-taking, group initiation, and skill acquisition for expert control found in edgework (Lyng, 1990). The alluring desire of testing the limits is described in edgework. Gender roles, however, were found to be perplexing (Brown, 2005) and exclusionary rather than complementary or equal (Librett, 2008). Women experienced hierarchically oppressed roles by the hegemonic male police and outlaw motorcycle members (2008).

Edgework has been transported into the realm of technology and stock trading where the visual and auditory environment is dominated by the computer monitor and numerical, binary data. Smith (2005) stated that participants seek mastery over the adrenalin response within stock market trading. Smith interviewed 25 Internet investors in Denmark, Germany and the United States. Edgework is found in the communication and interaction of investors making risky investments in the stock market (Smith, 2005).

The ethos of pleasure ascribed to drug addiction and the public health approach in governance of drug and alcohol policies were discussed by Zajdow (2010). In an ethnographic study of eight persons with a long-standing past history of multiple-drug use, Zajdow considers the personal motivations to seek pleasure through illicit drug use as irrational. The skill acquisition and experiences of those seeking pleasure through drug



intoxication is likened to edgework (Lyng, 1990). Like edgework, intoxication was described by the participants as being outside oneself and experiencing timelessness. Navigating the pleasure of intoxication is daring the edge between life and death. Zajdow believes modern public health policies need to understand the power of euphoric pleasure in drug addiction to adequately address this issue.

Edgework is found in leisure and sport activities. In Kjolsrod's (2009) comparative analysis, edgework is described as one of four conceptualizations of demanding leisure activities. These activities are: 1. serious leisure, 2. specialized play, 3. edgework, and 4. consumption with a fantasy conclave (Kjolsrod). 'Serious' leisure is a derivation of work with civic contribution through a systematic application and acquisition of skill and knowledge. The basis of 'specialized play' is found in art in which the prospect of ideological or experiential play occurs after investing applied effort over time (Kjolsrod). 'Edgework' is described as a biological interaction of psychological and social elements of self-expression; in which one exposes oneself to dangerously extreme activities in response to a socially-controlled existence. 'Consumption with a fantasy conclave' provides an escape from one's typical normal life to an imaginative or historical culture or time period (Kjolsrod).

According to Kjolsrod (2009), edgework is unachievable without gaining control of one's body and mind. Answering the challenge to triumph over danger is found in edgework. The mastery of skills to successfully complete dangerous leisure activities provides the means to achieve higher levels of participation and satisfaction for the person engaged in edgework.

Seeking satisfaction in extreme sport is related to socio-cultural influences. Fletcher (2008) reviewed several theoretical concepts, including edgework, while exploring the sociological aspects of the participant in high-risk or extreme sport. Those who participate in extreme sports primarily- though not exclusively- are shown to have higher education and economic income (2008). Satisfaction is found in the escape from this social class (Lyng, 1990; Fletcher, 2008) that values disciplined vocations and delays reward. Choosing to take risks and surviving danger is found in extreme sports.

Rajah (2007) investigated the application of edgework as resistance in impoverished, minority women who were participating in a drug treatment program, living in New York with an oppressively violent partner. The intention of the study was to explore the defining actions of edgework resistance and clarify gender, socio-economic and ethnic expressions of this concept. Edgework is found in the acquisition of expertise, pleasure, reward, and limited control by the female with an abusive partner (Rajah, 2007). In this context of resistance, edgework is the attainment of rewarding, covert proficiency allowing these impoverished, minority women, who were involved in a drug treatment program, to navigate relational violence.

### **Nursing Theoretical Literature**

#### **Living on the Edge: As A Choice In Taking Risks And Surviving Danger**

*Living on the edge* as a choice in taking risks and surviving danger is found in nursing theoretical literature. Nursing takes risks in responding to those who have survived catastrophic events (Britson, 2009; Kagan, 2011). Nursing care includes the human-environment relationship. Nursing activism for policy changes to avert natural or

human-made disasters (Kagan, 2011) can contribute to quality of life and assist others in surviving danger.

The choice to take risks is explored by Mark Levi (1985) who describes living on the edge as a dialysis patient. For Levi, living on the edge was taking a risk to leave his dialysis unit for the first time in six months. He described the fear and dread in leaving his precarious sense of safety to spend time with family at the beach. He ponders death as terrifying yet filled with the promise of dying well. Levi hopes his death is an experience of moment-by-moment awareness of pleasure without uncertainty. He finds that the more he leaves safety behind, the more he is able to engage with life, and discovers that taking risks is imperative to living well.

Taking risks is considered an intrinsic nature of being human and creates opportunities for quality of life and health (Bunkers, 2009). Levi (1985) faces life and death through experiencing years of vulnerable health. Levi encounters in living on the edge the feeling of uncertainty and taking risks; hope and despair; fear and courage. He experiences delight at the edge of the shore taking risks and plunging into the surf. Uncertainty and fear are found in living on the edge.

Employing the humanbecoming theory, Bunkers (2003) pondered the meaning of uncertainty and the stranger. Bunkers stated by facing insecurity and fear one engages in meaningful relationships with kindness and compassion. Levi (1985) lives meaningfully with others in pursuing a graduate degree in social work to counsel others. With his hopes for tomorrow, he discovers joy in the positive aspects of living on the edge.

Nursing theory and perioperative nursing are described as being on the cutting

edge as a metaphor for advanced knowledge in nursing practice and vision. Deriving work satisfaction from “Living on the Cutting Edge” (p.10), perioperative nurses enjoy professional mastery (Wood, 1991). This work is considered fulfilling and a separate culture within nursing by the participants. The humanbecoming theory governed by the humanbecoming school of thought created by R.R. Parse has been described as “...the cutting edge” by Cody & Mitchell (1992, p. 58). The humanbecoming theory is the first theory exclusive to nursing that comprehensively governs nursing research (Parse, 1998; 2001, practice (1998; 2007b), education (2004), leading-following (2008b) and ethics (Parse, 2010).

### **Nursing Research Literature**

#### ***Living on the Edge: As A Choice In Taking Risks And Surviving Danger***

*Living on the edge* as a choice in taking risks and surviving danger is found in nursing research. Nursing science has attended to those who are uninsured as *living on the edge*. A phenomenological study by Orne, Fishman, Manka and Pagnozzi (2000) described the revealed themes of uninsured employed Americans as *living on the edge* of a “marginalized life” who were “up against rocks and hard places” by “making choices-chancing it” and “getting by-more or less” (p.207). The fear of losing their health and always feeling socially and physically vulnerable was a lingering threat for those who were working but uninsured. The participants reported having to make choices about their health care and taking risks by not attending to their health due to financial constraints. The participants described their experience as uncertainty while taking risks and as a “balancing act between faith and fear” (p. 211).

Faith has been studied in the humanbecoming school theory. The structure of the lived experience of faith in Doucet's (2008) study was: "discerning conviction with perpetual alliances arising with fortitude amid adversity" (p.348). This knowledge guides nurses while their patients' prioritize their values of health. Additionally, this knowledge increases understanding of their patients' faith as nurses and patients coparticipate during intense health experiences.

Fear is a strong emotive response to the fearful anticipation of a threat. While acknowledging adversity, the lived experience of feeling fear also encompassed a sense of assurance in this formative meaning illuminated by Baumann (2009). Assurance is a dynamic existence that includes the paradox of feeling certainty-uncertainty (Bunkers, 2007; Morrow, 2010) and in the lived experience of courage (Bournes, 2002). Bournes' concept inventing of courage revealed that the humanbecoming understanding of courage was: "deliberate steadfast risking while creatively living the cherished with opportunities-restrictions" (p.148). Having courage is requisite in taking a risk and surviving danger (2002). Abiding with the ebb and flow of fear and faith, governed by courage amidst sureness and unsureness, persons are *living on the edge* in taking a risk and surviving danger.

Bunkers (2009) and Britson (2009) guided by the humanbecoming theory employed the Parse method in their research of the lived experience of taking a risk. Bunkers (2009) revealed that the lived experience of taking a risk among nine Midwestern participants was "venturing forth amid potential peril, as apprehension with elation surfaces in novel engagements" (p. 245). Britson (2009) found a similar emotion

of “spirited delight” (p.96) that surfaced in the meaning of taking a risk. For those who experienced natural disaster, the structure of taking a risk was “persevering amid potential peril, as discomforting trepidation with spirited delight surfaces in daunting endeavors” (p.124). Having courage in anticipation of the possibles and finding faith in overcoming the fear of feeling unsure are among the rhythmic patterns of the human universe in taking a risk and surviving danger. There is joyous enlivening in taking a risk and *living on the edge*.

### **General Theoretical Literature**

#### ***Living on the Edge: As Engaging With Health Experiences In Which Persons And Nurses Coparticipate***

In the beginning of the twentieth century human science equated empathy to an understanding that occurs within human interaction (Stueber, 2008) such as the interactions between the nurse and the patient. Empathy is an essential component of understanding another’s lived experience (Greenfield & Jensen, 2010). This concept was initially advocated by the hermeneutic philosophy traditions (Stueber, 2008). Multiple definitions for empathy have unfolded throughout the years and across scientific disciplines (Preston & deWaal, 2002).

Daniel Batson’s defined empathy as quoted by Steuber (2008) as a response that “includes feeling sympathetic, compassionate, warm, softhearted, tender, and the like, and according the empathy-altruism hypothesis, it evokes altruistic motivation” (section 5.3, para. 1). Steuber goes on to state, “ Batson (1991: 117) contrasts empathy to a cluster of affective responses he calls ‘personal distress’ which is “made up of more self-oriented

feelings such as upset, alarm, anxiety, and distress” (section 5.3, para. 1). Batson’s definition of empathy provides the framework for this discussion of empathy as an altruistic presence. For the purpose of this discourse, empathy will be defined as a social response that drives sincerely altruistic motivations (Stueber, 2008) by the nurse with the patient in caring for others. Empathy promotes comforting actions in response to universally lived experiences of suffering (Commons & Wolfson, 2002).

Phenomenological philosopher, Edith Stein, believed that empathy was innate. Stein conceptualized empathy as a process moving through three levels (Maatta, 2006). In level one of self-transposal and active listening, a person attempts to understand the other’s experience. In level two of identification and merging, self-identification merges with the other person and an unexpected, exact awareness of another person’s emotions occurs. In level three of sympathy and recovery, one sympathizes with the other yet a separation of self from the experience occurs that results in a recovery of self (Maata, 2006).

Stein believed that empathy is identifying with the lived experience of others (Maatta, 2006). Nursing can prepare for coparticipating in intense health experiences with patients by understanding how to progress through Stein’s three levels of empathy. The nurse needs to recognize the importance of self-recovery by distancing oneself appropriately from the patient. As the nurse moves forward through the first level of self-transposal into the second level of identifying with another’s lived experience, the nurse may fear being emotionally fatigued and unable to compassionately care for the patient (Maata, 2006). However, Maatta states that if the nurse understands the process, the nurse

will be able to navigate the requisite closeness and distance to move forward into the third level of self-recovery (Maata, 2006). Stein's process of empathy imparts an effective strategy for nurses to meaningfully coparticipate with patients in intense health experiences thereby improving quality of life.

Suffering is an intense health experience in which persons and nurses coparticipate. Suffering is a complex experience (Cassel, 1982; 2003). Cassel (2003) suggested that one must be willing to travel in the patient's world. This journey is a phenomenological recognition of the personally lived experience that obligates another (e.g. the nurse) to alleviate suffering (Cassel, 2003). Empathetically understanding a patient's suffering, grief, or frustration provides the opportunity to engage with that person and ease their distress. Conversely, the inability to govern one's empathic response can become a burden for one's emotional health of a service provider (Bandura, 2002); such as a nurse. The presence of the nurse is a powerful agent for healing suffering or increasing pain. The antithesis of empathy is found in the fictitious person of Nurse Ratched in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. This nurse's presence is a dominant evil in her resolute intention to increase the suffering of those she is caring for rather than alleviating their distress (Kesey, 1962/2007). The nurse's coparticipation with the patient in intense health experiences may have deleterious effects and increase suffering if compassion and empathy are absent.

In a poem entitled *To the Nurses of the World*, by John Wayne Schlatter (2001), the presence of a nurse is a proclamation of honoring the other that eases suffering in a myriad of ways. In long-striding lyrics, the poem speaks of the courage of nurses who



seek *living on the edge* to see beyond the known into the mystery of illness. It is the nurse who bears witness by singing “the melody of consideration” (p. 335) in honor of the patient’s humanity; and is a warrior who creates miracles in the name of love.

He wrote, “...You are explorers, knowing that once you have gone as far as you can see, you will still see farther...”

You are singers spreading the melody of consideration...

You are magicians creating real miracles that inspire patients and families.

Like King Arthur and Joan of Arc, you are warriors battling against the villains of negativity...

For no one can practice your profession unless they already possess a brain brimming with wisdom, boundless courage and a heart filled with love.

You are living proof that humanity is created in the image and likeness of God, and the name of that God is Love.” (p. 335-336).

### **Nursing Theoretical Literature**

#### ***Living on the Edge As Engaging With Health Experiences In Which Persons And Nurses Coparticipate***

Nursing has explored the philosophical essences of the nurse and person coparticipating in intense health experiences in *living on the edge*. In the humanbecoming perspective, humans freely choose meaning. The ability of the nurse to understand the meaning of one’s lived experience creates the potential for health and quality of life. Mitchell and Bunkers (2003) wrote in *Engaging the abyss: A mis-take of opportunity?* about a unique opportunity to engage with the patient when on the edge of the abyss.

They define the abyss as “risking being present to the explicit-tacit truth of a situation” (p. 123). The abyss holds all three themes of *living on the edge* as it is a sacred place one travels to or where one lives; a choice of taking risks and surviving danger; and, engaging with health experiences in which persons and nurses coparticipate.

The abyss, as conceptualized by Mitchell and Bunkers (2003), is a uniquely frightening place of being. The abyss is illuminated in nursing practice as a sacred and powerful space. When encountering the abyss, one arrives upon the edge looking into a moment of intense awareness which may be suffering or joy. The nurse risks vulnerability when engaging the abyss. The fear is risking feeling the agony or experiencing joy of another. Exposure to intense emotions may be distressing for the nurse. One of the authors shared her experience of distress upon viewing a patient and family receiving disturbing news. As one of the family members looked through the glass-paned room, his eyes met the author’s. The author instantaneously turned away from this family member’s sorrow-filled gaze. She wonders, “What was that abyss that almost took my breath away and yet was as fragile as a baby’s breath?” (p. 122). In this chosen moment of fearful disregard, the author wonders what meaningful wisdom was lost. Another example of the authors’ dis-ease with the abyss is shown in the inability to remain emotionally engaged with a man who experienced two cerebral vascular accidents. His countenance of agonizing suffering was sometimes overwhelming. During these times she chose to disengage with the patient. The lingering mystery of what truths were lost remains with the author.

One may lose their balance as the abyss beckons them to the edge. One chooses

whether to risk one's self-possession or to withdraw; losing the chance to accompany another on their journey with the abyss. Each choice holds peril and promise. The fear of being overwhelmed by the abyss can cause nurses to turn aside and dis-engage from a potentially profound transformation. The abyss offers opportunity to deeply relate to another. When entrusted with sharing the sacredness of the moment at the edge the abyss, the nurse holds the opportunity to bear witness as the person lives their quality of life (2003). This awareness confers reactions of fear and misgiving. True presence requires love and compassion to engage the truth of the abyss. According to Mitchell and Bunkers (2003), "in being present, in risking engaging with the explicit-tacit truth of a situation, one discovers truth and only love can abide in truth" (p.123).

According to Naef (2006), "bearing witness is a human mode of coexistence" (p. 147) in which the nurse listens to the other and remains present. Bearing witness in nursing necessitates a "moral space" (p. 146). These spaces can be social, political or existential places, such as found in the abyss (Bunkers, 2003; Naef, 2006). Lingering presence abides with and honors another's life choices (Bournes & Naef, 2006).

Nurses know the abyss. To abide at the edge of the abyss requires courage and respect. How nurses relate with others at the abyss shapes the patient's and nurses' quality of life and health. It is at the edge of the abyss that human existence holds deep meaning. It is in these moments of intense health experiences that the nurse and person are *living on the edge*.

The theoretical principles of *living on the edge* as engaging with health experiences in which persons and nurses coparticipate is discovered in nursing theory. In

the caring nursing theory of Jean Watson (Watson, 2008), the nursing science of unitary human beings of Martha Rogers (Rogers, 1992; Wright, 2007), the unitary nursing theory of Margaret Newman (2008), the culture care diversity and universality theory of Madeleine Leininger, and, in the humanbecoming nursing theory of Rosemarie Parse (1998, 2006a) nursing presence is considered an indivisible, irreducible aspect of the person-environment. The presence of the nurse with the person is considered the primary focus of healing or transformation for the nurse and the person. However, presence does not have the same meaning for each of these theorists.

The science of caring theory by Jean Watson describes the transpersonal caring relationship as an art of professional nursing (Watson, 2007) that exemplifies an ideal relationship of the nurse with the patient (Watson, 2008). Transpersonal caring is an illustration of the nurse and person's coparticipation in health experiences. The transpersonal caring is a relationship of unconditional honoring and acceptance of the patient (Watson, 2008) that views the patient as whole irrespective of their physical condition (Watson, 2007). The nurse intentionally chooses to be authentically present in a caring moment that becomes transformative and healing for the nurse and patient (Watson, 2008). This mutual relationship is a compassionate dwelling in the moment that becomes an expanded plane of consciousness for the patient and nurse. With love and caring by the professional nurse and patient reveals a transpersonal connection (Watson, 2006). This focused caring is considered by Watson to be more precise, and personalized (Watson, 2008) becoming a powerful moment for healing for the patient and nurse. Transpersonal caring is conveyed through verbal and non-verbal communication and

includes the scientific applications and tasks of nursing actions (2008). The healing practice of the nurse is transpersonal caring (Watson, 2006).

