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# Creative Thinking in Qualitative Research and Analysis

**Abstract**  I would like to present the possibility of broadening the traditional methodological and technical skills of researcher and analyst, but also the intellectual capacity of the researcher associated with combining data, categorizing, linking categories, as well as the interpretation of the causes and consequences of the emergence of certain social phenomena. Some methodologies, methods, and research techniques are more conducive to creative conceptual and interpretive solutions. Therefore, I describe the serendipity phenomenon in such methodologies as grounded theory, ethnography, phenomenological research, and contemplative inquiry. The problem of intuition in qualitative research will be also described in the paper.

There will be presented also some suggestions how to be creative in qualitative research.

From the review of issues of creativity in qualitative research we can derive the following conclusions:

1. Creativity in qualitative research depends on the strength of *a priori* conceptualization and stiffness of the adapted methods of research and analysis.

2. If the methodology is more flexible (as the methodology of grounded theory), the researcher can get to phenomena that he/she has not realized and which are still scantily explored in his/her field of expertise.

3. The phenomenological and contemplative approaches allow the use of the investigator's feelings and experience as they appear in the studied phenomena, which usually does not take place in objectifying and positivistic research.

4. The investigator may therefore consciously use these methodologies and approaches that foster creativity.

5. The researchers can improve their skills in thinking and creative action by doing some methodical exercises (journal writing, writing poetry as a summary of the collected data, the use of art as representation of the phenomenon, the use of meditation, observation of the body feelings, humor, etc.).

**Keywords**  Contemplation; Meditation; Creativity; Grounded Theory; Phenomenology; Serendipity; Qualitative Research; Ethnography

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*Creativity is intelligence having fun.*
Albert Einstein

*A mind is like a parachute.*
*It doesn't work if it is not open.*
Frank Zappa

Qualitative research is sometimes considered to be creative by definition, quality is not quantity, so strict rules do not apply. However, the development of procedures, techniques, research methods, and procedures for the analysis of qualitative data makes the study more precise. This development with some standardization may be a restriction to the creative approach to research and analysis of qualitative data. By analogy to quantitative research, we can say that it is difficult to be creative when everything is, from the beginning to the end, established and planned in the research process, including hypotheses.

Those who believe that qualitative research is by definition creative, justify that research methods are not as standardized as they are in quantitative research. There is a creative approach to the use of specific research and analytical techniques and methods. This dose of creativity, in the sense of arbitrariness, is intended to provide an unconventional approach to constructing research problems and solving them. Creativity would be here defined by the degree of openness of the researcher to new methodological solutions in research and technical data analysis. Openness would also apply to the use of multiple interpretation schemes. So, it is not just about extending the possibilities of methodological and technical research and analysis, but also about

the intellectual capabilities of researchers involved in data combining, categorization, categories linking, and the interpretation of the causes and effects of social phenomena.

One should therefore consider what does lie at the base of creative thinking in qualitative research. If we are talking about creative thinking, it is evident that we are talking about the researcher who thinks. We clearly associate the formulation "creative thinking" with the subject who thinks. It is rare for us to think of the idea that creative thinking can appear automatically in the research process under certain conditions which are to be conducive to the creative research process. However, if we think so, we can imagine the idea that some methodologies, research methods, and techniques are more conducive to creative conceptual and interpretive solutions. Such research methods include, in my opinion, the methodology of grounded theory, sociological ethnography, transformational phenomenology, or the use of non-standardized interviews in field research, or in contemplative research. Limiting pre-conceptualization allows us to enter into a context of discovery (*serendipity*). Methodology of grounded theory, sociological ethnography, phenomenological studies limit the number of assumptions taken before the study of explored phenomena. Phenomenological *epoché* is a clear example of this. Taking in the brackets our assumptions on the basis of which we perceive a phenomenon in everyday life opens us up to seeing phenomena as they are. We can also see more clearly what lies at the base of our lifeworld. We can realize what limits us in the research (*a priori* setting research areas and topics, categorizing and interpreting data and categories on the basis of pre-assumptions),

which makes us most likely to see the world in some dimensions, while other dimensions are inaccessible to us. Why, for example, do we neglect the spiritual dimension of a study that may affect the researcher?

By using the above methodology, we can easier enter the context of discovery, that is, to observe phenomena that were not in our field of interest prior to the start of the study (*serendipity*). By limiting the pre-conceptualization of research we are more open to phenomena that may unexpectedly appear in the field of research. The perception of these phenomena is possible by categories of our language. This language (especially colloquial language) is, however, metaphorical and does not restrict us in conceptualizing phenomena *in situ* when we have direct contact with the phenomenon under investigation. However, inspiration for the labeling of phenomena and research objects comes from the research area itself. Pre-conceptualization certainly limits us and does not give us opportunities for these inspirations. The use of everyday language is one of the most important skills of a qualitative researcher. Creativity is an immanent feature of colloquial language. This language is not so restricted in meanings as the scientific language. A creative researcher uses this commonsense vocabulary at the beginning of the study to freely label the phenomena he/she observes. Then, in a more rigorous way, he/she tries to clarify their meaning, and eventually build up definable categories of labels.

