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Navigating the Local and the Translocal With Institutional Ethnography: Exploring Ethical Grey Areas in the Relationship Between Researcher and Standpoint Informants in Dementia Care Research

Nicole K. Dalmer & Guro Wisth Øydgard

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Abstract: Institutional ethnography (IE) is grounded in the idea that the power structures shaping daily life—known as ruling relations—cannot be fully understood from any individual's immediate perspective. IE researchers, therefore, look beyond an individual's local environment and experiences to analyze how these broader ruling relations influence their everyday practices. Drawing on two complementary studies, we explore the practical and ethical challenges of identifying and mapping the ruling relations that connect local and translocal contexts for those conducting, teaching, or supervising IE research. The studies include a Norwegian project on family caregivers' access to formal health services and a Canadian investigation examining how family caregivers and paid staff manage information connected to dementia care. Based on experiences and insights from these projects, we identify three, key ethical grey areas in navigating between local and translocal contexts: 1. explaining IE concepts to informants with limited research knowledge; 2. handling data from distinct informant groups; and 3. producing findings that serve participants while potentially revealing uncomfortable knowledge about their institutions. We conclude by encouraging continued dialogue among IE researchers about the ethical complexities involved in such work.

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1. Introduction

Doing research and developing one's abilities as a researcher demands learning, experience, and reflection. While there are numerous 'how to' textbooks and articles available, there are far fewer resources addressing the complexities, messiness, and failures in conducting research (NIND, HOLMES, INSENGAC, LEWTHWAITE & SUTTON, 2020; ROSS & CALL-CUMMINGS, 2020). Addressing this gap, in this article, we convey some of the ethical ambiguities that may arise when conducting an institutional ethnography study. [1]

Institutional ethnography (IE) is a *way of thinking and doing research* as a discovering method which moves between the local and translocal, that is, between entry-level and level-two informants[1] (CAMPBELL & GREGOR, 2004; SMITH, 2005). CAMPBELL and GREGOR (2004) outlined two types of data that are collected throughout the course of an IE investigation: Entry-level and level-two. Entry-level (local) data illuminate informants' everyday experiences of the phenomena under study. An IE inquiry, however, "pushes beyond the local settings of people's everyday experience, and it must do so by finding those extended relations that coordinate multiple settings translocally" (SMITH, 2005, p.49). Therefore, from entry-level data, IE inquiries move to collecting level-two data, that is, translocal data which are "positioned outside the setting" (DEVEAU, 2008, p.150). These allow the investigator to work back to see how the experiences collected in the entry-level data happened as they did. Through a combination of entry-level and level-two data, the researcher can progressively reveal "how people's everyday lives may be organized without their explicit awareness but still with their active involvement" (CAMPBELL & GREGOR, 2004, p.43). This movement can prompt ethical challenges for those researchers doing, teaching, and/or supervising IE studies. [2]

In the following sections, we explore the practical and ethical implications of discovering and mapping ruling relations between the local and translocal, not only for institutional ethnographers and students learning this method of inquiry, but also for informants. With the use of examples and experiences from our own research, we highlight three grey areas worth considering when explaining, doing, and teaching IE, for students, possible informants, and other researchers. We draw our data from two separate but complementary projects: The first is a Norwegian study where 26 family care providers to persons living with dementia and seven administrators working at municipal allocation divisions were interviewed, exploring family care providers' care work and access to formal health and care services (ØYDGARD, 2018a). The second is a Canadian project where 13 family caregivers and five paid care dementia care staff were interviewed to better understand the social organization of families' information-related dementia care work (DALMER, 2018). [3]

Drawing on our and our informants' experiences and insights arising during and after these two studies, we first provide an overview to institutional ethnography

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[1] In institutional ethnographies, research participants are referred to as informants (CAMPBELL & GREGOR, 2004, p.66).

and our two studies (Section 2). In Section 3, we shortly discuss ethical challenges in IE, and then, in Section 4, we outline and unpack the following three ethical grey areas that can arise when identifying ruling relations which connect data emanating from local and translocal research sites: 1. Explaining IE to informants and navigating researcher positionality; 2. Researchers' responsibilities and dilemmas when managing data from multiple informants; and 3. The difficulties in producing knowledge "for the people" that may reflect poorly on some of the informants' organizational practices or experiences. Through the exploration of these three ethical grey areas, we seek to contribute to and further the field of IE pedagogy, aiming to share experiences that can inspire IE scholars to reflect upon and develop their own IE studies and methodological reflexivity. In Sections 5 and 6, we conclude with a discussion and a call for continued dialogue among IE researchers about the ethical complexities involved in such work. [4]

