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Research into Transformations in Everyday Life: Three Methodological Notes[1]

Abstract   The article focuses on the reflection of my research experience in obtaining qualitative data using narrative interviews. I confronted my own research experience with the phenomenological methodology of Alfred Schütz, dramaturgical sociology of Erving Goffman, and interpretative sociology of Max Weber. The article discusses three problems that emerged during a longitudinal study of everyday life transformation in the long-term horizon of sixty years: 1. How to create a concept of everyday life so it serves not only as a tool for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data, but also as a tool for understanding the meanings of the examined empirical world; 2. How to discursively create an image of everyday life transformations during an interview between a participant and a researcher and what it means in relation to the research subject; 3. How to reach understanding between the participant and the researcher during a face-to-face interview.

Keywords   Everyday Life; Narrative Interview; Understanding; Temporality; Historicity; Generation Gap; Life-World (*Lebenswelt*); Social Reality; Phenomenological Sociology

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The objective of the article is to discuss three methodological problems that gradually emerged during my five-year qualitative research in the micro-regions of Silesian Hlučín and Moravian Království. The article does not focus on spe-

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cific research results,[2] but on the issue of obtaining qualitative data, that is, the researcher's interview with a participant (communication partner).[3] It is an analysis and interpretation of my research experience. The long-term stay in the field, increasing the number of interviews (more than 200 in the end) and multiplying field notes, gradually brought me to issues of how reality is formed during interviews and how and to what extent it is possible to reach understanding between a researcher and a participant. Such thorny questions occur when a researcher stays in the field for a long time, uses more research techniques, and repeatedly returns to communication partners. That is why I would like to reflect on my research practices in this article.

The objective of my qualitative research was to create a grounded theory of the transformation of the suburban countryside in the Moravian-Silesian Region[4] and its everyday life based on an emic approach in order to present the understanding of the (historical) transformation of rural everyday life as seen, perceived, reflected, and assessed by the rural people themselves.[5] I defined countryside as an area formed by everyday practices perceived as rural and by a wide range of everyday representations of the "ordinary" population. This area generates stable patterns of behavior, emotions, and meanings that affect everyday rural life (cf. Halfacree 1993; 2006).

The research methodology (data collection, their analysis, and interpretation) was based on this research question: How has the perspective of the suburban countryside population on rural everyday life changed from the 1950s to the present day? The selected emic approach to the transformation of rural everyday life motivated the selection of qualitative research methods and techniques. The data were mainly collected and analyzed using the grounded theory method (Corbin and Straus 1990; Strauss and Corbin 1997). The main method of data collection was a narrative interview. The context of the data collection and analysis were data from the Czech Statistical Office on selected social, demographic, and economic indicators, and the "large" history of Czechoslovak/Czech society since the end of the Second World War. The theoretical framework of the research was formed based on the phenomenological sociology of Alfred Schütz and Thomas Luckmann (Schütz 1944; 1945; 1953; 1954; 1962; 1964; 1966; 1970; 1981; Schütz and Luckmann 1973).

Based on the self-reflection of my research practices and reflection of relevant aspects of phenomenological sociology, three methodological problems will be successively discussed:

1. Forming a concept of everyday life as a tool for empirical research. In my opinion, forming a concept is a key act of qualitative research, since it contributes significantly to the formulation of the research problem, the definition of the research subject, and selection of the research strategy. How to define a concept so it serves not only as a tool for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data but also as a tool for

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[2] Published research results, see: Kubátová 2013; 2014; 2016a; 2016b; Kubátová et al. 2015; Anýžová, Kubátová, and Znebejánek 2016; Anýžová, Kubátová, and Matějů 2016.

[3] For the purposes of this text, the terms "communication partner" and "participant" are used as synonyms.

[4] The Czech suburban countryside is formed by rural municipalities located in the hinterland of regional cities.

[5] On the possibilities of generalizing qualitative research cases, see: Flyvbjerg 2006.

understanding the meanings of the examined empirical world?

2. The research subject as a discursively formed image of everyday life transformations. As the aforementioned research question implies, transformations over a long period of sixty years were investigated, which brought the issue of everyday life temporality and the possibilities of an adequate sociological approach to it to the center of the research problem. The past of everyday life cannot be monitored directly, and it is necessary to draw on witnesses' memories. What does it mean to study a past that exists only in memories?

