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**Teaching Qualitative
Methods**

edited by

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Introduction to the issue “Teaching Qualitative Methods”

Popularity of qualitative methods in social sciences is still on the growth. Many scholars from disciplines which prefer to count phenomena and their indices, and also statistically verify their hypothetical statements, are now interested in qualitative methods, which may help them in understanding of social phenomena. We observe such trend in management sciences and economics. If the new kinds of methods, qualitative ones, enter some disciplines, a question of teaching these methods arises. How to teach methods that are based more on understanding and emphatic insight into motives of behaviour and intersubjective empathy to describe and explain interactional phenomena?

Teaching methods is a very complicated undertaking. We teach qualitative methods to get scientific results. The expectations in the academic world are clear and very demanding. So we need to have a plain structure of the process of teaching and procedures of applying these methods. However using qualitative methods requires more than getting to know procedures and sequences of their applications. We need something more in this endeavour. We need some kind of social experience and immersion in the real life of observed and researched people. Combining technical approach to teach procedures of qualitative methods with teaching of social skills and knowledge is the main goal of the instructors. So we need to redirect our didactic process from a purely technical attitude to more diverse and “life world” oriented instructions. The practice of using methods and going to the field seems to be the solution that majority of qualitative methods teachers have undertaken. Some of them have specific tactics of teaching: using visual devices, going to the field, realising research projects, studying biographies of qualitative scientists, etc.

The role of handbooks in a didactic process of teaching qualitative methods is also interesting. Handbooks should give us more or less simple recipes how to make qualitative research. However they do not give us recipes that are ready to use without any advice from teachers and their knowledge of the society. Still direct instruction and observation of the master in practice during the research by students are the best way of transmission of knowledge on qualitative methods. Written instructions, handbooks or computer assisted data analysis are not enough to teach students what to observe and how to observe, how to analyse and what to analyse. The methods are connected with theoretical knowledge and applying theoretical thinking to a research. There is no research without concepts and explanations of the social phenomena. Methods only are not enough to make our results better and more understandable and acceptable from the evaluation of credibility or the research. Students need our knowledge, expertise and sagacity. But we need their questions, doubts and vigour in research to make data and analysis more dense and saturated. Teaching is an interactive enterprise and we can see it in our pedagogical work.

For what should we then teach methods of qualitative research? I think that we need some kind of an *a priori* structure of the process of collecting and analysing data. We need the procedures to make our research and analysis of data more intersubjective and transparent. We also need evaluation procedures. There is no evaluation without controlling and checking the way of application of methods. So we need handbooks, written instructions and computer assisted data analysis to teach students how to make qualitative research and check the results of that teaching as well as results of their research projects. Students, to start a research, need some basic structure of research undertakings and courses of methods give it to them. Courses of teaching qualitative methods are indispensable, although they should be enriched by theoretical courses and intensive field research practice.

The issue we present to you is a result of a conference "Teaching Qualitative Methods" that took place in Lodz University, Institute of Sociology on September 15 – 17, 2008. It has been organized by European Sociological Association Network of Qualitative Methods. Papers, published in the issue, are mainly concentrated on teaching of qualitative methods and its processual and pedagogical aspects. The process can change the perspectives of students on the research (paper by Barbara Kawulich, Mark W.J. Garner and Claire Wagner). Students can also learn that a qualitative research and report are a collaborative enterprise and not only a product of a mind of a brilliant scientist (paper by Izabela Wagner). Anne Ryen shows that the research in the intercultural context could be a very risky endeavor and we should try to make a research work empowering people than to make them dependant. Krzysztof T. Konecki shows that using visual materials can enrich students social empathy and also increase the sociological imagination and better understanding of the analytical procedures to generate concepts and theoretical understanding of the researched field. Ana Maria Brandão shows advantages of the early exposition of students to the field and building their experiences and personal adaptation to the future visiting the field. The last paper, by Dominika Byczkowska, shows that researchers learn a lot by doing research, also by body experiences, which makes the researcher fully engaged in the investigation.

Krzysztof T. Konecki



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Students' Conceptions—and Misconceptions—of Social Research

Abstract

How knowledge of students' conceptions of social research can influence the pedagogy of research methods is the focus of this article. This study explains how students' conceptions of social research changed over the course of a two-semester research programme. Twenty-nine graduate students participated in focus groups, interviews, and open-ended surveys to inform the instructor's pedagogical decisions in developing the course. Data were analyzed phenomenographically, and the categories that were identified defined changes in their conceptions of research related to affect and attitudes, the processes involved with conducting research, and the end products of their research projects. Pedagogical inferences were derived from the findings, and implications for future research were outlined.

Keywords

Conceptions; Phenomenography; Social research methods.

Since about the middle of the last century, there has been a shift in emphasis in education from teaching to learning. Whereas the earlier focus had been on the characteristics of a good teacher and the approaches that result in successful pedagogy, it has in recent years increasingly been on the processes that result in successful learning. In the field of higher education studies, one result of this change has been the development of a small but vigorous body of research into students' conceptions of what they learn -- the object of study -- and how they learn -- the processes of study. Such studies have been conducted within a range of theoretical frameworks, including, in particular, phenomenography, which was initiated in the late 1970s by Ference Marton in Sweden and developed over the intervening decades by him in collaboration with a number of scholars in that country, in Australia and to a lesser extent elsewhere (e.g., Prosser et al. 1994; Marton and Booth 1997; Marton and Pong 2005; Marton and Svensson 1979; Murtonen and Lehtinen 2003).

Phenomenography can be described as the study of ways in which human beings experience a range of phenomena (Marton and Booth 1997) and it has been most widely applied in contexts of higher education and professional development (Ashworth and Lucas 2000). Phenomenography has made a key contribution to conception research in education by focussing attention on the notion of “conception” itself. A person’s conception of an object or process can be simply defined as the way in which he/she mentally construes its characteristics, and hence goes about learning it and applying it in real life. The participants themselves are rarely conscious of these constructions – or, at least, they are rarely able to articulate them explicitly. An entire course of study can be conducted, during which neither learners nor teachers articulate to one another their potentially widely divergent conceptions or crucial elements; what the former think they are learning may be quite different from what the latter think they are teaching. Needless to say, if this happens, the course is unlikely to achieve its educational objectives to any satisfactory extent. Conceptions are thus implicit but powerful assumptions that underlie and help to determine many aspects of individuals’ approaches to teaching and/or learning within an academic subject or professional field. How knowledge of these conceptions of social research, specifically, can influence pedagogy of research methods is the focus of this article.

Scholarly interest in learners’ conceptions dates back at least to the 1960s. Researchers at the University of London Institute of Education and elsewhere conducted a number of studies in British schools. Their approach was eclectic, broadly learner-centred and informed in particular by construct-psychology models, such as those of George Kelly and Jerome Bruner. Marton and his colleagues pursued a similar line of research, which was gradually articulated as the systematic research framework of phenomenography. Most conception studies in the past three decades have been either strictly phenomenographic or partly informed by phenomenography, although there are a few examples of research conducted within a less methodologically explicit framework. During this same period, emphasis on the use of qualitative methods to address research problems in the social sciences has increased; however, qualitative research has yet to achieve the same prestige as quantitative research in funding, publications, and integration into the curriculum, particularly in North America (Richardson 1999).

Phenomenography investigates the “qualitatively different ways in which people understand a particular phenomenon or aspect of the world around them” (Marton and Pong 2005:335). In phenomenography, the object of study or referential aspect, is the meaning or conceptions that humans hold of a particular phenomenon (Åkerlind 2005) in which the outcomes are comprised of the various ways one might experience that phenomenon (known as categories of description). The second aspect of phenomenography, the structural aspect, involves developing a structured set of these “outcome spaces” or relationships (Åkerlind 2005; Marton and Pong 2005).

The phenomenographic approach consists of three steps. The first is to elicit, typically through interviews, respondents’ conceptions that are central to the topic under investigation. The next step is to arrange these conceptions into categories. There is a theoretical presumption, consistently borne out by empirical findings, that although each individual’s conception or set of conceptions is to an extent unique, there are sufficient similarities between them to allow the researcher to construct a typology of conceptions for the study sample. The final step in the process is to describe how the different conceptions vary from one another. The focus of phenomenographic research is on the collective experience of the group, rather than that of the individual.

Conception research has made a small but valuable contribution to our understanding of educational outcomes. The findings of this research have the potential to inform the design and delivery of curricula and to improve both pedagogical approaches and the activities of learners. It must be admitted, however, that the literature is characterized more by a theoretical interest in describing the conceptions than in applying the knowledge gained to the classroom. For many conception studies, including the majority of those conducted within a phenomenographic framework, the research outcome is the categorization of conceptions and the description of their variation. Researchers may, and frequently do, make some concluding remarks about possible implications of their findings, but there are few empirical studies of their application. For example, there is little empirical evidence about the effect of various conceptions: do some give rise to more successful teaching or learning? Nor is it yet clear whether attempting explicitly to challenge and change conceptions is pedagogically effective. It does not seem, either, that much research has been undertaken into the provenance of, or influences upon, different conceptions.

Some conception studies include the notion of “misconception”, either as one of the categories of description or, in certain cases, as the primary focus. An example of the former type of study is Meyer et al. (2005), which is discussed below. A focus specifically on learners’ misconceptions of what they are studying is found in a number of studies in physical science (e.g. Ebert-May, Batzli and Lim 2003; Hermann and Lewis 2003; Ray and Beardsley 2008), life sciences (e.g. Mills Shaw, van Horne, Zhang and Boughman 2008; Modell, Michael and Wenderoth 2005) and mathematics education (e.g. Green, Piel and Flowers 2008), but it is also found in other disciplines (e.g. Woody 2004). A misconception might be defined as a conception held by a learner that is significantly at variance with that of an expert and, therefore, impedes progress in learning. The pedagogical implication is that misconceptions need to be changed into, or replaced by, the “correct” conception. This deficiency view has, however, been countered by Smith III et al. (1994), who argue that naïve conceptions have an important role in developing more advanced understanding.