2. Institutional Ethnography: A Method of Inquiry

Originating in the 1970s by Canadian sociologist Dorothy E. SMITH, IE is a method of inquiry that maps how the everyday world of people's experiences is "put together by relations that extend vastly beyond the everyday" (2005, p.1). While rooting itself in individuals' knowledge and the actualities of their everyday experiences, this method of inquiry simultaneously acknowledges that these everyday, local experiences are permeated and coordinated by linkages and institutions which are outside of, and may be invisible to those living in their local, everyday environments (these linkages are what SMITH [1999, p.79] called "ruling relations"). Mapping and making known these ruling relations that extend beyond the local and the everyday is the crux of institutional ethnography. This mapping metaphor permeates institutional ethnographic inquiries with maps serving "as a guide through a complex ruling apparatus" (DeVAULT & McCOY, 2002, p.754). [5]

One of institutional ethnography's ontological assumptions is that the ruling relations which are part of the social organization of the everyday world cannot be fully explored from the place where we stand within the everyday world. An institutional ethnographer therefore looks beyond the local, with the purpose of explicating how the everyday world is coordinated by the ruling relations embedded in our ways of living, but that cannot be observed from the place we stand in our everyday world (SMITH, 2005). [6]

As a result, institutional ethnographers collect two different, but connected, types of data from two different research sites. First, entry-level data are collected from "local" research sites, that is, from standpoint informants, who, in an IE study, are those individuals experiencing the phenomenon under investigation. Collecting entry-level data offers an "entry into [the] problematic in the everyday world (CAMPBELL & GREGOR, 2004, p.60). An IE inquiry, however, "pushes beyond the local settings of people's everyday experience, and it must do so by finding those [ruling] relations that coordinate multiple settings translocally" (SMITH, 2005, p.49). Therefore, from entry-level data (the local), an IE inquiry moves to collecting level-two data from "translocal" research sites, that is from people or texts existing outside of, but still related to, those existing in the local. It is therefore the *combination* of local and translocal data, not the one or the other, that enables the IE researcher to reach beyond the local everyday world, into the organization of powers generated in the ruling relations (ibid.). Through a combination of entry-level and level-two data, an institutional ethnographer is able to progressively reveal "how people's everyday lives may be organized without their explicit awareness but still with their active involvement" (CAMPBELL & GREGOR, 2004, p.43). [7]

Despite this necessary movement between the local and translocal, there are few IE studies that begin to unpack the implications and the ethical quandaries of collecting two different types of data from two different research sites (BISAILLON & RANKIN, 2013; MYKHALOVSKIY & McCOY, 2002; NORSTEDT & BREIMO, 2016). Producing knowledge for people (one of the underlying aims of IE studies) demands that institutional ethnographers carefully balance their own knowledge about research with informants' perspectives and work knowledge about their everyday world. [8]

2.1 Study One[2]

ØYDGARD investigated how informal carers' contributions to care and access to formal services are negotiated with administrators at municipal allocation offices and the ruling relations that in turn shape their work. The empirical data were collected in qualitative, in-depth interviews with 26 informal carers and seven administrators working at municipal allocation offices. In-depth interviews in an IE study are best described as "talking to people" (DeVAULT & McCOY, 2006, p.22). They are also, however, oriented towards "sequences of interconnected activities" (p.23). The interviews with informal carers were carried out first, seeking to grasp their everyday life experiences. Through these interviews, it became clear that the administrators' professional practices were significant in shaping the informal carers' experiences. Accordingly, ØYDGARD followed up with interviews with administrators. Among the informal carers, three were males and 23 were females. Thirteen were children of the person living with dementia, nine were spouses, and four had another relationship with the person living with dementia: One sister, two cousins, and one friend. The persons living with dementia whom the informal carers cared for lived in 12 different municipalities across Norway. From these 12, five municipalities were selected, accounting for variation in size and number of inhabitants. Among the seven administrators who were interviewed, five were female and two were male. [9]

This research adds to an increased understanding of informal carers' contributions of care work, and how their work is largely influenced by institutional regulations beyond their personal motivation and intentions. Informal carers' perceptions and considerations of what public services they can and should apply for are shaped by interactions with administrators and formal carers. Informal

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[2] While both studies were focused on interviews with informants, IE investigations can take up a range of methods to map and make known the ruling relations of interest to the study. Methods might include observation, textual analyses, and document reviews, among others.

