Blurry Lines: Reflections on "Insider" Research

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Abstract

Insider research poses a range of benefits and challenges for researchers and the communities being researched. It is commonly advocated for disability research but there is limited work exploring disabled researchers' experiences. Influenced by autoethnography and through a process of asynchronous structured conversations, we reflected on our experiences as two blind researchers. Through our collective reflective process and analysis, we created three main themes: insider research is complex and subjective, there is judgment about the "right" thing to do, and insider research requires "different" work. We argue that insiderness is more than sharing characteristics: it is a situated, fluctuating, and "felt" experience. The complexities, judgments, and emotional labor associated with insider research can challenge researchers in potentially very personal and unexpected ways. We propose that further investigation is required about how researchers can best prepare for, engage ethically throughout, and be supported through the insider research process.

Introduction

Insider research can be described as research in which the researcher is doing research on, with, or for, a person, group, or community with which they share characteristic(s) that are relevant to the research (Yin, 2015). Across definitions of insider research, a common thread is that it engenders unique challenges and opportunities shaped by temporal, disciplinary, and community contexts (Chavez, 2008; Labaree, 2002; Nell, 2019; Toy-Cronin, 2018). In the context of disability communities, insider research is highly valued (Duckett & Pratt, 2007). Kitchin (2000) quotes one participant saying, "I would love to see the day when disabled people are doing research about disability . . . Simple little things like [accessibility in transit], that [enabled researchers] can't empathise with, but someone like myself as a disabled person can" (p. 34).

Some of the challenges include perceived bias and the need to negotiate dual roles as a community member and a researcher (Toy-Cronin, 2018). Within the literature, there is a lack of guidance or models for doing insider research as a disabled scholar. There is little discussion of how disabled insider researchers affect and are affected by the research process and outcomes. This article aims to address this gap by adding to the conversation about doing insider research as a disabled scholar.

Author Positionality and Context

We are both scholars with differing experiences in terms of length of time in academia and familial background. We both identify as blind—that is, we use nonvisual/less visual techniques to function efficiently in everyday life, including academic life (Jernigan, 1984). We acknowledge that we are both White women with the privilege of higher education. We hope to be transformative intellectuals by being "open to change as we seek to understand why we think and act as we do" (Lester, 1993, p. 233) and by uncovering subjugated knowledges (Giroux, 1988). We also recognize that we are "speaking from, for, and to the margins" and we will need "to acknowledge positions of privilege, which exist alongside marginality" (Boylorn & Orbe, 2016, p. 15). We further position ourselves and other disabled people as belonging to a minority culture and affirm disability as a valuable identity.

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Our work together began with Bethan joining the supervisory committee of Laura's PhD. At the start of that process, there was no definite intent to research our own experiences; however, through our—often very lengthy—conversations as part of the supervisory process, we found ourselves discovering and uncovering experiences that neither of us had previously read about within the literature. We decided that rather than continuing to simply discuss in an informal manner, we should put some structure and method on a specific series of conversations, so that we could robustly unpack and analyze the experiences of doing research in the blind community, and problematize those experiences in the context of concepts of insider research. The aim of this research was therefore, through conversations, to gain a greater understanding of experiences of insiderness

Method

Through our reflective conversations, we elucidated a greater understanding of insider research from our blind perspectives and explored the potential implications for ethics, research approaches, and the disability community.

Our Process

Our process was informed by autoethnographic approaches. The autoethnographic approach enables the cultural, societal, and personal perspectives of the researchers to be uncovered and discussed (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; La Monica, 2016). Autoethnographers seek to understand culture and society through understanding the self (Chang, 2008; Ellis et al., 2010). Through autoethnography, researchers can elucidate how their own beliefs and experiences about a topic have been constructed, and possibly come to a greater appreciation of the beliefs and experiences of others (Wright, 2008). Furthermore, through autoethnography, researchers can "use personal experience to illustrate facets of cultural experience, and, in so doing, make characteristics of a culture familiar for insiders and outsiders" (Ellis et al., 2010, p. 3). Whereas in our roles as researchers, we turn the proverbial microscope upon the experiences of others, we also chose to turn it upon our own experiences and used this process to shed light on the particular phenomenon of insider research. By elucidating how our own beliefs and experiences about insider research have been constructed, we hoped to reveal avenues for other insider researchers to explore their own processes (H. Chang, 2008; Ellis et al., 2010; Wright, 2008). As suggested by Vandenberg and Hall (2011), we developed a flexible list of research questions with the aim of exploring

- What can "insider" research mean to blind researchers?