## Thinking and Creative Work

If we recall Herbert Blumer's (1954) idea of sensitizing concepts, then we find there the potentiality

of sociological creativity. The sociological imagination is built in close relation to the observation of phenomena as they occur in a particular place and time. Blumer's approach to symbolic interactionism is an empirical approach that encourages the exploration of not investigated phenomena. Symbolic interaction, therefore, based on defining the situation by participants, imagining the role of the other, and negotiating identity by language, gives us the opportunity to use imagination, especially in new interactions or those that need to maintain a definition of situation and identity in the new context. Language operations in defining yourself and others, defining situations and phenomena, are related to its creative use.

Interactive phenomena "named" by sensitizing concepts allow us to see these phenomena in their full coherence and spatial-temporal localization (Charmaz 2006). The researcher, in a specific place, uses the native language and his/her own scientific language, and **combines two modalities** that prompt him/her to open up new dimensions of the phenomena and to make them more precise. **Creativity is, among other things, a derivative of the collision of these two contradictory tendencies.** The term "homelessness" means not having a home, however, we know based on stereotypes that a homeless person does not have his/her own home. Nevertheless, the person has some space to live and sleep and eat, the home is moving together with the body and the equipment of the person. The society defines the homelessness also by legislation; and yet—who is the homeless person? Is he/she a vagabond or a bum? A criminal or a victim of the socio-economic system? The commonsense meanings of the term

indicate the direction of looking for the data and later the analysis of the data. Even the persons being researched use these stereotypes.

Herbert Blumer (1954:7) distinguishes definitive concepts and sensitizing concepts. These first relate to what is common to a certain class of objects, and these are the definition of features of a certain category of objects, while the sensitizing concepts point out to us only the direction in which we can observe the phenomenon. They make us sensitive to certain features without specifying the final version and quantity of the objects tested. They allow you to remain open and look for further characteristics and contexts of their occurrence. It is important to be sensitive to specific questions related to a given phenomenon (Charmaz 2009: 27). The questions come from the language that we use.

Sensitive concepts show us the directions of our observations and do not accurately point out the characteristics of a given phenomenon or object. The phenomena of everyday life have their specificity associated with their location in a particular context. By studying what is common to a given phenomenon in different contexts, we also study what is unique. These specific qualities can be our discoveries if we are open enough and careful to seek what are the unique characteristics of experiencing the phenomena in their often-unique context. A creative approach to research would be a skillful attempt to focusing on:

1. a detailed description of the researched phenomenon (what is its content and how the phenomenon proceeds),

2. then its interpretation in relation to its context,

3. and individual experiences of phenomenon by individuals and social defining it at the group level.

Thus, adapting the idea of sensitizing concepts allows us to develop a creative approach to research and analysis of phenomena. The concept thus contains the immanent features of creative thinking and new actions (openness, continuous questioning, searching for specificities). The guiding principle here is to sensitize the researcher to something that is worth looking for and exploring rather than pointing out the exact location and set of features of a given phenomenon. Blumer referred his concept primarily to the "naturalistic" research, in this case, studies of the observation of everyday life phenomena as they occur in their natural environment. However, the ending point is to create the generic concept and they lose the uniqueness of experiencing the phenomenon. And here the symbolic interactionism needs some inspirations from other perspectives, as, for example, phenomenological style of research. What about the "homeless" person that does not feel homeless? He/she could think that the city or the whole world is his/her home. The suffering of the homeless people is assumed and probably it can be proved in the research, however, if the suffering is not experienced, is the homeless person less homeless? What about the meaning of homelessness connected with freedom? Here is a quotation from the grounded theory research report on embodiment in homelessness:

Yet, other youth were capable of understanding and incorporating a more abstract sense of home based

on a clear sense of self in relationship to their bodies. Consider this youth's statement, "I don't have a problem with being homeless. I am happy to be homeless because I can start a new life where nobody has control over my body." This youth was less concerned with the physical space that she was living in and more concerned with the freedom being homeless gave to control her body. [Sy 2010:99]

If the homeless person is mindful of his/her existential situation, he/she could feel home differently: "you can feel home if you are at home in your body" (Sy 2010:100).

The body can also not accept taking more drugs and the person wants to get out of the homeless situation and seeks help from others (Hall 2010).

Definitions of the concepts come from outside, the living experiences from the inside.

If we use the sensitizing concepts in our research plans and research itself, as it often happens in qualitative research (ethnographic studies, grounded theory, phenomenological research), then we have to think about what is creative thinking. Without precisely defined concepts, we must put up new research questions and seek answers to them in the most versatile, often unconventional way. So, we need the sensitizing concepts. Creative thinking is related to finding new solutions to problems we know or to connecting new ideas with existing and known ones. Creativity is therefore going beyond the known means of problem solving, beyond socially acceptable patterns of perception and action. Generally, we want to prove some thesis or hypotheses also in qualitative research. While proving, we look for similar instances of the phenomena and we want to find the generic features of them. But, there are side effects or other crisscrossing phenomena that are not exactly proving our theses. Following the scientific procedures, we drop them to find proofs. They are our goal.