3. Understanding between the participant and the researcher during a face-to-face interview. In such a situation, is it methodologically useful to create two worlds, a world of science and a world of everyday life, and try to be a disinterested observer?[6]

1. Creating the Concept of Everyday Life

Even though my research objective was to analyze changes in everyday life from an emic perspective, my concept of everyday life is not based strictly on the ordinary thinking of people. According to the phenomenological sociology of Alfred Schütz (1964), on which my research was based, researchers examining everyday life should keep their distance from its immediate perception. In my view, this can be achieved by forming a heuristic sensitized concept

of everyday life as a tool for data collection, as well as for data analysis and interpretation. As Blumer (1969) claims, heuristic concepts are sensitized because they help explain the meanings of the relevant empirical world.

My creation of a concept was based on the methodology of ideal types formed by Max Weber (1949), which was later followed by Schütz (1964). Ideal types are constructed based on empirical facts to which participants assigned a cultural significance. The researcher subsequently selects those which correspond to their theoretical interest. As Weber says, it is important that a created concept was simultaneously adequate to the subjective meaning of the participants' actions, as well as to the research question. It must neither be too empirically empty (i.e., theoretic), because then it would not correspond to the empirical world, nor too rich in content (i.e., empirical), because then it would only be a description of reality with a small range (cf. also Hekman 1983). Weber's requirement is reflected in Schütz's (1954) assumption about the specific meaning of social reality for human beings who live, act, and think in it. The world has already been interpreted by people's everyday constructs and they experience it as their everyday reality. Scientists' objects of thought must be based on people's objects of thoughts.

For that reason, I combined the theory and experience when forming the heuristic concept of "everyday life." The theoretical basis for this was Schütz's concept of the everyday life and life-world on the one hand, and the sociological conceptualization of a way of life as a relatively stable pattern of every-

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[6] From the empirical perspective, these three problems partly overlap and their separation is more analytical.

day behavior within a specific life situation utilizing available resources, on the other hand. The empirical source for the creation of the heuristic concept was the structure of the life-world identified in a pilot field study. In the pilot survey, I used as many research techniques as possible (e.g., unstructured interviews, unstructured disinterested and interested observations,[7] examination of municipal chronicles, etc.).

When creating a concept, I proceeded from the fact that everyday life is embedded in rural social relationships, which can be implied not only from the formulation of the research problem but also from the phenomenological assumption that the world of everyday life is a socio-cultural world in which we relate to our neighbors in various ways and in various degrees of anonymity and intimacy (Schütz 1954). Everyday life is therefore approached as an intersubjective phenomenon manifesting the values, norms, needs, and wishes of people, their interests and goals. It takes place in social reality, which I understand in accordance with Schütz (1954) as a reality that is experienced in the everyday thought of people who were born into it and had to learn to live in it.

The world of everyday life is, together with the world of dreams, fantasy, and science, a part of the life-world, an umbrella term as considered by Schütz (1962). It is a framework forming a unity of these four sub-worlds, while the world of everyday

life represents the paramount reality. It is a world of work, pragmatic approach, and practice, which is not the dominant subject of thinking, but a world of action and practical orientation in it (Schütz 1962; 1966; Schütz and Luckmann 1973).

Based on these theoretical and empirical resources, I defined everyday life as a world of experience and a key reality of the life-world, as a sum of practices, strategies, interpretations, and social interactions that people use when earning a living and living their domestic lives, in which the everyday life is not only reproduced but also transformed. I focused on the *understanding* of earning a living and household chores as practices and life strategies of individuals who perform them in everyday, ordinary situations. Schütz (1954) claims that human behavior can be understood only when we understand people's motives, choices, or plans rooted in their biographically determined circumstances. For that reason, everyday activities could not be just described; I had to understand their motivations, which, as I assumed, arise from satisfying biological, emotional, and social needs.

Two types of time may be associated with the concept of everyday life—cyclic and linear. Cyclic time is related to the regular repetition of activities and the rhythm of passing days. While cyclic time stabilizes everyday life, linear time transforms it due to historical events, institutional and system changes, and even biological changes, which are framed in individual life stories. Linear time refers to two transformation axes: biographical (in the form of a life career or life story) and historical (cultural and political). I thusly understand everyday life as

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[7] For example, balls, religious festivals, awarding important and successful personalities of the region, various meetings of citizen associations, and also family celebrations, ordinary family days, et cetera.

a changing space produced and reproduced by the routine repetition of habitual actions in recurring situations and settings, as well as by dealing with the cultural, historical, and political transformations of values, norms, and institutions and with transformations biographically associated with life stages, life career phases, and life experience. In other words, everyday life consists mainly of recurring activities related to earning a living and home life. These actions, including their motivations, are also culturally, historically, and biographically determined, so they acquire various cultural and individual expressions and meanings throughout the historical and biographical time.[8]

