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Researchers' Role Reflexivity When Studying Values Work

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Introduction

Researchers leave fingerprints on their research that are often implicit and subtle, rarely obvious or visible. Can researchers become aware of the impacts of their involvement on their research? And how can such insights explicitly be accounted for? Such questions essentially highlight how researchers position themselves through various roles. My approach to this challenge is to answer the question *How can researchers strengthen role reflexivity when studying values work?* The aim of this study is twofold: to clarify and link the multifaceted concepts of reflexivity and roles and to exemplify through empirical illustrations how these concepts are a resource when researching values work. I specifically draw examples from observation and interviews since these methods, in particular, highlight fundamental challenges about roles and reflexivity that are also relevant to other methods.

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The chapter is structured as follows. The theoretical section delineates the main concepts and the philosophical underpinnings of the illustrative study. I then discuss reflexivity as a dimension associated with awareness of the researcher's roles and apply it to three stages of data collection: while preparing the study, interacting with participants and interpreting.

The Norwegian film *Kitchen Stories* (2003) offers interesting lessons on role reflexivity. The film illustrates the challenges of being positioned as an insider or outsider—in other words, balancing proximity and distance (Repstad, 2019). Depicting the early 1950s, the film is based on Swedish observers from a firm producing kitchens who want to study Norwegian homes. By studying inhabitants' use of the kitchen, the observers hope to, with the help of 'modern, scientific methods', place the stove, sink and table in the most effective way so that users do not have to walk unnecessarily. In the film, the observer sits on a highchair in a corner, watching and taking notes about the 'object', who is an old bachelor cooking and drinking coffee. The observer and the observee are not allowed to communicate. The bachelor gradually gets bored and turns off the light, leaving the observer in a dark kitchen. The observer, however, turns on his headlight. The bachelor then drills a hole on the kitchen ceiling and starts observing the observer from the floor above the kitchen. Finally, tired of the situation, the bachelor invites the observer to a cup of coffee. They become friends and discover mutual interests and values. When the bachelor dies, the observer chooses to enter new roles by leaving his job, moving into the house and embracing the values of its former resident.

Theoretical Perspectives

Kitchen Stories illustrates how researchers shuttle between positions, managing proximity and distance by assuming different roles. To theoretically ground this construct, I relate it to the scientific paradigms that underpin interviews and observation. I also link the key concepts: roles, reflexivity and values.

Scientific Paradigms and Researcher's Positioning

Kitchen Stories offers insights into how scientific paradigms inform researchers' involvement. The 1950s were characterised by a sense of belief in progress, the future and science. The ideal of neutrality has mirrored a positivist legacy derived from the natural sciences, foregrounding distanced researchers who guaranteed the ideal of objectivity. Generally, such distancing is more easily realised when sending a questionnaire to people, without engaging in face-to-face contact. Quantitative research deals with variables and parts as well as counts and measures. On the other hand, qualitative researchers explore people in their natural environments, attempting to characterise and describe, seeking in-depth understanding and examining the meaning of particular events, actions and experiences from the angle of purpose and values (Creswell, 2013). Kvale and Brinkmann's (2009) metaphors of miners and travellers capture this duality. Like miners searching for prized metal amid worthless stones, quantitatively oriented researchers extract objective information because they know what to look for. In contrast, travellers set out to discover and write their accounts upon returning home. Similarly, the qualitatively oriented researcher is not a tool that is detached from the process of interpretation and knowledge creation. Paradigms about reality being socially constructed foreground the researcher as an involved co-constructer of data.

Traditionally, indicators like neutrality, distance and objectivity have separated quantitative studies from qualitative ones. However, such indicators are difficult to evaluate in situations characterised by indifference towards the participants. Thus, the direct involvement of researchers can be placed on a scale: from making surveys to performing fieldwork, interviewing and observing participants. Irrespective of paradigms, researchers are not neutral; in fact, they tend to affect their research personally and institutionally (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). Importantly, this highlights the ethical and values-laden dimension of research. It signifies that researchers' fingerprints are on their research, metaphorically speaking. Accepting this premise, researchers are compelled to attend to such connections. Accordingly, I propose the concept of role reflexivity which, for

the purpose of this chapter, I understand as identifying, accounting for and managing researchers' roles.

