Main Article:

Challenging Fieldwork Situations: A Study of Researcher's Subjectivity

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Abstract

Researching two different work settings, police work and hospice care, the authors experienced a strange sense of discomfort in their bodies during their fieldwork when investigating professional training and work situations, especially in encounters with citizens and patients. In some of those situations, the authors withdrew physically or mentally from the situation without wanting to do so, feeling emotionally affected by the uncertainty of the situations, not fully grasping the meaning of what was going on. In a strange way they felt awkwardly detached from their research activities and their bodily involvement in their fieldwork. In this article, the authors seek to explore the meaning of awkwardness embedded in some kinds of ethical dilemma. Through a phenomenological analysis based on the concept of intentionality of the body and a model of inner dilemmas, they reach a renewed understanding on the phenomenon of awkwardness as a natural way for researchers to respond to challenging fieldwork situations. Finally, they propose and unfold mutual interviewing and cooperative analysis as methods of investigating researcher's subjectivity in facing such situations.

1. Introduction

During our fieldwork in a police work setting and a hospice care setting respectively, we have been faced with dilemmas where we had doubts about what was the right thing to do. While entering the field, following the professionals engaged in their practice, we experienced some bodily sensed feelings that we had not anticipated beforehand when entering citizens' rooms while on house calls with the police or patients' rooms while on ward rounds with nurses. In some of these situations, we have both experienced an uncomfortable sensation in the body forcing us to withdraw from situations we wished to investigate. When we shared our experiences of these situations, we often used the word *awkward* and we became interested in examining this feeling.

The aims of this study are to present the result of our phenomenological investigation of the meaning of feeling awkward during our fieldwork and to provide knowledge about how these dilemmas have affected our way of acting and interacting. Furthermore, we will propose a *duoethnographic* approach of mutual interviewing and cooperative analysis as methods of investigating researchers' lived experiences in challenging fieldwork situations.

In this article we wish to address the issue of researcher's subjectivity from an empirical phenomenological approach investigating the lived experiences of researchers engaged in fieldwork. From this perspective we point to the meaning of the researcher's body embedded in a socio-cultural setting that challenges the fieldwork in a peculiar way. Investigating bodily sensed experiences in challenging fieldwork situations might be referred to as embodied research which is originally referred to as doing ethnography "at the edge" (Ferrell & Hamm, 1998) and further developed as "risky" fieldwork (Monaghan, 2006) or "dangerous" fieldwork (Jacobs, 2006). The tradition is particularly present in high-risk fieldwork settings such as police work (Fielding, 2006; Van Maanen, 1988). It draws attention to the relationship between the researcher and the perceived danger, where the researcher is engaged in a disorderly social world. Negotiating the boundary between order and disorder involves stepping out of one's comfort zone (Monaghan, 2006).

Etymologically, *awkwardness* refers to an uneasy and uncomfortable bodily positioning, which can be used in a figurative sense. The phenomenon might have several connotations: physical incoordination (clumsiness, maladroitness, and slowness), underdeveloped capacities, ineptness (meaning tactlessness or a lack of social competence), and inefficiency and amateurishness, meaning a lack of professional competence.

Research literature on the notion of awkwardness related to doing ethnography is limited. Only a few research articles have addressed the phenomenon in a professional setting. A group of physicians conducted a study of the communication between physicians and their patients regarding the patients' adherence to HIV medication (Barfod, Hecht, Rubow, & Gerstoft, 2006). They investigated the difficulty of communicating with HIV patients about how to follow medical prescriptions. The study shows that a feeling of

awkwardness was present in the communication when the physicians generally focused on showing patients respect and tried not to create feelings of guilt. Awkwardness was not present when the physicians did not worry about the patients' feelings of shame. The article, however, does not develop the concept of awkwardness, but it seems to relate to personal feelings of guilt and shame, to something that feels inappropriate and uncomfortable.

A study of the researcher's experiences of dilemmas in ethnographic fieldwork was conducted by Goodwin, Pope, Mort, and Smith (2003). This article describes how the researcher, a nurse who conducted her research in a theatre studying expertise in anaesthesia as a participant observer, experienced ethical dilemmas when she overheard conversations on confidential matters. Due to the confidential status of the conversation and due to the possibility that someone might look at her notebook, she decided not to record these notes. On the other hand, excluding important research material in order to protect the subjects resulted in a conflict with her role as researcher.