Life is a continuous stream of changes, both in terms of the "big" history and in terms of biography and career. Everyday life is therefore discontinuously continuous. It passes in stages and phases, and the consequences of one stage become enabling or limiting conditions of the following stage. The research of everyday life shows that people often do not cope with radical changes in their life by replacing their old everyday life with a new one, but by embedding the new everyday life in the old one. Everyday life is characterized by momentum because it strongly opposes institutional and political changes. People do not change their life radically. This is because each present everyday life contains its past in the form of past experience. Decisions made in the past have a significant effect on the present and the future.

The knowledge of the past motivation and strategies adapted by people helps understand their present motivation and strategies. Hence, if we want to understand the present of everyday life, it is necessary to explore its past. As written by Chris Hann (2015), the past, present, and future must be analyzed simultaneously.

2. The Research Subject as a Discursively Formed Image of Everyday Life Transformations

To examine everyday life transformations over a long period of sixty years means to examine a past that exists only in memories, that is, a narrated past.[9] This generates a methodological question of what is actually being investigated.

My invitation to talk about the participants' everyday life past made them reflect on the yet unreflected, which breached their everyday life and changed it into non-everyday life. This is because it is typical of everyday life that it relies on implicit and unspoken meanings to a significant extent. As I already mentioned, everyday life for Schütz (1962) is a world of practice, which is not the dominant subject of thinking, but a world of action and practical orientation in it (cf. Schütz and Luckmann 1973). Everyday actions are routines based on everyday knowledge, which is largely inexplicit and unspoken. This results from the fact that the life-world is a natural world of common sense that is not questioned in

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[8] In addition to that, some actions are at a certain time in the communication partner's everyday life background (e.g., childcare, when they do not have children or they no longer live with them; the public sphere under communism) and some of them in the foreground (e.g., work at the time of economic activity; the private sphere under communism).

[9] The past can be also explored by analyzing personal documents, such as letters or journals. I could not, however, use these documents to an extent sufficient for my research objective due to their highly intimate nature.

the natural attitude and is comprehensible to every member of the community as a world that humans perceive as a normal and natural fact, as a given fact to which they are forced to adopt an active, practical, or pragmatic attitude and act. While talking about the past may reveal certain unreflected upon and undisclosed meanings of everyday life, most of them still remain hidden and unreflected upon.

Moreover, everyday perception is significantly reduced. We do not realize the majority of impulses or we do not focus on them; we only perceive them partly because they are not exciting, they are natural, fit into what is normal and repeat without end: our living room, my office, my colleagues, Sunday family lunch, et cetera. Another reason people do not reflect on their actions is because they act under the influence of practical logic. As written by Pierre Bourdieu (1990), people are fully absorbed in their matter, their task, their affairs. They do not project their actions, they act based on their pre-perceptual anticipation arising from the harmony of the habit and field, which produces a deep doxic belief in the world that they do not realize. I therefore assume that the situation of a research interview about past everyday life makes participants reflect on it in retrospect. If we inquire about their practical experience, we are forcing them to adopt an attitude, making them observers of their own practical experience and leading them to create quasi-theories about it.[10]

Given the above, I was aware that I was not primarily investigating a participant's logic of everyday life and its transformations, but the "discourse" in which participants narrate, for example, the way they lived and live, worked and work, what their home looked like before and what it looks like today, et cetera. I understand the concept of discourse neither as an "order of discourse," that is, rules allowing the creation of individual testimonies (cf., e.g., Foucault 1973), nor as a linguistic term that refers to any text longer than a single sentence (cf., e.g., Crystal 2008). I use the term discourse to describe narrative (discussion) situations about a certain topic in the form of a dialogue between the participant and me as a researcher. I assume that discourse consists of verbalized and semantically shared knowledge. The discourse of past everyday life shows an image of everyday life transformation in participants' memories in the form of auto-stereotypes and positive and negative aspects of everyday life: how I lived, what I was like, et cetera. At the same time, as participants talked about their specific everyday practice, they assigned meaning to its components, evaluated them, talked about their motivations and strategies, et cetera. I could watch how the participants discursively created or constituted their everyday life during the interview.[11] I began to observe the way the participants shape their information so that it forms acceptable images of what they experienced. I perceived more that everyday life is discontinuous and only narration makes it a complex entity.