Research into Conceptions of Research

What contribution can conception studies make to the teaching of research methods? Unlike many other subjects, research methods has only just begun to develop a pedagogical culture (Kawulich, Garner and Wagner 2009), and the literature relating to conceptions of research is correspondingly sparse (McCormack 2004). There is a good opportunity, therefore, for those of us who are involved in teaching research methods to take stock of the potential of conception studies to enhance our teaching and our students’ learning. Can conceptions of research be put into categories, and, if so, what categories? Are some more conducive than others to developing the capacity to do good research? What might be implications of this knowledge for the design and conduct of our courses?

In this section, we give a brief, critical review of major published conception studies relating to research methodology. The following section reports some preliminary findings of investigations conducted with our own students, which suggest that the essentialism inherent in existing research gives results that are only partly applicable to research methods pedagogy. In the final section of the paper, we discuss some possible directions for future research that may build on the small knowledge base we have to date and extend it into potentially more directly applied studies.

Research into conceptions of research methodology was initiated by Brew's (2001) study, in which she identified four qualitatively different ways in which research is understood by experienced researchers. McCormack (2004) applied a similar approach to the mismatch between institutional assumptions and postgraduates' experiences, and Woody (2004) focussed specifically on misconceptions among music students. Most recently, *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* devoted a whole issue to the topic (2005), comprising several papers reporting empirical studies (e.g. Kiley and Mullins 2005; Meyer et al. 2005), an editorial survey (Murtonen and Lehtinen 2005) and a critical commentary (Vermunt 2005). A pilot study (by the authors) addressed the conceptions of research held by graduate students in the U.S. (Kawulich, Garner and Wagner 2008) and the conceptions of research of doctoral students were investigated by Halliday and Meyer (2008).

These studies, few though they are, have opened up a potentially valuable field of inquiry for us who are interested in developing a strong pedagogical culture around research methods. An obvious conclusion from Brew's (2001) study is that we should not assume that even the term "research" itself will be understood in the same way by our academic colleagues - let alone our students. Yet this assumption is rarely examined. It is a reasonable generalization to say that the meaning of "research" is assumed to be unproblematic both by those who formulate university policy statements and by those who are responsible for realizing them in practice:

It is assumed that researchers mostly agree about what research is, at least within specific disciplines. Further, it is assumed that teachers of research courses know and agree about what research is and how to teach it (Murtonen and Lehtinen 2005: 219).

Methods textbooks typically begin with statements about what research is:

Research is a cyclical process of steps that typically begins with identifying a research problem or issue of study. It then involves reviewing the literature, specifying a purpose for the study, collecting and analyzing data, and forming an interpretation of the information. This process culminates in a report, disseminated to audiences, that is evaluated and used in the educational community (Creswell 2002: 8).

(Research is) a careful, systematic, patient investigation undertaken to discover or establish facts and relationships. (...) Research is called for when one is confronted with a question or problem that has no readily available answer. One must obtain information and make sense of it in order to answer the problematic question (Charles and Mertler 2002: 8).

It is impossible to disagree with statements like this but, as with any core concept in an academic subject, providing an up-front definition or description does not guarantee that students will have formed a clear and unambiguous conception for us to develop further. A subject called Research Methodology (or similar) is increasingly a compulsory and substantial part of a degree programme. It is natural that students embarking on it will have an impression that there is a definable "something" called research, for which their previous education has insufficiently equipped them, and to which they will now be initiated. Statements about what research "is" can all too easily confirm that impression without giving it substance. They inevitably leave unanswered the question of what is, and what is not, research - and whether some research is better than others. Does reading a book or consulting the Internet constitute research? Is a person asking a series of questions of someone

in the street doing research? Students, even those who see little need to learn how to do research for themselves, tend to ask such questions, if only to ensure that they will perform well enough to pass the course.

We acknowledged earlier that conception studies in relation to research draw attention to the need to address these issues in teaching methodology, even if they have not yet explored the pedagogical consequences of doing so. There is, however, also a danger that such studies contribute to reifying research as a discrete kind of academic activity, rather than the basis of all academic activities. Reifying, or essentializing research, is both theoretically unjustifiable and pedagogically unhelpful. Byrne-Armstrong et al. (2004: vii) quite rightly depict research as “complex, often chaotic, sometimes messy, even conflicting, full of critical moments that disrupt the process”. It is not surprising that the studies noted above have all found wide variation in how research is understood by successful researchers (Brew 2001), supervisors and teachers (Kiley and Mullins 2005).

Our own experience as methods teachers confirms the findings of conception studies: it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to formulate a concise statement of what constitutes this thing we call research. Does this, then, negate any pedagogical value in studying students’ conceptions of research? By no means is it a principle of all learning theory that we learn by building on what we already know. With good teaching, epistemologies can be extended, made more sophisticated and more comprehensive, and thus lead to the growth of further understanding of the field of study. But they do not arise from nothing, nor are they written on the blank tables of the students’ minds by the teacher. It is extremely valuable, therefore, for the teacher to have some appreciation of the students’ conceptions as a starting-point for the course. This will help to provide a focus and a sequence as the teaching proceeds.

There is a caveat, however. As Smith III et al. (1994) argue, conception research is too often led into a pedagogical cul de sac by seeking to identify misconceptions. This is both logically and empirically unjustified. To label a view as a misconception is logically unjustified on the grounds noted above: it relies on the false presumption of an incontestable definition of research. Significantly, in two recent studies, one focussing specifically on misconceptions (Woody 2004), and one including them as a category among other, apparently acceptable, conceptions (Meyer et al. 2005), no explicit definition of research is provided.

An objection could be raised here. It takes the following form. Let us avoid a simplistic dualism that sees conceptions as either right or wrong, and let us think of various conceptions in terms of usefulness or functionality for developing students’ research skills. From this perspective, while there may inevitably be some disagreement about the degree of functionality, there are some conceptions that are so patently misguided as to justify the label of misconception. These need to be identified, challenged, and changed if those holding them are to learn from the course. This counter-argument does not stand up to close examination. In practice, students who have reached university - even those in the first undergraduate year - will have some idea, however vague or superficial, of why research is done, and what sorts of things it involves. It is not true that they have absolutely no idea at all of what the word “research” refers to, even if they claim not to. The search for misconceptions of research held by students also distorts the findings of empirical studies, particularly in relation to possible pedagogical applications.

Methodology

While there is a vigorous body of literature on students' learning and teachers' conceptions of teaching in higher education, less is known about students' conceptions of research (Brew and Phillis n.d.). Students' voices are rarely heard in research in higher education (Cotner et al. 2000). To investigate graduate students' conceptions of research, we adopted a phenomenographic approach, focussing on a class of 29 specialist-level graduate students in one U.S. university; this school was selected, in part, to expand the use of phenomenography in North America (Richardson 1999). The research experience of the students enrolled in this two-semester (Fall 2007 and Spring 2008) graduate research course culminated in their production of reports of the research they carried out. The students' research projects included quantitative statistical studies, qualitative studies, ethnographies, case studies and action research. Students were educators employed in various teaching or administrative positions in schools where they carried out their research. The students participated in a focus group (three groups of approximately 10 students) at the end of the Fall semester, periodic individual interviews with the instructor during Spring semester, and an open-ended survey at the end of Spring semester.

Phenomenographic data analysis involves describing the variation in how humans conceive or experience a phenomenon (Åkerlind 2005) - in this case, how students conceive of research. The data collection methods were used to determine students' previous experience with and attitudes towards research, changes in their conceptions of what constitutes research, and what conceptions of research they had that they would consider to have been misconceptions of research. The data were analysed using a phenomenographic approach by first eliciting responses from students; the data were then coded thematically and grouped into categories of meaning. Last, these categories were compared for similarities and differences to provide a description of the array of conceptions these students held about research.

Findings

These students began the two-part course with varying levels of confidence and skill as researchers. As a result, there were different views of what constitutes research. Their previous research experience ranged from a few who had taken statistics courses and/or action research courses in their master's programme to several who had taken a research overview course in previous coursework to those who had no experience at all. The instructor's assumption was that students had been exposed to various approaches to research. In this course, each student selected the topic for his/her study and completed the paperwork to obtain permission to conduct research from the ethics review boards at the university and school district. Pedagogical tools included lectures with powerpoint slides, class discussions, share-pair discussions, one-on-one meetings with the instructor and various exercises to enable them to practice data analysis skills. Students were allowed to submit segments of their written work for feedback periodically throughout the two semesters.

Reasons for doing research

In defining research, students also explained their reasons for doing research. Their responses addressed research as a means for answering a question, for supporting or generating theory and for bringing about change.

Answering a question

Five of the students defined research as answering a question. For example:

- ⇒ The act of finding out about something that is unknown.
- ⇒ Investigating problems of interest.

Supporting/generating theory

Another student viewed research as a means to support or generate theory:

...searching for material or support to a theory or argument; or creating such material through a study to support a theory or argument.

Vehicle for change

One student viewed research as a vehicle for change:

I defined research to be a process to bring change to a problem or situation.

Another student mentioned these reasons for doing research:

I have learned that you must do research to find the underlying factors to improve your problem or situation. You cannot make assumptions. You could be right, but you could also be wrong. When we are dealing with students, we cannot afford to be wrong. Plus, the research process helps you think through various scenarios that will eventually bring about change.

The categories generated from the data analysis addressed affect, process and product. Each category illustrates changes that students experienced in their conceptions of research.