In the articles mentioned above, we find some parallels to our research on this topic. We recognise the feeling of being outside the comfort zone. We also recognise the feeling of awkwardness related to the ethical matter in situations where we feel doubtful about the rights and wrongs of our presence in fieldwork situations.

2. Two Short Stories on Researchers' Lived Experience

We will present two short stories of lived experience in challenging fieldwork situations. The descriptions are "creative non-fictional narratives" (Sparkes, 2002; Van Manen, 1990). They are based on a study of our actual, lived fieldwork experiences and reflect how we perceived our actions and emotions while approaching and withdrawing from challenging situations.

The first author (Bille) is investigating the development of the professional identity of trainee police officers and the interconnectedness of training and actual work situations. He has no formal background in the police and the police district where he was doing his fieldwork had never had an ethnographer studying professional learning processes within the organisation. The second author (Steenfeldt) is studying the meaning of spiritual care in hospice settings. Even though she was a clinical nurse some years ago and has worked with seriously ill people, she has never entered a hospice before.

> *Short Story 1: Lived Experience of Police Work*. I am standing on an outdoor staircase leading up to an apartment on the second floor. In front of me, two policemen are lifting the heavily drunk and drugged man up the stairs. He is potentially a very dangerous man, the senior officer told me. A few minutes ago he hit his friend in the face so his glasses broke. Now his friend offers to let him sleep over in his apartment. There is a movement on the staircase and the police officers move upwards and into the apartment. A few steps before I reach the platform outside the front door, a huge dog appears right in front of me breathing heavily into my face. Suddenly I hear

the loud yell from one of the police officers further inside the apartment: "That is not a shotgun, is it?" I feel a sudden burst of coldness running through my body and I hesitate right there. Can I enter the apartment? Or should I stay outside? No, I have to go in. Slowly I enter the doorstep. It feels as if I am about to trespass a zone of privacy. It feels like a place where I am not allowed to be. But I am allowed to be there and as a fieldworker I feel obliged to enter the apartment. That is why I am doing my research in the first place: to observe the trainee police officer in real work life situations. I am standing in the hall now and I move a little closer to the kitchen in front of me. I sidle through the doorway and I pass only a few inches from the drunken man sitting on a fold-out camp bed with a police officer beside him. Feeling quite awkward, I find a place to stay hiding behind my notepad, trying to make myself invisible. But I don't write much. After a while I look up over the rim of the notepad, feeling exposed to the other's gazes and presumable thoughts: Who are you? What are you doing here? At that moment, I fix my eyes on the shotgun lying on the kitchen table.

Short Story 2: Lived Experience at the Hospice. I am following the hospice nurse, Helen, to see John who came into the hospice a week ago. John is asleep. He is in a bad condition. He is not responding to what Helen or his daughter, Christine, say to him. He cannot express his wants and wishes any longer and he does not seem to recognise the people around him. He is not able to go to the bathroom but relieves himself in the bedpan or in a diaper. I know from the last few days that John is a man who has always taken pride in caring for himself. Now he needs help with everything. Christine feels sad for her father's situation. When talking with Helen, Christine begins to cry and Helen puts her arm around her. After a short while, Christine starts to talk about her father and a troubled life that they never talked about. As this conversation evolves, I begin to feel awkward. It feels like being on private ground overhearing this conversation. On the one hand, I really want to hear everything they talk about and observe how Helen is taking care of Christine. But it also feels inappropriate because Christine is a family relative and not a primary subject in my research. It is her father who has agreed to participate in my research. Maybe she does not even know that I am here as a researcher. I am trying to make myself invisible by moving close to the wall and then slowly towards the door. Finally, I find myself standing in the hall outside the room.

Even though the research contexts are different in terms of research areas and research projects, the short stories account for a shared feeling of awkwardness in challenging fieldwork situations. This mutually shared feeling was the beginning of our further investigation which will be presented below.