- How are insider perspectives managed in research, when both the researcher and participants share the characteristic of being blind or partially blind?

Our reflective process involved three stages of asynchronous discussion about our experiences of doing insider research as blind scholars.

Stage 1: We both reflected through writing on three initial questions:

1. What do the concepts of insider and outsider researcher mean to you?
2. What is your experience doing research with other blind people?
3. When have you felt like an insider or an outsider?

Stage 2: We read each other's narratives responding to the three questions. Based on our reading of the other person's work, we each identified key themes and formulated an additional nine questions. The nine questions came directly from our reading and interpretation of the other's narrative, some questions sought elaboration of specific points made in the first narrative, and others sought expansion on broad ideas discussed in one or both narratives. We then reflected through written responses to these questions:

1. If we can never be a true insider, what are the values (and problems) with the concept and reality of insider research?
2. What does "close to the research in a special way, closer than what is usual for a researcher" mean?
3. How do you manage the challenge of over-empathizing with people or the desire to share your experience in research with people who are like you (as opposed to other than you)?
4. Insiderness—something you embody? Do other people recognize it? How does it influence your research and what do you do with it?
5. How much of insiderness is determined by emotional, intuitive, and connection?
6. Can a so-called insider (say someone who is blind) behave as an outsider and treat "other" blind people as subjects? Would this no longer be insider research although the researcher has legitimate claim to the identity?
7. If in/outsider research is a spectrum, is it possible that different parts of ourselves are at different places on this spectrum at different times?
8. If in/outsider research is a spectrum, who decides where an individual is on the spectrum of in/outsiderness?
9. What are some of the things of which you were afraid when doing insider research?

Stage 3: We both reviewed the written responses from Stage 2 and independently recorded our thoughts about what we noticed from the conversations and what themes we might derive.

Following our asynchronous written conversations, we analyzed our written responses and engaged in verbal conversations about what we were noticing as interesting and important. Through our process of reflection, we developed an understanding of the meaning we made of doing insider research.

Our analysis involved copying all information into one large table and independently performing open coding of responses to each of the 12 questions. We created a list of codes or analytic units, then moved the codes into one large document, and rearranged them to group ideas together (Braun & Clarke, 2018, 2021). While the questions included asking about past experience, the majority of discussion and codes related to the more philosophical concepts of what insider research is and is not, and what insider research requires.

We collaboratively developed a shared understanding of our similar and diverging experiences to elucidate how doing research with blind people might or might not be considered insider research. This was done through both conversations and coding the written texts.

The ethics panels at both our institutions granted ethical approval for the study. While we were both concurrently the researchers and the researched, we created a participant information sheet that acted more as a shared agreement between us, rather than informing us about the study. Key ethical considerations were our own privacy and that of any third parties we might mention in the process of sharing our stories, and how we communicated the findings. Data storage and sharing were also a focus, as we work in different jurisdictions with different data protection processes. We needed to balance the need for ease of access of material (particularly as we use different strategies to access information) with data security.

Findings: Themes About Insider Research

Based on our collaborative reflective process and analysis, three themes stood out to us: (a) Complexities of insider research: subjective experiences and shared emotions, (b) the "right" thing to do, and (c) doing the different work of insider research.