Affect

Several affective/attitudinal aspects of the research process were identified that illustrated students' feelings about conducting research. Many comments from the students related to their prerequisite knowledge for the course, stemming from their varying levels of experience with conducting research. Fourteen students bemoaned their lack of knowledge of research practices at the onset of the course. A typical response was:

- ⇒ I thought instructors would teach everything we needed to know about research; it is not fair to expect students to know something taught in a different course unless there is a prerequisite course that teaches those concepts I need to know before entering this class.

- ⇒ (I thought) it would be a step-by-step process. For example, one week we would complete or work through chapter 1.

Five students' comments made it clear that they initially had feelings of insecurity about their level of expertise and prior knowledge of research methods and shared concerns about their knowledge base compared with that of their peers. For example, one student said:

(I got the feeling) that everyone else knows what they are doing.

In addition to the above responses, nine students made general comments about their initial understanding of research, such as having believed that doing research "is hard", "is just boring math" or "is very time consuming". Specific comments that illustrated their beginning attitudes were:

- ⇒ It is a huge waste of time that will have almost zero effect on my daily life as an assistant principal.
- ⇒ (Research is a) bunch of garbage – somebody doesn't have anything else to do, so they make up something.

One student stated that, at the beginning of the semester, he/she believed that:

Research was a long drawn out process that was drudgery. It would go into a research journal that no one would read.

Students' attitudes towards research and towards viewing themselves as researchers changed throughout the two-semester course. Three students found that taking a research course affected their self-efficacy, particularly when working with others. For example, one student said:

I have learned that I can do serious research and develop a quality paper by working hard and utilizing the expertise of my professor. My ability to locate resources has grown considerably.

Students also broadened their knowledge base related to the processes of research. Students gained an appreciation of the research process and broadened their initial understanding of research processes. At the beginning of the course, several students expressed their concerns about having to do mathematical computations in statistics. By the end of the course, three of these students focused their comments about what constitutes research more expansively to include more than statistics:

- ⇒ It's more than just statistical equivalence or causal relationships.
- ⇒ (I) was not aware that research was actually dual focused – qualitative or quantitative.

Other students' comments from the end of the course indicated that they had expanded their conceptions of research to include more positive views of the value of research and of their ability to conduct a study.

- ⇒ It's much bigger than I thought, and one should be much more careful than I anticipated. The little details in a write-up can send the reader in directions other than intended. As to "bigger", I think sometimes small

“findings” or “results” can have profound insights and relevance as to meaning or implication.

- ⇒ I think I've been able to “see the big picture” a little more when it comes to the importance of research. The conversations we've had, both in and out of class, have given me a good bit to think about. I'm not so quick to blow off reading an article now. Now it's more of “ooh, what's this?” where it used to be “I am NOT reading that...I don't have time”.
- ⇒ (I learned that) most research is valuable.

Process

Students' experience with conducting research also changed their initial conceptions of the processes involved in conducting research. Their views of the variety of approaches to doing research were expanded, along with their views of specific aspects of the research process, such as topic selection, theoretical framework, sample selection, data collection, data coding/analysis and ethics.

Approach to research

Thirteen students specifically stated that they had initially equated doing research with conducting the review of the literature or re-examining existing knowledge. Typical student responses reflecting this idea included these:

- ⇒ I thought research was reading and reporting (I know now that that is just the literature review).
- ⇒ Reading articles or books and writing a paper using them as sources.
- ⇒ The process of reading, writing, questioning, and deciphering information that helps to conclude answers to a question or a problem.
- ⇒ I really thought of research as reading a lot of articles and presenting a paper on what I learned.
- ⇒ I thought that research was a long process of locating information, sorting through it, conducting a survey, developing data, and writing a detailed summary of the information, including a bibliography.

Another student shared his/her initial belief that doing research meant “overquoting” others' work from the related literature.

Two students originally defined research in relation to quantitative approaches; for example:

- ⇒ (Research is) exploration of a topic using quantitative methods to prove or disprove a hypothesis.
- ⇒ (Research is) Information (data, prior research, observations) gathered by people that supports a particular topic or hypothesis.

Broadened conceptions of research

Students were asked, How has your definition of research changed as a result of what you have learned in this class? Several students indicated that their

definitions had changed very little or not at all. Ten students indicated a broadened definition of what constitutes research. Their comments were similar to this one:

I have become familiar with the different types of research – qualitative, quantitative and action research and the instances where each would be appropriate. My definition is much clearer as to the steps involved with research.

Six gave responses that illustrated a new understanding that research is not just quantitative. For example:

I now realize that research is not only data and statistics, but also opinions and reactions.

Over the span of the course, six students indicated a new appreciation for qualitative research. Typical comments included:

- ⇒ As a mathematician I have always focused on the statistical side of research, but I realize that qualitative research is the only way to measure some information.
- ⇒ I have a different perspective on quantitative research and no longer see it as the most difficult type of research.

One student's comment indicated his/her having gained a more accessible view of research:

(I thought research was) Unattainable – (yet) once you understand the process (broken down into parts), it can be done.

Ten students indicated their changing views of the process of doing research as being the most important thing they learned. For example:

- ⇒ I am so much more familiar with what research entails - the process of conducting a study, the phases of the study and the final product. It is so much more than just finding articles on a particular topic.
- ⇒ I now think of research as a process, beginning with a question or something you want to know and developing a way to go about finding out the answer based on the process of investigation.

Students mentioned various aspects of the research process that had been clarified since the course began, including the difference between the rationale and the significance of a research topic, understanding the processes of data collection and analysis (how to do research) or products of the process (what the paper should look like) of conducting a research project. Specific comments addressed changing conceptions of research regarding topic selection, theoretical framework, sample selection, data collection, data coding/analysis and ethics.

Topic selection

Two of the students found the class discussions of selecting a research topic to be helpful in helping them understand the research process.

- ⇒ I learned a lot. I learned that people spend years researching one topic and that the focus of a paper changes according to the results of your

research. The most important thing I learned was that, if I decide to get my doctorate degree, I will be sure to choose a topic that truly has meaning to me, so I don't get bored with it and want to throw it out after a couple of months, like I did this one!!

- ⇒ (I learned) how to correctly research and gather information that is important to the subject matter. To narrow your subject to be able to fully understand the topic. Too broad of a topic makes it hard to narrow down all the data to form a conclusion.

Two students mentioned their discovery of the importance of the wording of the research questions:

- ⇒ The wrong wording can create a monstrous situation. If issues or statements are not initiated in the primary opening, then these things cannot be brought up later as a result. The research and support system must be threaded throughout the writing.
- ⇒ It is difficult to design a study so that you get clear results with data to support it. Your questions must be carefully chosen and your assessments must directly correlate with the questions.

Theoretical framework

Three students indicated surprise over the use of theory in research. A typical response was this one:

- ⇒ The theoretical frameworks supporting research was a new discovery for me.
- ⇒ My theoretical lens can influence my research.
- ⇒ I now feel that research must be supported or addressed through a theoretical lens.

Sample selection

Two students mentioned changes in their initial conceptions of the sampling process:

- ⇒ (I was under the impression that) sample selection does not include (a specific) number of participants/subjects or criteria for selection.
- ⇒ (I thought that I would be) using random selection of participants for qualitative studies.

Data collection

The discussion of various data collection methods available to researchers also broadened students' conceptions of research. Regarding survey methodology, one student indicated that he/she:

Thought the response scale had to be the same for each question. I realized that the response scale/descriptions could be different for each question or set of questions within the same survey.

Two students discovered new methods for collecting data; one of them said:

I never thought of interviewing as a research method.

Data coding and analysis

Three students mentioned the data coding and analysis process as being confusing previously.

(I thought that) analysis and disaggregating data is hard. ([I found that] it's not hard, it's time consuming).

Ethics

Dealing with human subjects was an area that was clarified for two students.

(I) was surprised to learn I needed permission forms when I didn't plan to use names.

One student was surprised at having to complete the Institutional Review Board (ethics committee) process:

(I) had no idea I would actually need permission to observe and document observations about my students for use in my research (I mean, it's all anonymous anyway, right?). Left to my own devices, I never would have thought to do that.

Product

Writing up the research served as a growth experience for many of the students, as they had not been exposed to the various topics that researchers must address in sharing research findings in reports. Three students focused their responses on their expanded view of the write up of the project; for example:

I now understand what a research paper actually is... complete with hypothesis, research questions, theoretical framework etc. and it is a LOT more work than I thought!!

Two students' responses illustrated their amazement at the various topics/sections that were included in the outline for the final write up; one of them said:

I was not previously aware of all of the stages and/or components that must be completed and I now have a better understanding of what is involved. I am surprised at how much I enjoyed the assignment. I have learned much more than I anticipated.

Four students indicated no surprises, but one elaborated:

(I realized) that I remembered nothing from the research methods classes I took as a part of my masters program and that "coding" is easier than it sounds! I never knew buttons could be so educational...

Five students illustrated their broadened view of what constitutes research in these comments. Typical comments were:

I now have an understanding of the sequence, stages and requirements. I understand how to conduct research and compile data. This experience has taken the fear out of writing a lengthy paper. I have found that when I take the steps one at a time and do my work carefully, the paper comes together.

Students were asked what misconceptions they had about research or research methods before taking this course. Thirteen students indicated having no misconceptions about research, though one of them stated: "Much of what I experienced was not expected and my thoughts about study/research project work were very embryonic", while another said, "I'm not sure if I had strong misconceptions, because I never had a thorough definition". These students extended their knowledge base about what constitutes research through their coursework and participation in conducting a research study.

Discussion

How knowledge of these conceptions of research, specifically, can influence pedagogy of social research methods was the focus of this paper. In this two-semester course, students illustrated conceptions of research that changed from the onset of the course to its end.