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[10] This problem was also addressed by Schütz (1953) using the motives of "in-order-to" and "because." Participants living in the ongoing process of their actions reflect only on the "in-order-to motives" of their actions, that is, the projected state of affairs to be undertaken. Only if they return to their already performed actions or to past phases of still ongoing action anticipating the act, participants may retrospectively grasp the "because motives" that led them to do what they projected to do. Then the participants do not act—they observe themselves.

[11] At this point, I began to approach the issue of oral history, which works with narratives that are perceived as images of participants' life events or life events of someone else verbalized by participants. The purpose is not to determine what happened in the past, but to reveal the interpretation of an individual or a group (cf., e.g., Bertaux, Thompson, and Thompson 1993; Thompson 2000).

Or, as Berger and Luckmann (1966) state, individual actions are shaped according to interrelated parts of life at the moment people think about their lives. We can assume that there is a relationship between the participant's practical logic and the narration because the participant is in a discourse with the researcher about what actually happened long (or not so long) ago. However, the participants' "quasi-theory" of their own past of everyday life corresponds semantically with the present, that is, the point in time when the past is being described.

That is why the dramaturgical sociology of Erving Goffman (1959) soon became part of my research field. Using his metaphor of theater, I started to reflect on what I initially mostly ignored. For example, how participants produce their past everyday life as a film and compose individual scenes as directors when they are talking. They decide which scenes to cut and which to keep based on the current situation, but they reinterpret the scenes for the purposes of a new performance for the researcher, therefore changing their motivation, reinterpreting meanings, et cetera. Participants select individual scenes for their film about past everyday life for a specific purpose, for example, to give a good account of themselves or to make me understand their narration. That is why they initially do not present their normal behavior in everyday life, their private world of an improvised and spontaneous (or routine) character, but instead present their official (and therefore comprehensible) social roles of the public world.

Goffman's theater metaphor makes it tempting to understand a qualitative face-to-face interview as a theater performance. In my opinion, however,

Goffman (1959) does not address aspects of theater that penetrate everyday life. He deals with the structure of social encounters, while the key factor of this structure is to maintain a uniform definition of the situation. The metaphor of theater is included in the assumption that this definition has to be expressed (introduced), and this expression has to be maintained despite a number of potential disruptions. To present a definition of the situation means that the actor makes an impression upon the observer. The observer has to rely on this impression, which, of course, creates the possibility for the actor to distort reality by manipulating the impression given to the observer. This could mean that every social encounter is hypocritical and deceptive. In fact, however, Goffman argues that everyday life is surrounded by a number of courtesy, etiquette, and moral norms. While there is always the possibility that the observed person is manipulating the impression, this is not a rule.

The participant, therefore, constitutes a definition of the situation. This almost always results in surface consistency in defining the situation because it is not expected that participants will express their true feelings and honestly agree with the feelings of others. Instead, it is expected that participants will suppress their immediate feelings and that their statements will be at least partially respected and thereby they will avoid open conflict caused by different interpretations of the situation. In ordinary encounters, participants are allowed to rationally interpret and justify their actions.

However, a research situation is not ordinary. On the contrary, I, as a researcher, wanted participants to

express their true feelings and not to suppress them, to step out of their official social roles and reveal their private world to me. This can be at least partially achieved by disrupting the working consensus. At the beginning of an interview, however, it is necessary to work together with the participant in creating a working consensus for at least some time by using protective corrective mechanisms, particularly by tactful protection of the participant's interpretation of the situation and by respecting their opinion. At this point, the information I gained before the interaction is of key importance. In order to obtain information relevant to my research, I then tried to disrupt the smooth interaction by ceasing to respect the surface consistency in the situation definition. I asked questions that are perceived as unthinkable, or at least inappropriate, in common situations because they undermine the requirement of courtesy required in common situations as a part of a personal facade. For example, I asked about membership in the Czechoslovakian Communist Party, actions in the period of collectivization of agriculture, et cetera. The fact that participants had the advantage of authenticity because I did not experience much of what they were talking about at first forced me into defensive and affirmative solidarity and compassion. Later, however, I tried to resist this impulse. I wanted to get behind the participants' stylization of their own lives, get further than just to their staged lives; at the same time, however, I was aware that if I overdo this, I would break the rules of interaction and destroy the whole research situation.