Definitions—Roles and Reflexivity

While role is an external attribute linked to positions within the social structure, identity is internal, consisting of internalised meanings and expectations associated with a role (Sirris, 2019, p. 55). Roles are not static; rather, they evolve through interactions, as illustrated in *Kitchen Stories* by an ongoing and dynamic negotiation of roles from distant observation to befriending. Similarly, research is a process characterised by how role incumbents, researchers and participants alike, attach meanings and work on coming to terms with multiple roles. This is because research is processed in interaction and identification with the participants.

Textbooks on research methods operationalise roles into various typologies (Repstad, 2019). Researchers themselves, deliberately or unknowingly, claim and perform roles. Moreover, roles are attributed as researchers reflect external expectations from participants, for example, colleague, friend, enemy, superior or apprentice (Wadel, 2014, p. 31). Even when researchers claim to be precisely researchers, they can be regarded as inspectors, controllers or guests. The sum of expectations from oneself and others results in a complex plurality of various roles that demand attention. Participants can also use their role repertoire and portray themselves as superhumans, victims, experts and so on. During research, roles naturally develop or change as researchers assume new positions and experience transitions. Thus, roles express positionality: what we know and believe. However, changing positions or roles does not necessarily imply that one is reflexive about it.

When researchers are reflexive about their roles, they engage in identity work, which involves forming constructions that provide coherence and distinctiveness (Sirris, 2019, p. 53). Generally, reflexivity denotes multiple factors that are relevant to research: interrogating the roles of the researcher, the relation of the researcher and the researched, how the research process and practices shape its outcome, and the context of

knowledge production politically and socially (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). Vital to reflexivity is an ongoing process of vigilance and self-questioning—researchers' conscious stance vis-à-vis their data analysis and theorising (Gabriel, 2018, p. 145). Reflexivity refers to interrogating one's own position, values and practices during the research process and how these may have had impact on the research. The goal of reflexivity is to enhance trustworthiness and the value of qualitative research. To me, role reflexivity is the process by which researchers identify, account for and manage their roles. Being reflective is to consider something, while being reflexive is to take a step back and involve the subject, in this case the researcher, in the reflection, and examine how they are part of the research (Johnson & Duberley, 2003).

Delving deeper into the role concept, a person can define oneself in alignment with the role or not. From a functionalistic perspective, a role is understood as explicit and systematically enforced prescriptions for how organisational members should think and feel about themselves and their work. In contrast, Simpson and Carroll (2008, p. 43) focus on the affinity for social interactionism and interpret role as 'a vehicle that mediates and negotiates the meanings constructed in relational interactions, while itself being subject to ongoing reconstruction in these relational processes'. Since roles are not exclusively linked to a social position, they are means of translations. They are seen as a boundary object, functioning like open containers to be filled with meaning, in line with the symbolic interactionist view. Simpson and Carroll (2008) suggest that role identity encompasses values, goals, behaviours and beliefs that are connected to a given role which may be enacted.

Values and Role Reflexivity

Researchers exercise their values in choosing roles. Importantly, from a moral perspective, one is never solely a researcher in relation to the actors, and the actors are more than research objects. In a research setting, human beings are in contact, and not roles. According to Ciesielska et al. (2018, p. 40), 'researchers are thinking and feeling human beings, engaged in relationship with others, nurturing more or less crystallized political and

religious views and preferences and thus always situated in their research and their production of knowledge’.

To provide context for the examples used in this chapter, I view observation and interviews as methods linked to values. Observation involves studying and registering behaviour in a given context or field. It gives direct and unmediated access to reality, as in the case of *Kitchen Stories*. Interviews are not context-bound in the same way; they can be retrospective or prospective and hence transcend time and space. Both methods are a product of ‘intersubjective encounters and practice, influenced by numerous psychological and circumstantial factors’ (Gabriel, 2018, p. 147). First, to avoid narcissism and promote transparency, reflexive researchers interrogate their own values and motives and how these may impact the research. Seeking transparency in values has a bearing on how one describes and reflects on the choices of subject, concepts, methods and field work. This entails a demanding and close probing of motives, understanding how values drive research and recognising researchers’ own presence.