carers' contributions of care work should therefore not be seen as individual instances of work, but should instead be understood and studied as a socially organized process. In alignment with SMITH's (2005) generous concept of work, ØYDGARD argues that informal care work should also be acknowledged as anything done by informal carers which takes time and effort. Because of the starting point in informal carers' everyday lives, and the framing of their care work in a generous manner, this study makes visible a broader sense of care work than previous research has given attention to. The investigation of informal carers' work ultimately argues for a broadening of the concept of informal care work. [10]

2.2 Study Two

DALMER was struck by the increasing social and political expectations on families to actively and independently seek out information to guide their care work and yet the frustrations family caregivers expressed when trying to figure out what information they might need or where they should access that information. In response, she designed her IE study (2024) to make visible the social organization of family caregivers' information-related dementia care activities. As one component of this study, she spoke[3] with 13 family caregivers (12 females, one male) ranging in age between 67 and 88 years of age who were caring for a family member who was: Over the age of 65, living with dementia, and aging in the community (aging in place). Eight of the family caregivers (seven wives and one husband) were caring for their spouses and the remaining five were caring for a parent. Institutional ethnographers learn "by encountering the actualities through [...] talking with those who are directly involved" (SMITH, 2008, p.433). To find out "what actually happens," she interviewed those "who participate in such a regime to explore with them the work they are doing and to make visible in this way how the institutional regime enters into the organization of that work" (GRIFFITH & SMITH, 2005, p.4). She recruited the majority of participants from a dementia care facility that hosts adult day programs as well as weekly caregiver support meetings and education sessions. During the semi-structured interviews, family caregivers spoke about a typical day as a means to construct and extract descriptions of the work they did in relation to caring for their older family member. [11]

To make better sense of why and how "what actually happens" to family caregivers happens, DALMER subsequently spoke with five dementia care employees, including social workers, directors of adult day programs, and a manager of personal support workers. DALMER asked questions pertaining to how staff located the information they shared with family caregivers and the decisions they made about when and how to provide this information to families. Conversations with families and then paid dementia care providers (in addition to textual analyses of aging in place policies [2019] and research articles [2020]) revealed an ongoing negotiation between the very conceptualization and understanding of the role of information in family caregivers' everyday worlds. [12]

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[3] Interviews in IE are framed as conversations or as "talking with people" (DEVAULT & McCOY, 2012, p.384).

3. Ethical Challenges in Institutional Ethnography

Research with human participants should not harm nor put individuals at risk and therefore necessarily involves ethical deliberations. Furthermore, autonomy is a central principle of ethics, with informed consent a necessity in order for subjects to participate (VANCLAY, BAINES & TAYLOR, 2013; WITHAM, BEDDOW & HAIGH, 2015). At the same time, however, institutional ethnographers cannot detail or plan the exact progression of their study, not only because there is "no 'one way' to conduct an IE investigation" (DeVAULT & McCOY, 2002, p.755), but because IE is qualified as "research as discovery" (SMITH, 2005, p.2), as aptly summarized by DeVAULT and McCOY (2002, p.755):

> "The process of inquiry is rather like grabbing a ball of string, finding a thread, and then pulling it out; that is why it is difficult to specify in advance exactly what the research will consist of. The researcher knows what she wants to explain, but only step by step does she know who she needs to interview, or what texts and discourses she needs to examine." [13]

As the IE study begins to take shape, the ethics of the study are not stagnant; ethical dilemmas and grey areas develop and take shape at different points throughout the research process. Indeed, reflecting on possible consequences of research activity is an integral part of being a researcher. That said, development as a researcher is also, as LATOUR (1987) described, a *collective process*. Reflecting with other researchers, debating, drawing, and learning from one another's knowledge and experience (both positive and negative) is an important role of the collective research society, and can expand the lone researcher's horizon and understanding. When teaching IE, institutional ethnographers must also integrate students in this collective process. Drawing on experiences from our own research throughout this article, we can, as NIND et al. (2020) argued, take the students "behind the scenes" and dismantle the notion of "perfect research" (p.808). Accounts of messiness, imperfections, struggles, and emotions are often missing from methodological-focused literature (ibid.). This article is therefore a contribution to the field by inviting instructors and students alike to take part in and share experiences of "doing IE." Thus, we aim to stimulate fruitful conversations about IE's ethical grey areas with the goal of enhancing students' knowledge and practice of IE as well as outlining helpful ways of articulating and explaining IE to informants. [14]

4. Ethical Challenges in Our Two Studies

Our conversations with one another, our informants, and with existing scholarly works resulted in the distillation of the following three ethical grey areas that must be navigated when conducting IE research: Explaining IE to informants who may possess little research experience or methodological knowledge; managing knowledge acquired from two separate informant groups; and the difficulties in producing knowledge "for the people" that may reflect poorly on some of the informants' organizational practices or experiences. [15]