This procedure enabled me to move from participants' official roles to their private life. But, in situations in which participants reflected on their private world, they basically used uniform discourse about the past of their everyday life. In other words, the longer the period they were thinking back to was (i.e., the older the participants were), the more their testimonies of past everyday life resembled each other. It can therefore be concluded that shared communication memory intervened in their discourse on the past as one of the collective memory sectors. Like Assmann (2006), I understand it as a living memory passed on between three or four generations of contemporaries through speech. I proceed from the fact that memories are selected due to the influence of this memory of the majority because memory tends to adapt to constantly changing images formed within social groups. This is apparently the reason why individual participants' memories of the long past of everyday life were typically identical. According to Halbwachs (1992), collective memory provides a generation group with an image of itself; it is continuous and consists of live elements of group consciousness. Memories of individuals are associated with the group to which an individual belongs or belonged and in the memory of which they are stored.

It can be said that each generation has its own history. That is why introducing historical context into the research, that is, linear time of everyday life, is problematic. Although the participants whose past and present everyday life I examined were my contemporaries because we shared a place and time during the interview, I was aware that there are generational differences in terms of our knowledge of the world. Schütz (1954; 1981) solved this problem by believing that the everyday world is important for us universally, and therefore assumed that despite

all the differences in the individuals' knowledge of the world, everyday knowledge of the everyday world is sufficient to live with our neighbors, cultural objects, and social institutions in social reality.

I agree that we can certainly live with them because the generational embeddedness of individuals in everyday situations does not create any serious problems. However, in a research situation, the difference in generational experience can significantly intervene in the research subject. I soon noticed my communication partners anticipated that what their peers would consider normal and standard I would not or could not necessarily have to consider normal and standard. That is why they tried to explain, interpret, or even reinterpret and normalize their past everyday life to me. My research experience is more consistent with what Karl Mannheim (1954) surmised, that is, that differently generationally embedded people have different aspect structures that determine how a person sees a certain thing, understands it, and constructs facts. My experience with research interviews shows that this problem is not identical to Schütz's (1953; 1954), but describes differences between individual perspectives leading to the current participant's knowledge being only potential knowledge of persons related and vice versa. It therefore cannot be solved by Schütz's reciprocity of perspectives because even though it allows living and standardized understanding in the social reality, it does not solve the problem of fundamental understanding during an interview. The problem of the influence of the "generation gap" on shared meaning between the participant and the researcher is clearly visible in a situation in which we examine changes in everyday life in a society that was going through a period of major historical and political twists.[12]

The past in witnesses' memories, which is not static and is always dependent on their present, also intervened in the research subject. When thinking about the past, the participants drew on their current biographical situation and used their current systems of relevance. They related their memories from the perspective of the "here and now." They evaluated their real past actions from the present day perspective. Therefore, it is significant to mention that most of my communication partners were at least 60 years old and were recalling their memories between the years 2012-2016. If they recalled memories of the late 1970s or around 1989, their stories would certainly differ from the current ones in the evaluation of the past, choice of the relevant events, and their expectations of the future. Therefore, no research result can be removed from its temporally conditioned semantic context.

The research subject of the change in everyday life through participants' stories is not the practice of everyday life and its practical logic, but an image of the history of everyday life discursively created by the communication partners, while the shape, structure, and meaning of such an image are significantly influenced by many circumstances mentioned above: reflection of the yet unreflected, reduced perception, memory selectivity, communicative

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[12] In the Czechoslovakian context, it is especially the communist takeover in February 1948, the Warsaw Pact troop occupation of Czechoslovakia in August 1968, the following so-called normalization period, the Velvet Revolution in November 1989, and the following liberalization and democratization of society and introduction of a market economy.

memory, the generation gap, and the intervention of the current biographical situation and system of relevance. This raises the question of whether the researcher and the participant can actually understand each other during the interview. The problem of understanding will be discussed in the last part of the article.

3. Understanding between the Participant and Researcher during the Interview

First, I briefly describe the interview situation. As mentioned above, within the pilot field study essential for creating the heuristic sensitized concept of everyday life, I conducted several unstructured in-depth interviews and both structured and unstructured observations, including an analysis of available documents. After I had constructed a working version of the concept of everyday life, I began to design a semi-structured interview script consisting of topics relevant to my research subject.[13] I modified the traditional approach to the narrative interview, which does not allow for additional questions about reasons for the communication partner's behavior (see, e.g., Bertaux and Kohli 1984), according to my needs. I asked questions to improve my understand-

ing[14] and also to discover motivations, since I sought to *understand* the acts of earning a living and doing household chores as practices and life strategies of individuals who perform them on an everyday basis. As mentioned above, Schütz (1954) claims that human behavior can be understood only when we understand their motives, choices, or plans rooted in their biographically determined circumstances. In order to understand, I tried to utilize everything the interview reveals besides the actual answers of participants. That is, the external scenery, such as apartment or house furnishing, books, kitchen, garden, yard, et cetera, people sharing the household with the participant, and other information on the same topic received from other participants. The understanding was also facilitated by family photographs spontaneously shown by the participants to document their stories.