Theme 1: Complexities of Insider Research: Subjective Experiences and Shared Emotions

We recognized that insider research was more complex than we first thought. Sharing characteristics is not enough to feel like or be perceived as an insider and not sharing characteristics does not necessarily make one an outsider. We became aware that insider is a nonbinary, fluid identity. As Bethan stated, "at first, [we] had what was, perhaps, a naive and simple understanding. [We] thought it was a matter of being someone who has the particular lived experience." For Bethan, insiderness was problematized when a graduate student challenged her to reconsider insiderness in disability research. The graduate student was a nondisabled professional, yet she felt like an insider doing research with disabled people. This highlighted complexity regarding what makes someone an insider. Bethan previously considered disabled people as insiders, but questioned whether a nondisabled professional could be considered an insider. The graduate student had a relationship with the disability community, but was an outsider to the lived experience of disability. Is that relationship enough? Bethan proposed a spectrum of insiderness:

> We are somewhere on the spectrum . . . Where on the spectrum of inside/outside a person sits, I think is, at least in part, emotional. It is about how connected you feel to the topic or community, as well as others' perceptions of your insider-ness.

Laura responded that insiderness is nonbinary:

> I am always standing in the borderland between being an insider and outsider. Knowing aspects of the experience of being a blind person, but not knowing, for example, the experience of using a guide dog or of being (blind and) Indigenous.

Highlighting the nonbinary nature of insiderness, Laura wrote, "I do think that I am often, maybe always, an outsider even when I am also an insider in relation to those with whom I do research." Rather than being a fixed position or identity, we found through our reflection that it is fluid and therefore these seeming contradictory positions of insider and outsider can coexist. Some aspects of our experiences might contribute to insiderness, whereas others simultaneously contribute to outsiderness. We also found that the felt sense of insiderness, be it felt by researchers or participants, is not static. Bethan said that "in different situations, we inhabit different parts of the spectrum [from total outsider to total insider] . . . I think we probably shift in and out with each question, with each piece of analysis and with writing up." Because it is ever-changing, "the identity of insider is not really something one can possess. It is perhaps something fleeting, fluctuating" (Laura).

Our reflective conversations led us to discuss subjective feelings and emotion contributing to insiderness or outsiderness. If insiderness is not solely based on an objectively observable characteristic, then upon what else is it based? "Perhaps to be a true insider means that the felt sense of connection over shared experience outweighs the sense of

disconnection . . . perhaps being an insider has something to do with empathy" (Laura). Bethan shared about an occasion when she and a participant both felt a sense of connection:

> [The participant] repeatedly said "You know what I mean." I did, I absolutely did know what she meant, even though she was a person with cerebral palsy, who used a large powered wheelchair and personal assistance and objectively had little in common with me . . . I felt like an insider . . . while our embodied experiences of disability were very different, we shared a perspective on the world. That seemed enough.

In this instance, Bethan subjectively felt like an insider and from the comment "you know what I mean" it seems the participant agreed. But this is not always the case. If insiderness is subjective and related to an embodied feeling, then, we asked "the question: felt by whom? . . . Do the folks with whom I feel I am an insider feel the same way? . . . What if they feel that I'm an insider but I do not?" (Laura). For example, although in her research (Bulk et al., 2023) Laura seemed to be treated like and felt like an insider during focus groups with blind participants, it is possible that some participants did not perceive her as such. This may have influenced what they shared and their trust in her. Although at no time did participants imply that they felt she was an outsider to experiences of being blind, the power inherent in being "the researcher" in this situation may have caused participants to conceal this feeling.

The subjectivity of insiderness is related not only to determining what makes insider research, but also what impact the subjective perception of insiderness might have on the research and on the researcher. Laura reflected that perhaps situations wherein the participants perceive insiderness (even if the researcher does not) "allow for some of the same benefits to research as when I also feel that insiderness." Bethan also questioned the impact of participants' feelings that she was an insider:

> Their perception of me as an insider, I think, made them feel like I was more trustworthy. They assumed that I would do the best for them and document their views, maybe unquestioningly. They seemed to suggest a sense of comradery that made them feel at home with me, and noticeably less with the [non-blind] researcher.

Conversely, when a researcher might perceive themselves as an insider, whereas participants do not, this could have the opposite impact. Laura conveys her reflections on this as a partially blind scholar:

> One thing that's made me uneasy is the idea that perhaps I will be considered an outsider masquerading as an insider, because I am not "blind enough." Although I have found acceptance, and belonging, in the blind community, I do sometimes feel

like an outsider even in this community. For the most part not, but there have been particular moments or interactions.

