

Title of abstract: Organizational Agents as Epistemic Agents: Re-examining Nurse Executives' Agency in Homecare Organizations

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Stage in doctoral program: I am in my second year of the PhD program in Nursing at the University of Ottawa. I am developing a research program that critically examines assumptions about discourse, organizational epistemology, sociopolitical aspects of caring work, strategic ignorance, and power in healthcare organizations. I am currently securing ethics approval and writing the drafts of my first four chapters.

Abstract:

Nurse executives (NEs) are understood as the highest level nurse in a homecare organization (HCO) overseeing both administrative and clinical nursing functions. This research will explore NEs as a critical and strategic subject position and the interplay between HCOs' epistemic and discursive practices where knowledge is developed and used. Specifically, what knowledge is dominant within the HCO and what knowledge is dismissed.

Research problem: This study aims to explore how NEs enact their moral, socio-professional, political, and epistemic agency in HCOs in Ontario.

Literature review: HCOs are discursive spaces where certain kinds of knowledge are deemed legitimate and influential, and others less so. Epistemological arrangements in HCOs create and maintain particular subject positions, pockets of organizational ignorance, and predetermine interactions between organizational agents whose status and influence hinge on their access to, and strategic management of, competing forms of knowledge. Organizational enactment of NE positions is likely made complex by overt and covert power-knowledge-ignorance dynamics that are socially, historically, and politically entrenched.

Theoretical framework: This study uses a Critical Management Studies theoretical framework, as informed by Foucault, and the Sociology of Ignorance. This allows for the explicit examination of NEs strategic organizational positioning within HCOs power structures of hierarchy and demonstrates how knowledge tensions and ignorance are used to bring forth certain narratives and the tension between those administrative narratives. It will create a different understanding of how NEs can be both subjects and objects of power in HCOs.

Methods: The methodological approach is Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis. Document analysis and semi-structured, in-depth, individual interviews with 20 NEs will be conducted. Document analysis will focus on select employment postings, guidance and reports that address discourse in homecare from relevant organizations. The experiences, perceptions, discourses, and inferences of the written, spoken, and visual textual data will be examined.