The participants usually invited me to interview them at their home; therefore, I could also observe the environment in which they lived. As mentioned before, I soon began to view the interview as an encounter (Goffman 1959). Goffman's principles helped me to better understand the research situation, uncover participants' efforts to control the definition of the situation, and notice the research interview disrupting the surface consistency in the definition and the effect thereof on the research situation. I also became conscious of small details I had ignored until that point. I realized that by selecting and staging the scene, the participants controlled the situation to some extent. Everything depended

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[13] During the gathering of data, the script was adapted to newly acquired findings and empirical data; it gradually became more focused on the research problem that also crystallized from the empirical data. The script served as a tool to help following the thread of the interview. It was important to let the participant talk about issues I had not expected, and therefore had not included in the script. Although my aim was to keep the everyday life topic in my previously defined structure, I wanted to preserve the emic perspective and not impose topics upon the participant. The script allowed me to maintain control over the interview content, and despite the textbook rules, I am of the opinion that the topic should be decided upon not only by the participant but also by the research problem.

[14] In addition, questions keep the interview going. For example: "Do you remember? At that time, I was doing this and that, what about you?" "What was it like when you had to...?"

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on the definition of the initial situation formulated by the participant based on our phone conversation prior to my visit and, with the increasing number of interviews in a set region, also on the reputation of my interviewing technique, which had spread quickly. I had operated in the field for many years and people from the region communicated their knowledge about the interview procedure to one another; therefore, the presentation facade (of individual interviews) had gradually stabilized. Soon, I was also able to anticipate the participants' definition of the situation, their narrative focus, what they would show me in their home, what food they would offer, et cetera. Participants also tried to control their personal facade concerning their appearance and behavior and had certain expectations about my personal facade, that is, my appearance, manner of speaking, gestures, interview preparation, et cetera.[15]

My face-to-face contact with the communication partner and the repeated visits very soon led to the question if and to what extent we could achieve mutual understanding during the interview. Alfred Schütz's phenomenological sociology offers certain techniques to achieve this.

According to Schütz (1954), it is necessary to distinguish between knowledge within everyday meaning and knowledge as a method specific to social sciences. Schütz does not view understanding primarily as a scientific method, but rather a specific form of experience we use within our everyday thinking

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[15] Schütz's phenomenology defines a self-standardization phenomenon: by standardizing the behavior of others we standardize our own behavior in connection with theirs (Schütz 1953).

to identify our socio-cultural world and live in it. Schütz assumes that the world is experienced in everyday thinking in a standardized form. The participants are given objects and events, and which of their features or qualities they consider unique and which standard depends on their current interests and system of relevance. Interests and the system of relevance are determined biographically and situationally and are subjectively experienced in everyday knowledge as systems of behavior motives, choices to be made, projects to be conducted, and objectives to be achieved (cf. also Schütz 1970; Schütz and Luckmann 1973).

Schütz (1954) claims that a second participant can understand these motives, choices, projects, and objectives (and through them the first participant's behavior) only in their standardized form. Therefore, in the everyday world, participants construct standardized patterns of participants' motives, objectives, attitudes, and personalities, and their current behavior is nearly a case or example of such. These standardized knowledge constructs replace the personal world knowledge of individual participants. Everyday world knowledge is based on fundamental idealization known as the reciprocity of perspectives. According to Schütz (1953), this idealization overcomes the differences in individual perspectives stemming from the participant seeing something different than other participants and their different biographical situations. This overcomes the problem of participants' current knowledge being nearly the potential knowledge of persons related and vice versa.

However, Schütz (1954) claims that a social scientist is supposed to approach the social world differently.