Here she explicated one of the complexities of insider research—that it involves the subjectivities of researcher, participants, and community members. This meta interpretation, or thinking about what others may think, led us to question when insider research may be universally the best or right thing to do.

Theme 2: The "Right" Thing to Do

The second theme relates to how insider research is valued (or not) in different contexts and whether or not it is perceived to be the right thing to do in a given situation. We found that perceived value of insider research affected our perceptions and practice. Values of insider research change according to context and we discussed how our perceptions of insiderness changed over time, in our own research journeys.

Although we both knew how insider research is positively valued in disability research, we also critically examined its value. We described the affordances and challenges of insider research and the impact of others' value judgments. Bethan was encouraged not to do research with blind people for her doctorate because at that temporal and disciplinary location, insider research was considered less rigorous and lacking in desired objectivity.

It was, however, clear in our reflections and conversation that we did not consider insider research to be either good or bad. Rather, we took a position that insider research has its place, and so does outsider research, as Bethan noted,

> Just as there is perhaps no binary insider–outsider relationship, there is perhaps not necessarily a value attributed to one or other side of the continuum. At times, the insider knowledge and perspective are valuable, at other times, there is real value in stepping back and looking in from the outside. Slipping between roles is possible, even within the same research project, but requires advanced and acute reflexivity. Either end of our insider–outsider spectrum could be less helpful, but there is value in the range of insider or outsider perspectives.

Another example is derived from Laura's work cocreating research-based theater through workshops (Bulk, 2022). A non-blind theater artist and research-based theater expert was present at the workshops. Reflecting on the experience, Laura realized how valuable his questions and contributions were. He helped clarify subtle knowings that were shared among blind insiders without even recognizing we knew these things. Without his insights, we may not have realized that we needed to make aspects of our experience explicit if we wanted them to be knowable for people outside our community.

Some of the challenges of insider research made us question whether it was the best approach. Bethan described empathizing with a participant in a study early in her research journey when she felt a shared understanding, which she later reflected may have meant that she did not engage the participant in more detailed explanation because she assumed understanding. In our conversation, we found that when there is less intuitive understanding, we probe more during interviews and may collect data that is more thorough. When we shared experiences, and our participants were aware of this, we found it more difficult to probe without breaking that rapport. We did "know" information and we could understand, and probing further felt as if it might indicate to the participant that we were not actually insiders as demonstrated by the need to probe to gain understanding. This tension, we found, raised the challenges of how to manage data collection, and particularly getting rich, detailed information that can be meaningfully analyzed in a trustworthy manner without challenging relationships and the bond built during interviews. We described the challenge of managing our own presence and voice as insiders in the research, wanting to maintain space for participant voices while also knowing, as Laura said,

> When I am perceived as an insider, I think it feels useful to voice my agreement, my sense of shared experience . . . this often leads to further sharing of stories and deeper feeling from participants. . . [Being conscious of the possibility of our own voices dominating] feels especially important when there is a perceived power imbalance between myself as a researcher and coresearchers/participants.

Another issue we identified is that judgments are made about insider research as lacking rigor and about us as researchers. The value judgments made by the scholarly community affected our engagement in insider research. Bethan shared that, at an earlier point in her career, she "was afraid of an external judgment or suggestion that being 'too close' makes the research less trustworthy." This shifted as she became a more established and confident researcher, and as the acceptance of various qualitative methodologies increased generally. We were conscious of value judgments potentially being made about us as scholars. Laura, for example, said,

> One big [trepidation about doing insider research] is the fear of being put into a box, a blind box. Wherein someone talking about me might say "This is Laura, she's a blind scholar, she does research with blind people. What else does she do? Nothing, she's blind."

In the end, although some scholars might put her in "a blind box," for her the value of insider research outweighed this risk.