Affective aspects

In the affective aspects of their conceptions of research, they exhibited more positive attitudes about what research is and about themselves as researchers. Students brought a wide range of research experience to this course, from having taken no research courses or having only taken a research overview course to having taken several research courses in which they had the opportunity to actually conduct research. Many of these students began the research course series with feelings of anxiety about the research process and some had negative attitudes about the value of research and about their ability to conduct good research. Their self-efficacy as researchers changed in positive ways, as was evidenced by their comments at the end of the second semester. Following from Onwuegbuzie (2000), it seems that, overall, as many of the students became more proficient at conducting research, their levels of anxiety decreased and their self-efficacy as researchers improved. Several students who had no previous exposure to quantitative research methods at the beginning of the course did not necessarily exhibit the same comfort level with conducting research as did other students with prior experience. Sizemore and Lewandowski (2009) indicate that students' misconceptions of research may underlie the lack of change in their perceptions about the value of and attitudes toward research. Hamza and Wickman (2008) reported on several studies in which misconceptions served as impediments to future learning. It is possible that these students' anxiety about quantitative research and their initial view of 'research means doing statistics' stemmed from misconceptions; it seems more plausible, however, that their initial conceptions/misconceptions served as a foundation for their continued learning and that those conceptions were expanded to include a broader definition of research and its associated processes and products. The findings of this

study do indicate changes in all of the students' conceptions of research and it is believed that their participation in conducting their own research was instrumental in changing views that they perceived as misconceptions.

Process

Students' conceptions of research were broadened in terms of the range of processes that are available to conduct research. They chose their own topics for study and discussed with others in class potential research questions to pursue. Through lectures, class discussions, outside readings and instructor feedback, students formulated their individual research plans. As many of them had no prior experience in conducting research, their encounters with the processes of selecting a theoretical framework, determining sample criteria, choosing appropriate data collection methods, deciding how data should be analyzed within the chosen framework and learning about what constitutes ethical research provided an enhancement of their existing conceptions of research. The primary focus of many students' comments centred on what they learned about research methods in general.

Product

Many comments from students addressed what they learned about writing up the research. This process of description of their project from beginning to end posed a challenge for some students whose writing skills were not as strong as other students' skills; however, even the weakest writers expressed satisfaction with their end product and noted their surprise at the depth of description with which researchers must share the process of conducting research. For example, students were surprised at the need to explain in detail their actions to address issues like trustworthiness, validity and reliability. Those conducting qualitative research had to be prompted to include a section on instrumentation. Those doing quantitative studies needed encouragement in their interpretation of the results. All students, however, indicated that their research product was something of which they were proud and that it illustrated how their conceptions of research had changed over the course.

Relationship to existing literature

Previous studies of conceptions of research have generated various categories to illustrate the range of meanings associated with understanding what constitutes research. The categories identified in this study – affect, process and product – relate well to two of Brew's (2001) categories of senior academics' conceptions: domino (a series of tasks) and journey (a voyage of discovery) conceptions and, to a lesser extent, to a third category, trading (a social exchange for money or publication). Students' comments focused greatly on the process or steps involved in conducting research. Their perception of the process was viewed as the pursuit of discovery, a venture full of surprises; one student indicated that the process of learning how to do research had been, for her, a life-changing experience, similar to Brew's journey conception. The category of trading was exemplified by one student who, at the beginning of the course, indicated that he wanted to create a paper worthy of publication that would enhance his chances of being admitted to the doctoral program.

The student's conceptions of research may also relate to Kiley and Mullins' (2005) categories of "technical", "integrating complexity" and "new ways of seeing" in their study of supervisors' conceptions of research. The "technical" and "integrating complexity" were exemplified in students' comments about the process of doing research, while the "new ways of seeing" category was illustrated in the students' changed conceptions of research at the end of the course.

The most closely related categories of conceptions of research to those found in this study were the categories summarized by Meyer, Shanahan and Laugksch (2005) and Meyer and Halliday (2007). Students identified their conceptions/misconceptions about research and illustrated how those conceptions had been broadened through their experience. Students' initial definitions of research demonstrated such conceptions of research as: re-searching existing information; a process to gain insight into various topics of interest; a way to solve problems; a means for discovering truth; information gathering and a scientific process. Their subsequent definitions contained more depth of understanding of research and illustrated that having participated in the research process had exposed them to additional conceptions of research. Rather than viewing research as finding literature about a topic and writing an essay, their conceptions of research now encompassed research with human subjects or other data sources. They began to view research as an insightful process that enables the researcher to learn something new or to solve problems or discover truth.

Following Cotner, et al. (2000) in their study of doctoral students' preparation for conducting research, students in our study came into the course with varying levels of preparation, research skills and diverse attitudes about research; some of our students initially viewed only quantitative approaches as being ways of conducting "good" research, while others initially viewed several students described research as re-searching existing literature. Students in both studies also held a variety of opinions about the value of certain research paradigms. For example, in our study, several students who had previously only experienced quantitative research paradigms found themselves to be uncomfortable with what they perceived as the "subjectivity" of qualitative methods and others who had previously conducted qualitative research found a new appreciation for the structure of quantitative methods. Similar to the Cotner et al. findings, student support from peers, instructor and other faculty researchers was considered to be a beneficial influence in their learning experience. Prior preparation, systematic course sequencing, content-specific instruction, student support groups and a positive relationship with a faculty mentor/instructor were found in both studies to be useful in preparing students to conduct research.

Problems with students' understanding of statistics and probability were found in this study and this is not a new phenomenon (Garfield and Ahlgren 1988). Several students in the sample expressed dread and anxiety about mathematical aspects of research. At one point in the first semester, after a lecture with power points of various statistical procedures and a brief overview of their corresponding equations, two students spoke with the instructor after class to confirm that "we aren't going to have to do this, are we?" While both of these students ultimately conducted qualitative studies, they were required to sit through our discussions of both qualitative and quantitative methods to ensure that they were at least exposed to a variety of approaches. As Garfield and Ahlgren suggest, developing concepts and understanding how statistics are used in various situations is more important than carrying out calculations.

Further pedagogical considerations from the teaching/learning nexus were described by Knewstubb and Bond (2009). As they note, early phenomenographic

studies suggested that students learn more effectively when they focus on conceptual learning than when they memorize information. Their study questions whether students' understandings of course concepts are the same as those of an instructor who holds sophisticated conceptions and a structured view of knowledge that he/she brings to students. As they suggest, we need to know whether our students understand research concepts as we understand those concepts. We agree that further investigation of these communicative alignments is required.

Wisker, Robinson, Trafford, Creighton and Warnes (2003) in their study of postgraduate students' dissonance, advocated that instructors avoid adopting a particular research paradigm and work with students to select a paradigm appropriate to their research question. In our study, students conducted quantitative studies using a variety of statistical methods, qualitative studies, including ethnography and case studies, action research studies and mixed methods studies. Their students also found success through constant interaction with the instructor and through peer support groups. Reflection and discussion with others facilitate opportunities for students to clarify their own work and learn from others' concerns.

Pedagogical Inferences

Knowing students' conceptions of research can inform pedagogical decisions instructors make. According to Scott, Asoko and Driver (1991) in their study of students learning physics concepts, instructors should attend to the learning environment, teaching strategies and the learning tasks used to teach the concepts. Alleviating the anxiety students feel about learning research involves establishing a learning environment that encourages questions and discussions to enhance conceptual development. The teaching strategies include determining appropriate sequencing of concepts to be presented and effective ways to teach those tasks. Scott et al. suggest that instructors promote conflicting concepts and their resolution to encourage students to reorganize their knowledge or build on existing knowledge, thereby providing scaffolding to new ways of thinking. Their presentation of discrepant events draws from the Piagetian model of presenting some exposure to new concepts, making students aware of their own and other students' conceptions, explaining the discrepancy, and encouraging cognitive accommodation to the new model of conception (Scott et al. 1991). They further suggest that discussion, consideration of others' views and application of concepts to real life assist students in broadening their conceptual knowledge. As they note, understanding students' conceptual knowledge has the potential to assist instructors in selection of a starting point for teaching and in the sequence and design of curricula. In our study, by determining students' initial conceptions of research, the instructor was able to make decisions about specific course content and structure and to choose effective ways to teach that content.

Reflection on the pedagogical approaches used in this course illuminates our knowledge about what worked and what did not. Classroom discussions of research problems focused on issues that are relevant to educators and illustrated the utility of relating examples of applied research in education. To ensure that students recognized the need to produce a research report based on research, rather than opinion, the instructor continually encouraged students to explain their decisions and defend them. Similarly, Broskoske (2007) suggests that students defend their research in writing as a lawyer would present a court case, including framing the case (defining the topic), searching for evidence (searching for sources), presenting the evidence (as students write their report), and making a closing argument

(drawing a conclusion). Britt (1995) also uses a courtroom format in having students defend a published research article before a jury of their peers. Innovative techniques, such as these, encourage student involvement and interest in the subject and present creative approaches for their conceptual learning.

A short lecture on ethical research practices incorporated opportunities for students to respond to discussion questions about potential areas of concern in conducting ethical research. The importance of good record keeping and issues related to use of human subjects (confidentiality, full disclosure, anonymity, voluntary participation) were discussed.

To heighten awareness of various theoretical frameworks, the graduate students were asked to make presentations in small groups on a specific theory and how it might frame a research question on a particular topic. Problem development was addressed in whole class discussions, giving students the opportunity to benefit from other students' attempts to come up with a viable research question. Exploration of sample parameters and data collection methods followed in subsequent class sessions.