Social scientists have a cognitive rather than practical interest in the situation and are not involved in it. They replaced their personal biographical situation with a scientific one, meaning they eliminated the system of personal relevance controlling their everyday interpretations and originating in biographical situations and replaced it with the scientific problem.[16] The researcher then uses the formulated scientific problem when developing concepts, as well as scientific standardizations (i.e., scientific ideal types, so-called second-order constructs) through which he/she understands the participant's behavior and the life-world. According to Schütz (1954; 1964), social scientists observe certain facts and events in social reality and based on them create standard types (ideal types) of behavior or courses of action. However, they cannot overstep the boundary created by defining the scientific problem (postulate of relevance). They then coordinate these patterns with ideal participant models (so-called homunculi) which equipped the systems of relevance (i.e., standard practical purposes and objectives). Each homunculus is assumed to be related to other homunculi through interaction formulas. Each and every construct must be developed based on formal logic principles and must be adequate to the participants' everyday subjective world; therefore, it must be comprehensible to the partici-

pants (postulate of subjective interpretation). Schütz concludes that meeting these requirements ensures the compatibility of scientific constructs with both scientific findings and everyday life constructs. This compatibility ensures that social sciences deal with the real life-world, one world common to us all, not with fantasies independent on and disconnected with the life-world.

Schütz therefore postulates human understanding in everyday life using everyday knowledge and standardization, as well as scientists' standardization through their research problem. He assumes that the participant has current interests and a system of relevance determined both biographically and situationally. He further assumes that the participants have an appropriate cultural formula at their disposal determining relevance levels and functions as an unquestionable reference outline (Schütz 1944; 1945). On the other hand, scientists have their cognitive interests and relevance systems determined by a scientific problem.

In my opinion, a problem arises when we, as researchers, ask whether we can understand the participant during a face-to-face interview under such circumstances. In terms of such understanding, is it relevant to the researcher to proceed as Schütz suggests, that is, to create homunculi and other scientific standardization, to strive to disregard their everyday knowledge and relevancy systems determined by their biographical situation, to replace them with scientific knowledge and a system of relevance, and to elaborately ensure the adequacy of their scientific and participant's standardizations. Only if the researcher strives to accomplish the same as Schütz,

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[16] In this respect, Schütz (1954) follows Max Weber, who postulated the objectivity of social sciences by disconnecting them from value patterns which (may) control the participant's behavior on the social scene. However, I believe Weber (1949) complements his concept of the value neutrality of a scientist with the so-called value relationship, which he understands as a research gesture allowing research within a specific culture, with culture being a semantic framework giving meaning to behavior. Therefore, he emphasized the historical uniqueness and specificity of each cultural phenomenon. In my opinion, Schütz disregards the cultural specificity of a research problem, for he assumes cultural universalism.

that is, achieve objectivity of scientific theories and subjective meaning in the everyday world. However, I believe that if we strive to truly understand the participants in a face-to-face interview, then such objectivity cannot be postulated. Even Weber (1949), to whom Schütz often refers, postulated only objectivity that is culturally conditioned, as it is always dependent on the values of the time.

Another important question is whether it can be ensured that researchers' systems of relevance stemming from their everyday life and biographical situation do not intervene in the interview. Based on my experience, I believe it cannot be ensured. My communication partners naturally strived for a normal symmetrical conversation and asked me personal questions, thus sending me back to my biographical situation. Dialogue and narration are essential elements of everyday communication. During the interview with the participant, the researcher must adapt to these everyday life techniques while the participant does not dispose of any other. However, if we follow Schütz's approach to scientific understanding as a second-order construct, we actually eliminate the participant, much like a quantitative researcher does through a questionnaire. Therefore, I believe that in order to understand, the researchers must keep their everyday knowledge (albeit controlled) and use it. During a face-to-face interview, they do not dispose of any other tool they could use to have a dialogue with the participants and thus understand them.

Let us ask a question: Where does the actual face-to-face interview between the researcher and participant take place? In the life-world? Undoubtedly, because both the world of everyday life inhabited by participants and the world of science are part of the life-world. According to Schütz, no other world inhabited by both the researcher and the participant exists. Everyday life is the only framework in which scientific research can take place and where all scientific and logical concepts originate (Schütz 1954). Life-world is a place where the scientist's and participant's worlds meet. According to Schütz (1966), each interpersonal communication in the life-world presumes a similar structure of at least thematic and interpretative relevance. I believe that the narrative interview, despite being part of the research situation, is, at the same time, one of the basic forms of interpersonal communication. Therefore, the researcher needs to use even his/her everyday knowledge and the systems of relevance arising from it. While the participant possesses only one (everyday) system of relevance, the researcher always possesses two, since beside his/her scientific layers of relevance determining what is relevant to his/her scientific problem, he/she also possesses relevance used in everyday life.