Second, the participants’ values constitute or inform the object of research. Social interaction relates to acquiring certain values or goals. Awareness of the values dimension necessitates interaction and interpretation of the researchers’ and participants’ worlds. Explicit and official core values, or values-for-practice, are captured more easily than values-in-practice, to which qualitative research is particularly well-suited (Sirris, 2020). While interviews capture what people say and what they say they do, observation gives access to their actual behaviour. Both methods capture actions and situations where something is at stake and underpinned by emotions. Both methods allow for capturing the actor’s point of view and allow for in-depth characterisations through the study of an environment or a case with distinct nuances. Combining these methods casts light on practices, discourses and values. The combination potentially examines behaviour as values-laden, allowing researchers to understand why events are experienced as significant and why emotions arise. Emotions are ignited when encountering situations that threaten or enhance values (Mazzetti, 2018, p. 159).

Methods and Role Reflexivity

In interviews and observations, there is a distinction between what we *look at* in the sense of watching and noting—as naïve observation or narrativism—and what we *look for*, that is, phenomena of interest that are theoretically informed and expressed in generic concepts. Wadel (2014, p. 33) summarised researchers' involvement and roles in the following words: 'A person may drink (participate in the native culture) drink heavily (participate, fully, in depth) get drunk (temporarily go native) or become a drunk (go native and stay in that condition)'. Although the quote refers to observation, it also has a bearing on interviewing. Such categorising has implications for researchers' roles at three different stages, and these roles are distributed between inside and outside positionings. First, completely participating means blending into the studied environment and practices of the actors. In interviews, blending is indicated by a strong sympathy and even adoption of the interviewee's stance against adversaries. This stance implies going native: an acculturation with strong identification, which is useful when seeking insiders' points of views and access to tacit knowledge. The researcher becomes an ally, therapist or a peer. However, the researcher can either be in the background or draw more attention by interrupting and asking questions. Second, partial participation is taking part in interactions by learning the behaviour and values that offer in-depth understanding from an external standpoint. This implies not losing control of the researcher's role as a scholar and academic. Third, non-participant researchers observe without becoming involved in practices. The researcher in such situations is an 'alien', as seen in shadowing, who fixes their gaze on a person by following them around (see Chap. 10). Hidden observation has its limitations since ethical guidelines safeguard participants' informed consent. At the same time, it also has advantages in terms of no researcher's effect, which refers to the tendency of some people to behave differently because they know they are being observed. To sum up, combining interviews and observation enables the researcher to capture values-for-practice and values-in-practice. Using these methods, researchers should position themselves after considering and explicating their repertoire of roles, and thus

demonstrate role reflexivity. The following section illustrates how this can be practically achieved in a research study.

Role Reflexivity in Values Research

To exemplify role reflexivity when studying values work, I conceptualise three interrelated phases associated with data collection: (1) the *before* phase involves claiming and establishing roles by interest and self-presentation; (2) the *during* phase involves performing and negotiating roles through interactions, where roles are preferred or attributed (values works involve a moral perspective) and (3) the *after* phase involves interpreting. These are somewhat overlapping and not isolated processes. My examples stem from a PhD project on hybrid professional managers' self-understanding of roles and values (Sirris, 2019). Using a multiple embedded case study design (Stake, 2013), I interviewed nine middle managers in a faith-based hospital and nine deans who supervised pastors in the Church of Norway. I also shadowed three leaders from each organisation for one workweek each.

Phase 1: Claiming and Establishing Roles—Research Interest and Self-presentation

The choice of research project emanates from an individual's scholarly interest. However, questions and goals are institutionally framed and depend on disciplinary trends. Given that nothing exists in an ideological vacuum, research is values-laden and driven by politics and interests. In other words, research depends on what issues are perceived as problems, what questions are considered relevant and what priorities are made. Researchers are not neutral and detached from these contexts. Axiology concerns such layers of the context in which the research is done (Creswell, 2013).

Usually, positioning oneself requires self-presentation, which is explicated in the methods section along with ethical considerations. First, a researcher's inherent values should be accounted for as part of the

axiology since researchers' values, intentions and experiences cannot be left out of the research. For instance, one can account for educational background (in terms of professional training), work experience and particular research interests. These can be a source of bias *and* a resource for enhancing engagement. For example, in my comparative study, I had profound knowledge of the church context as a former employee. As an insider, I knew and had access to the deans and clergy. However, my knowledge of healthcare was limited. To compensate, I read research literature on hospital organisation and management. My knowledge of the sectors included in the study was asymmetric. To balance this discrepancy, I favoured the collection of more data than less. I sought to overcome my own prejudices by spending adequate time on the field. Having a comparative project was useful since comparisons between the organisations were inevitable. This sensitised me to the uniqueness of each organisation.