3. Cases and Methods

Before commencing this particular study we spontaneously discussed challenging incidents from our fieldwork experiences in a general sense. We shared a sense of uncertainty regarding our bodily involvement in these situations. Throughout the discussion we came up with the phenomenon of awkwardness as a mutually shared and bodily grounded feeling that summed up our experiences. Gradually we realised the need for a more systematic investigation to generate knowledge of why and how our bodies acted in defensive manners. Therefore, we decided to investigate our lived experiences by interviewing one another on the topic and through a cooperative analysis to reach a renewed understanding of our original experiences. In the following paragraphs, we will present our process of investigating the feeling of awkwardness, based on a phenomenological approach.

3.1. Phenomenological Approach

The overall approach to this study is phenomenology. Phenomenology is originally a philosophical approach aiming at finding the essence of meaning structures by focusing on lived experiences, without being influenced by a theoretical framework in advance. In phenomenological research, concrete descriptions of lived experience lead the researcher to understand the inner meaning of that experience. The facts therein are transformed into generalised meanings that reveal the situation as it is perceived by the experiencer and from such meanings essential descriptions can be obtained (Giorgi, 2009).

The meaning structures are grounded in the lived experiences and evolve from the phenomenological analysis itself, not from a presupposed theoretical point of reference. In phenomenology, internal validation of data must be grounded in lived experiences going back and forth in the text and the evolving descriptions (Malterud, 2003). That does not mean that a theoretical framework is irrelevant, however. Malterud proposes that an external validation referring to theory is an option, but only after the internal phenomenological analyses of the life worlds themselves have been conducted.

In our study we investigate the topic with an open phenomenological attitude, but even though we strive to be open minded, we cannot avoid bringing subjectivity into the research. In phenomenological research, however, elimination of subjectivity is not a solution. What matters is how the subject is present (Giorgi 1994). Phenomenology also implies a notion of *epoché*--meaning, bracketing a theoretical presumption--what is more a vision than an attainable task. Instead of bracketing, Dahlberg (2006) uses the metaphor of "bridling," which means not to understand too quickly. It is not a technique, but rather an attitude that implies holding back ones theoretical assumptions and pre-understandings as the phenomenon is to appear throughout the analysing process.

3.2. Narrative Interviews

Attempting to get as rich a first-person description as possible, we conducted mutual interviews with a narrative approach (Hermanns, 1991). This approach has recently been

referred to as *duoethnography* (Norris, Sawyer & Lund, 2012) which is a collaborative research methodology in which two or more researchers juxtapose their life histories in order to provide multiple understandings of a social phenomenon.

While preparing for the interviews, we shared personal experiences from selected parts of each other's field notes, highlighting moments where something happened that made us pause, hesitate, or perhaps even withdraw from a situation. As our mutual interest in the topic grew, we decided to interview each other about the challenging situations from the fieldwork. Our intention was to reach the main story, the feeling of awkwardness, by asking open questions inviting a narrative description of lived experiences, such as:

> *Question*. We have talked about feeling awkward when being on private ground. Can you try to tell me about a situation where you felt you were on private ground?

> *Question (more specific)*. In your field notes, you described a few lines about a situation where you felt awkward crossing a kind of boundary to a private sphere. Can you try to recall the situation and elaborate on your story?

In accordance to Hermanns (1991) the interviewee was playing the leading part in most of the interview and the interviewer remained in the background, listening and asking additional questions to stimulate further expressions such as: "Can you tell me something more about the urge to get closer to some situations?" or "Can you try to recall the situation where you felt uncomfortable and tell me what happened?" We did not ask for concrete answers, but rather invited the interviewee to recall and unfold these situations. Occasionally we had difficulties adjusting to the method, interrupting the interviewee's narrative with too many detailed questions. On the other hand, we experienced that by using detailed questions correctly in order to frame the narrative, we achieved descriptions of the lived experiences as close to the actually perceived as possible although the recollected memories will never be identical to what really happened. Our short stories are descriptions of how we recall what happened, in body and mind (Boss, 1994).

3.3. Phenomenological Analysis

Each interview lasted about an hour and were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Our subsequent analysis was inspired by various contributors of phenomenological analyses, such as Giorgi (2009), Malterud (2003), Dahlberg, Dahlberg, and Nyström (2011), and Karlsson (1993).

First, we repeatedly read through the transcripts to form an overall impression. Then we divided the text into meaning units, subsequently transforming them into a third person perspective. The transformed meaning units were then organised in clusters. The clusters are not considered as findings, but rather meanings that seem to belong together (Dahlberg, Dahlberg, & Nyström, 2011).