Margaret Newman's nursing theory, health as expanding consciousness, focuses upon the relationship of the patient and nurse as an evolving pattern of the whole in connection with the environment (2008). The HEC theory was influenced by Roger's science of unitary human beings (Sarter, 2004; Pharris, 2006). Health is viewed as pattern of the person regardless of disease and non-disease states (2006). When conditions of a person's health changes, the person moves from normal and predictable fluctuations to unpredictable disorganization (2006). It is during this disrupted and disorganized state of the patient that the nurse enters into the person-environment to assist the patient through the disturbance and uncertainty (Sarter, 2004; Pharris, 2006). Effective nursing care requires "transforming presence" (Newman, 2008, p. 56). The nurse and patient coparticipate in the transformative development of the nurse's and patients' re-organizing process (Pharris, 2006). As the nurse is present, the patient's patterning emerges into new patterns of health as expanded consciousness (Pharris, 2006; Newman, 2008). To attain an understanding of the patient's health patterns, the nurse must be "fully present in the moment" (p. 56) (Newman, 2008). Recognition of the new emerging health pattern helps identify the meaning of the health experience and guides nursing care (Newman). Transforming presence allows the nurse and the patient to engage in intense health experiences.

Madeleine Leininger developed the theory of culture care diversity and universality. This theory recognizes the importance of understanding culture and the

cultural values of patients. Leininger proposes that the nurse's presence is a powerful nursing skill and stated, "Care as presence is often deeply valued and promotes therapeutic outcomes (Leininger & McFarland, 2006, p. 286).

The science of unitary human beings was developed by nursing theorist Martha Rogers (1914-1994). This theory addresses the nurse and person as coparticipating in health experiences. In this unitary theory, the person and the environment are inseparable fields of energy (Rogers, 1992). As a result of this connection, a mutual exchange of human and environmental energy (fields) occurs that is unifying (Watson & Smith, 2004) limitless, and eternal (Wright, 2007). The rhythms of the fields develop dynamic patterns of change that are nonrepeating. Nursing practice is identified as an art and science in the science of unitary human beings. The coparticipation process between the nurse and patient recognizes and respects diverse healing modalities (Rogers, 1992). These therapies include noninvasive remedies such as meditation, therapeutic touch, and healing environments. Healing environments are "light, colour, harmony, intentional mutual patterning of human-environmental field; pattern manifestations appraisal and repatterning" (Watson & Smith, 2004).

In the humanbecoming theory, Rosemarie Parse (1998) denotes true presence as a coparticipatory action with the nurse and patient that bears witness to the meaning of the patient's lived experience. True presence upholds the important tenets of unconditional love and acceptance in bearing witness to the patient's articulated lived health experience. True presence honors the other's dignity and freedom of choice as they explore whether they will change their valued priorities of health (Parse, 1998). As the

nurse dwells in true presence with the patient, the patient is assisted in illuminating the meaning of the situation and transcending to reach their personal goals (Parse, 1998). This is not a directive nursing intervention. Rather it is a way of being present in the timeless moment with the patient that endures (Parse, 1998). This timelessness of presence transcends spacetime. True presence enhances quality of life as the nurse and patient coparticipate in health experiences.

In theoretical nursing literature, Derouin and Bravender (2004) described the necessity of nursing presence with the phenomenon of adolescents and young adults who self-harm. These youth are *living on the edge* with their hidden suffering. Self-mutilation is a response to overwhelming impulses in which adolescents repetitively wound themselves with sharp objects. The aim of this action is not suicide. Self-mutilation seeks to alleviate relentless psychological pain. The contemporary youth in the United States that self-harm do not have the stereotypical mental illnesses (e.g. clinical depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, anxiety disorder or borderline personality) that have previously been reported in the literature. These authors report that the current demographic profile reveals today's afflicted youth appear successful, sociable, highly motivated and well-liked. Yet, while appearing outwardly successful, they are inwardly experiencing anguish and are unable to cope with their psychological pain. The authors contend that contemporary stressors experienced by American youth are magnified by the ubiquitous exposure to violence, a discordant family structure, by feeling not listened to, and in being misunderstood. These suffering adolescents and young people are living on the physical and psychological edge of a conflicted existence.

How nurses coparticipated with their patients' health experiences is explored in the concept of empathy. Maata (2006) discusses empathy as a means of compassionate action in nursing. Nurses are invited to understand the important difference between sentimentality and empathy by connecting with the patient and yet appropriately distancing oneself from the patient. According to Maata (2006), sentimentality is considered an experience of uncontrolled emotions; while empathy is a disciplined compassion in 'being with' another. By moving through the three levels of Stein's notion of empathy, the nurse avoids being overwhelmed (2006). The nurse is able to remain close enough to the patient's lived experience yet sufficiently distanced to be effective for the patient. Accurately navigating the tension between closeness and distance is important for nurses in caring for others.

In the humanbecoming theory, as with Derouin and Bravender's discourse (2004), the experiences of feeling listened to (Kagan, 2008) and feeling misunderstood (Condon, 2008) have been explored and are found as crucial elements of existence. Condon examined the concept of feeling misunderstood through the humanbecoming theoretical concept inventing (2008). Condon found that "feeling misunderstood is a burdensome disquietude with potent disregard arising with communion-aloneness" (p.214). Derouin and Bravender report a corresponding sense of disregard in being misunderstood by self-harming youth (2004).

The humanbecoming theory recognizes the primacy of human dignity and worth in nursing care (Parse, 2010). However, the phenomenon described by self-mutilating youth reveals similar essential concepts of feeling misunderstood (Condon, 2008) and the



import of human dignity that the humanbecoming theory in nursing advocates (Parse, 2010). For these youth living on the edge is a way of appearing to be balanced while suffering leads them beyond the edge of coping into self-mutilation. Their attempts for a reprieve from their anguish, resultant suffering, and seeking to be understood are poignantly interconnected. *Living on the edge* as the nurse and patient coparticipate while engaging in health experiences is found to be fundamental in nursing theory.

### **Nursing Research Literature**

#### ***Living on the Edge As Engaging With Health Experiences In Which Persons And Nurses Coparticipate***

*Living on the edge* as engaging with health experiences in which persons and nurses coparticipate is found in nursing research. Presence of the nurse with the person has been explored in theoretical nursing literature. Presence has been studied in nursing research through the exploration of universally lived experiences of feeling listened to and feeling understood and in feeling misunderstood.

Feeling listened to (Kagan, 2008), feeling understood (Jonas-Simpson, 2001), and feeling misunderstood (Condon, 2010) are important aspects to understand when engaging with health experiences in which persons and nurses coparticipate. Kagan (2008) employed the Parse research method to study the lived experience of feeling listened to. Ten participants living in Chicago were willing to speak about this phenomenon. The core concepts of feeling listened to “are *unreserved affirmation amid potential irreverence amid potential liberating contentment, and benevolent affiliations*” (2008, p.63). *Unreserved affirmation amid potential irreverence* reveals not only the

affirmation when being listened to; but the struggle against discourtesy one experiences in order to be heard. In this study when a person feels listened to, there is a *potential* for *liberating contentment*. An emotional response surfaces with *benevolent affiliations* when someone feels listened to. These participants all wished for a respectful non-judgment regard in feeling listened to. As these findings reflect a quality of life, this study informs nurses in how they can bear witness to another by valuing and honoring a person's point of view by listening to them (Kagan, 2008).

Feeling understood is a universal experience that was studied by Jonas-Simpson (2001). This phenomenological study cocreated music as a means of expressing the participants' and the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon of feeling understood in accordance with their health. These 10 participants were engaged with intense health experiences of multiple sclerosis, fibromyalgia, recurring cancer, and motor vehicle accident injuries. This coparticipation occurred through mutually choosing the tempo, loudness or softness, and the extemporaneously composed notes on a flute played by the researcher. The musical expressions were published in written musical form. The core concepts discovered were "*an unburdening quietude with triumphant bliss, attentive reverence of nurturing engagements, and fortifying integrity amid potential disregard*" (p. 224). This answered the research question of "What is the structured of feeling understood?" and enhances quality of life. As found in feeling listened to by Kagan, (2008), feeling understood included a close attentiveness of listening to each other.

These findings of desiring attentiveness and reverence are consistent with Kagan (2008) and found in Condon's (2010) study of feeling misunderstood. Condon (2010)

studied the universal lived experience of feeling misunderstood with ten participants with the condition of vitiligo and uncovered four core concepts. They are “*disheartening insignificance, discordant affiliations, resignation with resiliency, and inventive endeavors*” (p.141). The structural transposition became: “feeling misunderstood is haunting irrelevance surfacing with dissonant engagements, as acquiescence with tenacity emerges with ingenious enterprises” (p.143). Condon (2010) states that the implications for nurses are: 1) to become more aware and considerate in recognizing the feelings of insignificance by persons feeling misunderstood; 2) to recognize the indifferent affiliations experienced by the person to ensure discussion takes place with the person; 3) become more considerate of others who are different; and 4) support the patient’s personal strengths by acknowledging their sense of resignation with resiliency when they experience feeling misunderstood. Feeling misunderstood or understood while being listened to is the engaging with health experiences in which persons and nurses coparticipate.

An engaged relationship with the person and nurse provides a sense of presence and is found in giving each other the time and opportunity to tell their stories. A sense of timelessness is an important aspect of lingering presence. Conceptualized by the humanbecoming theory, lingering presence was further explored by Ortiz (2003) using the humanbecoming hermeneutic method. By dwelling with all the written letters of remembrance of those who died with AIDS as reported in Brown’s text written in 1992, *A Promise to Remember: The NAMES Project Book of Letters*, Ortiz uncovered the structured meaning of lingering presence. From these intimate writings, lingering

presence emerged as “a human experience that is lived at many realms of the universe all-at once” (p.152). Lingering presence is described as a moment that transcends spacetime and stays with the person (2003). Lingering presence is closely connected to health and quality of life as a process of becoming as persons and nurses coparticipate by engaging with health experiences. Lingering presence remains illimitable existing on the edges of space-time.

Fibromyalgia has been described as *living on the edge* between capability and incapacity. Nursing science reports the negative aspects of chronic pain with fibromyalgia as “falling over the edge of exhaustion” (p. 22). Sallinen, Kukkurainen, Peltokallio and Mikkelsen (2010) found four emergent experiences of “confusion, coping with fluctuating symptoms, being ‘in between’ and being over the edge” (p. 21) in the experience of workability in women who were diagnosed with fibromyalgia. The notion of having a legitimate physiological condition was frequently doubted by their providers and many were confused by the disrespect expressed to them. As they balanced on the edge, the participants found it difficult to maintain full work ability and avoid disability.

All participants reported feeling ‘over the edge’ of exhaustion at some point and described symptoms of sleeplessness, unresolved high levels of pain, overwhelming fatigue and depression that was typically exacerbated by accumulating negative life events. Being ‘over the edge’ is a multifaceted dimension that encompasses social disengagement in response to physiological fatigue, sleeplessness, intolerable pain, and overwhelming emotional exhaustion. Therefore, these women with fibromyalgia were

*living on the edge* of an intense health experience choose to coparticipate with nurses.

Baumann (2003) found similar engagement-disengagement patterns of relating in his study on the universally lived experience of adolescent girls in feeling very tired. The core concepts revealed are “1) Feeling very tired is struggling to attend to chosen endeavors and projects, 2) Feeling very tired arises with comforts-discomforts, which go along with activities and involvements with others, 3) Feeling very tired is part of the paradoxical experience of feeling very tired-feeling energized (p. 332)”.

Baumann (2003) reports the paradox of feeling very tired -feeling energized. This paradox is similar to the women with fibromyalgia experiencing fluctuating symptoms. A clinical practice application from the study by Sallinen, Kukkurainen, Peltokallio and Mikkelsen (2010) posits a cautionary admonishment to advanced practice nurses to avoid bias and treat fibromyalgia as a credible, chronic, painful condition. It is imperative to recognize when patients are describing their experiences of being “in between” or “over the edge” and intervene without delay in order to improve their rehabilitation and ability to work. How nurses choose to coparticipate with their patients during intense health experiences effects quality of life.

A phenomenological study by Zerwekh (2000) explored the nature of ‘caring on the ragged edge’ (p. 47) of those who have been marginalized by society. These patients are disenfranchised and *living on the edge* of society due to their health problems and the community’s fearful response. As a result they are exiled from the society. These patients, pushed away from the community, struggle with the consequences of estrangement and are blamed for their difficulties. Those exiled generate suspicions and

fear when encountering others who are accepted by the community. Zerwekh (2000) illuminates the significant impact how nursing coparticipates in intense health experiences with societal outcasts. Seven nurses who exemplified a professional life that sustained compassionate care and developed meaningful relationships with those marginalized from society were interviewed. The nurses' patients were described as persons homeless; adolescents taking risks with their sexual behavior and abusing substances; the mentally ill; and those living with HIV/AIDS.

One of these nurses' narratives stated that freeing herself from judging others was liberating and sustained her in this demanding ragged edge of caring for the abandoned. The reward of this work arises in prevailing over the fear of mysterious dis-eases; overcoming prejudices; and, revering the common humanity with whom they provide care.

Three meta-themes were reported by Zerwekh (2000) as: the Human Connection, the Community Connection, and Making Self-Care Possible (p. 54). This compassionate caring requires fearless courage to venture into the marginalized spaces to provide care and value those who have been disenfranchised by a fearful society. This nursing practice is also described as "striving to understand the reality of another person" and "being with as authentic presence" (p. 59). These nurses chose to compassionately engage with their patients; thereby improving quality of life for themselves and their patients as they coparticipated in health experiences.

Bunkers (2003) wrote about *the stranger* as one who needs to be understood rather than viewed as different and threatening. Her findings concur with Zerwekh by

stating "...never ...has the world been more in need of finding ways to welcome those that are different and those that are viewed as *the stranger* to the larger society." (p. 305).

Bunkers (2003) and Zwerkh (2000) assert that by embracing fear and uncertainty, the nurse can relate compassionately with those who are marginalized by society.

Being excluded and 'living on the edge of the community' (p. 309) is a theme found in families of parents who have major depression and withdrew from the family (Ahlstrom, Skarsater, & Danielson, 2009). A pattern of distancing from community and within the family was revealed. Social withdrawal became a different pattern of being with the family; forcing the family to find new ways of being as a family; and in completing individual tasks. These families are *living on the edge* during intense health experiences of major depression. Nurses can invite the families to coparticipate in developing coping strategies to ease suffering by expressing their lived experience, planning for care, and resisting social withdrawal to improve their quality of life.

Feeling cared for in a phenomenological-hermeneutic Parse method study by Bunkers (2004) supported a similar concept of closeness and distancing found in Edith Stein's process of empathy (Maata, 2006). While coparticipating with the nurse, the concept of the person feeling cared for is an important aspect of a person's health experience in achieving quality of life. Bunkers investigated the lived experience of feeling cared for with 10 women who were or had experienced homelessness (2004). In this study, the structure of "feeling cared for is contentment with intimate affiliations arising with salutary endeavors, while honoring uniqueness amid adversity" (p. 68). The conceptual integration of "feeling cared for is connecting-separating in the originating of

valuing” (p.68) provided unique knowledge for nursing science. Recognizing the paradox of connecting-separating provides optimal coparticipation in health experiences by the nurse and patient. Patients *living on the edge* of connecting-separating are living their quality of life and health.

### **Summary of Theoretical and Research Literature**

*Living on the edge* is a universally lived experience found in diverse frontiers of human existence. This phenomenon acknowledges the sacredness of being. *Living on the edge* is expressed in the human pursuit for new discoveries that involves travelling to and dwelling within the sacred spaces and places of human existence. *Living on the edge* is found in taking risks and surviving danger. Sometimes one does not survive encountering peril when engaging with the humanuniverse. Human beings explore frontier spaces of their humanuniverse that reveals a powerful desire to understand the meaning of life. *Living on the edge* is a communal engagement with the humanuniverse. *Living on the edge* is a personal journey that may include the nurse as a chosen companion. Nurses and patients engage in intense health experiences as they live on the edge of changing health and quality of life. Understanding this phenomenon will create new knowledge for quality of life and nursing science.



## Chapter Three: Research Methodology

### Background of the Parse Research Method

The humanbecoming theory by Rosemarie Parse provided the structure of the research design employing the Parse research method (Parse, 1998, 2001, 2005, 2007b, 2011). This research method is a distinctive heuristic-phenomenological research method based upon the ontological assumptions and principles of the humanbecoming school of thought by Rosemarie Rizzo Parse (Parse, 2007a, 2007b, 2011). The method is a synthesis of phenomenology and hermeneutics. While phenomenology inquiry seeks to comprehend the ontological meaning of the human experience according to the participant, hermeneutics strives to interpret the meaning of the lived experience in accord with the humanbecoming school of thought. The human experience of *living on the edge* for those living in the frontier of the American west was explored through the Parse research methodology.

Humanbecoming inquiry applies the following constructed principles for research methodology delineated by Parse (2001, 2011):

- “1. The methodology is constructed to be in harmony with and evolve from the ontological beliefs of the research tradition.
2. The methodology is an overall design of precise processes that adhere to scientific rigor.
3. The methodology specifies the order within the processes appropriate for inquiry within the research tradition.
4. The methodology is an aesthetic composition with balance in form” (Parse,

2001, p.167).