Therefore, creativity requires originality and courage. It could be connected with refusing the sensitizing concepts. What is conventional is not creative. Originality is, however, insufficient in creativity; we should add here the usefulness or appropriateness (Runco and Jaeger 2012:92; see also Runco 1988).[1] Not all original concepts, hypotheses are used in explaining or interpreting the studied phenomena, so they do not necessarily belong to creative solutions. Creativity is often combined with the notion of genius (Scheff 1990) and/or imagination creating something new that deviates from what has existed so far. It is also important to see that society evaluates the creative work at each historical time differently. Creativity is variously understood in different historical times. Creative work must be given some value by a specific audience. You can be "individually creative" (original), but not "original historically," that is, the work is not accepted by the audience at a certain time. Of course, it may happen that the

[1] Research on creativity is a very well-developed field of investigation within psychology. It is enough to see *Creativity Research Journal* to realize how much has been done in this regard. In this article, however, I will focus on the conditions of existing theoretical and methodological approaches that allow for creative attitude to solve some research and methodological problems in qualitative approaches in the social sciences and the humanities. These problems are connected with the repeatability of solutions to the theoretical questions or the stuck in the research or analysis when we do not know how to answer some questions that emerge during the investigation or analysis.

originality will be accepted by the public after the death of the creator, as was the case with the work of Vincent van Gogh (Boon 2014).

Here is a standard definition of creativity, which also refers to the need of acceptance of creative work by others: "The creative work is a novel work that is accepted as a tenable or useful or satisfying by a group in some point of time" (Stein 1953:311).

However, creativity must in some way be adapted to reality at a specific historical moment, to be settled down there. The originality alone is not enough to be a creative person. Inventing new words, concepts, hypotheses, interpretations does not come from the brain, it comes from deep reflection or insight.

Considering creativity from the individual's point of view, we may say that sometimes the epoch is not adjusted to new ideas created by the individual. However, in general, our creativity is blocked by the psychological and psycho-social barriers associated with the situation here and now, where we operate and create. If we have not created the need for critical thinking, then we cannot question the existing patterns of thought and patterns of action. Criticism is the basis of creative thinking. The concepts conceived are usually supported by group thinking. Being opposed to group thinking requires courage and confidence in yourself and your thoughts. You should look more deeply into the concepts, also sensitizing concepts. This courage, in turn, is associated with having a high self-esteem, which allows one to oppose the opinion of the group and the appearance of emotion of shame or embarrassment (see: Scheff's concept of genius [1990]; Konecki 2008; 2014:31-32;

Pawłowska 2013).[2] In addition, if we are in bad working conditions, with unfair criticism, excessive burdens, we have an increased number of barriers for creative thinking, as it often happens in academy. Thus, mental barriers can meet and strengthen social constraints and eventually limit our creative capacity.

## Creativity in Contemplative Studies. Contemplation as a Tool of Creativity

The use of sensitizing concepts and vernacular terms is part of creativity, from another side we have the techniques of research and analysis of data. Although we should remember that the techniques are used by the researcher that thinks and that mind's work is included in the investigation. Seeing the techniques as an integral part of the research is very important in understanding the lack of creativity or its abundance.

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[2] A very important factor of creativity is laughter. When we experience shame, we should start laughing to dissolve it to save our self-esteem. High self-esteem is an important condition of creativity (Scheff 1990:173). Shame blocks it. The good-humored laughter also dispels chronic shame (Scheff 1990:175). Then, the mind is less blocked and can find new connections and solutions.
Samuel Johnson, George Gordon Byron, Richard Wagner, Friedrich Nietzsche were inveterate laughers, "the great geniuses should have been laughers" (Scheff 1990:175). Nietzsche connected even his creativity with laughter when he was writing *Zarathustra* in 30 days. Concerning Richard Wagner, there is evidence that he experienced many times prodigious laughter. His wife, Cosima, mentioned in her diary 300 hundred times about the attacks of laughter. The entries in diary are from the periods when Wagner was the most creative in writing his music (Scheff 1990:173-174). Laughter is supporting creativity of so-called "easy creators" that generate their work very fast, without revisions, as mentioned Nietzsche, or Goethe who wrote *Werther* in 24 days. They were free from the self-censure (Scheff 1990).
Then, humor rather supports creativity than suffering and sadness as David Lynch, a movie director, said: "A lot of artists think that suffering is necessary, but in reality, any kind of suffering cramps the flow of creativity" (see: https://vimeo.com/182093266 [retrieved July 30, 2017). To see it, we need some deep insight into the work of our mind.

Qualitative research can be treated as creative by definition. For example, a non-standardized interview can be an extremely useful tool in reaching new phenomena, but it should be connected with insight (Janesick 2015:54). By analyzing and interpreting the meanings from the interview, we get a new view of the phenomenon based on the interview, which could be really deep insight into the situation. But, how to achieve the insight?

Qualitative research can be contemplative, if we care about continuous and full communication with the respondents and we are able to obtain periods of silence (pauses in our thinking to gain even deeper insight). What decides on qualitative research as contemplative inquiry is, according to Valerie Janesick, the consciousness of thought/thinking in each component of qualitative research.

The definition of contemplative qualitative research according to Valery Janesick (2015:22) is as follows:

> This practical concept is useful for those of us using qualitative methods to make sense of people's lives: we are connected to our participant/s whether or not we wish to be. I call this approach contemplative qualitative inquiry. The contemplative component has to do with the stillness and silence of thinking with a meditative orientation.

"I use the term contemplative inquiry to refer to qualitative techniques that place a deep and serious emphasis on thought in every component of a study of the social world" (Janesick 2015:34). Thus, contemplative research serves to understand the Other and the social worlds, not to prove or verify hypotheses. It is necessary here to keep full openness and realize our own assumptions. Then we can be as close as possible to social reality, to touch it in a direct way, because we also have insight into our own cognitive apparatus and identity of the researcher. We concentrate how the mind works.