We organised the meaning units in the following six emerging clusters: (1) "being a newcomer," (2) "making oneself invisible," (3) "acting appropriately in special circumstances," (4) "showing respect to the research subjects," (5) "the private sphere," and (6) "being a witness to private matters." The clusters were divided into a number of subgroups. In each subgroup, we made an imaginative quotation--creating a text that tries to retell and summarise the meaning content in each of the subgroups of meaning units (Malterud, 2003).

After analysing the decontextualised meaning units, we re-examined the transcripts. By recontextualising, we made sure that the new descriptions were true representations of the original transcribed texts, which is a crucial analytical phase in any phenomenological analysis.

The result of the analyses was condensed into an overall structure, presenting the basic features of the phenomenon. The structure is not to be understood as a general definition of the phenomenon, but as a holistic perspective based on empirical factors of the lived experience (Dahlberg, 2006; Giorgi, 2009).

The six clusters and the imaginative quotations are methodological steps in the process which led us to two overall themes related to our phenomenon of investigation: "Being a newcomer in the field" and "Being present in private spaces." These themes stand out as specifically important matters to our search for the overall structure of the phenomenon of awkwardness. The themes are presented and discussed in the next section and further elaborated through a theoretically informed renewed understanding in Section 5.

4. Themes on Lived Experiences in Fieldwork

Now we will turn to the evolving themes bringing them closer to the lived experiences as presented in the short stories, however adding additional experiences from the interviews as we move along. At this stage of the analytical process we "go back" to the original experiences but with a change of perspective. The quest is to understand how the socio-cultural conditions and the researchers' professional backgrounds as fieldworkers lead their bodies to act in certain ways in the situations at stake.

At this point you might want to go back and reread the short stories, not in order to find "evidence" of the analysis to come but to get into the "mood"--or to apply a "phenomenological attitude" as a phenomenologist would say--of the lived experience as experienced by the researchers. Maybe you will be able to picture yourself in the dilemmas involved and maybe you will even be able to relate yourself to similar though not identical situations in your own fieldwork experiences.

In accordance to Giorgi (2009) we present the analysis in a third person singular and plural account, referring to "the researcher(s)" in order to distance ourselves emotionally from the lived experiences and reduce the urge to present ourselves in a different (perhaps more heroic) manner than actually perceived.

4.1. Being a Newcomer in the Field

When the researchers entered their fields of research, they were unfamiliar with the professionals' systems of values and behavioural patterns as well as practical working relations with the citizens and the patients. They felt like strangers in the field, trying to crack the code of professionals' self-perception and meaningful actions, desperately grasping the basic meaning of being professionals.

As outsiders, they were somewhat uninformed about the professionals' frames of meaning behind their actions and they were dependent on the professionals' willingness to initiate and illuminate their worlds of professional actions and work experiences. The professionals were experienced as a kind of gatekeepers. The researchers felt as if they were conducting their research at the mercy of the professionals and had to earn their respect, either by acting as a member of the profession, helping the nurses with practical matters and being "part of the team," or by showing courage and enthusiasm in potentially dangerous police work situations as being "one of the boys." In a way they needed the professionals' approval to be present as outsiders in the work situations involving citizens or patients. At the same time, they felt assessed and judged by the professionals and felt an urge to be valued and appreciated as reasonable and legitimate participants in the work situations.

In the actual work situations, the researchers were anxious about being an obstacle and a disturbance to the professionals' work. This experience is illuminated by the following example:

> One day the police officers stopped someone in a car. I could not hear their conversation without getting very close to the open car window. If I was to get close enough, I felt that I would have to push the police officer aside. Of course, I couldn't do that. I did not want to interfere with their work or to disturb them. But I fought against my position as a researcher and my obligation to gather the best data possible. How far should I go?

However, the researchers felt obliged to get as close as possible to the work situations in order to obtain the data. Faced with these challenges and in their endeavour to get close to the work situations they applied certain strategies to overcome this dilemma.