The fundamental assumptions of the Parse research method are:

- “1. Humans are indivisible, unpredictable, everchanging humanuniverse mysteries who freely choose with situation among illimitable options to live pattern preferences.
2. Descriptions of lived experiences whether expressed orally, in text, or in artforms enhance understanding of humanbecoming.
3. Researcher-participant, researcher-text, and researcher-artform dialogues discover the meaning of phenomena as humanly lived.
4. The researcher, while inventing, abiding with logic, and adhering to semantic consistency, creatively conceptualizes findings from descriptions, texts, and artforms and weaves these with the ontology of humanbecoming to contribute to nursing knowledge development for the betterment of humankind.
5. Sciencing with the humanbecoming methods is everchanging as new knowledge informs the school of thought.” (Parse, 2011, p. 11)

There are four phenomenological-elements uniquely characteristic of the Parse research method. Firstly, the person describes health and quality of life through their personal, universally lived experiences through symbols of the spoken word, metaphors, photography, drawings, paintings, movement, and music. Secondly, data collection transpires with the researcher in true presence with the participant during the dialogical engagement. The dialogical engagement is the participant’s conversation about *living on*

*the edge* as opposed to an interview. Thirdly, the dialogue is analyzed through the extraction-synthesis process that progressively shifts the initial essences of the dialogue to greater levels of abstraction. The essences are then analyzed according to the core concepts and the structure of the universally lived experience. Lastly, the findings are heuristically interpreted in congruence with the humanbecoming theory. (Parse, 2001).

Parse (2001) maintains that rigorous analysis of qualitative research is imperative. The evidence for establishing acceptable validity and credibility is found in the investigator's articulation of a consistently logical research method. The critical analysis of nursing research establishes the credibility and worth of an investigation is imperative for the advancement of nursing science.

### **Rationale for the Selection of the Parse Research Method**

The Parse Research method is commendable as it is derived from a cohesive nursing theory that guides nursing practice. The Parse Research method is an integrated nursing research approach evolving from the humanbecoming theory that uncovers the meaning and patterns of humanly lived experiences of health (Parse, 2001, 2011). The humanbecoming theory contributes directly to the science of nursing, thereby, guiding nursing care and enhancing quality of life.

*Living on the edge* is a concept acknowledged as a universally lived experience of health and therefore, concerns a person's health or quality of life (Peterson-Lund *in press*; S. Bunkers, personal communication, 2009; R. R. Parse, personal communication, 2009). As the Parse Research Method guides the study of universally lived experiences, this methodology will best uncover the structured meaning of *living on the edge*.

The Parse Research method is congruent with this researcher's epistemological and ontological perspective. The connection of the human with the universe (humanuniverse) found in the humanbecoming theory, is an assumption of this research method. The concept of the human with the universe signifies a strong interrelatedness that is consistent with this researcher's beliefs and is reflected in the Lakota expression, "Mitakuye Oyasin" (We are all related). The ethical tenets conveyed by the Parse research method uphold the inherent dignity of the human being (Parse, 2010). The nurse understands the human being as freely situated to choose their valued priorities of health respects the personal choices and dignity of each person.

The generation of developing a frontier nursing theory surfaced from a lifelong residence and caring for those in the frontier. An appreciation arose for the frontier population during my nursing career. This experience inspired an objective to develop a frontier nursing theory to improve the quality of life for this population. The Parse Research method is the best means to deepen understanding of the universally lived experience of *living on the edge* and enhance nursing care of those living on the frontier.

This Parse Research Method was chosen for this study because: (a) this method is a distinctively nursing integrated research method; (b) the epistemology, ontology and ethics of the method are congruent with this researcher's perspective; and (c) the method provides the optimum approach to answer the research question, "What is the structure of the lived experience of *living on the edge*?"

### **Research Design**

The study setting and the definition of frontier is defined for the purpose of clarity

and precision. The Parse research method is described in detail and provides the method to uncover the concept of *living on the edge*.

The Parse research method is founded upon nursing science derived entirely from nursing theory. This singular focus supports nursing science as a distinctive discipline. This method is one of three humanbecoming research methodologies in the humanbecoming school of thought (Parse, 1981, 1998, 2005, 2011). The Parse research method is a phenomenological- hermeneutical method established upon the humanbecoming theory that exclusively guides nursing research (Parse, 1998, 2001). This study explored the lived experiences of *living on the edge* by persons living in the frontier of the American west

**Study setting.** The research inquiry explored the phenomenon of *living on the edge* with frontier persons living in the American west. The study occurred with the participants in the privacy of their homes or public places (e.g. community libraries or meeting rooms) in frontier counties.

**Definition of frontier.** The frontier of western America depicts the most remote and isolated areas in the nation (Rural Assistance Center, 2008). The indices utilized to define frontier and rural are manifold. Ecological, geographical isolation, social, cultural, inaccessibility to services, occupational and population densities are descriptors utilized to define the meaning of rural and frontier (Willits & Bealer, 1967; Racher, Vollman, & Annis, 2004; South Dakota Department of Health, Rural Health, 2008; Young, 2009).

For the purpose of this study, frontier is defined by county population density and informed through the literature of frontier authors and nursing science. The use of

narrative is supported by Bunkers (2006b) and Milton (2004).

Frontier is designated as counties with six persons or fewer per square mile (Popper, 1986; Rural Assistance Center, 2008; South Dakota Department of Health; Office of Data, Statistics, & Vital Records, 2008; South Dakota Department of Health, Rural Health, 2008; Young, 2009; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Defining attributes of the frontier is reflected within the musings of frontier authors (Peterson, 1961; Hall, 1991, 1993; Norris, 1993; Bunkers, 2006a). Norris states that the prairie frontier made her “a human being” (1993, p.11). She writes of the Dakota prairies as a spiritual geography of contrasts where silence is loud and the emptiness of the plains is full of “miraculous things” (1993, p.10). However, the frontier will bestow its beauty only after one is tested by the harshness of the land and survives (Deloria, 1944/1998; Peterson, 1961; Hall, 1991, 1993). Living with the Dakota frontier, one may find oneself alone but not lonesome; isolated but surrounded by identity. Bunkers (2006a) found freedom and creativity in the vastness and silence of the prairie. Other geospatial definitions are recognized by nursing science as ‘new frontiers’. These areas include international areas (Yonge, Ferguson & Myrick, 2006), disaster areas (Weiss, Holcomb, & Crigger, 2006), and aerospace environments (Rogers, 1992; Parse, 2007b).

Frontier is defined by population density, through the literature of frontier authors and in nursing science. These descriptions of frontier reveal the setting and nursing explorations that guided the research investigation in the frontier of western America. This investigator resides in one of the most remotely frontier counties of the United States (University of North Carolina Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research,

2008; Young, 2009; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). It is within this unexplored environment of nursing that nurses impart care and support the quality of life of frontier individuals, families, and communities.

### **The Parse Research Method Processes**

The Parse research method employs three processes. They are: dialogical-engagement, extraction-synthesis, and heuristic interpretation (Parse, 1998, 2001; R.R. Parse, personal communication, June 2007, 2011). Metaphorical emergings are frequently noted in Parse research method studies and have become a recent addition to the heuristic interpretation process. The metaphorical images articulated by the participant add depth and richness to the description of the phenomenon of interest (Parse, 2011). The participants provide the structure of the lived experience (Parse, 1998, 2001, 2011). In accordance with the humanbecoming theory, true presence and bearing witness by the nurse are imperative hallmarks of nursing research. The investigation utilized the humanbecoming theoretical principles of true presence (Parse, 1998) and bearing witness (Parse, 2001) during the investigation of the phenomenon of *living on the edge* by those living in the frontier. The Parse research method processes include dialogical engagement, extraction-synthesis, heuristic interpretation with metaphorical emergings and artistic expression (Parse, 2011).

### **Participant Selection**

Selection of the participants for the study began after receiving approval from the South Dakota State University Institutional Review Board (See Appendix B) (Approval #: IRB-1105009-EXP). Participant selection occurred by obtaining voluntary agreement

to discuss one's experiences of *living on the edge* through spoken words and presentation of a symbol of their meaning of *living on the edge*.

Voluntary recruitment of the participants by interested persons transpired in response to an invitation to participate in the research investigation. To complete the recruitment process to acquire ten participants, the investigator presented the research study at a local organizational meeting in a frontier county to invite participation. Further details regarding the study were provided and questions were answered by the principle investigator. The dialogical engagement continued as long as the participant desired to fully express their lived experience of *living on the edge*. The participants were invited, but not required, to bring any symbolic item(s) that represented their personal, humanly lived experience of *living on the edge*. These symbols were provided, copied or photographed to be included in the research findings.

The participants included 10 volunteers over the age of 18 who agreed to discuss the concept with the investigator. No restrictions were placed upon gender or ethnicity. The participants were able to speak, read, write, and understand English.

### **Dialogical Engagement**

In the humanbecoming research methodology, dialogical engagement provided focus for the research participant and elicit the meaning of *living on the edge* for the frontier person (Parse, 2011). The dialogue is not an interview. This unstructured conversation with the participant and researcher concentrates upon the phenomenon of interest. The investigator listens in true presence with the participant (Parse, 2011).

The Parse method of the dialogical process began after the consent was signed



and the audio-taping had begun. The opening question was, “Tell me about your lived experience of *living on the edge*”. Discussion consistent with the Parse method of dialogical engagement included requests such as, “Please, tell me more about your experience of *living on the edge*” or “Please explain further about how this relates to *living on the edge*”. Dialogue was further encouraged by asking the person, “What more can you tell me about *living on the edge*?” or by asking “What is that like for you in *living on the edge*?”

### **Extraction-Synthesis**

Extraction-synthesis process involves dwelling with the persons’ conversations and co-created dialogue through transcribed audio taping (Parse, 2001). Audio recording provided the database and means for reflection and clarification of the themes. The researcher read the transcript and listened to the audiotape at the same time to discern the participant’s meaning.

### **Heuristic Interpretation**

The heuristic interpretation includes structural transposition, conceptual integration, metaphorical emergings, and artistic expression. Artistic expressions may include stories, poetry, symbols, drawings, paintings, music, photography, or dance (Parse, 1998, 2001, 2011). Heuristic interpretation is accomplished by integrating the structure of the research findings with the conceptual discoveries through aesthetic representation by the investigator (Parse, 2011).

Metaphorical emergings were recently added to the heuristic interpretation as metaphors consistently surfaced within humanbecoming research (Parse, 2011). These

metaphors augment the heuristic interpretation enhancing knowledge and meaning (Parse, personal communication, 2010; Parse, 2011). Metaphorical emergings provide depth and richness of aesthetic description of the universally lived experience (2011). Metaphors are the images, similes, symbols or allegories as expressed by the participants that enhance the meaning of the phenomenon of interest.

In summary, extraction-synthesis involves the researcher to be in true presence by dwelling with the person and co-created dialogue during the conversation and later with the audio-taped transcription. The expressions, semantics, and ideas are documented with clarity and precision. The database is the transcribed audio-taped dialogues that provided the means for review and clarification of the identified essences and metaphors.

### **Ethical Rigor**

The humanbecoming researcher honors the dignity of the individual and ensures that the ethical standards of humanbecoming science are preserved (Parse, 2010). The participants were informed prior to signing the consent that they may experience a minimal risk of discomfort in recollecting personal aspects of *living on the edge* during the study. All participants were able to decline participation at any time during the investigation without recrimination or reprisal.

Consent was obtained through written form and included permission to reproduce artforms provided by the participant for publishing purposes. Assurance for confidentiality was provided to the participant about documentation and dissemination of the findings. Confidentiality included the participant and any identified persons within the dialogue. This is an important consideration in a frontier area where “everyone knows

everyone". Therefore, pseudonyms were used and identifying information was changed or removed from any writings.

The dialogical engagement occurred after a consent agreement was signed. The dialogical engagement took place at the convenience of the volunteer participants; e.g. the participant's home, a community room, or a room suitable for a private conversation without interruption.

Ethical rigor assesses the ethical implications found within the process of the study. Identifying the ethical implications and requirements is considered essential by Burns and Grove (2007). These ethical standards were applied to this study. Appropriate consent and documentation as directed by the institutional review board was followed. Confidentiality was maintained and assured to the participants throughout the entire process by the use of pseudonyms in the presentation of the data. The data collection of audiotapes are protected in a safe place under lock and key; and will be dispensed at the completion of the study.

### **Rigor and Credibility**

Critical appraisal requires analytical proficiency. Parse (2001, 2011) and Burns & Grove (2007) have established scholarly analytical appraisal of qualitative investigations. Subsequently, the analysis is informed by Parse (2001, 2010, 2011) and Burns and Grove's (2007) evaluative standards of qualitative research. In the humanbecoming theory, rigorous analysis is accomplished through the four criteria of conceptual, ethical, methodological, and interpretive dimensions (Parse, 2001, 2010, 2011). Burns and Grove (2007) provide authoritative standards of scientific excellence. They are: 1. descriptive

vividness, 2. methodological congruence, 3. analytical preciseness, 4. theoretical connectedness, and, 5. heuristic relevance. An integration of these qualitative methodological analyses was applied to this study.

### **Descriptive Vividness**

Descriptive vividness of the research ensured the clarity and accuracy to demonstrate validity of the investigation. This process requires clear articulation of the research site, the participants, and the researcher's thought processes during the study and data collection. This process provided an experiential context in which the reader envisions the research event.

Within the study of the lived experience of *living on the edge*, clarity and vividness was established by a precise narrative of the environment, the data collection process, and the experience of the researcher (Burns & Grove, 2007). Quotations of the participant's responses during the dialogical engagement revealed the personal world of the participant for the reader. Audiotaping the dialogical engagement of each participant constructs the means for assessing accuracy with the extraction-synthesis process (Parse, 1998, 2001, 2011).

True presence illuminated the intersubjective dialogue. This is accomplished by becoming present and attentive with the person. True presence is a non-judgmental, moment-to-moment witnessing of the person's transformation of meaning of lived experiences and value priorities (Parse, 1998). According to Parse (1998), witnessing is considered to be a non-intrusive and gentle acceptance of the person. Bearing witness is living the art of true presence founded upon scholarly knowledge of the humanbecoming

theory (Parse, 1998, 2007a).

### **Conceptual**

Logical clarity, conceptual precision (Parse, 2001) and formal methodological congruence (Burns & Grove, 2007) establishes the scientific merit of the research findings. The research design of this study was constructed upon the theoretical framework of the humanbecoming theory. The epistemology is the ordered inquiry and artistic expression relating to universally lived experiences (Parse, 2011). The ontology, or nature of being, consists of the assumptions and postulates that reveal the concepts and paradoxes in the humanbecoming theory (2011). The phenomenon of *living on the edge* is explicitly recognized as a universally lived experience. The research question was formulated and consistently integrated within humanbecoming ontology and epistemology as: "What is the structure of *living on the edge*?" Therefore, the conceptual domain of this research investigation is conceptually congruent and systematically developed according to the humanbecoming school of thought.

### **Methodological Congruence**

Burns and Grove (2007) state that methodological congruence of the philosophy of science and the nursing theory should be maintained. The identification of the philosophy, theoretical school of thought and the methodology meets the required standard. This study specifically and clearly documents the influence of phenomenology, human science and the humanbecoming nursing theory as the foundational support for investigating the lived experience of *living on the edge*. I consulted with the chair of the dissertation committee who is a Parse Scholar and with the other members of the

committee to ensure methodological congruence.

### **Rigor in Documentation**

Rigor in documentation was further established by the accuracy of describing the research question as: What is the lived experience of *living on the edge*? As this phenomenon is established as a universally lived experience influencing quality of life, justification of the significance of the phenomenon is established (Cody, 2001; Parse 2007a; Bunkers, personal communication, 2008). The humanbecoming theoretical assumptions were identified and discussed. Methodological or procedural rigor was maintained by being supervised by the dissertation chair and committee members. This researcher precisely followed and recorded in detail the process of the Parse method of dialogical engagement, extraction-synthesis, and heuristic interpretation (Parse, 2011).

### **Procedural Rigor**

Parse's methodological substance (2001) corresponds with Burns and Grove's procedural rigor (2007) in assuring procedural adherence of the investigation. A precise description of the procedural steps, the philosophical foundation and theoretical underpinnings substantiates the merit of the research investigation. To ensure adherence to the Parse research method, the chair of the dissertation committee is an expert in the Parse research method and humanbecoming theory. Additionally, the dissertation committee as research experts reviewed the research procedures.

### **Auditability**

Auditability provides a clear means to review the results of data collection through analysis (Burns & Grove, 2007). In utilizing the Parse method (2011),

auditability was maintained through careful notation of the research question, the revelations of the dialogical engagement by the participants and the logical articulation of moving through higher transformative levels of abstractions. Accurate utilization of the Parse method provided a means for inspection.

Respectful informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, and the careful application of the Parse method provided ethical congruence. The potential risks and benefits of this study were explored. The theoretical foundation of the humanbecoming theory employing the Parse research method guided the investigation. Maintaining investigative rigor was an additional ethical imperative. The ethical considerations for this exploration included beneficence, justice and respect for the frontier people. These principles preserved the safety and dignity of the frontier individual and community.

### **Analytical Preciseness**

The evidence of analytic preciseness (Burns & Grove, 2007) arose from the clear description of the researcher's identification of rationale for decisions while moving through the concepts of increasing levels of abstraction. The process of extraction-synthesis is documented by the investigator through textual and table configurations while deeply abiding and dwelling with the findings. Utilizing the precise languaging of the humanbecoming theory provided credence for consistency (Burns & Grove, 2007).

### **Theoretical Connectedness**

The research study is directly connected to nursing knowledge and human science by utilizing the Parse humanbecoming theory. This consistency is established through the citations documenting the theoretical influences upon Parse's humanbecoming theory by

Dilthey, Giorgi, and, the hermeneutical phenomenology of Gadamer and Heidegger (Mitchell & Cody, 1999).

The Parse research method links the research process directly to the humanbecoming theory (Parse, 2011). The interrelationship of the conceptual framework is derived and remains consistent with the data collection and analytical approach of interpretive phenomenology, the humanbecoming theory, and Parse's research method (Mitchell & Cody, 1999; Burns & Grove, 2007).