Valerie Janesick uses the metaphor of Zen Buddhism to extract contemplative elements from qualitative research, but also tries to apply certain rules of Zen Buddhism to research practice. Qualitative and Zen research are:

a. holistic,

b. context is important,

c. body and mind are instruments of cognition,

d. both approaches emphasize ethics and the principle of "do not harm,"

e. both traditions use "storytelling" as a research and reporting tool that is used in teaching as well,

f. both cognitive traditions emphasize discipline in thinking and writing, perseverance, urgency, intuition, and creativity (Janesick 2015:34).

So, since Zen is creative, the inspirations from it can only enrich the creative qualitative research. Zen plays with language, with words, it is seen especially in Zenic poetry, haiku. The approach to analyze documents, photographs, and artifacts involves the consciousness of compassion and creativity, because we deal with the world described by the language

(see: Janesick 2015:81). The use of poetry, photography, drawings, art, or even jokes by a researcher can be a significant addition to the written narrative. Experimenting with photographs during qualitative research can help us to interpret phenomena, to reach their meanings. Putting the photos in some sequences could help to see the phenomenon in a different way and inspire to new interpretations of the researched phenomenon (Konecki 2009).

Qualitative research can be helped with mindful activities. For example, to write in the evening what we experienced during a given day, or free and fast writing within the time limit, for example, 15 minutes could be useful. It may be important to keep a journal of meditation. This can help you to clear your mind of your thoughts and understand your assumptions (Konecki 2016). Meditation also helps to maintain mindfulness while interviewing and focusing on the here and now while talking to a participant (Janesick 2015:32).

Writing poetry can be helpful for interpreting different texts or documents, for example, what is included in a given document can be interpreted by a poem, what Janesick advises her students. Poetry is another instrument to capture meaning (Janesick 2015:86-88). Poetry captures deep meaning. Poetry is open, creative, showing new perspectives of interpretation. Writing poetry after reading documents or transcribing can be an impulse for new and creative interpretations of texts.[3] Poetry can

help us to reach the meanings of a given phenomenon. It allows us to notice things imperceptible (Heidegger 2005) and to find also the eidetic features of the phenomenon.

Very important in developing creative research skills (e.g., limiting the pre-conceptualization and influencing one's own assumptions on perceived phenomena, interpretative abilities, etc.) is to write a reflective journal (Janesick 2015:132). It is writing for joy, for better understanding, and playing with creativity. Writing a reflective journal is also a contemplative activity, allowing the researcher to reflect on his/her role and identity in the study, and to be free from the limitations of his or her identity, or to observe these limitations. In the reflective journal, we also record our feelings and impressions from interviews and the use of other research techniques.

## Intuition

Referring to the above considerations of contemplative research and their connection to creativity, meditation can be considered as a technique to support the emergence of intuition. Meditation,

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[3] "According to Husserl, poetry and fiction are primary aspects of phenomenological thinking. Free variations are imaginings designed to clarify essential elements of phenomena. Phantasies are informed by eidetic intuition. Phantasies also clarify such intuitions: one can say in strict truth that 'feigning' ['fiction'] makes up the vital element of phenomenology as of every other eidetic science, that feigning is the source from which the cognition of 'eternal truth' is fed" (Husserl 1982:133 as cited in Bentz 1965:49).

Heidegger also attaches great importance to poetry in discovering the secret aspects of being that may emerge in the style of writing. What is important is the understatement that is between transitivity and what is constant and unchangeable; important is what is coming and the poet has intuition to predict it (Heidegger 2005). This poetic style of writing can also contribute to the discovery of hardly recognizable meanings and configurations of meanings, premonitions about future events in ethnographic research. Poetry can certainly be used in the journal of reflection to derive those undiscovered meanings and feelings for the future.

and therefore the practice of concentration and/or mindfulness over a particular object, raises many questions in the individual about his/her existential condition of being in the world. One such question is: "Who am I?" (Konecki 2018). An interesting phenomenon of consciousness may be that the answer to this question, however often it will appear, is never the ultimate answer. The researcher asking this question during the meditation practice can reach the limit of cognitive ability. Answers may be many, but they do not reflect the psycho-physical state in which the researcher is at the moment. If the researcher cannot answer the question of who he/she is, how is it possible to seek answers to this question about the respondents? Who are they? What do THEY mean? What are their identities? And what is my identity? Is it sensible to ask for permanent features of the identity of OTHER, since I-researcher cannot identify them in myself?

When I ask myself in meditation, "Who am I?," and I find no answer, this kind of self-experience makes the boundaries of my *ego* porous and builds doubts about the existence of the researcher as a separate being. I start seeing connections with the "outer" world, which turns out to be my world, because I am close to it, I question the properties of it, so I touch it directly. I am not outside; my space is in this space *here and now* and it determines my perception of the world (Merleau-Ponty 1962). Researching the homelessness, I, as a researcher, can ask, "Who am I?" in the moment of the research. I have a home, family, income, I am not addicted. So, how am I going to understand the homeless person who is in a completely different situation? If I am looking for the structural conditions of his/her fate, where do

I come from with these assumptions? I come from a home-world, so my worldview is a home-world view, and completely external to the lifeworld of the homeless person. How would I behave in his/her position? These issues could become the subject of my contemplative practices, or in the poetry, or in reflective journals, or in deconstructing some concepts related to homelessness phenomenon (for example, the concept of deviation).

By practicing meditation and contemplation of phenomena considered as obvious, I get rid of prejudices, assumptions that usually duplicate and restore existing knowledge. If I create a space where nothing exists for a moment, I can observe images, words that I notice now, which I did not notice before. Intuition is the observation of things that are habitually imperceptible.