As students chose research topics that warranted the use of quantitative, qualitative and action research approaches to research, a series of powerpoint slides was developed. These addressed various statistical procedures, such as correlation, chi square, confidence intervals and analysis of variance, among others. Each set of slides was discussed with examples to illustrate the applicability to educational research. Articles using quantitative methods were assigned as outside reading and were discussed in conjunction with the presentation of various statistical procedures. Though not used in this course, one recent article explored teaching research methods through use of clips of the Mythbusters television programme, providing a creative way to teach research methods concepts (Burkley and Burkley 2009). Survey methodology was also a topic for discussion, particularly developing instruments that adequately reflect the concepts to be addressed; related topics were question wording, scaling, order and sequence of questions.

To assist students with qualitative data collection, students developed an interview guide in response to a research question and interviewed each other, transcribed the interviews for coding/analysis. Each student shared his/her transcribed interview with the other group members (typically, groups of three students) and they were instructed to use a thematic approach to coding and analysis and develop a short paper on the results of their three interviews. The students were assigned a series of observations to enable them to practice their skills in observing, taking field notes and memoing. Several exercises were used to teach qualitative coding and analysis procedures, involving organizing and making sense of various data provided to them; one of these exercises included pairs of students organizing "buttons" in various ways and deriving a story to share with the rest of the class about those "data". Throughout the course, examples of "good" research articles and dissertations were shared to illustrate various ways that one might develop the end product.

Throughout this process, the instructor met with students in small groups or individually outside of class to give feedback on their written work, to discuss their progress and to answer questions or redirect their thinking. While this aspect of teaching is most time consuming, the feedback from each iteration of their writing served to ease students' anxiety about conducting research and ensured that course requirements were met.

Implications for teaching

Several implications are identified from our experience:

1. Students should be encouraged to participate in their own research projects to gain a clearer perspective of every aspect of research.
2. Students who feel anxious about learning/doing research need support from peers and instructors to begin to view themselves as researchers. When students are presented new information in a variety of ways that engage their thinking, they tend to enjoy learning and their nervousness about conducting research subsides. Make learning fun!
3. Research should be presented to students in ways that are interesting and relevant to their experience. Building new cognitive conceptions involves expanding prior knowledge. When students see that research “is doable, when broken down into steps”, they are more apt to focus on learning new concepts and applying them to existing conceptual knowledge. Systematic presentation of the aspects of good research is required.
4. Many students want a recipe book that lists step-by-step processes for doing good research, which is not necessarily the reality of what research is like. Instead, assist them to become more comfortable with allowing their theoretical philosophy guide the question development and subsequent processes. When they understand that various questions generate different protocols for research design, they may find that flexibility and subjectivity are part of the process of research in human subjects research (particularly in qualitative designs).
5. While it may not be ideal to provide detailed step-by-step outlines for writing up research projects, students may find it helpful to have a loosely structured framework that includes specific topics that should be discussed. Those who have never done academic writing may also need guidance on certain writing guidelines such as tense, person, level of detail required.

We hope that this venture into students’ conceptions of research will stimulate some discussion from readers to address such questions in their future research as:

1. What pedagogical approaches are most effective at introducing new forms of research to novice researchers?
2. What pedagogical approaches work best to redirect or build on students’ conceptual knowledge?
3. How can the study of conceptions of research further inform the pedagogy of research methods?

The aim of this article was to contribute to conception research, particularly students’ conceptions of social research, in the tradition of phenomenography. The findings showed that students hold various conceptions of research and that certain conceptions changed over the course of a graduate research class. Asking participants to explicitly articulate their constructions aided in making their conceptions conscious and bringing teacher and student understandings closer together and informed the instructor’s approach to teaching the class. This article has demonstrated how conceptions of research studies are valuable in improving research methods teaching practice.

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Coupling career fairy tale “Fascinating Sociology Class”.
How to teach sociology? The sociology of sociology

Abstract

This paper is a simple account of my teaching experience¹, the aim of which is to answer the question: “How can we successfully teach interactionism, labeling theory, grounded theory and other sociological bases related to qualitative methods with the active participation of students?”. Through the examples of sociologists working in the Chicago Tradition, French sociologists working with Pierre Bourdieu, and other examples from American sociology, I show that sociological work is group activity. It is argued in this paper, that to make sociological thinking understandable to students teachers may do well to contextualize key theorists in their narrative/biographical context. The students learn, that sociologists are not magicians or genius individuals who produce attractive theories. Rather, they work in collaboration with other humans to generate knowledge. Moreover, I demonstrate that sociologists’ contributions are often strongly related to and influenced by their broader life context.

Keywords

Teaching sociology; Context of sociological production; Collaborations in sociology; Sociology of knowledge; Career coupling; Chicago School.

Undergraduate and even graduate students frequently complain that their sociology courses, especially dedicated to social theories, the history of sociological thought and sometimes methods are incomprehensible, uninteresting and even boring. In this paper I address the problem of “How can we successfully teach interactionism, labeling theory, grounded theory and other sociological basics related to qualitative methods with the active (and satisfied) participation of students?”.

This paper is not an exhaustive or gold-standard methodological guide on how to teach sociology. Nor is it a continuation of the special issue of the *American Sociologist* about “How to teach sociology?” in which a lot of famous sociologists gave their account about their “teacher’s trick and trade” [following Becker’s expression used in the title of his writing manual for social scientists (Becker, 1998)]. This paper is a simple account, the aim of which is to share my teaching experience.

¹ the oral version was presented during the Meeting of ESA – RN 20 – Qualitative Methods in Lodz in 2008

During the academic year 2006/2007, I delivered a course entitled “Mutual influences in French and American sociologies” at the University of Warsaw to a mixed group of Erasmus and Polish students². I focused on the history of qualitative sociology, using the concept of career coupling.

Because I believe that a close interest in biography links to and can help students understand a particular sociological approach, I used in my teaching the career coupling perspective. I developed the concept of career coupling in 2005 and it was based on my research in the artistic world of violinists and later developed in the world of life-science scientists (Wagner 2006). Career coupling is a social process, which concerns the parallel professional routes of two or more actors who cooperate, each in their own specialty, during the time necessary for them to change their rank in their respective professional worlds. Through this process, the actors hope to progress in their professional hierarchy. This concept consists of an interaction between two or more careers. In my teaching I used the concept of career coupling to analyze the careers of several scientists - sociologists. Instead of presenting and analyzing complex theories and linkages between the work of people I started with a simple analysis of their careers.

Understanding sociology or understanding sociologists?

A close interest in the biography of prolific and influential scientists-sociologists is not new. The times when only the history of ideas, completely separate from the information about the authors of those ideas, was taught at university, are long gone. Today students are often invited to discuss the life of sociologists during the lectures, not only in the corridors, exchanging several anecdotes about the “founding fathers” of these according to my students words “obscure” theories. This important change in how sociology is taught is not only due to the large interest in people’s biographies, but also and first of all because of several works about the biography of scholars, which have been lastly published³. Even a history of the most influential sociological scholars is now written with a biographical perspective – contextualizing major theoretical contributions in individuals’ personal histories (see Chapoulie 2001).

The origin of my lecture and audience: European students

The idea of my lecture about career coupling originally resulted from a misunderstanding. I had have been trained in France and when I moved to Poland I was perceived by my Polish colleagues to be a specialist in French sociology. Of course, I had read a lot of French sociology, but according to my specialization I was “a sociologist of work, trained according to the Chicago Tradition” - in France our group of research was called the “American” laboratory and we were perceived as specialists and strong enthusiasts of the Chicago School(s) and we were unique in France at that time. I was lucky that the sociology of Chicago was not taught at my University and several students expressed their interest for qualitative research and the interactionist perspective. Because interaction means also mutuality, the lecture title was easily set: “Mutual influences in American and French Sociology”. I had 60 hours during two semesters, and I was asked to teach in French, this is why, eight

² The lecture was given in French. For explanation of Erasmus student status see the footnote 3.

³ We can observe this tendency which occurs in sociology- the grow of interest in microsociology, for social actor; here we can see that the sociologists have themselves their positionality and the context of their work is of the first importance.

out of fifteen students enrolled on that course were Erasmus⁴ (French, Belgian) and seven Polish; all of them were on the third to fifth year of graduate studies (License or MA) - two from the department of psychology, thirteen sociologists. Due to those circumstances, the place and time, it was a specific class for a specific public.

Sociology class - quick state of the art

Sociology students often complain that sociology is a very difficult subject of learning, they have difficulties in understanding, it seems an obscure knowledge and if they understand it they find it... "boring" (student's expression). It goes without saying that these kinds of comments are unfortunate, but understanding why students feel this way is important to minimise similar criticism in the future.

Several factors seem to influence this negative perception of our discipline. Theories are complex, and students have to deal with all this heritage already starting from the first semester. They also have to very quickly learn a large number of concepts, which is almost equivalent to learning a new language for them, especially for those students without philosophical training (French students do, Polish rarely - depending on schools). Some of my colleagues wish to expose their knowledge in a sophisticated way (which is quite understandable from their point of view) and show various connections between the schools, which is not at all useful - the students comments suggest that they are frequently lost. But also our discipline is not as others - which you can learn without any life-experience. Hughes, who was an excellent teacher, very inspiring for his students (Chapoulie 2001) underlined that it was always more interesting for students to study the phenomena which they know (close to their experience). Similar remark was formulated about French students (in 1970-1985); according to Chapoulie, the sociological theories itself seem to be much more difficult to understand than based on life experience social phenomena observed in-situ (Chapoulie, editor 2000). Taking into account these constataions, I was convinced that the "pure" theory of sociology teaching without historical and biographical context may be a huge obstacle to the understanding of social processes.