4.1 Explaining IE to informants and navigating researcher positionality

It is well known that caring for a person living with dementia can involve mixed feelings and frustrations for care providers, where "norms of obligation, responsibility and feelings of affection and resentment intertwine" (BAINES, EVANS & NEYSMITH, 1998, pp.4-5). This was the case for many of our participants. Several of the informants in ØYDGARD's study wanted to participate because they had *a message to share;* processes or services they were satisfied with, missed, or were frustrated about. After recruiting family carers to participate in her study, ØYDGARD received the following message by e-mail[4]:

> "Dementia and Alzheimer's have always been a stigmatized and 'hidden' disease, and this is still how our experience of it is. Therefore, we have decided to be open about the illness; we refuse to hide my husband away because he has Alzheimer's. He's not responsible for getting this disease, and neither are we. We have no reason to be ashamed and hide him away. We want to share our experiences and contribute to an openness about the disease and about living with it. Please contact us if you want to talk to us." [16]

Similarly, one of DALMER's informants said she would be willing to share her caregiving story as she would do "anything to help stop this dreadful disease [Alzheimer's]." Several of the informants in ØYDGARD's study asked if she had a personal experience and interest as family carer for a person with dementia. Similarly, both family caregivers and paid dementia care staff in DALMER's study also queried about her history or prior experiences as a care provider. As researchers, we both felt there might be an expectation of *giving voice* to or raising the profile of their personal stories. [17]

IE started out in the 1960's in the women's movement as a response to the way sociology was conducted at the time. Like several sociologists at the time, SMITH (1987) raised a critique against a sociology that was created for, by, and of men; a sociology that silenced women and other groups who did not fit the "male-focused" mainstream. Prominent feminist researchers, including HARDING (1991), and HARTSOCK (1983), created a new era of theory and research traditions aiming to raise epistemological questions from women's standpoints. Most of them claimed that it was their position as women that made it possible to

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[4] ØYDGARD's interactions with informants were in Norwegian. She translated all passages into English for this article.

explore issues raised by feminism (SMITH, 1987). As HARAWAY (1999, p.182) relayed, "we do not seek partiality for its own sake, but for the sake of the connections and unexpected openings situated knowledge make possible." Nevertheless, the purpose or process of giving voice is rarely unproblematic. No researcher is free of internalized and learned oppressions (ASHBY, 2011). HARAWAY (1999) highlighted the importance of the researcher situating herself in the position as researcher and woman. More recently in the field of disability research, giving voice has been an important goal of the research. As our own research and work with the data proceed, we started to wonder *whose voice* is *it anyway*? [18]

SMITH, however, did not only seek to give voice to women who had long been marginalized in sociology. Her project was "creating a way of seeing, from where we actually live, into the powers, processes, and relations that organize and determine the everyday context of that seeing" (1987, p.9). From SMITH's point of view, every position is open for everyone. IE therefore differs from mainstream feminist research and from the research that proposes *giving voice* to marginalized groups, such as in disability research. This attempt to give voice has, however, become a well-known hallmark within research involving marginalized groups (ASHBY, 2011), and a consciousness of the development in the field might be useful in understanding why informants might expect the researcher to belong to this tradition. The principle of voluntary participation implies that information must be provided in a way that fits each informant. Ensuring that informants understand the purpose of the research is a fundamental part of this information. [19]

In other words, research-linked explanations must be shaped in a way that the informants understand (VANCLAY et al, 2013). Even though the process of providing knowledge can seem technical, as well as methodologically complex, the information and the knowledge that comes out of it must be made available and useful for the people involved. After all, as SMITH (2005, p.10) emphasized, IE is *a sociology for people*. Explaining IE to informants needs to take place in the context of their previous knowledge, what they might have heard or read about before, or as SMITH (2005) noted, within the *discourse* they participate in. [20]

However, as IE researchers, we also participate in that discourse. Reflecting about our experiences from the interviews, we both realized that we may have been coordinated by this hallmark of "the within" that characterizes the field of research of family carers' experiences. As DALMER remarked in one of our earlier conversations together: "I felt so sensitive to the fact that I hadn't yet cared for a family member living with dementia. I felt like I might not be the best 'fit' as a researcher because I didn't have that lived experience." [21]