Second, how research is situated within a particular institutional context should be explicated. For instance, my institution enjoys a long-standing tradition of training health and social workers. I work at the university's master's programme that offers a specialisation in values-based leadership and attracts students from healthcare and social sector fields as well as from faith-based and religious organisations. The institution is owned by a faith-based trust. The doctoral programme lies within the cross-disciplinary realm of 'diakonia, values and professional practice', and most PhD projects are empirical. These factors frame the research project.

To sum up, reflexivity on axiology by accounting for context, research interest and self-presentation resembles the act of looking in the mirror at features that help in establishing the researcher's role (Gabriel, 2018). The reflexive researcher steps back and learns since the mirror allows for adjusting one's position and changing expressions when viewing oneself from the position of others.

Further, reflexivity also deals with positioning oneself within the researcher's role and explicating one's relationships with research organisations and participants. Assuming any role is associated with both advantages and disadvantages. According to Wadel (2014, p. 51), 'a role affects where the researcher can go, what he can do, who he can interact

with, what he can ask about, what to see and what be told'. Conducting research in a well-known field has its advantages; for instance, having thorough knowledge about the routine of an organisation can improve understanding and avoid misunderstandings. Choosing a well-known field can allow researchers to exercise their values through engagement and fulfil their desire to improve or change the field or a given problem. Access is easier but maintaining distance is challenging. Going native is easier when researching known persons, like friends and colleagues. In such cases, the researcher's role is embedded in the professional role, since the studied role is prioritised. People seek common ground when they meet. This demands reflexivity concerning added roles such as presenting oneself and behaving like a peer professional, or discussing like a manager with another manager. Social roles like being a parent or sharing beliefs may also need to be articulated and often emerge in small talk.

There are also disadvantages associated with proximity to the research subject, and that includes the lack of distance to discover something new. Much is taken for granted and not questioned. The following axiom holds true: 'Familiar things happen and people don't bother about it. It takes an unusual mind to discover the obvious'. However, distance is not always an advantage; for example, social anthropologists exploring a remote island may feel isolated and foreign as they acquire new knowledge and language to understand the culture. Culture refers to value patterns informing behaviour whereas social structure or organisation refers to patterns of behaviour (Wadel, 2014, p. 24). Social scientists study the organisation of cultural values, the people who organise and maintain such cultural values, and their reasons and processes. In order to understand something about the lives of others, one must accept their views on what is important to their lives: one must listen to them and their priorities. This, of course, is vital to values studies. Whether a researcher is an insider or outsider, reflexivity is not merely about one's own role. It implies assuming the role of the other to enhance understanding. This entails encountering and entering their culture by understanding their patterns of values-for-practice and values-in-practice.

Phase 2: Performing and Negotiating Roles— Attribution and Preference

To enter a cultural field, one needs to approach an organisation to gain access. The researcher is a representative of a given institution; the role carries weight as well as authority. Often the study is in the interest of the organisation and is anchored by the management who offers formal consent. Approaching the organisation with a letter or asking for a meeting creates expectations about the researchers' roles and establish role patterns.

It is important to add that one cannot automatically enter any roles that one desires. People typically expect to fit and place the researcher into a familiar category within their social system, such as a supervisor, an expert or a guest. For instance, if the research has been approved by the management and the researcher is studying managers, the researcher could be perceived as being associated with the management, particularly if study method involves shadowing, where the entire focus is on the manager. Since observation is selective and filtered, it is challenging to distribute attention. Wadel (2014, p. 84) expressed this in the following words: 'the collecting of data is a discriminating activity, like the picking of flowers, and unlike the action of a lawnmower'. To guard against this problem in my project, I spoke to a number of actors around each manager and included several managerial levels in my interviews. I also met different participants with different roles (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019). For example, gatekeepers can exclude from activities or metaphorically open doors. Sponsors have a special interest in the project, and they facilitate and offer support. Allies and mediators serve as key valuable informants who are cooperative, motivated, well-formulated and facilitate access to central activities and information.