Intuition appears as a vague image, a feeling, or some inner vague power: "The more a person practices bringing on the calm inside and listening, with the special mode of attention which characterizes intuitive listening, the more precious will be his awareness, the more subtle will be the sensations perceived" (Petitmengin-Peugeot 2002:71-72). Essential here may be the observation of the feelings of the body, which often informs us earlier and better about what is happening in ourselves and outside us. The body and its position often determine the meanings we give to the world and how we understand it and how we perceive it (Byczkowska-Owczarek and Jakubowska 2018).

Asking questions in silence when the researcher is alone with himself/herself, he/she may exceed cer-

tain limits of consciousness. He/she may ask questions that would not necessarily appear in formal scientific discourse (during conferences, debates, etc.). By asking whether the world is limited and unrestricted at the same time, he/she reaches the boundary of cognition, gets rid of the assumptions and the whole corpus of empirically and logically confirmed knowledge. We remain open at this point of time and space for an intuitive experience. How to express this experience? In what language? At what moment and in front of what kind of audience? Is it the subject matter for separate considerations? Although, we should remember that the image of the audience is often important in restricting our imagination and suppression of the ideas that come from the intuitive thoughts.

Intuition can be understood as "first thought," as in the case of Einstein who used intuitive understanding in solving scientific problems (Scheff 1990:145).[4] Moreover, it is associated with spontaneity (Scheff 1990:163). Intuition is "virtually instantaneous and an unlabored solution to problems insoluble in an analytic mode" (Scheff 1990:58). It can be expressed with words, but also with images, although it is often necessary to wait for it to be expressed in any language that is understood by others. Visualization of the phenomenon is a very important part of getting to the intuition (Isaacson 2007, chapter 2). Putting the phenomenon in images shows us the features that are not yet dressed in words.

Meditation can help to nurture intuition.[5] If, of course, we regularly practice. The core of intuitive word comes from the Latin word *intueri*—"to look inside" without invoking rational thinking. Through meditation we can see the coexistence of the multiplicity of things in the world. Observing or feeling these relationships, bodily feelings about interdependence are extremely important in creative work when we try to associate certain phenomena or objects to create new relationships and perhaps even objects. Recognizing the interdependence of things enables us to find new relationships between them and makes us more creative (Konecki 2016; 2018). Creativity is contained in the body (first feelings indicate that something new appeared), in the first associations, in the first thoughts that arise while solving a problem. However, these feelings do not always appear when we are facing this problem. The problem is in us, it is being developed subconsciously and the solution often appears in unforeseen circumstances.

## Phenomenological *Epoché* and the Limiting of Conceptualization

Creativity and freshness of the view on the reality that surrounds us (and is in us, at the same time) can be obtained by using the phenomenological inspiration. In the phenomenological study, very im-

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[4] "A new idea comes suddenly and in a rather intuitive way," Einstein once said. "But," he hastened to add, "intuition is nothing but the outcome of earlier intellectual experience" (Isaacson 2007, chapter six).

[5] Meditation is used by artists to have the possibility to see the whole situation and to have intuition when "to catch the ideas." Here is an opinion of a movie director, David Lynch: "Ideas are like fish," he says, "and you don't make a fish, you catch the fish…In Transcendental Meditation, the twisted stress becomes like water in the sun on a hot pavement. It just evaporates. You don't relieve the stress. So, you get a stress-free nervous system filled with the being and there are no dark corners. There's just light, and you see the great big beautiful picture" (see: https://vimeo.com/182093266 [retrieved June 30, 2018]).

portant is the so-called phenomenological reduction (*epoché*), that is, the bracketing of our assumptions of the conceptual framework, and structures of perception and experience (Rehorick and Bentz 2008:11-12). *Epoché* allows us to study intentionality instead of causality, allowing us to avoid reification of concepts and phenomena (Englander 2016). *Epoché* also allows us to get access to the intuition. We can become free from the obstacles of assumed knowledge. We have two aspects to take in the bracket of our knowledge. The first is about the suspension of scientific knowledge about the phenomenon, the theory about it, so what we have learned. The second aspect concerns the acquisition of knowledge of a given phenomenon from our common knowledge, culture (Rehorick and Bentz 2008:12).

It is important to extract important features of the phenomenon without using our cognitive, socialized filters. "For Husserl, as for Kant and Descartes, knowledge based on intuition and essence precedes empirical knowledge" (Moustakas 1994:26, see also 58).

If we suspend our knowledge and do not refer to existing theories, we can more and more discover what really appears in our lives. Intuitions get started. Often these seem to be obvious structures of experience, but they are not fully aware by the subject. Studying them can be revealing. The substantive dimension of the context of discovery may also emerge here, by suspending our knowledge we can perceive phenomena and related experiences directly, without cultural and scientific filters, related to the current knowledge of the phenomenon. The freshness of vision can ultimately have a scientific significance, and in many cases, it could be a scien-

tific discovery. The phenomenon of "wonderment" here plays a significant role: "Wonderment challenges us to see, to notice, and to take stock of the features of our habituated everyday lifeworlds" (Rehorick and Bentz 2008:5). Wonderment, it is the first step in the creative exploration of the phenomenon that we perceive, often in unusual circumstances, because in everyday life it is often customary and difficult to observe.