SMITH (2005, p.156) described how institutional capture happens "when both researcher and informants are familiar with the institutional discourse, and know how to speak it." This, in turn, can make interview data descriptively empty. In its origin, institutional capture is described as a danger that prohibits the researcher from getting access to the informant's work knowledge. Reflecting on this first ethically grey area, we argue that the concept of institutional capture might be a helpful concept to describe our concerns regarding whether, as DALMER expressed it, we were *the best fit* to conduct interviews with family carers. As our reflections developed during our conversations, we began to wonder whether we, as researchers, may have been *institutionally captured* by the discourse of family carers as an especially vulnerable group. [22]

Given the purpose of IE, that is, making the everyday world its problematic (SMITH, 1990), people living their everyday lives are often included as informants in IE studies, even vulnerable groups, like in our two studies. Vulnerability is, however, also a concept constructed within a discourse. Persons living with dementia have traditionally been positioned as living in a narrative of loss and tragedy, described as an "empty shell of person" that creates a greater tragedy for the family (WITHAM et al., 2015, p.33; WHO, 2012). Participating in this discourse, we can be led to assume that participation in research can be too much to bear in relation to their caregiver burden. WITHAM et al. (2015) described how the assumption of vulnerability can lead to the exclusion of possible informants without even asking. In our studies, while we did not exclude informants, upon reflecting on our interviews, we observed that talking to "vulnerable" informants triggered our own insecurity about whether we were in danger of adding to the family carers' burden by asking questions about sensitive issues or having informants recall past uncomfortable experiences. Our fear might have been connected to a fear of misleading informants, of an insecurity regarding whether they understood that the purpose of IE is not to give voice to personal stories, but rather, looks for accounts of the "institutional" (via ruling relations). It is possible that we were captured in a discourse that led us to underestimate informants' capacity to understand the purpose of IE and participate in an IE study. [23]

4.2 Managing data from multiple informants: Researchers' responsibilities and dilemmas

We both spoke to two different informant groups located at different research sites. DALMER talked with family caregivers at the entry-level and paid dementia care staff who straddled the local and level-two about how they found, used, shared, and managed information differently. ØYDGARD conversed with family carers of persons living with dementia at the entry-level, and at level-two, administrators in municipal allocation divisions about the access and allocation of services. In collecting data from these two, differently-situated informants, we were both struck with the flexibility and creativity required to gather the work knowledge from these different groups. Furthermore, we struggled with managing the data acquired from these two different groups, particularly as the two informant groups were known to one another and their experiences were often in direct opposition to the other. In managing knowledge from two different informant groups, one group which articulated entry-level data and another group which articulated level-two data, not only did we need to use different methods to more adeptly "get at" different informants' experiences, but we eventually had to navigate experiences articulated by each informant group that were in tension or in contradiction with the other. [24]

DALMER started by talking with 13 family caregivers about their work, asking informants to run through a typical day as a means to construct and extract descriptions of the work they do in relation to caring for their aging family member. Family caregivers' experiences of their information work were intimately woven within their identity, role, and work as a family caregiver. DALMER then spoke to five paid dementia care staff to understand how staff located the information they shared with caregivers and the decisions they made about when and how to provide this information. Interviews with paid dementia care staff proceeded in a much different fashion, being shorter in duration and a less emotional process. Results from the two sets of interviews reflected an underlying tension between what BARNES and HENWOOD (2015, p.147) called *informing with care* and *informing to care*. In an *inform to care* approach, information is "understood as separate and outside of care, while nevertheless acting upon it to produce care" whereas in an *inform with care* approach, "information is understood as inextricably linked to care (with care) but not in any predetermined or uni-directional sense" (ibid.). This tension between family caregivers' *inform with care* understanding of information and paid dementia care staff's *inform to care* approach to information was, at times, uncomfortable and at other times puzzling, as DALMER held work knowledge from two informant groups which were known to one another and whose work knowledge was often in opposition to one another. [25]

As ØYDGARD interviewed 26 family carers, the informants shared their experiences of the many difficult processes in getting access to services. Some of the informants shared their frustrations, guilty consciences, and their stories about processes which consisted of endless meetings. Inspired by SMITH's generous concept of *work* (2005, p.151), the informal carers were asked about their everyday lives as informal carers and about their efforts to involve formal carers, home care nurses, security alarms, or placements in care facilities. Questions were related to their actual doings, asking informants what they did, who they spoke to, how they proceeded, and why. Proceeding to level-two informants, similar questions were directed to the administrators: How did they get to know about care recipients' needs for help, who told them, what did they do, who did they talk to, how were grants written, and why? In this way, ØYDGARD not only began to understand what informants' routines were, but she also accessed their reflections about what they actually do (and how this might differ from what they "should" do). IE's generous concept of work helped ØYDGARD to include the informants' complex invisible work, or as DeVAULT, VENKATESH and RIDZI (2014) stated, "when … work is performed by [informants] themselves, it is rarely acknowledged *as* work" (p.181). [26]