### **Heuristic Relevance**

Interpretation of the findings needs to easily reveal relevancy and significance to nursing science. The reader needs to readily understand the significant implications of the phenomenon and the contributions to nursing science. Munhall (2007) underscores the importance of language for concept development and in communicating nursing research. The existing body of knowledge regarding the phenomenon should also be completely explicated. Applicability to nursing science and nursing practice is considered essential for qualitative research (Parse, 2001; Burns & Grove, 2007). Heuristic relevance contributes and enhances nursing knowledge.

A complete review of the body of knowledge regarding the phenomenon of *living on the edge* was provided. An analysis of the findings in congruence with the Parse research method were carefully applied to nursing and health (Burns & Grove, 2007). A summary of the strengths and limitations were also included in the discussion of the investigation in accordance to the standards prescribed by Burns & Grove (2007).



## Summary of the Methodology

In summary, the investigation of the lived experience of *living on the edge* utilized the Parse research method of the humanbecoming theory of nursing science. Persons living in the frontier of the American west were the participants. According to Parse, comprehensive accuracy is accomplished by documenting the logical direction of the discourse and maintains that rigorous analysis of qualitative research is imperative (2001). The evidence for establishing acceptable validity and credibility is found in the investigator's articulation of a consistently logical research method. The critical analysis of nursing research establishes the credibility and worth of an investigation for nursing science. The Parse method of dialogical engagement, extraction-synthesis, and heuristic interpretation was the investigative methodology (2011). An integration of the methodological rigor of Parse (2001, 2011) and Burns and Grove (2007) provided the analysis of the methodological process of exploring the experience of *living on the edge* in the frontier of the American west.

The frontier person's experience of *living on the edge* was investigated. This population group, imbued with a rich history and hidden complexity, is an underserved population that deserves understanding and improved quality of life. Frontier persons merit nursing's best efforts to dispel health care disparities that currently exist and enhance quality of life. To do so, first required respectful listening to the frontier participants as they shared their lived experience of *living on the edge*.

## Chapter Four: Presentation of Findings

The presentation of the findings will delineate the structure of the experience of *living on the edge*. The distinctive process of the Parse method encompasses the dialogical engagement, extraction-synthesis of the essences, and heuristic interpretation of the lived experience. The participants in this study agreed to share their experiences of *living on the edge* and were comprised of eight females and two males ranging from 37-84 years of age. These participants lived in American frontier in counties defined as six persons or fewer per square mile (Popper, 1986; Rural Assistance Center, 2008; South Dakota Department of Health; Office of Data, Statistics, & Vital Records, 2008; South Dakota Department of Health, Rural Health, 2008; Young, 2009; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The dialogical engagements were completed in the summer of 2011. Each participant's story, essences and language-art are presented individually. Then, the core concepts, the structure, structural transposition, the conceptual integration, metaphorical emergings and artistic expression of the universal experience of *living on the edge* are reported.

The core concepts are conveyed as a comprehensive extraction-synthesis of the findings. Extraction-synthesis occurs upon dwelling with the transcribed, audio-recordings of the dialogical engagements with each participant. Each participant's story is summarized to reveal the central concepts of the experience of *living on the edge*. The essences are the central concepts uncovered from each participant's story. These essences are then articulated through the participant's language and followed by the researcher's language. The aesthetic expression of the language-art arises from the central concepts to

reveal the essences and uncover the meaning of *living on the edge* for each participant. The core concepts are then ascertained by employing the extraction-synthesis of each participant's language-art. Core concepts represent the elemental notions expressed by the participants. The researcher united these elemental notions or ideas to answer the research question: "What is the structure of the experience of *living on the edge*?"

Finally, the heuristic process of structural transposition is conveyed through statements containing higher levels of abstraction in accord with the humanbecoming theory and illuminated through the researcher's artistic expression. The Parse methodological processes of extraction-synthesis, heuristic interpretation, and artistic expression are represented in Tables 2-4.

### **Hugh's Story**

Hugh, a 58 year old male, talked about living on the edge by describing an Alaskan bear-hunting trip with his son and step-son. Hugh stated, "Living on the edge actually starts when they fly you in from this lake to the Arctic Circle. Once you get in there, you put this raft together and then you float on the river. So, living on the edge actually starts once you are on your own in the mountains. And, since you are hunting grizzly bear, there are certain risks associated with that." Hugh went on to say, "Going on trips without guides, we find exhilarating, interesting and something to be proud of. The first thrilling living on the edge was when we got set to shoot my son's bear. So we go in about a mile and a half and we spot this bear, it was a huge bear." Hugh explained how they shot the bear and determined he was dead. They could not see the bear that had fallen into the brush when shot. "So, as I walk toward him it was quite a thrilling deal until I did touch his eye with the barrel of the gun and he didn't move. We knew he was dead. You talk about living on the edge, because they will play possum and they will attack. It was a celebration because this was for my son's graduation from law school, my gift to him that we were going to go bear hunting in Alaska." Hugh then spoke about being left for six days in the wilderness as the bush pilot could not see them in their camp and they had poor communication. "We had two satellite phones and two bars on the remaining battery left. The communication system with the bush pilot was not good. Well, by the third day, we are out of food. The pilot comes in from the east and he completely misses us. So, now we are on the fourth day. We are tired of this place and bad things can happen. You have got grizzly bears, you can break a leg, you can have heart problems, there are just a

whole lot of things that can happen.” Hugh continued, “By the time you are there so long you really don’t think the bears are the problem, you think the plane and the fog is the problem. You want out. We start thinking, ‘How are we going to get out of here? Why is it this guy can’t see us?’ It was depressing. It was like being on an island.” Finally, on the sixth day, the pilot found them and took them out of the wilderness one person at a time. Hugh said, “I went out first and I chewed that guy out as hard as I have ever chewed anybody out. I was so mad about him risking our lives, I said to him, ‘not a word. I don’t want to hear a word.’ He was smart enough not to say a word.” In conclusion, Hugh said, “I think you become a better person, and I think you understand what is important, and I don’t know that we take the time to do that unless you are on the edge. Do you value your time with your friends and family more? Yes. I think you understand life better if you live on the edge. It was quite an emotional deal each day, and quite a relief when the guy does finally show up and land. So that is my story. Unbelievable satisfying hunt and getting the bears and both of us getting a bear is quite astounding.”

### **Essences: Participant’s Language**

1. Living on the edge is flying to an Arctic Circle lake for an exhilarating, thrilling, and astounding bear hunting trip, putting a raft together for floating down a river, and shooting grizzly bear; it is being mad, feeling depressed as well as celebrating and being satisfied and proud.
2. Living on the edge is being left for six days in the Alaska Wilderness, being out of food where communication is not good; it is understanding life better, becoming a better person, and learning to value the time with friends and family.

### **Essences: Researcher’s Language**

1. Persevering in an intriguing quest surfaces distress amid elation.
2. Survival wisdom surfaces with perilous isolation while honoring diverse affiliations.

### **Language-art**

*Living on the edge* is persevering in an intriguing quest surfacing distress amid elation, as survival wisdom surfaces with perilous isolation while honoring diverse affiliations.

### Alice's Story

Alice, a 67 year old female, related living on the edge to the difficulties in caring for her mother who experienced a stroke and the difficulties of finding suitable care for her. "My mother had a stroke and I found her on the floor. I live 45 miles away but made it in 38 minutes. My brother and I stayed with her day and night." In the emergency room Alice did not know the doctor who initially evaluated her mother. Alice stated, "A doctor was seeing her, a man we had never seen before, had no knowledge of". Later, Alice was informed by the hospital that she would need to make arrangements to place her mother in a nursing home. Alice stated, "The first thing they told us was that we would have to move her out of the hospital. I had to find a place for her." Alice wanted to discuss "their options" with the hospital staff; however, arrangements were then made for her mother without consulting her. "By that time I was upset". Alice stated, "We didn't have a clue about anything. I was upset. My mom is also gluten intolerant and doesn't like milk, oatmeal or corn. Five mornings out of six they sent milk and oatmeal. I had to send the tray back." Alice went on to state, "I felt like I was on the edge all of the time because I had no help and I asked to see a social worker or any counselor. I felt like I was out there alone, except for my family." Alice worried about her mother's care in the nursing home, "Mom kept gaining weight. I insisted that the doctor see her." Alice went on, "Unless you insist it is like you take them to a nursing home to die, it is not like they are taken there to be given help to live." Alice continued, "She gained 31 pounds but nobody still asked a question. The physical therapist looked at her, went to the front desk, and that day they started Lasix. That pulled the water off her." Alice scheduled her mother for rehabilitation in the nearest town that required "travelling across the state." Alice talked about taking her mother to another rehabilitation center where they discovered she had a blood clot in her leg and they did tests to determine what to do. Alice went on, "A week later her 42 year-old grandson, who was her favorite died. He left two little girls and so then we had to deal with the grief. But, the therapy group was wonderful. She kept improving." Later Alice arranged to care for her mother at home saying, "I brought her home because she wanted to come home. I felt like I was on the edge because there was no help. You have to do it yourself." Alice stated, "They all seem disconnected...to find people it is almost an impossibility." Alice continued, "I am the only one retired and so I felt like I was on the edge." Alice wondered about family members trying to get care for a loved one without having any knowledge about health care, "So what happens when this old rancher comes in and he has had a stroke and his kids know nothing but ranching? What happens to that man? That is living on the edge, let me tell you. I feel like I have stood on the edge since the 22nd of September. It is stressful and I don't feel like I have had a life. It is living on the edge and there is no end in sight. I felt like I was on the edge all of the time because I had no help... like I was out there alone, except for my family. The doctors and the medical system here is almost non-existent." Alice spoke about how the presence of her family sustained her, concluding, "If I had not had the support of my brothers and sisters and my aunts and uncles-I have had their support; so they have helped me. I didn't fall over the edge."

**Essences: Participant's Language**

1. Living on the edge is taking a mother with a stroke to hospital 45 miles away and not knowing the doctor caring for mother, having to insist on care for mother to be given help to live, travelling across the state for rehabilitation, staying with mother day and night, and caring for mother in the home; it is being upset, stressed, concerned and grieving over a grandson's death while experiencing a wonderful rehab therapy.
2. Living on the edge is having the support of brothers' and sisters while feeling like being out there alone with a nonexistent medical system, not having a life and with no end in sight.

**Essences: Researcher's Language**

1. Engaging in a burdensome ordeal surfacing anguishing turmoil amid satisfying revitalization.
2. Compassionate others emerge amid perilous isolation.

**Language-art**

The experience of living on the edge is engaging in a burdensome ordeal surfacing anguishing turmoil amid satisfying revitalization, as compassionate others emerge amid perilous isolation.

### Harold's Story

Harold, a 66 year old male, described *living on the edge* motorcycling where there is a certain amount of danger. "I like the idea of being able to travel. You do have to be alert and watch what everybody around you is doing and pay close attention, because you are much more vulnerable" Harold spoke about journeying around the world. I've been to Ireland, England and did a ninety-five mile hike over the Scottish Highlands, ridden to the West Coast, Vancouver Island and then got on a ferry and went on the inside passage almost to Alaska. I have seen pretty much every state west of the Mississippi and canoed down the Cheyenne River from the source all the way to the mouth". I have enjoyed water sports, sailing, fishing, and hunting..." Harold concluded, "Living on the edge makes your life more fulfilling". "I consider that to be [the] healthy part of living a good life and to have passion... [that] adds to your life, to your well-being".

#### Essences: Participant's Language

1. Living on the edge is motorcycling, sailing, canoeing, fishing, hunting and travelling to the West Coast, Vancouver Island, Scotland, and going on a ninety-five mile hike over the Scottish Highlands; it is having to be alert and having to pay close attention to everybody around you.
2. Living on the edge makes life more fulfilling, is fun and enjoyable being healthy and living a good life, having passion that adds to life and well-being; while at the same time being more vulnerable and not as safe.

#### Essences: Researcher's Language

1. Participating in exciting ventures surfaces distancing vigilance with affiliations.
2. Delightful vitality arises amid jeopardy.

#### Language-art

The experience of *living on the edge* is participating in exciting ventures surfacing with distancing vigilance with affiliations, as delightful vitality arises amid jeopardy.

### Nancy's Story

Nancy, a 63 year old woman, spoke about living on the edge by relating medical problems. "It's a disadvantage as to where we are living. My daughter put her arm through a glass door and split her wrist. We put pressure on the bleeding and drove to town as fast as we could. If it would have been an artery, who is to say that we would have made it? That is scary." Nancy went on to discuss her medical problems. "I fought Lyme's disease. I was really sick and it was really bad. I was so weak I was crawling on my hands and knees it was so bad. I had to go to [a city 150 miles away] to get that confirmed." Nancy discussed how the P. A. [Physician Assistant] decided to treat her for Lyme's disease and "It was just like a miracle when she started treating me." Nancy concluded, saying, "I ended up with fibromyalgia. Some trauma in your life causes this. I had a hip replaced. We call living on the edge living in an area where the population is little. You have to travel a lot."

#### Essences: Participant's Language

1. Living on the edge is experiencing medical problems such as a split wrist, fighting Lyme's disease, fibromyalgia, and having a hip replacement; it is experiencing treatment like a miracle with a P. A. [Physician Assistant].
2. Living on the edge is scary and really bad; it is living in an area where the population is little, with the disadvantage of having to travel a lot.

#### Essences: Researcher's Language

1. Persevering with adverse ventures surfaces amid extraordinary recovery with a compassionate alliance.
2. Alarming awareness arises with living in troublesome remoteness.

#### Language-art

The experience of *living on the edge* is persevering with adverse ventures amid extraordinary recovery with a compassionate alliance, as alarming awareness arises in living with troublesome remoteness.



### Debra's Story

Debra, a 50 year old woman, talked about her experience of living on the edge as that of trying to find balance. "To me living on the edge with a 6-year-old is trying to get my work and home balanced. The job I have is a good one for me, because I am like an island, I do everything with it and I don't have a back-up which sometimes is good and sometimes it's bad. Like when I got out of the hospital having a baby on Saturday and came back to work on Monday." Debra went on to say that, "sometimes you don't feel like you get it real well balanced and you get so tired; it is like you fall off the edge. I work and then go home to a little monkey. I mean wild living on the edge things." Debra concluded her conversation stating, "I am not real well on the edge. I don't know if I really do live on the edge. I guess living on the edge is like race car drivers, I don't do any of that I guess. I try to balance things out and maintain them. Control freaks live on the edge and you try to maintain it so you don't feel like you are."

#### Essences: Participant's Language

1. Living on the edge is trying to find balance between home and work and maintaining control, having a baby on Saturday and going back to work on Monday, it is like race car drivers; it is living with a 6 year old.
2. Living on the edge is getting so tired, not having a backup, and 'falling off the edge' and being like an island; it is good and it is bad.

#### Essences: Researcher's Language

1. Persevering in burdening endeavors emerges with intimate affiliations.
2. Isolating fatigue surfaces with pleasure amid displeasure.

#### Language-art

The experience of *living on the edge* is persevering in burdening endeavors emerging with intimate affiliations, as isolating fatigue surfaces with pleasure amid displeasure.

### Carol's Story

Carol, a 66 year old female, talked about living on the edge in regard to moving from Italy to a rural U.S. farm area. "I grew up in the city, traveled all over Europe, lived in Italy three years and then we moved back here to the farm. To me, that was living on the edge." Carol discussed her family, "My husband and I ended up with four little girls that we came home with. With these four little girls, one was in school, the other three were home. At that time, my only contact with society was the church. It was very lonesome living in the country. I kept very busy, but it was still a really lonesome time. I am a craft type person, I made doll clothes for the girls, I made their clothes." Carol discussed her fear of driving in the rain and on ice. "I just have a real fear of having an accident because of ice or gumbo." Carol talked about the difficulty of getting to medical care and to equipment repair places. "One of our twins was very ill all the time she was growing up. One of the difficulties was we didn't even have a clinic. It worked, we all survived, but it was very difficult. We had to drive—and now my husband is suffering from some heart issues and is dealing with a cardiologist. We are trying to get the records centralized—they are scattered and no one seems to know what is going on. That is living on the edge. And, now we have to drive many miles to get parts, or just plain shut down a tractor." Carol talked about her mother who had just passed away. "I just lost my mother who was 97 years. I wanted so badly to bring her out here, but all her friends and her medical care was in the city. Again, living on the edge, we have made trip after trip to the city to take care of her. We would teach full time during the week, go on the weekends, talk to her on the phone every day, talk to her medical help. It was one of the most difficult things I have done. These distance things with medical care are just horrendous." Carol then described an experience of someone trying to break into their rural home. "In September somebody tried to break in—in the middle of the night. It was pretty horrific. I have never spent a night in that house alone since that happened. We didn't have a local town cop. We don't have adequate law enforcement. It sure has been a frightening thing to me. Also, because of our craft business, I have to buy a lot of supplies. It has become a clutter in my house and kind of a turmoil within me of having the product or having the mess. To me living on the edge is living in a remote place where you have to be sure you are covered, all bases—and have adequate supplies to feed our kids." Carol talked about one of her granddaughters, "She was bitten severely by a dog. It was very difficult because you don't know what is going to happen. You don't know if they are going to survive. You don't know if they are going to get the medical help in time and you don't know if you are going to lose a loved one. To me that is living on the edge." Carol concluded her discussion of living on the edge, saying, "But, there are many things that probably outweigh the negatives. It's a wonderful life; it's peaceful in many ways.

Closeness of community, friends, and church. I would say that is about it.”

**Essences: Participant’s Language**

1. Living on the edge is keeping busy making crafts, doll clothes and children’s clothing, farming, and teaching; it is moving from Europe to a remote, rural farm area.
2. Living on the edge is feeling lonesome and feeling fear and turmoil with having inadequate law enforcement, difficulties with getting medical care, and not knowing what is going to happen; it is having a wonderful, peaceful life with closeness of community and friends.

**Essences: Researcher’s Language**

1. Persevering with steadfast ventures surfaces with shifting to isolated living.
2. Apprehensive insecurity arises amid delightful tranquility with intimate affiliations.