"Pedagogical" attitude

I wanted to avoid this kind of situation and I was in a lucky position: as Hughes expected from his "older" and "experienced in work-life" students, I came into sociology with the background of pedagogy of music (piano and theory) and several years of experience of music teaching (children, and adults, amateurs and professionals). I knew from my previous experience that the first obligation of a teacher is to set the clear goals of his/her teaching and the second is simply to

⁴ Erasmus students are the students who participate in the mobility European program of Exchange between universities. They spend 6-12 months in a foreign country, and try to get all their credits in order to complete their university semester (s). For that international population, each university prepares some lectures in the following languages: English, French, German sometimes Spanish. The Polish students also follow these classes, especially because they can get more credits (the lecture in "foreign language" as well as because of the expectation of University administration, which imposes Polish candidates for Erasmus exchange to participate in these lectures). In consequence these classes are composed of foreigners- European and also Polish students.

succeed them all! If not, the teacher is to blame for any failure and not the students) to the teacher and not students (following Dalcroze's⁵ method which I practiced)!

What were my goals for this French-American sociology classes?

Because I believe that history is very important in order to understand each phenomenon - one of the goals was to teach the tradition of research. Why? In order to understand the science! As Clifford Geertz remarked in *The Interpretation of Cultures* "If you want to understand what a science is, you should look in the first instance not at its theories or its findings, and certainly not at what its apologists say about it; you should look at what the practitioners of it do" (Geertz 1973).

Focus on the sociology of practitioners

The classical analysis of the main Chicago sociologists' biographies gave me the possibility not only to present their life, but first of all to make these young European students familiar with the context of Chicago almost one hundred years earlier in order to perceive clearly why these people elaborated such ideas, and how they did it. I always presented family background and I spent the time presenting their education. I focused much more on the analysis of collaboration, looking for the career-coupling phenomenon, not only with the teacher of that main person, but also between the collaborators (of similar status - other students, or other young researchers) and later even successors. The example of the Chicago School or rather "the Sociological Tradition of Chicago"(Strauss' expression cited in Chapoulie 2001) was perfect for this kind of pedagogical approach.

Example of class 1 - American case - Revolution in Thinking = The People behind the Theories

The unconventional ideas are the most precious element of the researcher's work. The Chicago School constitutes an excellent example of the "production" of such ideas. On the crossing between the sociology of work and sociology of race, Hughes found the interesting phenomenon - of being "Black" in one's neighborhood and "White" at work (Hughes 1994). The revolution in the sociology of deviance was set with Becker's work and labeling theory (1963). The new theoretical perspective was set by Glaser and Strauss (1967) - theory against theory - "grounded theory", and the most famous of all Chicago sociologists - Goffman (1961), who wrote about the total institution. All these studies were revolutionary at that time. What did these sociologists have in common?

The response is simple - the first evident relationship is the teacher-student relationship: Hughes was the teacher, but also the team leader, and the source of inspiration for his students (Strauss, Becker and Goffman)⁶. But they had in common also all the context of Chicago city and the University which played a very important role in their sociological approaches. They shared the experiences of research

⁵ Emile Jaques-Dalcroze (July 6, 1865- July 1, 1950) , was a Swiss musician and music educator. His method is a method of teaching musical concepts through movement.

⁶ They attended also Blumer's classes- and his influence of their work is also important, but this influence is better known than Hughes'es one, it is why I focused in this example- without forgetting other relations, which I mentioned also to my students. We have to keep in mind, that it is a university class, but an introduction for this area of sociology, and I mentioned other connections between people, but focused on some of them- I pushed the students to more deep research, in order to ripen these analyses.

(common activity in the Committee on Human Relations in Industry [CHRI]), worked following the main method (Ethnography), shared common interests in the research topics such as careers, socialization, occupations, modest activities, institutions etcera and they published the results of their research together (e.g. Hughes, Geer and Strauss 1961). We can ask if the relationship between Hughes and Becker, Strauss and Goffman was master/disciple or a less hierarchical collaborating relationship? Both are true, because this example of collaboration is a classical example of career coupling.

When the sociological concept can be helpful

Career coupling process

Career coupling is a social process, which concerns the parallel professional routes of two or more actors who cooperate, each in their own specialty, during the time necessary for them to change their rank in their respective professional worlds. By this process, the actors hope to climb in their professional hierarchy. In other words, the career coupling consists of interaction between two or more careers. Three phases are necessary in order to be able to state that such collaborations are career coupling. (1) matching; (2) active collaboration; and, (3) passive collaboration - the reputation of both collaborators is joint. (Wagner 2006)

Using the simple concept of career coupling - suddenly the theories become clearer. It is much easier to understand Goffman's total institution, knowing Hughes' analysis of "bastard institutions". As well as the influences of Hughes' career study on Goffman's concept of patient's career (he benefited from scholarship CHRI), Becker with Strauss - career study (1956) and Becker's deviant's career (Becker 1963). The relationship between Hughes' method of making analysis, one of the strong points of which was "looking at extremity of cases - seeking for process", it was probably easier to adopt a new view on deviance, which resulted from the so-called "labeling theory". As Chapoulie said "Hughes's reputation was built with the works of his disciples" (Chapoulie 2001:213). This effect is the main effect of the career coupling process.

Several goals were achieved thanks to this analysis. The students learned about various studies and theories, and first of all they learned about the sociology of sociologist's work - nothing is done alone. But with this first American example, the exploration of mutual influences was not sufficient. I switched to the second – the French example.

Example II - French case - People behind People

The French example offers very interesting opportunity to show the sociologists' collaborations. Looking carefully in the biography of the one of the "Big Stars" of French sociology we can find some "traces" of the career coupling process. Even the career of Pierre Bourdieu gives us an interesting example of hidden (and not), but always fruitful (not for all participants) collaborations. It is indeed a classical example of successful career coupling. But successful for whom?

All my students knew some works of Bourdieu - in Poland he is considered to be a genius who wrote at least one book a year (changing subjects) and each work was seminal. But rarely the readers ask themselves how it was possible for one single

person to produce this amount of knowledge - simply alone. Sure - several collaborations were mentioned, but several had been forgotten, omitted... hidden (intentional or not). The “discovery” of each collaborator allows the possibility to show the importance of common work in science. I proposed to my students to play a game “Guess who is behind?”

As an example some publications could be taken into account. The first concerns the book about Bourdieu’s first fieldwork (as he said in his “autobiography” [2004] - he considered himself to be an anthropologist) which was carried out in Algeria between 1958-60. Four persons at that time closely collaborated with him: the most important was Abdelmalek Sayad, who was his student and key informant. He originated from a village in the Kabyle region in Algeria, and he gave Bourdieu the possibility to travel around this country and to do the research about the condition of housing. Bourdieu could not speak fluently Arabic and at the time of war without the help of a native speaker it would have been difficult to communicate. Bourdieu’s other collaborators at that period were Alain Darbel, Claude Seibel, Jean-Paul Rivet. The works published after this fieldwork were in French: in 1964 “Le Déracinement. La crise de l’agriculture traditionnelle en Algérie” with A. Sayad and the same year “Travail et travailleurs en Algérie” with A. Darbel, R. Castel et J-C Chamboredon. Other books about Algeria were published years later without any sign of collaboration. In the case of publication of other works, the name of collaborators is frequently omitted and the students only remember the lead author – in this case Bourdieu. This is why I focused so strongly on those people in his shadow. This was the case of Jean-Claude Passeron, the co-author of the first successful book - the number one sociological bestseller in France “The Inheritors: French Students and Their Relations to Culture, Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture”(1979)⁷. Three years later it was the next publication in triple collaboration with Jean-Claude Passeron again and Jean-Claude Chamboredon.”Le Métier de sociologue” (1967 “The sociologist occupation”). The mechanism of collaboration and author’s signature is complex. Taking the book about photography as an example could show how difficult it is to discover the “true author”. The title of the book published in 1965 is “Un Art moyen. Essai sur les usages sociaux de la photographie”; in several of Bourdieu’s bibliographies in serious sources such as the College of France site, Bourdieu figures as the author with the following mention: “avec (with) L. Boltanski, R. Castel et J-C Chamboredon”. The English version of that book published in 1996 by Stanford University Press and entitled “Photography: A Middle-Brow Art” you can read “with Luc Boltanski and Robert Castel”. What happened to Jean-Claude Chamboredon? One quick look at the book gives one another version of the division of the authorship: this book was published in 1965 in the collection directed by Pierre Bourdieu and Robert Castel. But on the cover of the book, the mention in French “sous la direction” appears only Bourdieu’s name. If you are lucky and you have the book in your hand (French version), you see inside that the authors are Luc Boltanski and Jean-Claude Chamboredon - both names are not on the cover of the book, on which - I insist - the name of Bourdieu as director of the collection is inscribed. In consequence in several bibliographies of this author, that book appears as his own book. Several sources repeat this error mentioning Bourdieu as the author, sometimes with Castel (who was also the director of the collection), with Boltanski; Chamboredon is frequently forgotten - one of the two exclusive authors of this book.

⁷ about the history of that book see Mason 2001,2005 and 2006

Other examples

Always in the situation of teaching it is important to ask whether a scientific universe without collaboration is possible. Looking closer at a famous duo, or even a single person, we can discover others. The game “find his/her pair” continues. The co-author of the famous book printed in 1918-1920, “Polish Peasants” - Thomas and ... Znaniecki⁸. The authors of a book published in 1975 “The Cocktail Waitress. Woman's Work in a Man's World.” - James P. Spradley and the woman in a Man's world - Brenda E. Mann. And we will finish with the famous example of other “big star of sociology” - Robert Merton. This is the story of almost 20 years of common research, findings, a good concept and passion. Harriet Zuckerman did her PhD under Merton's supervision. At this time, in 1968, her mentor published in “Science” under the title “The Matthew Effect in Science, Cumulative Advantage and the Symbolism of Intellectual Property”, an article in which Merton explains a concept very important for science which he called “The Matthew Effect”. Twenty years later, in 1988 he published a kind of explanation about the origin of this concept in a special footnote:

The later fruits of Zuckerman's research appear in Zuckerman “Scientific Elite: Nobel Laureates in the United States” (1977); (...) This is an occasion for repeating what I have noted in reprinting the original “Matthew Effect” in Science. It is now (1973) belatedly evident to me that I drew upon the interview and other materials of the Zuckerman study to such an extent that, clearly, the paper should have appeared under joint authorship. A sufficient sense of distributive and commutative justice requires one to recognize, however belatedly, that to write a scientific or scholarly paper is not necessarily sufficient grounds for designating oneself as its sole author.” (Merton 1988: 607⁹)—text underlined by me.