Very important in phenomenological research is also the "lonely" self-reflection of the researcher, basing on his/her own experience of the world. While being alone we can discover many features of phenomena without being influenced by others. Phenomenological researcher, Clark Moustakas, writes that his natural inclination was to avoid people and their views. While being alone he could experience the phenomenon directly (Moustakas 1994). Solitude helps in this.

We may observe some similarities between the concept of *epoché* and the Buddhist meditation on emptiness (Bentz and Shapiro 1998:52; Depraz, Varela, and Vermersch 1999; Simpson 2009:61-62; Janesick 2015; Konecki 2016). Methodical removal of knowledge from the mind for some time, beyond the cleansing and hygienic application of meditation, can help to find phenomena and their structures as they emerge here and now without *a priori* concepts that structure our perception of reality.

Considering the possible combinations of *epoché* with Buddhist meditation we can formulate a pragmatic approach to *epoché* that could be characterized by three successive phases:

a. A phase of *suspension* of the habitual thought and judgment, the basic possibility of a change in the attention which the subject gives to his own experience, which represents a break with a "natural" or unexamined attitude;

b. A phase of reflective *conversion* of attention from "the exterior" to "the interior";

c. A phase of *letting-go* of a reception of the experience (Depraz 2002:122).

Artists as painters, in order to be creative, must also suspend their knowledge, which turns out to be "artificial," obtained otherwise in the perception of already seen paintings. Even if his/her perspective is rooted in some social context, the freshness of his/her gaze is based on a deep understanding of this context and, ultimately, his/her detachment from the canons. The worldview is burdened with our ideas, especially connected with historical periods (Strzemiński 1958). Reaching the very nature of phenomena, light and observation of the phenomenon here and now let the artist discover new insights into nature. Then, it is only possible real creativity and discovery of new painting principles.

To be creative he/she should see things that are in his/her perspective on a "pre-reflexive" level. This is the openness to Other or object of observation (which is important in sociological and generally humanistic studies) in order not to see things through social and cultural filters as it happens in sociological research based on the full conceptualization of research, either quantitative or qualitative. The full conceptualization is based on the

scientific filters or, as it happens in qualitative research, on *in vivo* codes coming from the vernacular language.

The study of phenomena is possible through self-observation and autobiographical reflection using the phenomenological techniques: horizontalization (Rehorick and Bentz 2008; Simpson 2009), methods of "bracketing" of existing knowledge and the adoption of "imaginative variations," that is, taking into account many formal different points of view concerning the existence of the phenomenon. Moreover, there should be concerned the horizons of the phenomena, that is, to look at a given phenomenon here and now from different points of view, to have the possibility to reconstruct and understand a given phenomenon by experiencing it (Rehorick and Bentz 2008; Simpson 2009; Kacperczyk 2014; 2017). All of this can have a transformative effect on the perception of oneself and of one's life. This could be a researcher that explores his/her experiences (Rehorick and Bentz 2008).[6]

## Methodology of Grounded Theory— Limiting of Conceptualization

The methodology of grounded theory has the potential of creativity in limitation of pre-conceptualization. It suggests the limitation of pre-conceptualization (Glaser and Strauss 1967), what can be extremely important in the exploratory research of human actions and interactions. It puts a premium on emergent conceptualization (Glaser and Strauss

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[6] In addition, journaling and the analysis of journals can be important here while using also mindfulness techniques (Giorgino 2014a:10; see also Giorgino 2014b).

1967:37). Emergency in which the researcher is engaged is the creative process. So, before leaving to the field, it is suggested to not take too many assumptions about the course of phenomena that we want to investigate. If we want thoroughly to investigate the phenomenon and/or its experience, we try to be as close as possible to the phenomena or participants who are involved in it. When we investigate a phenomenon, we often discover other phenomena associated with it, and this first phenomenon and its relationships we did not anticipate at the time of preparing for the study. Sometimes we can direct our research attention to other phenomena we did not expect to find in the area under investigation. If we have such situations, then we are experiencing a "context of discovery" (*serendipity*).

We can specify two situations related to the context of the discovery. One is the substantive contexts of discovery, when we find empirical cases in a given place and time (institution, social group, community, country, or state) of a particular phenomenon that is not described so far in scientific texts. So, we have a chance in a new and fresh way to describe a specific phenomenon in a given area (if we do not have too many presumptions and ready concepts).

On the other hand, the theoretical context of discovery in the methodology of grounded theory would refer to new connections between the categories that emerged by encountering perceived relationships (more or less accidental) between empirically observed phenomena (see: Konecki 2008:183). With this approach, the substantive context of discovery precedes the theoretical context of discovery. Although it is conceivable that the construction of

grounded theory follows the collection of various extant case studies and the empirical studies that have been carried out, when we do comparative analysis, without the personal involvement of the researcher in field research. At that time, it is the situation in which the analyst can experience the effect of "aha" (Topolinski and Reber 2010) and he/she also sees new relationships between categories or configurations of meanings. The theoretical context of discovery may in various ways relate to a researcher's personal involvement in fieldwork, but does not need to be linked to it, however, it is usually linked to the use of a constant comparative method.

In general, by limiting pre-conceptualization in qualitative research, we increase the chance to "discover" new relationships between the phenomena and the categories that describe them. Such innovations come from the creative potential of the limited pre-conceptualization. We do not impose categories and hypotheses derived from existing theories or empirical studies. Therefore, the context of discovery is an immanent feature of grounded theory methodology that builds creative context for research.