**Language-art**

The experience of *living on the edge* is persevering with steadfast ventures surfacing with shifting to isolated living, as apprehensive insecurity arises amid delightful tranquility with intimate affiliations.

### Florence's Story

Florence, a 72 year old female, talked about living on the edge by recalling some of her childhood experiences. "We lived on the edge of town and grew up during the war years, that was on the edge. My half-brother went to WWII and so every airman that came through the airbase, 15 miles south of us, was invited to our house for dinner. Mother also chose to be on the edge when she would sneak into the back of the grocery to get contraband bananas. We didn't have a bathroom in the house, so that was always living on the edge, in the winter time to the good ole outhouse. We also walked over a mile to school every day, didn't matter what the weather was, you went. My first adventure of living on the edge was walking across the railroad trestle bridge to get to home every noon. It was exciting when the train was coming and there was only a little pathway, so you had to scurry to get across the bridge." Florence then talked about going to college. "I went to college, which was an exciting experience. I chose to be a teacher. I went to New York and Long Island and taught there. I had asthma and New York is not the place for an asthmatic to live. I came back to visit friends and my lungs cleared. Friends said maybe I should get a job teaching back here. I interviewed and was hired on the spot. I thought I was on the edge of the world when I got out here. I met my husband here and had been married 47 years. I lost him two weeks ago. That has been tough. I guess living on the edge, too. My son and daughter-in-law had four miscarriages and we had a baby full term and on the same day my husband died the baby was stillborn. So that has been the hardest. Life and death is a very fine edge." Florence discussed the time she had to care for her husband at home. "We had that adventure on the edge for a while and then finally he agreed to go to the nursing home. I knew it was terminal. He was there 5 days, and that was that." Florence also talked about her teaching and farming that she did. "So, it is a tough life out here. It's tough. You have to be tough to survive. Everything is kind of a life and death thing. I think it takes courage, I think it is scary because we are so separated." Florence spoke about learning new things on the ranch, "I had never really raised cattle before and I learned to pull calves, give shots, things I never, ever thought I would do in a thousand, million years." Florence concluded her discussion of living on the edge by talking about the weather and animals. "Hailstorms just scare me to death and I have fought the wind all my life. We are vulnerable out here. And I think Mother Nature takes a pretty good shot at us out here. This is normal." Florence said about animals, "So that is another one of living on the edge, if you didn't live on the edge here, you wouldn't have deer running through all over the place. Every day at our house we have geese, strange dogs, prairie chickens and we had a den of foxes in the hay bales one time. The raccoons are my favorites. Life on the edge. It's fun...it's dangerous. It is just a battle, but it gives us strength and character."

**Essences: Participant's Language**

1. Living on the edge is building character, having courage, and being tough while growing up during the WWII years, walking to school in spite of weather, walking across the railroad trestle, using an outhouse in winter, going to college, teaching in New York and Long Island, moving to the edge of the world, raising cattle, fighting the wind; it is losing a husband and having a stillborn grandchild.
2. Living on the edge is exciting and fun; it is dangerous, a scary separateness, and a battle.

**Essences: Researcher's Language**

1. Persevering with bold endeavors surfaces with the demise of intimate attachments.
2. Exhilarating pleasure arises amid perilous remoteness.

**Language-art**

The experience of *living on the edge* is persevering with bold endeavors surfacing with the demise of intimate attachments, as exhilarating pleasure arises amid perilous remoteness.

### Molly's Story

Molly, a 37 year-old woman, stated, "Living on the edge is like if there is just one more thing that pushes you over and it all falls apart. It is going two-hundred different places and making sure we can participate and get to this activity and that activity. It is having three children and they participate in everything and most of the things we can get to. I am fortunate to be able to have three kids participate in everything." Molly went on to say, "I guess the other thing as far as living on the edge for us as a family of five is financially living on the edge. There is this living paycheck to paycheck and sitting back thinking I don't know what I am going to do. But, things have been coming together and we haven't fallen off the cliff, but there have been times as a family when it is really close. It is a lot of stress. I get frustrated every once in a while. Having all this leads to a lot of frustration and miscommunication. We don't always communicate, and just because I have it in my head doesn't mean everyone else does. I guess that is how it feels."

#### Essences: Participant's Language

1. Living on the edge is going two-hundred different places and participating in this activity and that activity, and living pay check to pay check; it is not knowing what to do and being really close to "falling off the edge" and having it "all fall apart."
2. Living on the edge is feeling fortunate while at the same time feeling stressed and frustrated once in a while; it is having a family of five with miscommunication and sometimes no communication.

#### Essences: Researcher's Language

1. Engaging in challenging endeavors surfaces amid jeopardy.
2. Vacillating sentiments arise with the distancing of intimate alliances.

#### Language-art

The experience of *living on the edge* is engaging in challenging endeavors surfacing amid jeopardy, as vacillating sentiments arise with the distancing of intimate alliances.

### Amelia's Story

Amelia, a 68 year old female, spoke about her experience of living on the edge, "Over my lifetime the lack of fear guides me and is my ability to do many things that other people would be paralyzed by. If I see somebody walking along the road, I don't hesitate to stop and help them. As we were kids growing up, we always had to figure things out for ourself." Amelia talked about enjoying ranching and working with animals, "It was more exciting than housework. It was like you can do anything. So I started living on the edge [being] raised in the country." Amelia spoke about feeling liberated by not being afraid, "And the lack of fear, it didn't matter if we had to work sheep or the horses were big, you want freedom. So, if you got on a horse and you rode it the first time, you didn't exhibit any fear to that horse. I can meet most anybody and be very comfortable with them." An example Amelia gave was, "I got lost in London. I am circling the train station trying to figure out how to get in, in the dark of night, and I ran into other people from New York, so we joined forces and we finally found the way in." Amelia talked about choosing to live on the edge, "You are not afraid to take that step that puts you in a situation that might be precarious. And so to live on the edge, you have to have a respect for whatever it is that is an edge." Amelia went on, "Living on the edge is the ability to reason and not be fearful of exploring, like flying with a parasail is wonderful. It's something that preserves you, just like having a dream of falling off of a cliff and all of the sudden before you actually hit the ground, you wake up. Amelia stated "The reality of things is how I live on the edge. Whether it be the preservation of health of somebody that's sick, like my husband had an aneurysm that burst on the operating table. You get calm when things get out of your control, but if you are in control then you don't have a fear of what is coming. And I do what I need to do when there is a health issue. So when my husband came home with 5 IVs a day and 4 flushings a day, we got through it. And it is like the lack of fear, and there is nothing to fear but fear itself. It's a great feeling not to have the inhibitions of fear that keep you from taking that extra little step. And so as I thought about what living on the edge to me was, it was basically the lack of fear and charge ahead. And I think I come from a long line of chargers. I have had a lot of guidance from within." Amelia described the enjoyment and the burdens in living on the edge, "Living on the edge is just taking a little vacation when you have responsibilities." Amelia equated living on the edge to becoming a pilot later in life, "Like being able to learn to fly when you are in your 40's. One experience was that I had the throttle come off in my hand while I was in the air. And so logic says keep flying the airplane, instead of panicking or getting fearful. I just have a blessing of not getting too excited and think it out. Its fly the airplane, don't fly the radios, don't panic." Amelia described stalling and almost crashing while flying the airplane with her daughter and two grandchildren, "I was a little nervous. That's as much on the edge as I want to be with an airplane and the whole family on board." Amelia concluded, "You have respect for the edge, but you are not afraid to step to it and look out and make an observation and a decision. You are always on the edge in some respects; it doesn't matter if it is a health issue or you are a caregiver and have to make a decision to stop care. I had to make the choice on my

mother to pull the plug. And it is not an easy choice, you have to be willing to step to the edge and make the choice and not look back on it and second guess yourself. Well, that's about all. That's all it is."

### **Essences: Participant's Language**

1. Living on the edge is being raised in the country and riding horses, working sheep, and raising pigs, getting lost in London, flying an airplane and losing the airplane throttle and almost stalling and crashing, parasailing, caring for a sick husband, and stepping into precarious situations; it is respecting the edge, feeling no fear and feeling calm, feeling liberated while at times feeling nervous.
2. Living on the edge is thinking things out logically and having guidance from within; it is helping other people and joining with others.

### **Essences: Researcher's Language**

1. Persevering with perilous, solo ventures surfaces amid the ease-unease of boldness.
2. Intricate decisioning emerges while engaging diverse alliances.

### **Language-art**

The experience of *living on the edge* is persevering with perilous, solo ventures surfacing amid the ease-unease of boldness, as intricate decisioning emerges while engaging diverse alliances.



### Lucretia's Story

Lucretia, an 84 year old woman, spoke about *living on the edge*. For her, *living on the edge* "has a special meaning as I had been in New York City and moved to teach in a place where there are more cattle than there are people and have all the wide open spaces to notice the contrast in even the building structures and the culture is around the ranch and raising wheat." Lucretia spoke about "being frightened" as it was "a bit of a shock". Lucretia went on, "School activities and athletics would be as far away as 150 miles." Lucretia talked about living on the edge in accessing health care, "We have to go over 100 miles." Lucretia spoke about relationships between ethnicities when living on the edge, "There is always that need for conversation instead of confrontation. Often times it is just a matter of misunderstanding. It makes relationships difficult sometimes. When there is an element of uncertainty, there is always underlying tension there from people." Lucretia was concerned about living in isolation. Lucretia stated, "I wonder how we relate to the rest of the world and how these young people growing up and having families are going to relate and manage". Despite Lucretia living in this area since the 1940's, she stated, "I guess I still look at it from an outsider point of view. I think it has made me a more thoughtful person, in knowing how to manage... to do things independently." Lucretia stated, "I look to mitigate some of the difficulties and seek out ways to be a bridge for people. To help kids know that they can go anywhere, do anything from here." Lucretia said, "Living on the edge is just a part of my normal life. But I think that there is a psychological thing to living in this kind of environment. And sometimes I laugh about it, and other times I feel sorry for people because they don't have some of the benefits that we also have. That has developed a sense of can-do attitude and be a little innovative." Lucretia spoke of the ease of living on the edge, "I am more comfortable here, just because of an atmosphere with the people and I don't find having to make arrangements for things ahead to be difficult. More people know one another. But still, there are all sorts of differences and people that live out here have adapted to it, or have left. And navigating [is] easier out here than in the big cities, not treated as a number. So in some ways you were on the edge, but we're also in the center". Lucretia described the people where she lived as, "having to think about conservation on their own, having to be more independent or dependent on each other as neighbors to help. I have always lived on the edge. I don't think most of us consider it to be really strange." Lucretia spoke about coping after becoming a widow, "Because my husband died, I have been living by myself since then...operating the farm and teaching, then finally sold the farm and moved to [town], and doing commissioned lay pastor work of [two churches on the borders of two states] at the same time." Lucretia stated, "That is what you call living on the edge." Lucretia spoke about being an author of county history as living on the edge, "There is over two hundred family histories' in it. We don't have people who are professional authors in a community. So that is living on the edge. It's one of those things that you just do. I didn't intentionally set out to be an author of two books. Living in the community fifty some years, I have a perspective on the whole

society, the culture, the people, seeing the changes with the years. It was just interesting.” Lucretia concluded, “So that is just the way it is for me to live here. Ups and downs, and I think that is true in any place a person would live. And I certainly am never without something to do”.

### **Essences: Participant’s Language**

1. Living on the edge is being thoughtful and independent with a can-do innovative attitude in operating a farm as a widow, doing commissioned lay pastor work in two states, being an author of two county history books, and moving from New York City; it is being an outsider, having to go over 100 miles for healthcare and over 150 miles for school activities, and living in wide-open spaces.
2. Living on the edge is having uncertainty, tension, and having ups and downs with sometimes laughing and sometimes feeling sorry; it is being a bridge for people while sometimes having difficult relationships.

### **Essences: Researcher’s Language**

1. Persevering with pioneering ventures amid arduous remoteness.
2. Vacillating sentiments arise with unsettled affiliations.

### **Language-art**

The experience of *living on the edge* is persevering with pioneering ventures amid arduous remoteness, as vacillating sentiments arise with unsettled affiliations.

### Language-Art of the Structure of the Experience of *Living on the Edge*

- Hugh            The experience of living on the edge is persevering in an intriguing quest surfacing distress amid elation as survival wisdom surfaces with perilous isolation while honoring diverse affiliations.
- Alice            The experience of living on the edge is engaging in a burdensome ordeal surfacing anguishing turmoil amid satisfying revitalization, as compassionate others emerge amid perilous isolation.
- Harold           The experience of living on the edge is participating in exciting ventures surfacing with distancing vigilance with affiliations, as delightful vitality arises amid jeopardy.
- Nancy            The experience of living on the edge is persevering with adverse ventures amid extraordinary recovery with a compassionate alliance, as alarming awareness arises in living with troublesome remoteness.
- Debra            The experience of living on the edge is persevering in burdening endeavors emerging with intimate affiliations, as isolating fatigue surfaces with pleasure amid displeasure.
- Carol            The experience of living on the edge is persevering with steadfast ventures surfacing with shifting to isolated living, as apprehensive insecurity arises amid delightful tranquility with intimate affiliations.
- Florence        The experience of living on the edge is persevering with bold endeavors surfacing with the demise of intimate attachments, as exhilarating pleasure arises amid perilous remoteness.
- Molly            The experience of living on the edge is engaging in pioneering endeavors surfacing amid jeopardy, as vacillating sentiments arise with the distancing of intimate alliances.
- Amelia           The experience of living on the edge is persevering with perilous, solo ventures surfacing amid the ease-unease of boldness, as intricate decisioning emerges while engaging diverse alliances.
- Lucretia        The experience of living on the edge is persevering with pioneering ventures amid arduous remoteness, as vacillating sentiments arise with unsettled affiliations.

### Core Concepts

The four core concepts revealed through the dialogical engagements and extraction-synthesis process are: *persevering with pioneering ventures* (See Table 2), *perilous remoteness* (See Table 3), *vacillating sentiments* (See Table 4) and, *diverse affiliations* (See Table 5).

The structure of the experience of *living in the edge* is: *Living on the edge is persevering with pioneering ventures amid perilous remoteness, as vacillating sentiments arise with diverse affiliations.*

### Heuristic Interpretation

Heuristic interpretation weaves the structure and the principles of humanbecoming to enhance the meaning of the universal lived experience and identify new direction for future research (Parse, 2011). The processes of heuristic interpretation are structural transposition, conceptual integration, artistic expression and metaphorical emergings (Parse, 2011).

Structural transposition advances the structure (the research findings) into theory by transposing the structure into higher levels of abstraction through the language of humanbecoming (Parse, 1998, 2001, 2011). The structural transposition of *living on the edge is persisting with ingenious quests amid isolating jeopardy, as disparate moods arise with varied engagements.*

Conceptual integration enhances the structure and employs theoretical language of the humanbecoming paradigm (Parse, 2011). The conceptual integration of *living on the edge is powering originating amid enabling-limiting, as valuing surfaces in*

*connecting-separating*.

The artistic expression embodies the personal choosing of an artform by the researcher. This artform is chosen as the researcher reflects upon the meaning of the lived experience to understand and deepen insight of the structure (Parse, 2001, 2011).

### **Metaphorical Emergings**

Metaphorical emergings are expressions by the participant that surface during the dialogical engagement (Parse, 2011). These recorded phrases and imagings amplify the meaning of the lived experience. Metaphorical emergings deepen the understanding of the core concepts and the ontological meaning of the humanbecoming theory (2011).

Metaphorical emergings were uncovered in the dialogical engagements. Hugh said “It was like being on an island” when *living on the edge*. This reveals the connecting-separating of the second principle, cocreating rhythmical patterns of relating. Three metaphors surfaced with Debra in speaking about *living on the edge*. She said, “I am like an island” and that the experience was “like you fall off the edge”. These metaphors conceptually integrate the paradoxical rhythms of connecting-separating from the second principle of cocreating rhythmical patterns of relating. Debra also compared *living on the edge* to being “like race car drivers.” This metaphor reveals the pushing-resisting involved in new ways of being arising from the third principle of cotranscending with the possibles. Florence found the experience of *living on the edge* as “Life and death is a very fine edge” and “It is just a battle.” Florence’s metaphors also conceptually integrate powering originating with the third principle which is cotranscending with the possibles.

## Artistic Expression

The chosen artform illuminating the meaning of *living on the edge* is a poem written by the researcher entitled, *Living on the Edge of Creation* (Figure 4). This poem reveals the researcher's emergent understanding after abiding with the structure; *living on the edge is persevering with pioneering ventures amid perilous remoteness, as vacillating sentiments arise with diverse affiliations.*

Living on the Edge of Creation:

*Visions of my Mother*

I am Čhaňška upigi.

Wakan.

I have

flown,

fought,

loved

and

live on the edge of creation.

Venturing the cherished unknown,

Facing despair in search of survival,

I have flown above the darkness,

Carved bridges in the sky.

Wheeling over

the blindness

of tragedy,

Embracing the golden sun,

I circle souly on winged contentment.