One strategy was to try to imitate the professionals' code of behaviour. A way to imitate the professionals' code of behaviour was by dressing in a nurse's uniform or in a look-alike police uniform in the form of dark coat, dark jeans and a black pair of boots. Another way to imitate the professionals was by means of language, using professional speech by using police terms or medical terms. They also tried to imitate the professionals by means of approaching the citizens, by greeting and touching the patient, or by maintaining a physical distance to the offender or putting on a grim expression. Overall they adjusted their body movements, paces, and directions of the professions and tried to perceive, pay attention to, and reflect on the work life from the point of view of the professionals.

Another strategy was to distance themselves from the professionals at work. One way to distance themselves from the professional work was by performing other actions, such as making field notes and interviewing. Other ways were by perceiving things as outsiders by observing, reflecting on, and assessing the actions of the professionals, sometimes with awe and admiration, other times with bewilderment and resentment. The researchers also distanced themselves from the professionals' work by moving in and out of the situations according to their interests and feelings at the time according to the situation at stake and their emotions involved.

Getting into the culture of the professionals, the researchers experienced a dilemma adjusting their bodily involvement in the specific situations according to the above strategies. The researchers had to balance between an image of an informed and initiated participant and a distant outsider position as a researcher. Finding a balance between participation and involvement on the one hand and a distant position on the other hand settled in their bodies as a feeling of awkwardness, not knowing when and how to proceed.

4.2. Being Present in Private Spaces

The matter of informed consent and approval by the professionals involved were crucial ethical issues in order to gain access to the research fields and to develop a sense of mutual trust between the professionals and the researchers. At the outset of their fieldwork, both researchers were formally approved by the heads of staff to conduct their fieldwork. In addition, the professionals involved in the fieldwork were informed about the topic of research and had given their oral or written informed consent about the fieldworkers' participation in their actual working situations. In the hospice setting it is a standard procedure that patients who are directly involved in fieldwork situations have given their informed consent. In the police setting, it was a normal professional procedure due to security and safety not to respond to citizens' requests for information that was irrelevant to the particular task at hand. However, the researcher in the police setting had in advance signed a solemn declaration to secure the anonymity of the citizens involved.

As the fieldwork proceeded, both researchers were caught in several dilemmas. Particularly, when witnessing certain encounters between the professionals and the citizens, the researchers felt difficulties approaching these situations. In most situations the researchers could make agreements with the professionals beforehand about when to enter and when to stay out or withdraw from situations, such as matters of "death findings." However, many situations were unpredictable, leaving the researchers unprepared for the course of events and how to respond to them. Sometimes they were involved in delicate situations, such as those where written or oral consent from the citizens was difficult or even impossible to obtain or those where they were emotionally affected by the situations at stake.

In the police setting the researcher experienced a particular ethical challenge in regard to witnessing the state of affairs of citizens involved: "You hear about a citizen's previous convictions and it is an unpleasant knowledge to have." It was challenging to be present

in acts of power demonstrations with criminals or being close to emotionally affected injured parties: "You enter something private when you enter a person's living room. I often felt uncomfortable in such situations." Also the police researcher had to be alert to potential danger in the encounter with the citizen, resulting in a feeling of fear of being present and sometimes a feeling of guilt about being too enthusiastic about a spectacular drama that turned out well for the police, but not so for the criminal involved: "I had a feeling of penetrating these persons' private lives. Something had happened that touched them deeply. Every time the police officers are called, it is an emergency situation in a way. It is a serious matter to the citizen."

In the hospice setting, the researcher sometimes witnessed patients in a state of painful absence from the world, who are presumably unaware of their surroundings. The researcher withdrew from particular situations when she sensed that a normal conversation between the nurse and a patient may suddenly turn into a very private discussion involving the patient's state of being: "It is important to give priority to ethical considerations. It was my choice to withdraw from these awkward situations, however, looking back I did not know if the patient expected this consideration." In these situations the researcher was responding to moral obligations and a feeling of shame and guilt if she was to overhear an intimate conversation. Also it felt challenging for the researcher to witness professionals handling situations of pain, fear, or sorrow regarding the patient or the relatives. Somehow it felt wrong to witness terminally ill patients at pain and in despair and this feeling was transformed into guilt and shame as if she was a curious witness instead of a participant observer: "It was an awkward situation in my first days when I was just an observer. It felt like being a kind of an audience staring at seriously ill people."