Through these reflections, we concluded that insider research is not necessarily the "right" thing to do in all situations. The "rightness" needs to be examined critically and in conversation with the community in question. For example, a community where those whose lives are most affected by the research may want to have the research done by someone they perceive as an insider; this desire may be an indication that insider research would be most appropriate. This is, however, an area that would benefit from further research and consideration. For example, might there be situations in which the community in question is a dominant group and having an "insider" conduct research for them might allow this dominant group to maintain the status quo? Perhaps sometimes it is important to get an "outsider" perspective. Perhaps sometimes it would feel safer to do research as an outsider. For example, insider research requires different kinds of labor for which the researcher might not always be prepared.

Theme 3: Doing the "Different" Work of Insider Research

The third theme is about the work involved in insider research. We decided that it would be more appropriate to call it different rather than additional work. All researchers might engage in work that involves emotion, but our reflections highlighted some of the unique aspects of insider research work. Bethan stated,

> Insider research, I see as closely connected with reflexivity because we need to take stock of and reflect upon our status as an insider. Insider research can be challenging as the researcher necessarily has a connection with the area—an emotional connection . . . sometimes, I think it is easier to do research where I am not an insider, so I can just do the research without the self-examination.

As insider researchers, we play dual roles: researchers and members of the community. This is different from a dual professional relationship, such as being a health professional and a researcher. For example, Laura reflected that when doing research with members of the disability community, the risk she takes in terms of maintaining relationship with that community is greater than when doing research with people who are not part of her community of identity. We both described the work associated with insider research, relating to both reflexivity and emotion work and emotional labor, and were required to manage deep empathy with participants, reflection on our own experiences, and consideration of power differentials within a community.

As people who share aspects of a unique lived experience with participants, we discussed the challenges of when and when not to bring our own narratives into the conversation. For example, as an insider researcher, Laura needed to find a balance in how much to share in focus group

conversations. She needed to share something because she wanted to establish herself as an insider, build rapport, and acknowledge the value of her own story as part of the data. It was, however, also important for her as the researcher not to take up too much time sharing her own stories and experience because participants might be hesitant to jump in or to contradict something that the researcher said.

We both have a perception of blindness that is positive and accepting of blindness as an aspect of diversity and blindness is part of our identities. We both experienced a tension when meeting participants struggling with blindness as something negative. While this tension might exist for a non-blind person, managing it is different when the tension is around an important aspect of your identity.

> Something I've found difficult is reconciling my desire to share with others the idea that being blind is a good thing—it is more than just missing sight, it is a unique gift to the world that living with sight does not bring—with acknowledging and engaging humbly with other perspectives that may consider being blind to be a bad thing in need of cure. (Laura)

Here, Laura described the challenging and unique work of navigating relationships with members of the blind community who were also participants in research she was doing. As a community member, she wanted to share this perspective that gave her a greater experience of freedom. As a researcher, she needed to hold back so she would not diminish the perspective and voice of some participants. This tension was unique to experiences of doing insider research, where one has a deeply vested interest in the well-being of one's own community members.

In our conversations about the work that we, as insider researchers, needed to do, we described some management strategies that are common to qualitative research: journaling, memoing, debrief conversations, and self-reflection. Although these strategies were effective to a degree, we did find that we had fewer effective strategies for managing the deep emotion work and emotional labor of negotiating information and situations that may challenge our own self-perceptions and disability identities. Emotion work and emotional labor are similar concepts describing the particular efforts undertaken to manage one's own feelings and those of others, with the former being unpaid and the latter paid (La Monica, 2016).

Finally, another aspect of this theme is that, although doing insider research required unique kinds of work, it also sometimes brought a unique joy to the research process, as Laura described,

> Thinking about focus groups I've done, I have to say the first thing that comes to mind is that I really enjoy them! I find a feeling of connection with other blind people in the groups. We share similar experiences and stories. We laugh, sometimes groan, but more often laugh, even at the stories of ignorance and inaccessibility.

Discussion

Through our reflections, we came to conceptualize insiderness as temporal, situation-specific, and ever-changing, and recognize that it is not only about shared characteristics. We also acknowledge the value-laden context of insider research and reflected on the unique requirements of insider researchers. In this section, we discuss the relatedness between our findings and the literature regarding insider research and how to manage tensions associated with insiderness.