My scree ascending,

singing thanksgiving,

The closure between heaven and earth denied.  
 17 January 2011, Chante Wopila Tanka (With a thankful heart),  
*Čhaňška upigi*-(Red tailed hawk; Sacred Messenger),  
*Wakan*-(Holy; Sacred),  
*Living on the edge*-(Agleyela wiconi niun),  
*Creation*-(Wamakhognaka),  
*Abyss*-(Okiksahe)

Figure 4:  
 Living on the Edge of Creation: Visions of My Mother  
 By Robin Peterson-Lund © 2011

The poem, *Living on the Edge of Creation* (Robin Peterson-Lund, 2011), expresses the structure of living on the edge which is: *Living on the edge is persevering with pioneering ventures amid perilous remoteness, as vacillating sentiments arise with diverse affiliations*. The poem, *Living on the Edge of Creation*, expresses the structure of *persevering with pioneering ventures* (the first core concept) by ‘facing despair in search of survival’ to eventually ‘embrace the golden sun. *Pioneering ventures* are found while ‘carving bridges’ to triumph over the challenges of life. *Perilous remoteness* (the second core concept) is found in the apparent solo flight of Čhaňška upigi, the red-tailed hawk that cherishes the ‘unknown’. Yet, this being is in communion with all creation (humanuniverse) and is sacred. *Living on the edge*, holds peril and sanctuary. As the winged-flight of life has ‘fought, loved, lived on the edge’, *vacillating sentiments arise* (the third core concept) *with diverse affiliations* (the fourth core concept) by acknowledging the struggle and the beauty in life; by ‘cherishing the unknown’ and known humanuniverse; in ‘singing thanksgiving’; and through this simple poetic moment

of remembrance revealing the lingering presence of a cherished loved one. Paradoxical rhythms are revealed while beholding the cherished other. Diverse affiliations (the fourth core concept) are expressed by the vacillating sentiments (the third core concept) of joy-sorrow in connecting-separating with the red-tailed hawk that is felt all-at-once in the emerging now. While singing thanksgiving, Čhaňška upīgi, the red-tailed hawk, communes with the human universe and diverse affiliations (fourth core concept) where heaven and earth are one. The poem is set within the natural world of a frontier culture that esteems sacrificing for others; respects survival wisdom; believes the red-tailed hawk is a sacred messenger; and cherishes the land and sky as a 'thin place' where the heavens and earth touch. This artistic imaging provides further clarity and understanding of *living on the edge*.



Table 2

*First Core Concept Evidenced in Language-Art*


---

Core Concept:	Persevering with pioneering ventures
Structural Transposition:	Persisting with ingenious quests
Conceptual Integration:	Powering originating

---

Hugh	persevering in an intriguing quest
Alice	engaging in a burdensome ordeal
Harold	participating in exciting ventures
Nancy	persevering with adverse ventures
Debra	persevering in burdening endeavors
Carol	persevering with steadfast ventures
Florence	persevering with bold endeavors
Molly	engaging in pioneering endeavors
Amelia	persevering with perilous ventures
Lucretia	persevering with pioneering ventures

---

Table 3

*Second Core Concept Evidenced in Language-Art*


---

Core Concept:	Perilous Remoteness
Structural Transposition:	Isolating jeopardy
Conceptual Integration:	Enabling-limiting

---

Hugh	perilous isolation
Alice	perilous isolation
Harold	distancing vigilance ...jeopardy
Nancy	troublesome remoteness
Debra	isolating
Carol	isolated living
Florence	perilous remoteness
Molly	jeopardy...distancing
Amelia	perilous solo
Lucretia	arduous remoteness

---

Table 4

*Third Core Concept Evidenced in Language-Art*


---

Core Concept:	Vacillating sentiments
Structural Transposition:	Disparate moods
Conceptual Integration:	Valuing

---

Hugh	distress amid elation
Alice	anguishing turmoil amid satisfying revitalization
Harold	delightful vitality
Nancy	alarming awareness
Debra	pleasure amid displeasure
Carol	apprehensive insecurity arises amid delightful tranquility
Florence	exhilarating pleasure
Molly	vacillating sentiments
Amelia	ease-unease
Lucretia	vacillating sentiments

---

Table 5

*Fourth Core Concept Evidenced in Language-Art*


---

Core Concept:	Diverse affiliations
Structural Transposition:	Varied engagements
Conceptual Integration:	Connecting-separating

---

Hugh	honoring diverse affiliations
Alice	compassionate others
Harold	affiliations
Nancy	compassionate alliance
Debra	intimate affiliations
Carol	intimate affiliations
Florence	intimate attachments
Molly	intimate alliances
Amelia	diverse alliances
Lucretia	unsettled affiliations

---

Table 6

Progressive Extraction of the Core Concepts of *Living on the Edge*

Core Concept	Structural Transposition	Conceptual Integration
Persevering with pioneering ventures	Persisting with ingenious quests	Powering originating
Perilous remoteness	Isolating jeopardy	Enabling-limiting
Vacillating sentiments	Disparate moods	Valuing
Diverse affiliations	Varied engagements	Connecting- separating

**Structure**

*The experience of living on the edge is persevering with pioneering ventures amid perilous remoteness, as vacillating sentiments arise with diverse affiliations.*

**Structural Transposition**

*The experience of living on the edge is persisting with ingenious quests amid isolating jeopardy, as disparate moods arise with varied engagements.*

**Conceptual Integration**

*The experience of living on the edge is powering originating amid enabling-limiting, as valuing surfaces with connecting-separating.*

**Heuristic Interpretation: Artistic Expression of *Living on the Edge***

*Living on the edge* is expressed in the poem, *Living on the Edge of Creation*, by Robin Peterson-Lund (2011).

### Metaphorical emergings of *Living on the Edge*

*Living on the edge* is further illuminated through the metaphors voiced by the participants (See Figure 5).

Figure 5

Metaphors for <i>Living on the Edge</i>		
Participant	Metaphor	Conceptual Integration of the Theory
Hugh	“It was like being on an island”	Connecting-separating
Debra	“I am like an island” “like you fall off the edge” “like race car drivers”	Connecting-separating Connecting-separating Powering originating
Florence	“Life and death is a very fine edge” “It is just a battle”	Powering originating Powering originating
Amelia	“something that preserves you... like having a dream of falling off off a cliff and all of the sudden before you actually hit the ground, you wake up.”	Powering originating
Lucretia	“seek out ways to be a bridge for people”	Connecting-separating

## Chapter Five: Discussion of Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This chapter discusses the research findings of the experience of living on the edge employing the Parse research method (Parse, 1998, 2001, 2005, 2008a, 2011). The findings and four core concepts are examined. Four core concepts of *living on the edge* emerged with 10 participants living in the American frontier. They are *persevering with pioneering ventures, perilous remoteness, vacillating sentiments, and diverse affiliations*. The research question was answered by connecting the four core concepts to create the structure: *Living on the edge is persevering with pioneering ventures amid perilous remoteness, as vacillating sentiments arise with diverse affiliations*. By lifting the structure to a higher level of abstraction, the structural transposition revealed: *the lived experience of living on the edge is persisting with ingenious quests amid isolating jeopardy, as disparate moods arise with varied engagements*. The structural transposition was then conceptually integrated with the humanbecoming theory as: *the experience of living on the edge is powering originating amid enabling-limiting, as valuing surfaces with connecting-separating*. This description, conveyed in the language of humanbecoming science, imparts new nursing knowledge by revealing the structure of *living on the edge* as a universally lived experience of health.

This chapter chronicles each core concept substantiated from the participant's narrative and is described in humanbecoming language. Every core concept of *living on the edge* is supported by germane literature and imparts new discoveries to nursing science and humanbecoming. The structure of *living on the edge* relates to quality of life. Quality of life and new knowledge is considered. A summation of these discoveries,

methodological insights, recommendations for research and nursing practice and conclusions are reported. Methodological insights and recommendations for research and nursing practice are presented.

### **Core Concepts of *Living on the Edge***

#### **Persevering With Pioneering Ventures**

*Persevering with pioneering ventures* is being resolute in traveling to new places and in living unique ways of being. *Persevering with pioneering ventures* reveals the quest of human endeavor into the unknown, a pioneering journey that requires resolve and ingenuity to overcome the inherent challenges encountered along the way. It involves ingenious quests.

Participants described *persevering with pioneering ventures* as a journey of unique experiences that required resourcefulness and adaptability, “Like being able to learn to fly when you are in your 40’s.” Other participants said, “I went to college, which was an exciting experience. I chose to be a teacher. I went to New York and Long Island and taught there;” “We walked over a mile to the school every day [and it] didn’t matter what the weather was, you went.”

Several participants spoke about the compelling requisite and allure to journeying when *living on the edge*, “You have to travel a lot;” “I grew up in the city, traveled all over Europe, lived in Italy three years and then we moved back here to the farm.”

Another stated, “I like the idea of being able to travel... I’ve been to Ireland, England, and did a 95 mile hike over the Scottish Highlands, ridden to the West Coast, Vancouver Island and then got on a ferry and went on



the inside passage almost to Alaska. I have seen pretty much every state west of the Mississippi and canoed down the Cheyenne River from the source all the way down to the mouth.

A participant related his unique experience in *persevering with pioneering ventures* as “Living on the edge actually starts when they fly you in from this lake to the Arctic Circle. Once you get in there, you put this raft together and then you float on the river.” *Persevering with pioneering ventures* was conveyed in the challenges and triumphs of journeying to unique places and in living different ways of being found in the everyday moments of life.

The core concept of *persevering with pioneering ventures* is structurally transposed to *persisting with ingenious quests*. The conceptual integration of *persisting with ingenious quests* with the humanbecoming theory is conceptualized as powering originating. The powering originating concept arises from the third principle. The third principle is “cotranscending with the possibles is the powering and originating of transforming” (Parse, 2008b, p.370, Parse, 2011, p.12). With powering, the continual paradoxical rhythms of pushing-resisting, affirming-not affirming, and being-nonbeing occur (Parse, 1998, 2011). Originating is the innovation of “new ways of conforming-not conforming in the certainty-uncertainty” (Parse, 1998, p. 49) of life. Originating is exemplified in the distinctive choices of personal expression through living the paradox of certainty-uncertainty (Parse, 1998).

The paradoxical rhythms of powering as pushing-resisting will be discussed with the participants’ language. Participants described the powering of persevering while

reaching for new possibilities in pushing-resisting by saying, “You get so tired it is like you fall off the edge....Like when I got out of the hospital having a baby on Saturday and come back to work on Monday.” And another said, “Living on the edge here has a special meaning as I had been in New York City and moved to teach in a place where there are more cattle than there are people and have all the wide open spaces.... This developed a sense of can-do attitude and [to] be a little innovative.”

Powering with pushing-resisting paradoxical patterns reveal the tension encountered “while engaging with others, issues, ideas, desires and hopes all-at-once” (Parse, 1998, p 48). Tension can sometimes include conflicting opposition (Parse, 1998) as exemplified by the participants’ language: “We are vulnerable out here. And I think Mother Nature takes a pretty good shot at us out here;” Choices are made within powering. Others revealed this conflicting opposition of pushing-resisting when saying, “I insisted that the doctor see her;” and “We made trip after trip to the city to take care of her.” Each participant revealed choices when facing this paradox to reach for new possibles.

With powering, change arises with new possibilities that includes the affirming-not affirming paradox (Parse, 1998). Affirming-not affirming new ways of living is expressed by the participant’s statement, “ I had never really raised cattle before and I learned to pull calves, give shots, things I never, ever thought I would do in a thousand, million years;”

Being-nonbeing is the experience of possible loss that arises with daily life and with the yet-to-be that is not known (Parse, 1998) the mystery of the “emerging now”

(Parse, 2011, p.13). Being-nonbeing was expressed when one participant acknowledged the risks of his venturing. He stated, “Living on the edge actually starts once you are on your own ...there are certain risks associated with that.” Another recognized the risk, but chose to persevere when she stated, “You are not afraid to take that step that puts you in a situation that might be precarious...and charge ahead!”

Being-nonbeing is revealed in the fear of losing a loved one as noted with this participant’s statement, “Unless you insist it is like you take them to a nursing home to die, it is not like they are taken there to be given help to live.” One participant spoke about emerging possibilities of being-nonbeing after being widowed:

Because my husband died, I have been...operating the farm and teaching,... then finally sold the farm and moved to [town], and doing commissioned lay pastor work of [two churches on the borders of two states] at the same time.... It’s one of those things that you just do. I didn’t intentionally set out to be an author of two books.

Originating was illustrated by the participants’ stories choosing a unique way of life that requires *persevering with pioneering ventures*. As a result of these choosings, the participants reveal an acceptance to “live the ambiguity of unknown outcomes” (Parse, 1998, p. 49). The paradoxical rhythm of originating is the certainty-uncertainty paradox. The certainty-uncertainty paradox describes the concept of powering originating. With originating, the individual/family/community experiences certainty-uncertainty with new chosen patterns of being (Parse, 1998).

These participants spoke about their persistence in response to certainty-

uncertainty to access health care and improve quality of life. They stated, “You don’t know if you are going to get medical help in time and you don’t know if you are going to lose a loved one;” “I fought Lyme’s disease. I was really sick and it was really bad.” “I had to go to [a city 150 miles away] to get that confirmed...It was just like a miracle when she started treating me.”

*Persevering with pioneering ventures* reveals the core concept of powering originating from the third principle, cotranscending with the possibles (Parse, 1998, 2011) and was consistently revealed as a core concept of *living on the edge* surfacing from the conversation with the research participants. The general review of the literature of *persevering with pioneering ventures* did not produce any specific investigations of this phenomenon. However, concepts similar to *persevering with pioneering ventures* includes persistence and prevailing, and is found in related research as “persistent enduring” of suffering (Pilkington & Kilpatrick, 2008, p. 233), “prevailing amid misfortune” as persevering (Bunkers, 2010, p. 236), and “*fortifying tenacity*” as “*unyielding and enlivening willfulness to persist*” (Bournes, 2005, p. 223).

The core concept of *persevering* is found in humanbecoming research of deliberately persevering during a difficult time (Alichin-Petardi, 1998). Persevering during a difficult time, as cited in Bournes and Ferguson-Pare (2005), is ‘persistently pursuing a course of action despite obstacles...’ (p. 324). Uncommon and unique (pioneering) experiences of nurses, patients and their families were described while they persevered during a SARS outbreak in Toronto (Bournes & Ferguson-Pare, 2005).

Cultural survival requires the virtue and responsibility of *persevering with*

*pioneering ventures*. Black Elk, a Lakota Holy Man, shared his vision of hope to encourage his people to endure, to persevere, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to survive an imposed existence following military conflict with the Euro-Americans that encroached upon their land and way of life (Black Elk, 1953/1971). Joseph Marshall III, a Lakota philosopher, speaks eloquently about the invincible powering and originating of his people so that the Lakota culture and the human community may flourish (Marshall, 2001). Victor Frankl also wrote about heroic pioneering in finding meaning in severe suffering (Frankl, 1946/2006). Despite the tyrannizing imprisonment by the Nazi's during the holocaust of World War II, Frankl persevered in powering. Victor Frankl's certitude, that his being remained uniquely his own through freedom of choice, arose through *persevering with pioneering ventures* to find new ways of being in the world.

Another philosophical perspective by Tillich provides insight into perseverance and courage in his work, *The Courage to Be* (1952/2000). In his later works, Tillich affirms the essential reality of courage to overcome uncertainty and persevere in attaining meaning with life. He asserts that courageous perseverance through the tensions of uncertainty is to comprehend the infinite present and participate fully in being (2005).

*Persevering with pioneering ventures* is found in humanbecoming theory. Persevering is integrated conceptually with powering originating. Pioneering is welcoming the unfamiliar patterns of unfolding possibles. In pondering the experience of *living on the edge* pioneering ventures require courage and determination in embracing the mystery. Within this experience arises the potential of *perilous remoteness*.

## Perilous Remoteness

*Perilous remoteness* is the experience of aloneness and peril while living on the edge of the frontier. One may experience danger because one is isolated. This aloneness holds a sense of danger in feeling separated from essential support. With this peril comes both opportunities and limitations as identified by the participants. One participant described the limitations in isolation that hindered accessing care for her mother after a stroke and the difficulty in gaining opportunities to care for her mother,

My mother had a stroke and I found her on the floor. We were 45 minutes away from the hospital, but made it in 38 minutes...I felt like I was on the edge all the time because I had no help and I asked to see a social worker. I felt like I was out there alone, except for my family.

A participant described her sense of peril while living in an isolated area of the frontier. She stated,

It's a disadvantage as to where we are living. My daughter put her arm through a glass door and split her wrist. We put pressure on the bleeding and drove to town as fast as we could. If it would have been an artery, who is to say that we would have made it? That is scary.

Another participant described his sense of *perilous remoteness* while attempting to leave a remote area of wilderness,

Well, by the third day, we are out of food. The pilot comes in from the east and he completely misses us. So, now we are on the fourth day. We are tired

of this place and bad things can happen. You have got grizzly bears, you can break a leg, you can have heart problems, there is just a whole lot of things that can happen. By the time you are there so long you really don't think the bears are the problem, you think the plane and the fog is the problem. You want out.

Choosing to experience the peril of *living on the edge* is found in the participants' stories. One participant said, "You are not afraid to take that step that puts you in a situation that might be precarious. And so to live on the edge, you have to have a respect for whatever it is that is an edge."

Several participants described perilous remoteness as they discussed the lack of health care access, "One of the difficulties was we didn't even have a clinic. It worked, we all survived, but it was very difficult;" "Life and death is a very fine edge...So it is a tough life out here. It's tough. You have to be tough to survive." Another spoke about the wisdom required to survive the perilous remoteness of the wilderness.

So, as I walk toward him [the grizzly bear] it was quite a thrilling deal until I did touch his eye with the barrel of the gun and he didn't move. We knew he was dead. You talk about living on the edge, because they will play possum and they will attack.

*Perilous remoteness* is found in the second principle of configuring rhythmical patterns and is further revealed by the second core concept of enabling-limiting (Parse, 1998, 2011). Enabling-limiting is "living the opportunities-restrictions present in all choosings all-at-once" (Parse, 1998, p. 44). This core concept is described by the participants within their pioneering ventures as dangers and challenges that enable and

limit living with the remoteness of *living on the edge*. The opportunities of aloneness and the limitations of lack of access and support are found in *perilous remoteness*.

Within the concept of enabling-limiting, opportunities and limitations are experienced. Financial limitations were described by a participant who said, “There is this living paycheck to paycheck and sitting back thinking I don’t know what I am going to do.”

