



Qualitative Sociology Review

Volume I, Issue 1 – August 2005

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18778/1733-8077.1.1.01>

Krzysztof Tomasz Konecki
Lodz University, Poland

Editorial: Qualitative Understanding of Others and Qualitative Sociology

Welcome to the new journal Qualitative Sociology Review

We created this online Journal to promote qualitative understanding of social phenomena, human being and other species. Our aims are included in our mission http://www.qualitativesociologyreview.org/ENG/mission_eng.php. Community is one of the values that we want to advance. We would like to integrate qualitative researchers from all around the world and create one community. Community of individuals respecting each other as human beings with tolerance and equality in mind and approbation of scientific rules of understanding of a social world.

However we promote qualitative way of thinking, refusing “a rule of majority” that is used in quantitative research and generally in everyday life of societies dominated by “a survey philosophy”. If we want to understand others and maybe explain their actions and interpretation of the world we should concentrate on definitions of situations that could be typologized and conceptualized in order to understand the more general dimensions of social worlds. Thus it is difficult to accept that the usage of quantity (the rule of majority) decides how we can understand human being acting. ‘The more something is’ does not designate any meaning for understanding of human action. If something is large in quantity it only means that it is large in quantity, nothing more. The individual and social meaning of quantity has a qualitative character and usually depends on a context and individual interpretation of social and cultural rules. The concept of quantity is important, especially in explaining material world, but in understanding human being as a social being and her/his actions it is not enough. Analysis of social phenomena described quantitatively is always understood qualitatively. We cannot say anything comprehensively using only numbers without types, classes, categories, properties of categories, descriptions, relations. Pure numbers do not exist, they exist only in experience of acting individuals.

The mind, thinking and self have a qualitative character, not a quantitative one. I am or I am not; there is no rule of majority deciding about existence of self. Me and not-me; there is no relation like that: “the less I am the more you are.” Me and You exist only in certain form of relation. Relation with Other and this relation is a Quality, some form of social existence, not quantity.

Qualitative thinking is at the base of quantitative one. Every common sense or scientific statement about quantitative change in the phenomenon is based on

classes and categories that have a qualitative character. Quantitative analysts are very rarely aware of qualitative analysis that they do. Every quantitative statement is an imprecise form of a qualitative one. Precision in social sciences is possible only in description of qualitative relations, especially in descriptions of processes and their consecutive stages. We can repeat situations and observe processes in many contexts but it is very difficult to repeat social situations and obtain identical statistical correlations describing the processes each time.

What we then mean by qualitative sociology?

Qualitative sociology is a perspective of description, understanding and sometimes explaining social phenomena by investigating and analyzing individual and group experiences and world outlooks plus human actions, using qualitative methods of research or qualitative analysis of qualitative and/or quantitative data. Qualitative sociology is not only associated with the usage of qualitative methods of research (group interviews, participant observations, field studies, etc.), as it is sometimes understood. It is a qualitative way of thinking about human experience, i.e. the way of “scientific intersubjective empathy” in getting the meaning of individual and group experience of so called external world. The effect of research and analysis could be a theoretical description or conceptualization and theoretical integration of concepts. But concepts must always be grounded in empirical observations. We should remember that the qualitative sociology is a kind of general orientation in sociology, not only a usage of so called qualitative methods. However we have to remember that this orientation is internally very diverse.

Our Journal is open to all perspectives in qualitative research and analysis of social phenomena. We promote diversity in qualitative social research. Qualitative Sociology Review is then the journal of Symbolic Interactionism, Grounded Theories, Social Worlds/Arenas Studies, Action Studies, Biographical Analysis, Conversation Analysis, Collaborative Social Research, Content Analysis, Discourse Analysis, Deconstructivism, Ethnography, Ethnoscience, Ethnomethodology, Evaluation Social Research, Hermeneutics, Holistic Ethnography, Institutional Ethnography, Phenomenology, Phenomenography, Narrative Studies, Naturalistic Studies, Social Anthropology, Qualitative Case Studies and other qualitative orientations within social sciences.

Our Journal is of an Open Access kind. Growing prices of scientific books, journals, monographs, etc. are a serious barrier for a wide and common access to scientific works. We would like to contribute to Open Access Movement in scientific endeavors and at the same time propagate our ideas, scientific works and discoveries.

We do not believe in any boundaries in the world, especially here in Lodz (Poland), where many editors settled down for a moment. The city is famous for its diverse culture, that it originally has had. Before the II WW it consisted of four big ethnicities: Poles, Jewish, Germans and Russians and also many others. It is a city of big artists: Artur Rubinstein, Wladyslaw Reymont, Wladyslaw Strzeminski, Antoni Tansmann, Julian Tuwim, Michal Urbaniak and many others come from Lodz. The tradition of tolerance and spiritual invigoration coming from the mixture of cultures and nations is still alive but as every tradition should be supported by collective actions at all times.

We remember the time of scientific books and instruments shortage before 1989 and we know the high prices of books and journals today. Many of our friends from behind of the Iron Curtain helped us a lot sending the books and papers in the past. Now, we would like to assist other scientists in need, who maybe have some problems with a shortage of scientific publications from the whole world. Internet, as a very democratic instrument of communication, helps a lot to solve the problem. Webside journals seem to be a future of free scientific communication.

In the inaugural issue of our Journal we present diverse papers, in the approaching editions we plan to construct volumes and issues one subject oriented.

T. Berard's paper "Evaluative Categories of Action and Identity in Non-Evaluative Human Studies Research: Examples from Ethnomethodology" concentrates on practical use of evaluative concepts. The concepts are connected with such controversial phenomena as: suicide, mental illness, discrimination, also corruption, plagiarism, drug abuse, adultery, etc. The author tries to connect the detailed ethnomethodological analysis of empirical data with concepts that could be evaluative but should be exposed of their deep meanings.

K. Kosmala in her paper "Insights From Ricoeur's Hermeneutics On Best Practice In Professional Service Firms: On Perpetual Myth Creation?" deals with the question of how language takes part in creating individual judgments in professional work. The language and template of work deliver a base for the definition of "best practice". The paper shows the tension between structural content of the job and "soft facts" giving the margin for negotiation of meanings.

A. Bell in his paper "'Oh yes, I remember it well!' Reflections on using the life-grid in qualitative interviews with couples" deals with a methodological problem of using the life - grid tool in facilitating the process of interviewing. The author tries to answer if the life-grid help in opening interviewees and make them more reflexive, whether the tool helps in stimulating recall of past events etc. The conclusions of the paper are not promising in using life – grid in sociological qualitative interviewing.

My paper "The problem of symbolic interaction and of constructing self" presents discussion on an issue of creation of self concerning not only symbolization (human language) but also corporality. Corporality is connected with non-verbal communication, a relation of bodies in physical space, and so called "kinesthetic empathy" strictly associated with recognizing emotions by interaction partners. These elements of corporality may be the basis for taking the role of other and creating of common definition of situation and eventually social bonds not only between humans but also between human and non-human animals.

Feel free to read this new journal and to participate in creating its forthcoming issues! We await your papers, book reviews, comments and discussions.

Citation

Konecki, Krzysztof T. (2005) "Editorial: Qualitative Understanding of Others and Qualitative Sociology." *Qualitative Sociology Review* Vol. I Issue 1. Retrieved Month, Year (http://www.qualitativesociologyreview.org/ENG/archive_eng.php)