Addressing What Insider Research Is

Based on our experience, we describe insider research as complex, value-laden, and related to multiple subjectivities. If insider research involves doing research with one's own people, who are one's own people and who decides? Some disabled people maintain that nondisabled people (perceived as outsiders) should not do disability research, based upon a long history of alienating research on disabled people (Hyder, 2012; Kitchin, 2000; Oliver, 1992). Even when not entirely excluding nondisabled researchers from the process, some contend that research by disabled researchers (insiders) may be more relevant and useful to the disabled community, and that disabled people may share only partial accounts with nondisabled researchers (Kitchin, 2000; Oliver, 1997; Whitburn, 2014).

We problematized the concept of who are the researchers' own people and, in the context of disability research, who can be considered an insider. We found that our own people are not just those with whom we share an objective characteristic (e.g., blindness). One of our key reflections is that insider research relates to subjective experience of connection rather than shared characteristics. Shared disability characteristics do not alone create solidarity or insiderness, and subjective dimensions of experience add complexity (Bulk et al., 2020). Lourens (2015), a blind scholar doing research with blind participants, emphasized the importance of recognizing the subtleties in being an insider: "despite the observable and felt similarities between us, our worlds may differ in very distinct and significant ways" (p. 1). Drawing on Barad (2014), Parr (2013) states that "difference does not oppose sameness" (p. 297-298). Thinking in binaries resembling an us and a them, non-blind versus blind, tends to bolster rather than deflate the potential to have power over another, while eroding a potential sense of social solidarity. Our conversations suggest that social solidarity, across difference or within similarity, is a determining factor in doing thoughtful insider research.

The concept of allyship provides a helpful framing when interpreting our reflections. Allyship is action, not an identity; it is "an active, consistent, and arduous practice of unlearning and re-evaluating, in which a person in a position

of privilege and power seeks to operate in solidarity with a marginalized group" (Anti-Oppression Network, n.d.). The nondisabled professional in disability research mentioned by Bethan may have enacted allyship, giving her a legitimate place as an inside member of the disability community. Allyship is enacted, for example, by asking how I as a researcher can examine and dismantle my own role in upholding systems of oppression that affect blind people (Nixon, 2019). Our reflections raise the question of where the role for allyship in disability research could and should be. Some disabled people argue that nondisabled allies can play a valuable role in disability research, emphasizing that whether disabled or not, a researcher's first commitment must be to disabled people (Barnes, 2002; Kitchin, 2000; M. Moore et al., 1998). For example, a disabled or nondisabled researcher can enact allyship by connecting the team with resources, networking with influential stakeholders, or putting their skills in research processes and theories at the team's disposal. Kitchin's (2000) participants described the importance of research being conducted by people who have a commitment to disability justice, not necessarily exclusively disabled people, thereby avoiding the reinforcement of a disabled/nondisabled binary. We concluded it cannot be assumed that someone who is blind is an insider ally or that someone who is non-blind is an outsider (Blix, 2015). Although a non-blind researcher cannot claim to have the insider experience of blindness, they might demonstrate effective allyship and thereby be an insider. Alternatively, someone who has shared experiences of systemic oppression based on different characteristics might be perceived as an insider. For example, someone who experiences racism and someone who experiences disablism might not share objective characteristics, but dimensions of their experiences of oppression may contribute to a sense of solidarity and insiderness (Bulk et al., 2020). Based on our reflections, we concluded that insider research can be effectively conducted by blind or non-blind researchers who enact allyship.

How Is Insiderness Managed?

Our reflections illuminated the nature of the efforts required of insider researchers, including emotion work or emotional labor. For any researcher, reflexivity and emotion work and emotional labor may be important parts of the process (Bondi, 2005; Hoffman, 2007). Particularly, for example, doing research from a feminist perspective discourages researchers' detachment and encourages research in the context of relationships characterized by empathy (Parr, 2013). Parr (2013) described her research with women from whom she was separated by class, socioeconomic status, and access to social and material capital. Yet she described this research as "emotionally draining" (Parr, 2013, p. 15). Our conversations indicate, however, that insider research

requires a different kind of effort. For example, we found that doing insider research involves the work of constantly navigating insider and outsider identities and negotiating perceptions of self and others. The insider researcher's emotion work or emotional labor is deeply personal and self-revelatory.