Generally, grounded theorists look for the patterns and the causal conditions of the phenomena (Sy 2010:104). However, it would be interesting to use the *epoché* in a minimalistic way and clean the mind and see what is left if we abandon our researcher identity that is directing our search for reasons of phenomena. What happens if we avoid the causal thinking and concentrate only on the conscious perception of the reality by the participants? What

happens if we would like to put on the proverbial shoes of the homeless person? The use of the contemplative techniques could be helpful in the empathetic understanding of the other. The compassion is not a by-product of the research in such a situation, it becomes an integral part of it. So, preparing for the appearance of such feelings is important also for grounded theorists that look for the theory. His/her feelings should be also part of the analyzed research situation because he/she is a part of the situation whether he/she wants it or not.

Creating the theory in a creative way means combining the deduction with induction, but in a very open manner. The deduction could be based on thought experiments. The thoughts experiments could be very fruitful for creating the theory, even without the proofs of empirical data or experiments, as we know from the creative biography of Albert Einstein (Isaacson 2007, see chapter six). Einstein imagined, for example, that he travels on a beam of light and at that moment he asked many important questions about the perception of time and space. The induction could be inspiring, but the deductive, concise, and rigorous way of elaborating the concepts is the final act in constructing the theory (Einstein 1919). However, the grounded theory starts from the induction and replete with the deductive way of formulating the hypotheses that are still being grounded by further sampling and analyzing of the data. It is an iterative process. We can call it an abductive way of reasoning (Strauss 1987:12; Charmaz 2006:186). Therefore, to have more deductive and consequently abductive skills the limiting of pre-conceptualization seems to be indispensable. The meditative and contem-

plative practices could be very helpful here. The thought experiment of being the homeless person during the harsh winter and warm summer could bring us many interesting comparative questions that could give inspiration to the theoretical sampling. When and where should we make the next field explorations? We can also formulate hypotheses about the embodiment of homelessness in referring to the weather conditions or climate conditions.

## Ethnography and the Context of Discovery

Fine and Deegan (1996) distinguish three types of contexts of discovery (*serendipity*) relevant to ethnographic research:

1. Temporal context of discovery. It is the ability to find new sources of data, to be in specific places at a certain time, which can be decisive for further observation and analysis.

2. Relational context of discovery. Finding the right informants, often by chance, is extremely important for discoveries. The description of the relationship itself can also be interesting for further analysis as an empirical material.

3. Analytical context of discovery. There is a process of linking data with existing theories or formulating proposals to modify them that allows us to find a basic category or metaphor for integrating empirical data. This results in an emergent conceptualization of the problem (problems) based on collected empirical data.

Contexts of discovery appear parallel with planned actions, though they are unplanned and difficult to predict. Although the micro-ethnographical research is embedded also in the macrostructures (Fine 1991; Wojciechowska 2015; Müller 2019), on the micro level there are not only processes and psycho-social phenomena, but also the researcher himself/herself (Chomczyński 2017; 2018). However, as can be seen from the above catalog of contexts of discovery in ethnography, much depends on the researcher's ability and skills to be mindful of time, space, and knowledge that emerge (Konecki 2018). Discovering is hard work related to performing specific activities, both in the field and in conceptual work related to the study of theoretical concepts. The ethnographic discovery does not appear automatically, the researcher's active participation in it is of great importance. So, I think that the contemplative practices like meditation, yoga, or writing the reflective journals could help the ethnographers to be mindful during the field research to make the serendipity happen, it means to notice these situations. The world could be serendipitous if we have the observational skills to see the world around, but also to see what is happening in us. The signals of strangeness or wonderment or surprise could appear in our bodies or in some short moments in our mind. Being mindful and experienced in noticing the moments is indispensable to include serendipity dimension in our research. Here, the creativeness of the researchers means to have a deep insight to see more outside.

Robert Merton has a different view on serendipity. He argues that "under certain conditions, a research finding gives rise to social theory" (Merton 1968a:157). He believes that by analyzing empirical data and by accident, new hypotheses can be discovered, even those not studied by the researcher. This situation is about research experience, in which we observe some fact that is:

- unexpected—empirical research to verify the hypothesis creates a by-product incidentally—unexpected observation associated with the theories that were not taken into account at the beginning of the study (Merton 1968a:171);

- anomalous, it does not match existing theories and/or established facts;

- strategic for research—it must be very important, in some way, for the existing theory (Merton 1968a:158–162; see also Merton and Barber 2004).

It is evident in Merton's conception that the context of discovery is merely a by-product of the main purpose of research. In empirical research, we verify the hypotheses already set forth. In addition, we have an unexpected observation of certain facts to existing theories. The idea is to use already existing theories that can explain the surprising data or widen existing theories instead of discovering new theories. In the theoretical sense, nothing new was discovered here. Certain unexpected facts were theoretically explained. The environment in which surprising discoveries are made, according to Merton, is *institutionalized serendipity*, that is, scientists in certain environments and institutions exchange ideas and information with each other and inspire each other. Thus, one can say that there is a "pattern of the context of discovery." According to Merton,

the "accident" and the ability to see it is inherited in the social structure, and not in what is commonly considered a coincidence or a stroke of luck (Merton and Barber 2004; see also Merton 1968b:4, 7).

The environment in which the context of discovery takes place does not necessarily have to be institutional, as Robert Merton argues. It could be a psychological atmosphere in which the researcher lives. His/her propensity to laugh and feel relaxed and distanced from himself/herself could be more important than institutional conditions (Scheff 1990). The lessened concentration on ego by meditative and contemplative practices could open the mind and heart of the researcher and increase the empathetic skills that allow him/her to feel more and discover more from the described lived experiences of the participants of the research.