Working Conclusion - Sociology of Sociology (or sociologist's occupation)

The first important conclusion for my sociology students is as follows: Science is a group activity. An “irreplaceable scientist” does not exist - the organization of science and progress in science were described by H. Becker (1986) in “Writing for Social Scientists. How to start and finish your Thesis, Book, Article”:

Almost all scientific activities require that someone writes something - ‘take out’ the product from the atelier. The science is organized in a way, that these expectations do not lie within one person in particular. If me?, I do not write a book about one subject, it will be you who will do it; if it's not you, it will be someone else. We will not have the promotion, but in the end,

⁸ The Polish students know the first example- for them it is easy to remember Znaniecki- one of the most famous sociologists in Poland, who was the expert of Polish emigration before met for the first time Thomas, and not only key-informant or translator from Polish- he was a research partner, an important scholar on his own and had individual publications before the American collaboration and later. Unfortunately the language of these publications is mostly Polish which is probably the reason of only local fame of Znaniecki. The second reason for his presence in the world sociology areal as the co-author with Thomas is the World War II and isolationist politics of Poland after 1945, which certainly also constitutes an obstacle for the international popularity of Znaniecki's work. The last factor of Thomas domination was certainly the activity of his disciples who took care about the communication concerning that book, and decreased strongly Znaniecki's contribution to this work.

⁹ For my students it was interesting to know that Zuckerman was Merton's wife. I was not able to respond to the question how much this fact influenced this public 1988 declaration of Merton.

someone will write this book if the matter for this book exists; and he will have the promotion" (p.137).

Consequently, we have to recognize that sociological research is a group activity, and not the production of a single lone researcher. So it is important to look behind the author. Behind means looking at his/her background, teachers, colleagues, spouses (Mary-Jo Deegan did it for some American sociologists [Deegan 1990]), students and collaborators... You have to find hidden team members because one of the career effects could be the "vampirization of the reputation".

Vampirization of reputation

This mechanism was perfectly shown with Bourdieu's example - even if he is not an author but director of a collection, his strong reputation conceals the true authors. But I would like to show to my students that doing sociology is the contrary to the widespread standards of our insider communication, which is to focus on a single name— a solo intellectual hero or heroine.

Reactions of students

I would like to provide now some ethnographic data from my class. What happened after all this year of "looking behind" the authors, tracing collaborations and contributions to the work presented as solo work. I did not remark on the differences in the reactions of Erasmus and Polish students (which could indicate that sociology is not taught in the way which I explained). For all of them this "kind of teaching" was new: "Nobody, never spoke to me about the sociology like that!" (French Erasmus Student) "I understand much better now, and this is so interesting in fact!" (Polish MA Student) ; "This is truly fascinating - with all that biographies I learn much easily what happened" (Polish Student); "The stories of these people are so interesting - I started to learn their work - when you learn what happened to Goffman's wife - his writing becomes so true..." (French Erasmus Student); "I realized that even the biggest sociologists are human and that makes... sociology become human to me – it's not an abstract science any more ..." (Polish Student)

And because the sociology is NOT an abstract science they have to prepare the work related with the career coupling effect - the goal was to show how these strong collaborations work between the people engaged in other professional activities. As the validation work I obtained the papers about this very largely spread phenomenon, which is career coupling analyzed by my students in different social worlds, among them the world of post-doc students working in nuclear research (career coupling between mentors and their PhD or post-docs and lab-leaders), another study was a movie based on a long interview of two strong collaborators, one of them was a famous Polish movie director, the other was a cameraman; another work was a paper about the collaboration of famous rock stars: David Bowie and Brian Eno - the author of this work prepared a MA thesis in that topic. And finally, a more classical paper was about the relationship between Freud and his mentor Breuer, conducted by a student of psychology who analyzed it through the concept of career coupling - this paper is in the process of being published in a human science interdisciplinary journal. After these works it was clear to my students and me that sociology is animated by similar mechanisms of social collaboration as other human groups.

Conclusion

Were my goals achieved? As a result, the main goal of sociology was partially reached: we – both ,the students and I, – have progressed in the understanding of certain processes which occur in our society. I believe that the sociology should be taught in similar way – the theories should be present in the relation with the context – in a way that it is historically accurate (within the condition that the teacher has the asscess for this kind of data). This is very important to speak about ethical problems concerning collaboration in academic work. Thanks to my experience I saw that sociological contributions could be contextualized using the concept of career coupling. In that way the students become interested in our discipline, because they realize that this is a science “very on life”, with different aspects which are proper to human activity. The sociology course was taught not as the history of ideas but as the history of human collaborations, and I think that this is a good way of teaching sociology.

In similar vein, the book about the Chicago Tradition by Jean-Michel Chapoulie (2001) is an excellent history of complex collaboration - it is a “bible for the sociologist” who is interested in the research projects’ origins, contexts, backstage of realization in order to understand almost everything about the final product, because the final product of our research is always closely related to the context and our life. Have I mentioned who my Mentor was?

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“Hi, Madam, I have a small question.”

Teaching QM online:

Guide to a successful cross-cultural master-course.

Abstract

A few years ago Centre of Development Studies at my Faculty, Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences, started an online Master's Programme in Development Management. The programme was implemented by a network of universities from the North (University of Agder/UiA) and the South (Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Uganda, Ghana) recruiting students from across the world. The evaluation is very positive characterising it as a big success.

I will now look into one particular element of this study, teaching the qualitative methodology (QM) courses with a special focus on the South context. Each course QM included has been sectioned into modules based on a variety of students' activities including student-student and student-tutor/teacher interaction, plus a number of hand-ins across topics and formats. Evaluation of the students' performance is based on both online group activity and written material submitted either into the individual or the group portfolio.

My focus is twofold. First, how did we teach qualitative methodology and how did that work? Second, what about the contemporary focus on neo-colonial methodology and our QM courses? In a wider perspective the study is part of foreign aid where higher education is a means to transfer competence to the South. As such this study works to enable and to empower people rather than being trapped in the old accusation of sustaining dependency (Asad 1973, Ryen 2000 and 2007a).

This study then is embedded in a wider North-South debate and a highly relevant illustration of the potentials, success and hazards, inherit in teaching QM.

Keywords

Teaching qualitative methods; Online teaching; Cross-cultural methodology; Neo-colonial methodology; Africa.

In 2005 Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences, University of Agder started a Master's Programme in Development Management (M.Sc. Development Management).

This is a four semester full time study programme, covering 120 ECTS (credits) linking education and research on sustainable development with new information technologies. Apart from a couple of face-to-face sessions this is an online study

which means that teaching, instruction, tuition and supervision take place on the Internet through the Fronter Learning Management System. The programme is developed and run by University of Agder, Norway, and implemented in cooperation with a network of universities in the South. These include Ruhuna University in Sri Lanka, Mzumbe University in Tanzania, Mekelle University in Ethiopia, Makerere University in Uganda and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) in Ghana. Students are recruited from across the world though reasonably with a majority from the universities involved in running the study Master in development management¹⁰.

The study has been approved by the Norwegian accredit body for higher education (NOKUT) and has since 2007 been offered as a permanent study with an annual intake of students.

Still, the challenges in such studies are manifold. Teaching qualitative methodology can be a challenge in one's own culture, and teaching multicultural groups where the members are scattered around the world add on to challenges and potentials. In our case the students bring with them vast differences in training and practical experiences in the qualitative research field. This is accentuated by still another challenge, interacting online bereaved of observing the facial and bodily reactions (Ryen 2000 and 2002) that work as cues and feedback in the student-teacher relationship. And further, these meetings take place across cultures far apart ranging from more traditional till modern cultures. Undoubtedly, to some more than others, this does invite dilemmas being caught between politeness and ascribed status, and western higher educational expectations based on achievement and imported into the formal structure of evaluation and remuneration linked up with students' initiative, online activities and critical input in the debates. Put briefly, old rank meets merits giving birth to a new reflexivity, painful as well as liberating.

The article consists of six sections. In the next, section two, I will contextualise the study programme by referring to the international North-South issue followed by a closer look at the methodology courses including the online interacional particularities. In section four I look into teaching the QM modules in this particular e-learning study programme followed by the discussion in section five. My focus here is on the two referred aspects: experiences from the innovative teaching practices and second, the North-South issue and relevance. In the conclusions I claim that the particular challenges involved in such an endeavour are crucial to the potentials of QM methodology in enhancing social change or transformation. I also critically look into the category "success". Our QM-courses are embedded in a wider North-South debate and works well to illustrate the potentials - successes as well as hazards – associated with qualitative methodology. We may easily be trapped. If we succeed, QM may help to close the poverty gap; if we fail, we may sustain and even widen the cleavages.