In the situations mentioned above, the researchers sensed a tense feeling of unease and discomfort as if they were intruding or about to trespass a zone of intimacy or privacy due to existentially or socially difficult life situations of the citizens involved. Sometimes the researchers withdrew from these situations as a matter of respect of the citizens' state of being without knowing if the patient or the citizen would wish him or her to do so.

Facing these challenges the researchers' bodies responded differently, based on their own moral and emotional state of mind and due to the perceived conditions in the situations at stake. They felt an urge to hide behind their notebooks or turning off the recorder. They avoided eye contact, trying to make themselves invisible before the gaze of the citizens. Basically they shut out the world by withdrawing from the situations in a mentally distanced way or by physically avoiding entering the rooms and houses. They were caught in a perceived and embodied dilemma between respecting the citizen and conducting their research on the scene, resulting in a bodily grounded confusion of where to place their bodies in the situation and how to respond to the sensed interests at stake.

5. Towards a Renewed Understanding

Throughout the features and examples in the two themes of lived experiences in the fieldwork, awkwardness seems to summon up a commonly shared, embodied feeling. In

order to achieve a renewed understanding of the phenomenon, we will discuss the meaning of awkwardness in relation to some theoretical conceptual perspectives and, hopefully, reaching a frame of understanding how researchers might be caught in conflicting dilemmas of opposing forces leading to the feelings of awkwardness.

According to Merleau-Ponty (1962), the existence of man is grounded in the body and in its involvement in the world. The body is far more than a biological mechanism responding and adjusting to external stimuli. The body is a perceiving organism, constantly creating meaning in the world by sensing and making sense of a situated involvement in the world.

The body and the world are intertwined in such a way that the body will intentionally always move towards the fulfilment of meaning, depending on the situation. The concept of *intentionality*, therefore, does not refer to an act of consciousness or a result of intellectual rationality separating man from the world. It refers to a pre-conscious directedness of the body towards specific situations that demand specific actions to be made. However, the actual quality of the action depends on the diverse interrelationship of the subject and the situation. If the subject pre-consciously perceives a disordered world, the emotions and the actions of the subject will be directed towards the disorder as a meaningful response to a challenging dilemma. Therefore, what could seem to be a breakdown of meaning in regard to the phenomenon of awkwardness is, on the contrary, a natural reaction of an emotional dilemma within the body or in the relationship of the body to the other, indicating a basic disorder in the contextual relationship of the body and the perceived world.

In addition, Hollway and Jefferson put forth the idea of *unconscious intersubjectivity*, proposing that the self is not a separate unit with boundaries to the external world. On the contrary, it comes into play in the relations between people (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). Hence, both the researcher and the researched are subjects, and influenced by inner and outer emotions in the perceived situations. The research situation is not an objective relation between the researcher and the research context. The researcher is involved with his or her whole being in the intersubjective meeting.

Awkwardness, then, is not a matter of rational thinking, but a deeply felt unsettlement within the body when facing a new and uncomfortable situation, grounded in the body and affecting the fieldworker's emotions and bodily posture and positioning in the situation. The intentionality of the body is, therefore, due to a preconscious yet meaningful way of responding to the perceived world, forcing the body to move in a specific manner uncontrollable by the will of the mind. An important point has to be made: it is not the person who moves the body, but the body which moves itself responding to a pre-consciously perceived disorder in the relationship between the subject and the perceived world.

The objective of the fieldworker is to get close to the situation taking place, while observing the practice of the professionals in order to get as many details as possible for the research. Wanting to do so, the researcher has to move out of the comfort zone

(Monaghan, 2006). However, facing the emotional insecurity of the situation, an opposing need to re-enter the comfort zone becomes urgent, resulting in a physical or mental withdrawal from the particular incident. This process may count as a proposition of the dilemmas due to the feeling of awkwardness. The body responds to a pre-consciously perceived feeling of uncertainty that is a meaningful response to the conditions in the situation yet independent of pure reason and the will of the mind. In a more general sense, the body of the fieldworker as suggested above is caught in a conflicting project based on a disordered relationship between the subject and the world. We will turn to this matter now.