Previous research has highlighted the need for more responsive information about available home care services, aiming to improve family carers' ability to navigate health and care systems (COURTIN, JEMIAI & MOSSIALOS, 2014). The insights we collected about family carers' everyday world revealed, however, that there is also a need to pay attention to application, granting, and decision processes. Family carers' and administrators' experiences bore witness to approaches that were made by the administrators to the proposed needs, that in different ways made certain needs *accountable* (SMITH, 2005, p.179). Some of the family informants in ØYDGARD's study shared their experiences using the past tense as their loved one was already in a nursing home, and a number of frustrations had come to an end. A majority of family informants in our studies were, however, in the middle of the care process at the time of the interview, and this was where an ethical issue arose: Should an interviewer relay potentially helpful information to the informant? And if so, how much information should be transmitted and to whom and in which circumstances? We wondered whether information sharing or resource recommendations during the interview should be considered a key component of relationship or rapport building between an institutional ethnographer and the informant in building towards a sociology for people? [27]

In ØYDGARD's study, for example, a spouse had asked his allocation division about the possibilities for help from a home care nurse, but ultimately did not apply because of the administrator's recommendation that there was no available help. In the interview, he despaired over his situation: *This can't be right, but I don't know how to proceed.* ØYDGARD did tell him about his rights, and that her experience from previous interviews was that the chance of getting services would increase if he actually filed an application. Even though it is stated in the Norwegian Public Administration Act that an oral application should be treated the same as one in writing, the empirical material in her study showed that this was not how it worked *in practice*. DALMER similarly had collected a number of work knowledge from family informants (such as the "right" wording that families had discovered would "unlock" access a plethora of free mobility aids, including wheelchairs, grab bars, and tub chairs from dementia care agencies in the city) which would be invaluable to the other family caregivers in her study. While DALMER ultimately relayed this information to certain family caregivers when the topic was discussed, she felt unsettled and unsure whether this was in keeping with her role as "researcher." [28]

In conducting and navigating interviews between level-one and level-two informants, what came to the forefront was a negotiation of power. As we both acted as a mediary node between the two informant groups, we began to think more broadly about power, not as one traditionally thinks of power as limiting or as a negative mechanism, but instead as a productive relation (FOUCAULT, 1978 [1976], 1980). As we each completed our study, we found ourselves pulling on threads of power within each informant group, between the informant groups, between ourselves and the informant groups, and within ourselves. And thus we wondered: *What does the negotiation of power reveal, challenge, or inform?* How can we make visible the power that coordinates informants' lives and work while also being mindful of the power that circulates in and throughout the researcher and research process? [29]

In her interviews, DALMER was sensitive to the power imbalance between the groups (with staff assuming the role of information *provider* and families taking on the role of information *seeker*), but she herself was aware of the power she needed to negotiate given her status as "researcher" and the accompanying power (or lack thereof) that title can bestow. DALMER herself felt an internal imbalance of power. On the one hand, she felt perceived by the two informant groups as possessing a great deal of power. Perhaps as a result of her status as "researcher" and former librarian, DALMER felt that both sets of informants perceived the interview simultaneously as opportunity and threat; as an opportunity to share and hopefully make matters easier or better for future caregivers but also as a threat, as informants appeared to be wary of what they should or should not say to avoid maligning their employers, in the case of paid dementia care staff, or certain family members or services in the city, in the case of family caregivers. On the other hand, DALMER sometimes felt powerless, as aptly summarized by HOFFMAN (2007): "As the 'seekers of knowledge', the interviewers clearly lack certain power" (p.322). [30]

Both BISAILLON and RANKIN (2013) and NORSTEDT and BREIMO (2016) alluded to situations of dissonant forms of knowledge that can raise ethical dilemmas for the researcher when handling accounts that do not match. As institutional ethnographers trace everyday experiences to the institutional processes and practices which shape and govern the everyday world, further research and attention must be brought to the role of power between the informant groups that we interview or observe, and within ourselves as institutional ethnographers. As SCHWALBE and WOLKOMIR (2002) elaborated, looking to the ways power is infused in the interview are not "simply ways to wring more data out of research participants. They are also ways to see, make sense of, and then see past [what] we generally take for granted" (p.218). Paying close attention to these shifts or imbalances in power (between informant groups, between the informant and the researcher, and within the researcher herself) is crucial for institutional ethnographers, as they may reveal the intricate workings of ruling relations. A final way in which power is often negotiated when moving between level-one and level-two informants is when an institutional ethnographer must grapple with the work knowledge that contradict or differ between two informant groups, an issue explored in the following section. [31]