My research experience leads me to the conclusion that in order to achieve the adequacy of scientific theory and participant's subjective world in the everyday world, the scientist cannot be removed from the social reality he/she studies. He/she cannot disregard his/her biographical situation and with it all the systems of relevance, practical interests, motives, and choices of a researcher as an inhabitant of life-world because he/she would lose one of the key sources of understanding of the participant in the face-to-face communication situation. The researcher in an interview situation cannot be a mere

objective observer; he/she must communicate with the participant in the true sense of the word. In this case, he/she cannot "communicate" only on the basis of his/her scientific relevance, but must also incorporate his/her relevance from the everyday world into the communication. Therefore, he/she has to bring his/her own life-world into the field. Naturally, aside from that, he/she has to possess a sufficiently sophisticated and defined scientific problem that must respect the life-world of the participants; otherwise the scientist does not deal with the real world, but the world of fantasy.

According to Schütz (1954; 1964), when we live in the same life-world common to us all, there is no need to construct two worlds, the world of everyday life and the world of science, in a dialogue even for methodological reasons. If we do so, we lose the ability to reach understanding with the participants in the life-world and we appear as socially naive and ignorant participants creating tools limiting their ability for understanding in face-to-face communication situations. In the jungle of complex methodology and scientific constructions, the participant becomes a chimera because his/her identity and the historical context of his/her life are lost.

The model of a rational participant and a rational world can serve very well for data analysis and interpretation. However, in my experience, this model is not efficient in the case of face-to-face research interviews. The theoretical and empirical term of everyday life (the creation of which I described in the first part of the article) and the everyday knowledge of the researcher are sufficient as research tools in such a situation. Unlike Schütz, I believe that re-search situation and research problem must be relative to values of the time, since empirical data are unintelligible without cultural and historical context. Although we strive not to bring any scientific or everyday preconceptions into the research situation, we cannot prevent it. I believe that this is not a catastrophe threatening the validity of our results. Our scientific conclusions can always be only probabilistic, but the more they arise from our true understanding, the closer we get to the world of ideas of our communication partners.

Conclusion

During my long-term research on the changes of the everyday life of inhabitants in two suburban rural regions, I often faced the question of how to approach and understand the life-world and everyday life of my communication partners. I believe that if I did not spend so much time in the field and go through so many narrative interviews, these questions would not be so important to me, and it is possible that I would not have noticed many of the aspects. In this article, I focused on the situation of the narrative interview and confronted my research experience with Alfred Schütz's phenomenological methodology.

Schütz's methodology provides good guidance for the solution of the first methodological problem (how to create the concept of everyday life) when connected with Max Weber's methodology. I considered the creation of the concept of everyday life as a key step in qualitative research. This approach has paid off many times in the field because I had a transforming yet efficient tool for interview

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observation and conducting. I consider the pilot field study to be the most important when creating a concept because the concept must be suitable for the subjective meanings of the participants researched. Naturally, I also built on the research question while creating the concept. It gradually brought me to the formulation of the dual temporality of everyday life, cyclical and linear. It is the linear time, whether historical or biographical, that transforms everyday life. Therefore, it is always necessary to remember the issue of time and analyze the present, the past, and the future simultaneously.

The analysis of the past everyday life opened a problem I discussed in the second part of this article. At the beginning, I asked a seemingly trivial question: What was I actually studying? I tried to demonstrate that by studying the past of everyday life in the long-term and its changes I was not studying the experience of everyday life, but the narrative of everyday life, that is, the discourse led by my communication partners about their experience. While using this discourse, they created an image of their past everyday life, the shape, structure, and meaning of which were significantly affected by many factors, some of which I have described. The theatri-cal metaphor of Erving Goffman is very inspirational for a better understanding of the creation of this image and its meaning and structure.

In the final part of the article, I focused on the issue of an understanding between the participant and the researcher in the research interview situation. I described Schütz's dual definition of understanding—everyday and scientific. I asked myself whether it is efficient and relevant to the possibilities of understanding to construct a rational model of the participant and the social world and try to take the position of an objective observer. I tried to demonstrate on my own research experience that in the face-to-face communication interview the researcher would lose the possibility to understand the meanings of the participant's world when using second-order constructs. Second-order constructs can only be a result of research, not a tool. Moreover, I do not agree with Schütz's cultural universalism. In agreement with Max Weber, I believe that it is necessary to relate the research situation to historical and cultural values because it is impossible to understand the long-term transformations of everyday life of communication partners without a cultural and historical context.

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