I gained experienced with attributed roles in the hospital setting. One of the shadowed managers introduced me to the female nurses with a humorous line: 'As you can see, I have gotten a boyfriend on a regular basis'. As part of shadowing the manager, we also visited a unit of Philippine workers. Given the workers' Catholic identity, she introduced me as 'archangel Gabriel', signalling that I was a caring, discrete and trustworthy person. This manager had a tough work situation, filled with

hectic activities and a lot of responsibility. She also shared a dynamic relationship with the union representative, and I had observed their discussions on a few occasions. Later, the representative agreed to be interviewed and provided a balanced description of the running of the unit. In my opinion, she regarded me as a neutral person who did not take sides. This coincided with my preferred role identity.

Role expectations can also be shaped since positioning occurs through words and actions. It is important to question oneself about the values one expresses and whether one is considered polite and reasonable or ignorant, cynical and provoking. This can be achieved by informing oneself about the research project, by understanding self-presentation and by building trust. It is important that a researcher does not disturb organisational or professional routines and is not considered a threat. Flexibility is central to the researcher role. For instance, for my research project, I followed the managers and made notes discretely by hand or on the laptop. If I was alone with the managers, I occasionally asked questions, but interfered minimally. I had asked the managers to talk me through their work as they went about completing their daily tasks. Some of them initiated conversations and seemed eager to talk about their job and share their reflections.

My preferred main role during fieldwork is that of an apprentice, which is typically known within all cultures. This recommended role is associated with a legitimate stance of not knowing, yet eager to learn (Repstad, 2019). Apprentices are open to instruction and are essential to the research process, which involves learning from other people. Apprentices invite others to teach, guide and explain what, how and why. This role is marked by questions, humility and avoidance of heavy terminology to avoid being considered an expert. I experienced that people were often flattered when someone displayed genuine interest in them. The apprentice is often considered a young person or a novice who is trained in a profession and its practices by experienced others. Apprentices thus receive valuable information in an understandable language. I experienced that this role blended easily with other roles like researcher, teacher, VID-employee and pastor. Importantly, assuming the role of an apprentice gives access to cultural values inherent in practices. In values

studies, this is a resource for understanding why something is relevant and prioritised.

Importantly, roles evolve through interactions. Roles are not static; similarly, access is not guaranteed once and for all. It is a process that involves establishing relations and broadening the role repertoire. Formal access does not equate real access, being accepted or entering an interaction. Real access entails going beyond ice-breaking activities and engaging in renegotiation and improvement of relations. My experience allowed me to realise that a researcher's role is dynamic and shaped in interaction with the participants. For instance, I shared a good rapport with all the managers I shadowed, and they seemed comfortable with my presence. The managers I shadowed probably had different motives for participating in a study about the value of collegiality. For example, one elderly dean gave me the feeling that he wanted to exemplify 'the perfect dean'. This placed me in the role of a pupil or even a secretary, making records of his leadership. I was not completely at ease with this attributed role. I did not experience a dynamic interaction; rather, I suspected that my questions were met with pre-fabricated answers. In this deanery, I was excluded from certain activities and felt like a distant observer who was only invited to some parts of the show, but not into the unfolding of everyday life.

This dean separated leadership—strategy, motivating, preaching—from the nitty-gritty micro-management that he detested and delegated to his secretary. As a management researcher, I noted this division as well as the fact that the daily running of the deanery was, consequently, ill-organised. This did not coincide with my own managerial values. To better understand the deanery, it was crucial to obtain additional viewpoints. I conducted a group interview in which seven pastors participated. Additionally, two other pastors asked me to interview them separately. The two pastors criticised the authoritarian leadership style of the dean as 'mis-management'. It was important to them to communicate their managerial values and role expectations of the dean. I interpreted their initiative as an expression of trust towards me. They knew me beforehand and believed that I would safeguard their information. Both pastors used me to channel their frustration. They held collegiality as a central value and felt that it was not respected by the dean.

The above episode illustrates how roles are not constant. Thus, researchers will benefit from managing a repertoire of roles. So far, I have articulated various strategies for promoting acceptance of researchers' presence and actors' participation. I now turn my attention to social and values-laden interactions when fostering roles.