Karlsson (1993) proposes a conflicting model that may shed light on the dilemmas that lead to awkwardness. The structure consists of three components, the *will* (intention and motivation), the *should* (morality and ethics) and the *can* (competence and ability). The three components may be conflicting in relation to one another, for example, a conflict between the *will* and the *can*, or there may be conflicts within the individual component itself, for example, a conflict between different ethical issues within the *should*.

In the case of the *will*, both researchers experienced a conflict of membership, on the one hand, wishing to become "one of the boys" or "part of the professional team," but on the other hand striving to be autonomous researchers. They needed to be present in the professionals' work situations by means of practical participation (the hospice setting) or by emotional involvement by approving the work of the professionals (the police setting). Both researchers experienced a dilemma of how involved they could be without stepping out of their roles as researchers unaffected by the need of membership.

Another component of the conflict was the matter of facing inner dilemmas concerning the researcher position which might be addressed in the issue of the *can*. The researchers felt a strong urge to position themselves as competent researcher in order to earn respect from the professionals. Simultaneously, they were coping with a nagging feeling of self-doubt due to being inexperienced researchers doing fieldwork in a new setting. The position of being a researcher was accompanied by a feeling of lack of competence, facing questions such as: Am I good enough? Do I deserve to be here? How shall I proceed?

The third component, the *should*, concerns ethical and moral issues in the fieldwork experiences. Through their physical presence in situations of emotionally tense situations, such as patients in agony or pain and citizens in fear or despair, both researchers felt uncomfortably aware of their own presence, resulting in a physical feeling of exposure. They also realised that different interests and concerns were at stake, apart from their own perspective and the professionals' perspectives: the responsibility to respect the autonomy of the third party, the citizens. However, in these particular experiences, the ability to obtain informed consent was difficult, if not impossible, due to the course of the events and the basic nature of the professional work resulting in an uncomfortable feeling of shame and guilt at not being able to respond to the ethical obligations in a correct manner. The body responded to a basic feeling of trespassing on the private zone.

6. **Conclusion and Suggestions to Fieldwork Research Practice**

The phenomenological analysis of awkwardness and the duoethnographic method of mutual interviewing and cooperative analysis have provided us with a renewed understanding of the complexity of the researcher's subjectivity that we had not anticipated in the fieldwork period.

The analysis shows that particular incidents in the fieldwork situations have an impact on the researcher's subjectivity in a certain way. Even though the fieldworker might feel well prepared with legal and ethical formalities, she might not be well prepared to cope with the feeling of awkwardness while facing ethical dilemmas. No matter how carefully these issues are thought out and addressed beforehand, there will always be potential dilemmas in fieldwork situations that develop unexpectedly and spontaneously, because ethics are bound to the actual situation taking place. Witnessing private matters is not only a matter of getting informed consent from the professionals. As a fieldworker you might also be emotionally involved in witnessing the tragedies of fellow humans.

From a phenomenological point of reference, we suggest that awkwardness is a normal response to specific challenging fieldwork situations, especially when facing ethical dilemmas and responding to situations involving three different subjects: (a) the professional, (b) the citizen, and (c) the researcher. When there are conflicting needs and feelings within the researcher, or in the relationship to the other, such as when the act of pursuing rich data entails a risk of encroaching on the privacy of the citizens and the domain of the professionals, the researcher may end up in a distressing situation where they are unable to successfully establish and maintain an equilibrium between two opposing forces: a progressive force wanting to approach the situation and a regressive force trying to escape from the situation. We suggest that the dilemma is due to conflicts at different levels of the researcher's engagement in a disordered world with different motivations, values, and actions.

We have experienced that the feeling of awkwardness is particularly present in challenging fieldwork situations and in the early stages of a fieldwork as such, especially when you are an inexperienced researcher or a newcomer in the field. Eventually the feeling might vanish or become less urgent in the sense of a felt conflict. Finding a balance between participation and distance might be a way to overcome the presumably regressive force in the fieldworker caught up in challenging fieldwork situations. However the conflict behind it might still exist as a basic condition regarding ethical matters in ethnographic research and a matter to be taken seriously.

We suggest that researchers should pay attention to the messages from their bodies and be actively engaged in how situations may affect their emotions during fieldwork and also may influence their research results. We also suggest researchers mutually engage in sharing their experiences systematically with a peer researcher and develop new knowledge and methods of investigation in that process.

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