Many felt the limitations and opportunities of being alone or lonely as expressed by these statements: “I kept very busy, but it was still a really lonesome time;” “It is like living on the edge and there is no end in sight. I felt like I was on the edge all of the time because I had no help;...like I was out there alone....;” “I felt I was out there alone except for my family;” and another echoed this sentiment, “I felt I was out there alone.” However, despite the distress experienced in perilous remoteness, these participants described developing an essential resilience and survival wisdom to live with isolating jeopardy.

Humanbecoming studies in taking a risk (Bunkers, 2009; Britson, 2009) revealed similar concepts. Taking a risk by Bunkers (2009) uncovered venturing with peril as “venturing forth amid potential peril” which “involves a bold pressing on amid possible hazards.” (p. 245). In taking a risk for persons who have experienced natural disaster (Britson, 2009), discussed the peril in taking a risk. Perilous remoteness exists within the context of taking a risk.

The opportunities and limitations of enabling-limiting have a historical perspective. Historical and philosophical accounts of perilous remoteness arise from



venturing to new frontiers of human existence. The perils of remoteness are recounted by the venturing of the Mayflower passengers across seemingly impassable waters to an inhospitable New World (Philbrick, 2006) to the demise of contemporary astronauts venturing into the cosmos (National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), 2006). There is daring to embrace the remoteness involved with venturing that necessitates inventiveness in this human endeavor.

Perilous remoteness is found in venturing into spiritual frontiers as well. The thirteenth century Zen Master Kyogen (Loori & Tanahashi, 2005) challenges his disciples to risk physical and emotional peril in order to realize enlightenment in his koan, *Kyogen Mounts the Tree* (Ekai, 1938/2007). In this teaching he suggests that there is peril when venturing into the most remote reaches of spiritual enlightenment.

Palmer (1980/2008), theologian and philosopher, concludes that the remoteness experienced by people living in community yet distanced by technology produces the peril of an inability to respond. This ineffective remoteness conveys the peril of totalitarianism and loss of freedom (1980/2008).

Perilous remoteness is an experience of encountering limitations as one seeks the opportunities of *living on the edge*. The experience of aloneness, of *isolating jeopardy*, surfaces *vacillating sentiments* in *living on the edge*.

### **Vacillating Sentiments**

Vacillating sentiments are revealed in this investigation of *living on the edge* as predominantly shifting emotions that may move from high excitement and joy to extreme fear. These disparate moods were revealed as the participants expressed the wide-range

of emotion they experienced in *living on the edge*.

These shifting emotions are shown with a participant who said “It was a celebration” upon being flown into the wilderness. But upon being stranded, “You want out”. After being rescued he stated, “...I chewed that guy out as hard as I have ever chewed anybody out. I was so mad about him risking our lives...” and it was an “unbelievable satisfying hunt.” One participant felt “fortunate to be able to have three kids participate in everything” yet “It is a lot of stress.” “I get frustrated every once in a while.”

Another spoke about experiencing the changing emotions from distress to peacefulness in *living on the edge*,

You don’t know if they are going to survive. You don’t know if they are going to get the medical help in time and you don’t know if you are going to lose a loved one. To me that is living on the edge. But, there are many things that probably outweigh the negatives. It’s a wonderful life; it’s peaceful in many ways. One participant’s experience of flying surfaced differing emotions. When the plane’s throttle broke off in her hand while flying, she said,

...logic says keep flying the airplane, instead of panicking or getting fearful”.

Yet, when piloting a plane with her family on board that almost stalled and crashed, she then said, “I was a little nervous. That’s about as much on the edge as I want to be...”

She concluded, “You have respect for the edge, but you are not afraid to step to it and look out and make an observation and a decision.”

Vacillating sentiments about living on the edge in a frontier area were revealed by a participant when initially she was “frightened” and it was “a bit of a shock”. Then she said,

Living on the edge is just a part of my normal life.... I am more comfortable here.... I don't think most of us consider it to be really strange....That is just the way it is for me to live here. Ups and downs...

Living on the edge for one participant held vacillating sentiments. She said, “Life on the edge. It's fun...it's dangerous. It is just a battle, but it gives us strength and character.”

A related humanbecoming study of vacillating sentiments is found in Morrow's (2010) study of feeling unsure as the concept reveals the changing movements in, “discomforting trepidation with unassuredness-assuredness” (p. 319). In a study of children that experienced feeling lonely by Karnick (2008), the changing emotions of distress amid contentedness are noted within the revealed structure: “...feeling lonely is distressing isolation amid contentedness arising with cherished engagements.” (p. 160).

The notion of *vacillating sentiments* is found in a research study of nurses feeling respected- not respected by Bournes and Milton (2009). Shifting emotions of being affirmed and not affirmed surfaced assuredness and unassuredness emerged all-at-once. These participants chose the meaning while relinquishing control of their situations that relate patterns of cocreation (2009). The shifting emotions of changing expectations of women with high-risk pregnancies revealed the conceptual influence of the universal lived experience of hope (MacDonald & Jonas-Simpson, 2009).

*Vacillating sentiments* are found in the paradoxes of life. Palmer (1980/2008), a theologian and philosopher talked about the shifting emotions in paradoxical experience, Contradiction, paradox, the tension of opposites; these have always been at the heart of my experience, and I think I am not alone. I am tugged one way and then the other. My beliefs and my actions often seem at odds. My strengths are sometimes canceled by my weaknesses. Myself, and the world around me, seem more a study in dissonance than a harmony of the integrated whole (p. 2).

Palmer professes that an ability to welcome the changing perspectives of paradox and the accompanying emotions is important for humanity and the failure to do so is perilous (1980/2008). Thomas Merton (1965), a Catholic theologian, described his *vacillating sentiments* of living in community as the ‘most profound and happiest of times of my life...and also some of the most terrible... (January, 30, v. 198-99)’. The importance of understanding shifting emotions is reiterated in Sullivan’s and Strongman’s sociological examination of vacillating and mixed emotions that sometimes appear contradictory but may allow a deeper understanding of the person (2003).

The third core concept, *vacillating sentiments*, is connected to the first principle of the humanbecoming theory. The first principle of the humanbecoming theory is “structuring meaning is the imaging and valuing of languaging” (Parse, 2011, p.170). The structural transposition of *vacillating sentiments* is the ebb and flow of *disparate moods* and is valuing in humanbecoming theory. Valuing “is confirming-not confirming cherished beliefs in light of a personal worldview (Parse, 1998, pp. 37-38). Valuing is the cherished values and choices (Parse, 1998) lived through the “paradoxical rhythm of

confirming-not confirming” (p. 38). *Vacillating sentiments* are expressions of the confirming-not confirming rhythms as the participants engaged with diverse affiliations. *Vacillating sentiments* are shifting emotions that change in response to life’s vagaries and indicate one’s value priorities. Upon engaging with *living on the edge*, *vacillating sentiments* are involved with diverse affiliations.

### **Diverse Affiliations**

Diverse affiliations is the fourth core concept uncovered as participants spoke about *living on the edge*. Living on the edge with *diverse affiliations* requires separating from others to connect with the land, other beings, thoughts, and conditions in the frontier. As Parse (1998) stated, “Connecting-separating is being with and apart from others, ideas, objects, and situations all-at-once” (p. 45). This is the connecting-separating concept of configuring rhythmical patterns in the second principle of humanbecoming theory (Parse, 2011). *Diverse affiliations* connect and separate with the humanuniverse. Diverse affiliations involved moving with new people, places, and events while at the same time moving away from others when *living on the edge*.

A participant spoke about understanding life and clarifying priorities through the connection and separation found in *diverse affiliations* by saying, “Going on trips without guides, we find exhilarating, interesting and something to be proud of.” He explained further,

I think you become a better person and, I think you understand what is important, and I don’t know that we take the time to do that unless you are on the edge. Do you value your time with your friends and family more? Yes. I think you

understand life better if you live on the edge.

*Diverse affiliations* were described by a participant as connecting to the world through travel. He said,

Living on the edge makes your life more fulfilling. I consider that to be [the] healthy part of living a good life and to have passion... [that] add to your life, to your well-being.

Another participant spoke about her *diverse affiliations* with the animals and nature. She said, "Every day at our house we have geese, strange dogs, prairie chickens and we had a den of foxes in the hay bales one time. The raccoons are my favorites."

A participant discussed her *diverse affiliations* with others through her concerns in an attempt to connect with her community and with others, "I wonder how we relate to the rest of the world and how these young people growing up and having families are going to relate and manage...[I] seek out ways to be a bridge for people."

The importance of survival through *diverse affiliations* was expressed by another participant, "It is the edge, and if I had not had the support of my sisters and brother...so they helped me. I didn't fall over the edge." Another participant discussed the connecting-separating of *diverse affiliations* with her occupation by saying "The job I have is a good one for me, because I am like an island..." Another participant described *diverse affiliations* of living in the frontier and said, "It's a wonderful life; it's peaceful in many ways. Closeness of community, friends and church."

Closely related studies of *diverse affiliations* are found in the studies of feeling cared for (Bunkers, 2004) and feeling loved (Baumann, 2000). Feeling cared for revealed

the structure as “contentment with intimate affiliations arising with salutary endeavors while honoring uniqueness amid adversity” (Bunkers, 2004, p. 68). Meaningful *diverse affiliations* of contentment and presence were considered important to health and quality of life. Baumann (2000) explored the universal experience of feeling loved with mothers in a parolee program. Feeling loved was found to be complex experience of “unshakable presence arising with moments of uplifting delight amid bewildering trepidation.” (p. 335).

*Diverse affiliations* involve connecting with the other. Palmer, a sociologist, activist, and educator stated that when one affiliates with the world our understanding expands and enables us to connect and love more deeply (1980/2008).

Connecting-separating is the rhythmical choosings of moving closer in a relationship and distancing oneself from entities at the same time (Parse, 1998). Engaging with *diverse affiliations* may require sacrifice. Sacrificing something important is a means to bond with intimate others as an experience of health (Florczak, 2006). In sacrifice, one will separate from something of value to connect with another. This sacrifice may take the form of sacrificing time (Florczak, 2006) to be in true presence as an expression of love (Parse, 1998) with *diverse affiliations*.

The fourth core concept uncovered while exploring living on the edge is *diverse affiliations*. The structural transposition of this concept is *varied engagements*. *Diverse affiliations* are conceptually integrated with the humanbecoming theory as the paradoxical rhythms of connecting-separating of the second principle of humanbecoming.

### **Metaphorical Emergings**

The metaphorical emergings of the participants include the following: Hugh stated that *living on the edge*, "...was like being on an island." Debra spoke about *living on the edge* metaphorically, "I am like an island; like you fall off the edge. Lucretia would "seek out ways to be a bridge for people." These metaphors reveal the second principle's paradoxical rhythm of connecting-separating. Debra said that living on the edge is "like race car drivers." Florence thought that *living on the edge* was like, "Life and death is a very fine edge." It is just a battle." Amelia found that *living on the edge* was "something that preserves you... like having a dream of falling off of a cliff and all of the sudden before you actually hit the ground, you wake up." These images reveal the powering originating of the third principle. The metaphorical emergings further enliven and illuminate the meaning of *living on the edge*.

### **Health, Quality of Life, and Living on the Edge**

Health is "a way of living" chosen values and priorities by the person (Parse, 1998, p. 32). In accord with humanbecoming, Parse said,

The personal commitment is lived through abiding with the struggles and joys of everydayness. The way of abiding with the joys and struggles of everydayness is the choosing of meaning in situations at the reflective-prereflective realms of the universe. This is health. (p.33)

Health is further defined as "a continuously changing process that the human cocreates in mutual process with the universe" (Parse, 1998, p. 33). In living one's valued priorities, personal choices are not judged but respected (Parse, 1998, 2006b).



Personal choices in living out one's valued priorities is reflected in this participant's statement,

I think you become a better person, and I think you understand what is important, and I don't know that we take the time to do that unless you are on the edge. And we had plenty of time to think, but mostly what I thought about was my family and you know, do you have to try more cases as lawyer and that will make your life fuller, probably not. Do you have to play golf every Saturday and Sunday, probably not. Do you value your time with your friends and family more, yeah. ... but I haven't forgotten what is important and I think that more than anything was the important lesson I got, and that was, you don't have to have a heart attack, you don't have to be almost dead, to understand that what is significant in your life.... It isn't even that you are so afraid you are going to die, it is just that you recognize you are on the edge.... And anything can happen when you are on the edge.

Quality of life is "the incarnation of lived experiences" (Parse, 2007a, p. 217).

Quality of life is the objective of the nurse as a healthcare professional (Parse, 1998, 2007a).

*Living on the edge* is validated as a universal experience of health by the findings of the study. *Living on the edge* reveals personal valued priorities as it is lived out in meaningful moments of daily life. The shifting emotions of vacillating sentiments were realized as the participants pondered their pleasures and difficulties in *living on the edge*. How they persevered and endured amid these moments revealed their personal choices

and values. *Diverse affiliations* cocreated quality of life for these participants. *Living on the edge* contributes to quality of life as exemplified by the participants' statements. One participant talked about awareness and transcendence, "I think you become a better person and, I think you understand what is important...I think you understand life better if you live on the edge."

As another participant spoke about fulfillment and improved quality of life when *living on the edge*,

"Living on the edge makes your life more fulfilling. I consider that to be [the] healthy part of living a good life and to have passion... [that] add to your life, to your well-being."

These participants in the frontier of the American West revealed that *living on the edge* is *persevering with pioneering ventures amid perilous remoteness, as vacillating sentiments surface with diverse affiliations*. The participants in pondering the lived experience of *living on the edge* illuminated meaning to deepen and enhance their quality of life.

### **New Knowledge**

Six unique findings were uncovered from this investigation which are not found in the existent literature on *living on the edge*. ❄️

1. The structure of *living on the edge* is *persevering with pioneering ventures amid perilous remoteness, as vacillating sentiments arise with diverse affiliations*.
2. *Persevering with pioneering ventures* involves unique ways of living the

unknown in daring to seek ingenious quests in *living on the edge*.

3. *Perilous remoteness* reveals the danger in isolation in *living on the edge*.
4. *Vacillating sentiments* explore the ebb and flow of shifting emotions in *living on the edge*.
5. *Diverse affiliations* surface a variety of engagements with all creation in *living on the edge*.
6. Understanding of the universal experience of *living on the edge* has been developed and a deeper insight into health and quality of life has been revealed.

## Conclusions

The research process investigating those who live in the frontier of the American West revealed four core concepts of *living on the edge*. They are *persevering with pioneering ventures, perilous remoteness, vacillating sentiments, and diverse affiliations*. The principal finding of this investigation was the structure of the experience of *living on the edge: living on the edge is persevering with pioneering ventures amid perilous remoteness, as vacillating sentiments arise with diverse affiliations*. Transposing the structure to into a higher level of abstraction, the structure of *living on the edge* was transformed to *persisting with ingenious quests amid isolating jeopardy, as disparate moods arise with varied engagements*. At the theoretical level, the structure became *living on the edge is powering originating amid enabling-limiting, as valuing surfaces with connecting-separating*. The relevant theoretical and empirical research of *living on the edge* was examined and reviewed. This knowledge contributed to nursing science and

the theory of humanbecoming. This analysis provided additional understanding of the meaning in the experience of *living on the edge*.

The appropriate research methodology to explore the experience of living *on the edge* was Parse research method (Parse, 1998, 2001, 2005, 2008a, 2011). This method of inquiry provided the ethical and procedural rigor within the processes of dialogical engagement, extraction-synthesis, and heuristic interpretation to reveal the structure of the experience of *living on the edge* by those participants residing in the frontier of the American West. The Parse research method expands the theory of humanbecoming and contributes distinctive knowledge to nursing science.

This study revealed distinctively new knowledge for the existent literature about *living on the edge*. The singular concept inventing of *living on the edge* is included within this research investigation (Peterson-Lund, *in press*). The concept inventing determined that the synthetic definition of *living on the edge is risking venturing with sureness-unsureness surfacing with cherished engaging*.

The similarities and dissimilarities of the synthetic definition with the core concepts and the conclusions of the research investigation will be discussed. The first core concept was *persevering with pioneering ventures* and is similar to *risking venturing*. The concepts of *risking* and *venturing* were revealed in the first core concept. *Risking* was discussed in terms of taking a risk and surviving danger. *Venturing* was discussed as a sacred place one travels to or where one lives. In the research findings, the core concept contained *persevering* and *pioneering* which was not included in the synthetic definition. *Venturing* was described as *pioneering* in the general and theoretical

literature of taking a risk and surviving danger.

The second core concept, *perilous remoteness*, is distinctly different from the synthetic definition and does not contain explicit reference to the second essence of the synthetic definition, *sureness-unsureness*. *Sureness-unsureness* is similar to the third core concept, *vacillating sentiments*, by indicating a fluctuation between certainty and uncertainty. However, it does not describe and is not inclusive of the breadth of shifting emotions encountered in the fullness of the lived experience of *living on the edge*.

The fourth core concept, *diverse affiliations*, is related to the essence of *cherished engaging* in the synthetic definition. *Cherished engaging* is limited in conceptualization as it does not illuminate the variety of bonds revealed by the investigation of *diverse affiliations*.

The synthetic definition at the theoretical level was stated as *powering the originating of valuing connecting-separating*. The discoveries of the investigation revealed that *living on the edge* at the theoretical level was *powering originating amid enabling-limiting, as valuing surfaces with connecting-separating*. Similar concepts between the definitions are noted as powering originating and valuing are present in the synthetic definition and the research finding, The differences were notable in that *enabling-limiting* is absent from the synthetic definition.