Managing researchers' roles shows how social enquiry is a moral enterprise both formally and informally. Formally, researchers are committed through their institutional anchoring, and in my case, this was the recommendation from the Norwegian Centre of Research Data (NSD). Firstly, ethical guidelines mandated that all participants received information about the project. Participation was voluntarily, and informed consent was obtained from all the participants. Further, I ensured confidentiality by anonymising the data and did not divulge the names of the organisations or the managers. The participants were also informed about their right to withdraw from the study without providing any reasons. The quotations cited in the study could not be traced back to the sources. Finally, the consequences of participation, as an ethical principle, was also relevant to my study. I found that the managers enjoyed talking about their work and showed interest. Some also told me they were motivated to contribute to the project because the topic of hybrid professional managers' values was relevant to them.

At an informal level, awareness of ethical issues emerges from interactions. Fostering trust helps participants to open up and share essential information as well as their viewpoints. While the role of a researcher representing an institution inspires trust, it must also be built with formal and informal leaders in order to be accepted and included. The participants must be willing to share freely and by consent. For example, I interviewed two managers together, and unlike interviewees who were typically eager and talkative, they seemed very hesitant. This could be because of the relationship between the two interviewees. It is likely that they did not trust that I would keep the information they shared to myself. I emphasised my role by being polite, listening attentively and showing respect towards them and their perspectives, without hiding my interest in their work.

Relationships and emotions are embedded in qualitative research. Role reflexivity on the part of a researcher requires self-reflection on behaviour,

reactions, thoughts, feelings and how one's presence affects situations. Behaviours such as showing understanding and being friendly are important. Mazzetti (2018) holds that emotions become a critical research instrument as they are indicators of values. Irrespective of roles, a researcher must be a responsible adult who offers sympathy without entering the role of a helper. Participants being observed by a researcher should feel comfortable to continue with their jobs, without the feeling of being gazed at or interrogated. Managers, despite their many meetings and interactions, tend to feel isolated and lonely because they shoulder heavy responsibilities and do not receive constant follow-up or support from their own supervisors. Thus, being observed or shadowed can be experienced as an affirmation that they are interesting and worth studying.

Observing and interviewing provide access to participants' emotions. Researchers can use personal empathy to make the participants feel at ease and therefore more willing to tell 'their story'. Emotions can also be expressions of the fact that something is at stake. Any researcher engaging with the participants can develop sympathy for them and their views. One should acknowledge emergent feelings that are triggered by values, whether it is sadness, anger or compassion. Values especially surface in controversies and conflicts. They can be identified as priorities, worth of centrality and drivers of actions. In dilemmas, they are evoked and expressed more than in situations with a clear course of action. This ambiguity provides scope for negotiating values. Values work is a space of contestation when it comes to the interpretations drawn and the concrete consequences that a given value implies in a particular case. Core values are open to dialectic claims and ongoing tensions, as illustrated by the example of collegiality in the deanery. At close quarters, the participants are deeply engaged in their work, and the triggering of values suggests that something crucial is at stake. Values are expressed both in experiences of violation or trespassing as well as in dreams and hopes. The emotional engagement in such situations can be high, and the researcher may be able to capture the emotional spillover in the behaviour of the participants. However, doing this calls for a specific researcher value: respectful listening.

Finally, the researcher cannot be immune to strong reactions or the circumstances within the research field (Czarniawska, 2007). Interaction

with participants may evoke sympathy and the urge to listen to the participant's version. Conflicts may lead to pressure to choose sides. Sympathy or conflicts may induce a researcher to enter the role of an advisor. However, in my research project, I refrained from offering my opinions if the managers asked. I chose not to judge them or offer my own views. The helper role—sorting out issues, giving feedback and assisting the actors—can be postponed to after the project. This highlights the tiresome reflexivity that positions a researcher closer to a therapist. Listening to persons in distress was a part of my earlier professional practice as a pastor. The interview situation also resembled a key practice in pastoral work, which was discussing joyous or sad occasions. Thus, there is an asymmetry or imbalance between the researcher and the participant. The boundary between identification and overidentification should not be crossed by letting one's own feelings flow (Mazzetti, 2018).