4.3 The difficulties in producing knowledge that may reflect poorly on practices or experiences

Given the aim of IE as a sociology for people, the IE researcher aims to produce knowledge that is useful or helpful for people. That said, during the course of an IE study, the work knowledge uncovered might be unsavory to some informants or might challenge informants' perceptions. As MYKHALOVSKIY and McCOY (2002) stated in their article reflecting on using IE in community-based research, "IE does at times produce analyses that invite community activists to reflect on their own forms of knowing" (p.21). As discussed in Section 3.1.1, we felt a need to explain the purpose of IE to our informants, ensuring that they would not feel misled by us as we occupied our researcher role. Proceeding through the analysis process, this need to explain IE to our informants became of even greater importance as it was a crucial component to ensure that the results (explicating the informants' doings) sat well with all informant groups. [32]

Some of the family carers in ØYDGARD's study asked during the interview if she thought they had done enough or if they should have acted differently. This was clearly a sensitive subject for the family carers, and as a researcher, she felt worried that the results would give family carers a feeling of inadequacy. As the analysis process proceeded, these questions made visible the negotiation between family carers and administrators, and how ruling relations were woven into and coordinated in their work. The family carers' experiences of their communication and cooperation with home care nurses led ØYDGARD to discover how both family carers and administrators were caught up in a discursive notion of home care nurses as overworked and stressed because of the lack of resources. Several informal carers felt badly for the home care nurses and because of a sense of loyalty to the hard-working nurses, they abstained from applying for more services so that their needs never reached the allocation division (ØYDGARD, 2018b). It became visible how family carers' actions prevented them from accessing services. After finishing the analysis, it would be easy to simply conclude that the family carers could have acted differently. Analyses in IE begin and end in the everyday world; while we are doing the analysis we have not yet seen the full picture. As CAMPBELL (2006) wrote, "[t]he analysis begins in experience and returns to it, having explicated how the experience came to happen as it did" (p.91). [33]

Given the advent and purpose of IE, it is unsurprising that so-called "vulnerable groups" are often standpoint informants in IE studies. IE was developed as an inquiry for alienated groups. Making the everyday world its problematic, IE explores knowledge from the standpoint of people, from where they are situated in their specific context of everyday life (SMITH, 1990). However, individuals' direct experiences do not offer any answers; the social organization of the setting is not wholly available to us in its appearance. Objectified knowledge is part of the world and through the governing of ruling, we are ruled and we participate in ruling. Through the IE researcher's analysis, the ruling is made visible, and in that lies the power in the researcher's position. NORSTEDT and BREIMO (2016) suggested IE as a method highly sensitive to research ethics, *but that in itself does not ensure that informants are not exposed to harm* when they participate in research. Building on our experiences presented in this section, we would like to highlight the importance of work knowledge, not only in the exploration of the informants' experiences, but also through the process of analysis. A transparent process of analyzing the "doings" is needed. The concept of *work knowledge* is useful not only for the necessary access to the data but also for transparency throughout the analysis process. [34]

To fulfill the ethical demand of doing no harm, IE researchers must make visible to informants how their experiences came to be the way they are. Even though explanations or answers might not be palatable, a transparent analysis will make visible how people's particular doings are not one person's "fault," but are instead the result of the complex social organization of knowledge and doings that we are all implicated in and participate in (RANKIN, 2017). As researchers conducting an IE that actually is for people, we need to make sure that we can show and explain these socially organized practices and doings. We need to emphasize that we explain in a way that the informants understand, and with traceable links from their actual doings and how they are coordinated by and participate in the rulings. [35]

In DALMER's study, at first glance, the ways in which level-two informants (the paid dementia care staff) provided information to level-one informants (the family caregivers) were in the exact manner what families indicated they did *not* want to receive information. While families wanted to receive information from those with whom they were in relationships (whether staff or other family caregivers), paid dementia care staff provided information via booklets, pamphlets, and photocopied educational materials. While these results may appear to reflect poorly on paid dementia care staff's practices, it is through transparent and honest conversations with the staff members that DALMER was able to explain that staff's current practices happened as they did because of the ideals relating to aging in place that ultimately coordinated how, when, and the degree to which staff were able to interact with families, including the ways in which information could be delivered. [36]