### **Methodological Insights**

Comprehension of the humanbecoming theory is essential and a challenge for the novice investigator and scholar of the humanbecoming school of thought. Therefore, the guidance of a mentor is essential for verifying the integrity of the methodology and

confirming the accuracy of the findings of the investigation. Perilous remoteness was experienced as a doctoral student living in the frontier with few readily available resources. Planning ahead to access resources was crucial. However, mentoring and scholarly inclusion is imperative to sustain the efforts of learning and investigation. It is important for the novice to assimilate the complexities of the humanbecoming theory. This is best accomplished through a rigorous focus in studying and immersion with the humanbecoming theory. Attending the Institute of Humanbecoming enables the researcher to acquire knowledge enhanced by the community of Parse scholars. Dialogue with diverse affiliations of humanbecoming scholars expands ones vision and is inspirational to persevere with pioneering endeavors as a novice researcher.

### **Recommendations for Research**

There is a paucity of research regarding *living on the edge*. A singular concept inventing and no other investigations have been conducted on the experience of *living on the edge*. Therefore, further research is recommended with other groups of participants to further understand the phenomenon of *living on the edge*.

Four concepts of *living on the edge* emerged from the research findings with those living in the frontier of the American west. The four concepts are *persevering with pioneering ventures*, *perilous remoteness*, *vacillating sentiments*, and *diverse affiliations*. Additional investigations are recommended to elucidate the meaning of the lived experience of these concepts. *Persevering with pioneering ventures*, the first core concept, may provide direction in exploring the universal lived experience of believing in something, searching for an answer, imagining, considering tomorrow, or feeling free.

*Perilous remoteness*, the second core concept, may provide direction for research on the universal lived experience of feeling alone, feeling lost, feeling afraid, feeling lonely, or feeling at home. The third concept, *vacillating sentiments*, suggests further study of the expanse of human emotions such as: feeling angry, feeling happy, feeling joy, feeling sorrow, feeling jealous, feeling tired, feeling rested, feeling satisfied, and feeling disappointed. *Diverse affiliations*, the fourth concept, encourages further understanding of feeling cared for, feeling loved, loving another, or feeling accepted.

### **Recommendations for Nursing Practice**

*Living on the edge* relates to health and quality of life. This study of those living in the American west is not generalizable to other population groups. It is important that nursing understand this phenomenon as it relates to other international population groups living in frontier areas around the world. Since frontier areas may include the interior reaches of the human intellect, as well as the physical planes of existence, exploring *living on the edge* in all venues and with different age groups would allow the nurse to comprehend this universal phenomenon in diverse communities and across the lifespan. The conclusions of this study enhance knowledge about the humanbecoming theory and nursing knowledge.

Persevering with pioneering ventures was forged within the very foundation of nursing. Florence Nightingale developed the discipline of nursing prevailing above significant societal, personal and environmental challenges (Hegge, 2011). Hegge stated, “Her ventures were in the trenches and at the policy level, balancing realities with ideals.” (p. 154). Florence Nightingale was devoted to humanity. Some experienced

perilous remoteness and Nightingale responded to those in need. “Always the champion for the oppressed, and boldly entrepreneurial, she did not waiver when opposition and crises impeded her intentions to improve the plight of the poor” (Hegge, 2011, p.158).

Human flourishing enhances the individual’s lived experience and quality of life (Bunkers, 2011). Quality of life is cocreated in the present moment with the nurse and individual/family/community (Bunkers, 2011). By living in true presence with those *living on the edge* the nurse enhances quality of life and cocreates human flourishing with humankind.

### **Summary**

The objectives of this investigation were accomplished. The structure of the experience of *living on the edge* was discovered, providing new knowledge to nursing and the humanbecoming theory. Guidance for future research and nursing practice is supported by this study. Continued research in the phenomenon of *living on the edge* will enhance the science of nursing and the humanbecoming theory.

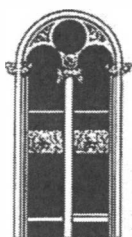


**Appendix A**

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Robin Peterson-Lund  
PhD Nursing student  
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Kadoka, SD 57543  
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**Permission for Leaves of Grass by Whitman**

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Sincerely,

Steven van Leeuwen  
President, Bartleby.com, Inc.

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To: bartlebycom@aol.com  
Sent: Fri, Feb 26, 2010 10:46 am  
Subject: Permission to Quote  
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I am a PhD student requesting information to receive permission to quote portions of the poem, *Leaves of Grass*, by Walt Whitman in a manuscript for possible application and for my dissertation. The lines are:

"All goes onward and outward- nothing collapses"

Will you provide me with your permission?

Thank you.

I am,

Most Sincerely Yours,  
Robin Peterson-Lund

Robin Peterson-Lund, RN,MS,CNP  
P O Box 13  
Kadoka,SD 57543  
605-484-2928

**Permission for Ulysses by Tennyson**

**From:** bartlebycom@aol.com  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 16, 2010 7:46 PM  
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**Subject:** Re: Permission to Quote Request

sure

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Robin Peterson-Lund <wolftable@kadokatelco.com>  
**To:** bartlebycom@aol.com  
**Sent:** Sat, Feb 13, 2010 10:04 pm  
**Subject:** RE: Permission to Quote Request

Dear Mr. Leeuwen,

Thank you for your prompt reply. I would also like to request permission to utilize these same lines of the Ulysses poem by Tennyson in my dissertation. Would I be able to have permission to do this as well?

Thank you,  
Robin Peterson-Lund

---

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**To:** [bartlebycom@aol.com](mailto:bartlebycom@aol.com)  
**Sent:** Sat, Feb 13, 2010 2:22 pm

Subject: Permission to Quote Request

Dear Sir or Madame,

I am a PhD student requestion information to receive permission to quote portions of the poem Ulllysses by Lord Alfred Tennyson in a manuscript for publication.

Will you send me the requisite forms for this application?

Thank you for your efforts.

I am,

Most Sincerely yours,

Robin Peterson-Lund

Robin Peterson-Lund, RN, MS, CNS, CNP  
*Family Nurse Practitioner|Philip Health Services*  
*SDSU|PhD in Nursing student*  
P.O. Box 13|Kadoka,SD| 57543  
Email: wolftable@kadokatelco.com  
Mobile: 605-484-2028  
Work: 605-837-2257  
Home: 605-837-2757

**Permission for Faith Poem**

From: Patrick Overton [POverton@clatsopcc.edu]

Sent: Saturday, February 13, 2010 11:15 PM

To: Robin Peterson-Lund

Subject: RE: Patrick Overton Info Request Form

Follow Up Flag: Follow up

Flag Status: Red

Robin - I would normally require a specific format but, under the circumstances, I am granting you permission to use the poem in whatever format is required. I understand the limitations of formatting for Ph.D. dissertation work and I know you have to follow it. I would ask though, that if it is to be used in any publication, you would share this with me and we would work together on how best to format the poem. If you will agree to that, I am happy to have you include it in your work.

I spent thirty years in the Midwest - some in Oklahoma and most in Missouri. I also spent a good deal of time addressing life on the Plains, in the frontier, and mostly in rural/small communities. I have also had a long-standing connection with Native American Spirituality as I taught a course called Religion in Human Experience. It was that course that introduced me to my intense interest in that subject which later helped me discover that my Great Great Grandmother was full-blooded Cherokee. I am honored that you would find the poem to be an

effective expression of your belief about surviving and thriving at the edge.

Ironically, one of my major lectures delivered at Univ. Mass. at Amherst was entitled,

"At the Edge." I suspect we have a lot in common.

I would ask one favor. I believe your dissertation will be an important piece of work and

I would love to have a copy of it when you are finished - if that is possible. It isn't a requirement, just a statement of respect and interest in your work.

Print this email out and keep it in your files for proof of permission from the author. If

you need something else from me, just let me know.

Good luck. You are doing important work and I am proud you are letting me be a part of it.

Patrick Overton

---

From: Robin Peterson-Lund [wolftable@kadokatelco.com]

Sent: Saturday, February 13, 2010 8:06 PM

To: Patrick Overton

Subject: RE: Patrick Overton Info Request Form

Dr. Overton,

How nice it is to have your reply. I came across your poem when I did an internet search of "living on the edge". I found your website and the poem. It is beautiful and your words are powerful!

The manuscript, that I hope will be accepted for publication, will also be utilized in

my first chapter of my dissertation. Therefore, I am wanting to clarify that for your consideration to grant me permission. It will be double spaced with Times New Roman font for the manuscript and dissertation.

I must double space the poem as part of the manuscript criteria. If you want any changes I will happily make them. I have attached the writing and citation as it is written exactly in my manuscript in case it is not easily read within the email. The following is the version of your Faith poem and citation:

Patrick Overton, an American writer, educator, playwright and poet, echoes this

experience. He notes in his poem, Faith,

"When you walk to the edge of all the light you have  
and take that first step into the darkness of the unknown,  
you must believe that one of two things will happen:  
There will be something solid for you to stand upon, or,  
you will be taught how to fly" (Overton, 2009)

I am a Family Nurse Practitioner and PhD in Nursing student at South Dakota State University. The title of my manuscript and dissertation is: Frontier Voices: Living on the Edge. My dissertation is about the frontier people and culture that embraces living on the edge in reality and metaphorically. My objective is to identify cultural attributes and health beliefs of the frontier people. This knowledge will help guide nursing science and nursing care to be culturally sensitive and competent.



Your poem will contribute to my study because it exemplifies what it means to dare to live on the edge. It expresses clearly what it is to push into the frontier of the unknown. I believe having faith generates vision.

Living in the frontier requires faith and vision. The frontier is a place, a culture, and a way of life. I define frontier as interconnected with the earth, the sky, outward into the aerospace, or inward within one's mind. I live and practice in the frontier of SD. My heritage encompasses both the early European mountain men, scouts and the Lakota people.(I am a registered member of the Oglala Lakota people.) I believe there is a distinctive culture out here in the frontier areas of both Euro-American and Native peoples. I want to give voice to this unique and wonderful people and way of life.

I attempted to be concise. I am sorry for my exhuberance.

If there is any further clarification that I can provide, I will be happy to do so.

Thank you once again for your reply and encouragement that one can find a way through the maze!

Robin Peterson-Lund

-----Original Message-----

From: Patrick Overton [mailto:POverton@clatsopcc.edu]

Sent: Saturday, February 13, 2010 3:47 PM

To: wolftable@kadokatelco.com

Subject: RE: Patrick Overton Info Request Form

Robin - I will be glad to give you permission. What I need to know is what version of the

poem you intend to use and how, how you will be presenting it in your dissertation (lineage, spacing, etc) and how you will be citing it.

If you will send me that, I will give you permission (via email note) permission for use.

What is the dissertation about? How did you come across the poem? And, more importantly, why do you think it will contribute to your work?

From one who survived the Ph.D. maze

Patrick Overton, Ph.D.

---

From: wolftable@kadokatelco.com [wolftable@kadokatelco.com]

Sent: Saturday, February 13, 2010 11:37 AM

To: poverton@patrickoverton.com

Subject: Patrick Overton Info Request Form

realname: Robin Peterson-Lund

Comments: Dear Mr. Overton,

I am a PhD student at South Dakota State University. I would like to apply for permission to quote your Faith poem for use in a manuscript and for use in my dissertation.

Would you please send me the permission application?

Thank you!

I am, Sincerey yours,

Robin Peterson-Lund

Email: [wolftable@kadokatelco.com](mailto:wolftable@kadokatelco.com)

605)837-2757

P.O. Box 13

Kadoka, SD 57543

## Permission for Photographic Reproduction Rights of Sacajawea

---

**From:** fritzliedtke@msn.com [mailto:fritzliedtke@msn.com] **On Behalf Of** Fritz Liedtke

**Sent:** Thursday, January 21, 2010 4:19 PM

**To:** wolftable@kadokatelco.com

**Subject:** RE: Sacajawea

Great, Robin. I know right where that is.

I usually charge a minimum of \$275 to go out and shoot anything, plus reproduction rights, but this is pretty simple and straightforward. I could do it for you for \$125, and that would include the reproduction rights, so you could do anything you wanted with the image.

Let me know if that works for you, and we can take care of that for you asap.

Thanks,

Fritz Liedtke

[www.fritzphoto.com](http://www.fritzphoto.com)

[www.fritzphoto.com/arts](http://www.fritzphoto.com/arts)

503.267.5078

Visit the blog: [www.fritzphoto.com/blog](http://www.fritzphoto.com/blog)

Hi Robin--

Just wanted to confirm that I received your payment; thank you. I'll finish processing those images and email them to you, probably tomorrow.

Thanks again,

Fritz Liedtke

[www.fritzphoto.com](http://www.fritzphoto.com)

[www.fritzphoto.com/arts](http://www.fritzphoto.com/arts)

503.267.5078

Visit the blog: [www.fritzphoto.com/blog](http://www.fritzphoto.com/blog)

**Appendix B**  
**Internal Review Board Approval**



South Dakota State University

Human Subjects Committee/Office of Research  
SAD Room 124  
Box 2201 SDSU  
Brookings, SD 57007

To: Robin Peterson-Lund, College of Nursing

Date: May 9, 2011

Project Title: The Lived Experience of Living on the Edge: A Humanbecoming Perspective

Approval #: IRB-1105009-EXP

The Committee approved your project using expedited procedures as described in 45 CFR 46.110. The activity was deemed to be no greater than minimal risk, and the following expedited category from 63 FR 60364-60367 was found to be applicable to your activity:

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

One-year approval of your project will be dated starting 5/9/11. If you require additional time to complete your project, please submit a request for extension before 05/8/12. Protocol changes must be approved by the Committee prior to implementation. Forms may be found on the Human Subjects web page. If there are any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others, please contact the SDSU Research Compliance Coordinator. At the end of the project please inform the committee that your project is complete.

If I can be of further assistance, don't hesitate to let me know.

Thank you.

*Norm*

Norman O. Braaten  
Research Compliance Coordinator

**Appendix C**  
**Participant Information Sheet**

### **A Research Study on Living on the Edge - Participant Information Sheet**

You are being asked to participate in a research study that is investigating the meaning of *living on the edge*. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and will contribute to nursing knowledge and may contribute to improving healthcare. The study will be conducted by Robin Peterson-Lund, a family nurse practitioner who lives in Kadoka, SD. Robin Peterson-Lund is also a PhD in Nursing student at South Dakota State University.

Participation in the study will involve one discussion between you and Robin Peterson-Lund. The discussion will focus on your experience of living on the edge. The discussion will last 20 to 60 minutes depending on what you have to say and how long you choose to participate. This discussion will be audio-recorded, and a transcript will be made of the audio-recording. Your name will not be on the transcript or in the final study report. To protect your anonymity only a code name will be used to refer to your discussion.

You are invited to bring to the discussion a symbol such as a photograph, poem, painting or any other object that represents to you the lived experience of living on the edge. This symbol may be photocopied or reproduced for possible publication or use in presentations. The original symbol will be returned to you. There will be no identifying information to link you to this symbol.

All of the information you share will be kept in a locked cabinet in Robin Peterson-Lund's home office. The information you share will be strictly confidential. After the study has been completed, the transcript will be shredded and the audio-recording will be destroyed. There are only minimal risks of becoming uncomfortable in talking about *living on the edge* and the benefits from participation may include increased insight into *living on the edge* and contributing to nursing knowledge. Should you decide to participate, you can withdraw at any time with no penalty. You may find it helpful to discuss your experience of *living on the edge*. If you are interested in participating in this study on living on the edge, please call Robin Peterson-Lund at 605-837-2757.

Thank you for taking time to consider participating in this study.



**Appendix D**  
**Consent Form**

**CONSENT FOR A STUDY ENTITLED:**  
**THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF LIVING ON THE EDGE:**  
**A HUMANBECOMING PERSPECTIVE**

I am asking you to participate in this study of LIVING ON THE EDGE conducted by Robin Peterson-Lund, RN, CNS, CNP. I am a PhD student in Nursing at South Dakota State University.

The purpose of this study is to investigate and understand the meaning of living on the edge. Participants in the study will help me understand what the experience of living on the edge is like by sharing your experiences with the investigator. This will enhance nursing knowledge and may contribute to improving healthcare.

In this study I will have a discussion with you about living on the edge. The discussion will begin with me saying, "Please tell me about your experience of living on the edge." The discussion will last 20 to 60 minutes depending on what you have to say and how long you choose to participate. The discussion will be digitally and audio-recorded. The tapes will be destroyed once the study is completed. A transcript of your discussion will be made and the paper and electronic copies of the transcript will be destroyed when the study is complete. Your name and other identifying information will not appear on written transcripts, reports, or any published papers. However, quotations about *living on the edge* from your discussion may be used anonymously (pseudo name) in the reports of the study.

The symbol that you may choose to bring to the discussion may be photocopied or reproduced for possible publication or use in presentations. There will be no identifying

information to link you to this symbol. The symbol will be returned to you.

---

**Participant Declaration:**

There are minimal risks such as becoming uncomfortable when talking about living on the edge and benefits include gaining insight into *living on the edge* and contributing to nursing knowledge. You are free to describe the experience as you wish. If during the conversation, you become uncomfortable, you have the option to stop the conversation and reschedule, or stop and withdraw from the study without penalty.

I certify that I have read the preceding, or it has been read to me, and that I understand its contents. The purpose and procedures of this study have been fully explained to me. I, as the participant, understand that the researcher is a mandatory reporter for legal or health care issues. If I state or imply that I am a danger to myself or others or if I discuss illegal activity, the conversation will be stopped and my participation in the study will be cancelled immediately. Seeking counseling may be advised by the researcher.

Any questions I have pertaining to the study have been and will be answered by Robin Peterson-Lund. I understand that I may call Robin Peterson-Lund in Kadoka, SD at 605-837-2757 to discuss any concerns or questions I may have about my participation in the study. I also understand that I may contact the Research Compliance Officer at South Dakota State University, Norm Braaten, at 605-688-4181 or the Research Supervisor, Dr. Sandra Bunkers, at 605-588-4114 if I have questions about the conduct of this study. I freely and voluntarily consent to participate in this study, and will be given a

copy of this consent form.

---

Participant's Signature

---

Date

---

Researcher's Signature

---

Date

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