Concerning the concept of Merton, it is very difficult to find a unified pattern of discovery context that could be structuralized. If we find a pattern, it will be rather a context of justification rather than a context of discovery (Reichenbach 1938:5-7). The context of justification refers to showing that theoretical claims have been formulated in accordance with scientific rules, but this does not show actual action/interaction in the real and complex situation of discovery. This is often done in a social world in which the researcher participates (e.g., the social world of photography, art, sociology, ethnography, or on the border of these worlds, etc.) or which he/she is currently analyzing (Becker 1982). The balancing on the border of many social words is very creative for the researcher, he/she has to be more concentrated to see and connect the knowledge from many fields and build his/her own and new corpus

of knowledge. The researcher's activities, which take place in some social worlds, can become an inspiration for his/her discoveries of the social world processes, as social world of climbing (Kacperczyk 2016) or social world of companion animals' lovers (Konecki 2005) or hatha-yoga practitioners (Konecki 2015). Contacts and interactions with other participants in this world (worlds) influence upon mutual inspirations, adding knowledge, perceiving someone's knowledge from different perspectives, changing horizons, refusing/bracketing own assumptions, and eventually leading to scientific discovery.

## Conclusions

From the above review of the issues of creativity in qualitative research we can derive the following conclusions:

1. Creativity in qualitative research is dependent on the strength of *a priori* conceptualization and stiffness of the adapted research methods. The more conceptualization before the research, the less innovative findings. Sensitizing concepts could be the choice because they are not limiting us to check and verify their validity, but they open to us some possibilities of seeing the phenomenon, although we are still going in some direction, even the sensitizing concepts have the temporary descriptive definitions. Who is the homeless person? We have many official definitions that direct us in our research. However, we can see that the definitions refer mainly to material conditions of life, not having a home. Legal designations seem here decisive. However, homelessness has also other dimensions that could be investigated if we

are not so much addicted to the ready concepts. The phenomenon also has a psychological, medical, esthetical, and ethical dimension.

2. If the methodology is more flexible and pragmatic (such as the theory of grounded theory or phenomenology), the researcher can more easily and creatively come to the phenomena that he/she had not realized before and which are still under investigation in his/her field of knowledge. The researchers coming from different methodologies could inspire themselves by referring to procedures from other methodologies that could be inspiring or useful in the field work. *Epoché* could be combined with the limitation of pre-conceptualization in grounded theory style of research. Grounded theory researchers could not only limit his/her plans and concepts before going into the field, but also bracket his/her assumptions and knowledge using the procedures of phenomenological *epoché*.

3. Combining phenomenological and contemplative methods makes it possible to use in the inquiry the researcher's experiences related to feeling and experiencing of the studied phenomena. Living experiences of the researcher are not used as a method of getting the empirical materials in objectivist and positivist studies. We can here use the protocols from the researcher's natural history of experiencing the research not for checking the validity of the research, but for inspiration to analyze the empirical findings. The body of the researcher, if mindfully observed, could tell us how he/she felt and what could be felt in the situation, for example, being homeless.

4. The researcher may therefore consciously use certain methods that promote creativity in phenomenological and contemplative approaches. Concerning the phenomenon of homelessness, the phenomenological research shows that not only the material conditions of life (as is indicated in the grounded theory research of Konecki 2009) are important for homeless people, but also the strategies to keep the hope for change. Imagined future home, connections with friends and family are important for surviving on the street that is often the source of hopelessness and despair (Partis 2003). The spiritual dimension could also be important here as we can see in the phenomenological research of Hall (2010). Therefore, the techniques that are more oriented on exploring the consciousness of human beings are very valuable in investigating the phenomena.

5. An investigator can improve his/her thinking and creative thinking skills by performing certain exercises (bracketing his/her assumptions, writing a journal, poetic summaries of collected data, applying meditation, doing constant comparisons, humor, etc.). The ability to suspend knowledge, contemplation (diversion of attention to the inside), "letting go" activity can therefore be practiced. So, all the techniques and methods from different methodologies that I mentioned in the paper could be helpful in building creativity in the qualitative research.

6. Participation of the researcher in the social world/s sensitizes him/her to certain phenomena, which he/she may combine with existing concepts or theories and create innovative theoretical connections. The living on the borders of the so-

cial worlds is very inspiring and creating the context for serendipity because we could see more while basing on different corpuses of knowledge, as being on the border of the photography world, art world, and sociology world (Becker 1982) or on the border of painting world and sociology/ scientific world (Fine 2004). However, to combine these pieces of knowledge, we should be mindful and able to see more than from only scientific perspective and already well-known concepts.

For creativity in qualitative research, it is important to be open to direct experience and to see the phenomenon as it is (from the point of view of contemplative research and phenomenology and symbolic interactionism and methodology of grounded theory and the context of discovery). Very helpful to the researcher's openness may be the use of contemplative and mindfulness techniques (Konecki 2016), as well as yoga practice (Konecki 2015) and the limitation of the conceptualization of research, as it is suggested in grounded theory. Openness also involves paying attention to the side effects of the original research goal (serendipity effect), and it is also important to accept chanciness during the project, even if the observed cases seemed not to be related to the research project themselves. However, it may be important for the project itself, also in the substantive sense.

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