5. Discussion

As we have discussed and reflected on the three ethical grey areas that we have highlighted, we continue to be struck by the permeability of these ethical challenges. As we came together to discuss our confusions and challenges in carrying out an IE study, we realized that these areas indeed transcend borders of space and time. Accordingly, ethics in IE (or perhaps the ethics of IE) need and deserve our attention, both in methods and education-focused IE works. At the same time, as we gathered background reading and research to compose this article, we were also struck by the dearth of IE research that explicitly addresses ethical questions and challenges. Our hope is therefore that this article serves as a prompt for IE researchers and instructors to take up and continue (our) conversations here as one facet in continuing to build IE as a sociology for people. As CUPIT, RANKIN and ARMSTRONG (2021, p.32) stated, IE "researchers need to constantly make decisions about which threads to follow and where to set the boundaries of their investigation." *When* making these decisions, IE researchers must recognize that they cannot realistically map all the social relations involved. In making these decisions, however, the standpoint informants must be our lead star. To further IE's goal to be a sociology for people we argue, like CUPIT et al., that "the ruling institutional relations that create real and substantial difficulties for those in the standpoint position" (p.33) must be our target of research. This, however, demands consciousness and relational skills on the part of the researcher, as the researcher needs to explain the IE research process to the informants, ensure that the informants understand the purpose of IE as we simultaneously keep the institution(s) in view (McCOY, 2006), ultimately contributing to a broader understanding of how and why everyday life happens as it does (SMITH, 2005). [37]

6. Limitations and Future Research

Limitations in this work stem primarily from the use of two studies to articulate the three ethical grey areas outlined in this piece. While the two studies are from two very different geographic contexts, we are limited by the smaller number of informants with whom we engaged. Including a wider range of informant groups (and perhaps from a greater number of studies) to capture diverse perspectives and experiences to more fulsomely investigate the power dynamics between different informant groups and between researchers and informants would reveal, in greater detail, not only how power influences the data collection and analysis process but would enrich the understanding of ruling relations in different contexts. In articulating the limitations of this piece, it is important to note that we view our exploration of the ethical grey areas in the relationship between researcher and informants as the very beginning of a conversation that we hope other institutional ethnographers will join in and contribute to. [38]

We are hopeful that our work might inspire future IE research which can contribute to the development of pedagogical frameworks and innovative teaching strategies which enhance the education and training of institutional ethnographers. This includes future investigations into the effectiveness of experiential learning methods which can serve to develop comprehensive, interdisciplinary IE curricula that incorporate ethical consideration and practical applications to enhance students' understanding of institutional dynamics in different contexts. This could also result in the development of a robust ethical framework specifically for IE research, addressing the unique challenges and dilemmas faced by institutional ethnographers. [39]

Finally, future work that focuses on the need for additional research and practice in ethical training in IE is two-fold: first, the need for additional research which examines teaching strategies that emphasize reflexivity and positionality in IE and second, the need to explore responsive mechanisms for informants to provide feedback on the research process and findings, ensuring their perspectives are considered in the analysis. Finally, when teaching IE, reflecting on these issues is necessary to enable students to develop their own knowledge, capabilities, and reflexivity. The findings here contribute to the pedagogy of IE by sharing experiences and insights that can help other researchers and students navigate the ethical and practical challenges of IE. We call for more comprehensive educational resources and discussions on the ethical dimensions of IE research. [40]

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Authors

Nicole K. DALMER, PhD, is an assistant professor in the Department of Health, Aging and Society as well as the acting director of the Gilbrea Centre for Studies in Aging, both at McMaster University, Canada. In her work, she takes up an interdisciplinary, critical gerontological approach as she explores the meanings, expectations, and values of connections (with people, nature, and technologies) in later life.

Contact:

Nicole K. Dalmer

McMaster University, Department of Health, Aging and Society
Kenneth Taylor Hall, 230A, 1280 Main Street West
L8S 4M4, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

E-mail: dalmern@mcmaster.ca
URL: https://www.nicoledalmer.ca/

Guro ØYDGARD, PhD, is an associate professor at the Faculty of Social Science at Nord University, Norway. Her research area comprises welfare and collaboration systems, with special focus on the interrelationship between the individual and the welfare state, and between different spheres within health and care services. Her empirical approach is mainly qualitative, with a focused interest of bottom-up perspectives.

Contact:

Guro Wisth Øydgard

Nord University, Faculty of Social Science
Universitetsaleen 11 8026
Bodø Norway

E-mail: guro.oydgard@nord.no
URL:
https://www.nord.no/en/about/employees/guro-wisth-oydgard

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