Phase 3: Role Reflexivity and Interpreting

Within the context of interpreting, role reflexivity calls for transparency and outlining of the process and one's own perspectives both in data collection and in the interpretation of data. Reflexivity suggests that research should reject one-dimensionality and elicit several interpretations in order to produce rich and varied results. It operates at the metatheoretical structure that guides the interplay between producing interpretations and challenging them. For example, my 360-degree research design afforded me multiple perspectives on the same managers, values and events. Thus, reflexivity was ensured by opening up the phenomenon, exploring more than one set of meanings and acknowledging ambiguity both in the phenomenon addressed and in the lines of inquiry favoured. Reflexivity also involves rejecting interpretations that are one-dimensional in favour of plurality and rich data (Alvesson et al., 2008). In observations and interviews, researchers' interactions with subjects tend to produce specific representations that need to be examined from multiple angles.

After I had concluded the observations, I asked the shadowed managers how my presence had affected their work and interactions. This was

to better understand presence and researcher's effect in my research study. Most participants said that they and other organisational members behaved like they usually would, and I attribute this to my role as an apprentice. The managers did not deem my presence as threatening, and I, in turn, exhibited discretion and willingness to learn. This effect can also be partly attributed to the very nature of managerial work, which is hectic and fragmented. Managers and employees must attend to issues as soon as they occur; things cannot be postponed *in media res*. Thus, over time, people's authentic behaviour usually prevails. Some hospital managers speculated that a stranger's (my) presence in the office may have deterred a few employees from knocking on their office doors. I solicited such reflections to better understand the researcher effect. In both the organisations that I studied, the managers were involved in many meetings and were surrounded by people most of the time. I was but one of those many people. To remain inconspicuous in the hospital, I wore a white coat, which signalled that I was an employee and not a civilian visitor, that is, foregrounding a professional insider role. This was done at the suggestion of the managers. When in the surgery department, I wore the uniform of the surgery nurses. While such camouflaging facilitates hidden observation, it may also raise ethical questions.

After the fieldwork, it may be challenging to express one's perspectives and findings if they are critical to the practices and values of the researched. Reflexivity entails bridging of the gap between epistemological concerns and methods. For example, in interviews and observations, a researcher interacts with subjects, and specific representations are produced. Taking these at face value would be a naïve approach; they should instead be explored from various angles (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). Inconsistencies are bound to surface between what people say they do and what they actually do, and not least in terms of values. A combination of methods is an attempt to come to terms with such discrepancy. Combining interviews with observations is thus a useful strategy.

The examples discussed above show how people employ various roles in different settings, and the context shapes the expectations of roles and values. Reflexivity concerns both role patterns and value patterns. Distinguishing between the emic perspective (actors' understanding) and the etic perspective (the researchers' perspectives) is crucial, and so is

balancing description and interpretation. My examples show how one can adopt a critical view of frontstage and backstage behaviour. After I gained the trust of the managers, they spoke more freely with me backstage than they did frontstage when the employees were present. Thus, a critical perspective towards role reflexivity is needed as its absence can lead to narcissism and self-indulgence. Most readers are more interested in the research rather than the researcher. Researchers should also be mindful of reflexivity paralysis, where too much attention is given to the personal, institutional and disciplinary layers of research (Johnson & Duberley, 2003).

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the question *How can researchers strengthen role reflexivity when studying values work?* I have explained how researchers can take measures and ask certain questions that strengthen their role reflexivity, which is defined as the capacity to identify, account for and manage researchers' roles. First, researchers should decipher their positioning by identifying various roles. In qualitative research, the researcher and the participants attribute various roles to each other and shape them through dynamic interactions. There is a continuous and challenging negotiation of roles. Second, roles should be accounted for in the research report. Being a qualitative researcher necessitates reflexivity on roles and identifications—about who you are and who the other is. In this chapter, I have discussed how roles have a significant bearing on the research—what the relation between the researcher and the field or object of research is. Third, managing roles is a demanding effort throughout the research process. Thematising the roles of the researcher in values research shows its embeddedness in complex webs of interactions.

Interview and observational values studies are characterised by their proximity to participants and close involvement of the researchers. In such cases, forming relationships with the participants appears inevitable. I have exemplified how researching values is an interactive and transformational process that emerges from interpreting life experiences and

closely associates the researcher with the participants. This chapter highlights the need for ongoing reflexivity when strategising and handling researchers' roles.

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