Reflexivity is revealed in our reflections as a vital tool for the insider researcher, perhaps even more vital than for the outsider researcher. We found that insider research requires reflexivity that examines our personal and professional preconceptions, values, feelings, and perspectives (Neville-Jan, 2004). Similar to La Monica (2016), we found that the insider researcher must employ advanced reflexive skills in the production of texts containing vulnerable revelations that relate to their identities beyond that of researcher. A reflexive strategy that we both have used in insider research is having critical conversations with fellow disabled people or blind people specifically. Debriefing with nondisabled or non-blind people can be helpful for some aspects of research, particularly methodological dilemmas and issues of rigor. We have, however, found it vital to have conversations with an insider about the tensions experienced with being both a community member and a researcher. Having such conversations with people outside the research team, however, requires caution and being conscious of ethical considerations, especially maintaining the confidentiality of participants' stories.

An additional complexity is that the extensive reflexivity required can cause insider researchers to question themselves. If the researcher is not confident in their identity, doing insider research may be an opportunity for discovering and shaping identity. Self-discovery occurs in insider research through those "me-too" moments. Empathizing with someone about shared characteristics may lead to a level of self-discovery, which might have emotional impacts on the researcher. We both discussed the impact of insider research on our identities, moments of self-discovery and emotional impacts of our insider research on us, as individuals and scholars.

Ethics of Researcher-Care

The challenges managing insiderness raise ethical questions about (self-)care for researchers. La Monica (2016) discussed the emotion work of being a graduate student, stating "no one told me about the challenges I would face, about the pain of being denied accommodations, or the extra work involved in educating the educators such as the ombudsperson office and even the disability services office" (p. 65). Reflecting on her doctoral research where she read the narratives of six disabled graduate students alongside her own, she says, "I was ambitious . . . sitting with, reflecting on, and identifying with each of these stories has been emotionally and physically draining" (p. 134). As discussed,

we also found that doing insider research is draining and that there is little warning of the kinds of work one will be required to undertake as an insider researcher.

Toy-Cronin (2018) discusses various ethical frameworks that might be beneficial for the insider researcher, including consequentialist and ethics of care frameworks. Using the ethics of care framework, ethical decisions are based on "care, compassion and a desire to act in ways that benefit the individual or group who are the focus of research, recognising the relationality and interdependency of researchers and research participants" (Wiles, 2012, p. 15). Other aspects of an ethics of care approach include recognizing interdependence and relationality, addressing others' needs, and recognizing emotions (Wiles, 2012). Research ethics frameworks however, often focus on protecting the interests of participants. Some include risk assessment for researchers but these tend to focus more on physical and psychological risk, rather than preparation for, or care for, the emotion work that can be associated with insider research. Our conversations echo those of La Monica (2016) making clear that there is little guidance from the research community, supervisors, or ethics boards with regard to caring for, or addressing the potential risks and benefits to the insider researcher. Perhaps it is an area for development of ethical standards or questions to be explored at the outset of an insider research project. We also concluded that there is a tension for the insider researcher who may want to be open to various perspectives, while also embracing who they are and sharing their own perspectives as an insider. We wonder what is involved in suppressing one's own voice in the process of doing insider research, and whether this is even beneficial. This is another area in which the research community can continue expanding conversation and building understanding.

Conclusion

Through these reflective conversations, we have elucidated some of the complexities of doing insider research. Particularly, defining a project as insider research is not as simple as determining whether the researcher shares a salient characteristic with participants, but involves complex subjectivities of researchers, participants, and communities. Although doing insider research has some significant benefits, it might not always be the "right" way to go and may involve complex emotion work and emotional labor for which the researcher needs to be prepared and of which they must be aware.

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