Institutional affiliation: Building competence as foreign aid

To better get at the main idea and the wider goals in which the QM courses are embedded, I will present the bigger framework in which it is positioned. This leads us to the main arguments why teaching qualitative methodology is a highly relevant and a most important part of higher education. We are obliged to make sure that our students manage to go from the classroom to the field and back again to write up

¹⁰http://www.uia.no/no/portaler/om_universitetet/oekonomi_og_samfunnsvitenskap/studier/undervisning_paa_engelsk/master_in_development_management

their research (Seale et al. 2004). But, qualitative research should also play a vital role in transforming society or in making social change (Mertens and Ginsberg 2008 and 2009). As such, QM is closely linked up with the wider commitment inherent in foreign aid programmes to contribute to empowerment and to eradication of poverty.

North-South collaboration

Our QM courses were one element in a long chain of activities under The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) which is a directorate under the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). Norad's most important task is to contribute in the international cooperation to fight poverty¹¹. Much of the Norad activities are managed by SIU¹², the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education, a public Norwegian agency that promotes international cooperation in education and research. Norad's Programme for Master Studies (NOMA) is one example and is a programme for providing financial support to develop and run Master Degree Programmes in the South through collaboration between local and Norwegian Higher Educational Institutions. The NOMA programme is financed by Norad, but managed by SIU. According to the mandate for the NOMA programme¹³:

The main objective of the Agreement between Norad and SIU is to regulate the cooperation between Norad and SIU relating to the NOMA-programme. The primary objective of this programme is to contribute to capacity building in the public and private sectors and NGO's in Norway's main development cooperation partner countries and other selected countries through capacity building in institutions for education in the South (Point 1, section 2).

In addition to designing programmes in accordance with national needs, the overall objectives also aim at building sustainable capacity of institutions in the South to provide the national workforce with adequate qualifications within selected academic fields of study¹⁴. And, to stimulate South-South-North cooperation¹⁵ through supporting the development of regional Master programmes and to enhance gender equality in all programme activities¹⁶.

Master in Development Management

This particular study programme is run in collaboration with the UNU network under the auspices of the United Nations University in Tokyo and implemented by the referred North-South network of universities with University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka, as University of Agder's main partner in the programme.

¹¹ http://www.norad.no/default.asp?V_ITEM_ID=1139&V_LANG_ID=0

¹² www.siu.no

¹³ <http://siu.no/en/Programme-overview/NOMA/Programme-board>

¹⁴ Thematic priorities are based on current Norwegian priorities and identified needs of the cooperating countries in the South.

¹⁵ The Project Document specifies geographical areas or countries in the South eligible for support by NOMA.

¹⁶ <http://www.siu.no/en/Programme-overview/NOMA>



University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka (<http://www.ruh.ac.lk/>). Also see http://www.uia.no/no/portaler/om_universitetet/oekonomi_og_samfunnsvitenskap/studier/undervisning_paa_engelsk/master_in_development_management.

To cite from the web site of the University of Ruhuna:

Idea behind the study programme

The Development Management Programme is primarily concerned with development, and with facilitators and obstacles to development, whether these are environmental or social, economic or political...

The relevance of the study programme

... It is clearly recognised both by national and international institutions that there is a need to increase the competence and capacity that can contribute to a positive development process. In Norwegian development co-operation, this aspect has been given high priority.

Programme objectives

The objective of the study programme is to familiarize students with theories and findings concerning development, and to offer managerial tools to practical problems...

Source:http://www.uia.no/no/portaler/om_universitetet/oekonomi_og_samfunnsvitenskap/studier/undervisning_paa_engelsk/master_in_development_management

The above makes the cross-cultural issue imperative in this study, so let us proceed to the teaching of qualitative methodology in practice.

E-learning: QM courses, e-system and e-pedagogics

Before the discussion we need to look into our e-learning system¹⁷ including the international credit system used to facilitate student transfers in the international educational systems, and the QM courses. I will also show the e-spaces in our Fronter system where different kinds of communication take place such as

¹⁷ Since the study is still on-going, though I no longer teach these courses, I prefer present to past time.

discussions and hand-ins both individually and in groups before I round off the section with a few comments on the e-pedagogics used.

The QM courses.

The two-year study programme offers different courses in research methods both quantitative and qualitative methodology and methods. Second semester includes a course in Research Methods in Development Studies (10 ECTS, see Table 1) which later is followed up by a Thesis Preparation Seminar and Applied Research Methods (5 ECTS) and Master Thesis Work (15 ECTS) before the Master thesis itself the fourth and last semester (30 ECTS)¹⁸. Let us now have a closer look at the QM courses.

The system requires rather detailed documents available to all students as illustrated by the methodology course 2005. This course consists of five modules:

Document	No of Modules	No of pages	No of words
Course description	Modules I-V Per module: Overview over start and end dates, deliverables (task and activities) and deadlines per task and activity	5	973
Study Calender	For all 5 Modules: -Date for start, end and date per deliverables specified in the Study Guide	2	154
Study guide (205 hrs)	-Tasks and Activities per Module -workload specified as hours per task and activity -Questions for Module reflections -Supporting literature	15	3726
Article Compendium TOC	Curriculum specified per Module. All curriculum not accessible on internet were made available for the students in hard copies and copies.	2	418

Table 1. ME-409 Research Methods in Development Studies by Anne Ryen and Maung Sein.

In total these documents consist of close to 25 pages (4300 words) so much effort is put into the planning phase to offer the online students rather self-instructive material as tools to plan and to coordinate across academic and other activities in their life in a time consuming study programme. All study documents are available for students in the Fronter system.

¹⁸ The Master thesis is all together 45 ECTS of the total 120 ECTS (credits). The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) makes teaching and learning more transparent and facilitates the recognition of studies (formal, non-formal and informal). The system is used across Europe for credit transfer (student mobility) and credit accumulation (learning paths towards a degree). It also informs curriculum design and quality assurance http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc48_en.htm .

Modules	Theme
1	BASICS OF RESEARCH IN SOCIAL SCIENCES
2	QUALITATIVE METHODS
3	QUANTITATIVE METHOD
4	ACTION RESEARCH
5	WRITING YOUR REPORT, PRAGMATICS AND CONTINGENCIES OF RESEARCH

Table 2. ME-409 Research Methods in Development Studies consists of 5 modules¹⁹:

All modules apart from the third refer to QM either fully or in parts. Dates, tasks, activities and list of curriculum per module are all in the course documents (see Table 1). In Module I the students are invited to the general context of research in the social sciences. This includes epistemological issues and the activities such as reading course material, a mini-lecture submitted by one of the professors using a practical example from the introductory FTF-meeting as point of departure, and a group discussion with hand-ins where students have to come up with a research topic. Module II introduces different qualitative methods including online methods and case studies, and the issue of the quality of qualitative research. The students now have to submit a project proposal using one or more qualitative methods (as in Module III where they individually have to submit a short research project using quantitative methodology). Module IV is dedicated to action research and the students here have to develop a research project using an action research method. The last, Module V, among others deals with writing your thesis and with research ethics. In the different modules the students also have to reflect on and discuss how to handle potential upcoming dilemmas when doing their research. This works to contextualise research and to make reflections on practice a crucial part of the research process.

Let us now proceed to teaching online in practice.

The e-learning system.

Focus is here on how the online teaching is organised. Practice will be discussed in the next main section.

The constructionist pedagogical approach focuses on the individual learner's relationship with the surroundings based on ideas from the pedagogues Dewey and Piaget. Meaning and knowledge is never externally readymade, but constructed by the individual in his or her active interaction with the surroundings. These ideas were further developed by Vygotsky who claimed learning was embedded in social and cultural contexts. The meeting between experienced persons and newcomers then enables the latter "to understand the contexts and confidently participate in the activities in that context" hence "learning takes place in 'zones of proximal development'" (Bjørke 2004:7). There is a shift from positivistic transfer of meaning to meaning-making that encourages practices with the teacher as facilitator of good learning environments in which the learner in multiple ways is encouraged to pursue locally defined educational goals (Edwards and Usher 2000; Bjørke 2004). A more general description would be participation rather than acquisition, community and actors rather than containers (Crook 2002) in line with studies showing peers as the most potent source of learning for US college students (Astin 1993).

In global settings synchronous interactions have proved less flexible than asynchronous. The latter seems preferential both as to the drop-out problem,

¹⁹ My good colleague professor Maug Sein was fully in charge of Module 3 and 4. I was fully in charge of module 2. We collaborated on developing course documents (see Table 1), and collaborated on teaching modules 1 and 5.

reflection and higher order thinking, but demands a well prepared pedagogic strategy, a good learning environment (McLoughlin and Luca 2000) and most crucial, a high level of activity between students, tutors and lecturers to make online learning a success (Bjørke 2004). At a more practical level students need a support package, a well functioning learning management system, a start-up face-to-face session, and dedication to build an online learning environment with frequent log-in and standardized systems²⁰ (Bjørke 2006). The action plan called “African University Network” makes online learning possible across campuses at least in parts of Africa (Bjørke 2004) though Sub-Saharan Africa is worst off in the “digital divide”. Let us move on to practice.

When I go to my personal online room in the Fronter e-learning system²¹ a column comes up on the computer screen:










	Room
	Participants
<hr/>	
	Curriculum and reading list
	Course material
	Archive
	Discussion Forum
	Chat
	Hand-in
<hr/>	
	Course evaluation

Table 3 “My personal room” in the Fronter online system (every participant can log on to his or her own parallel room)²²:

Clicking on any of these gives you access to stored information. “Participants” for example, shows all names, e-mail addresses²³ etc of all students, tutors and professors involved. The crucial parts in operating this e-learning system for both students and teachers are lines 3 – 8. Let me now illustrate what happens when you click any of the lines the table (see Tables 3.1-3.6 below with sub-tables).

All online activity for a course is archived for a period of close to two years which means that the archive deadline for some of the methodology courses 2005-6 has expired. This leaves me with ME 500, the Master thesis course for illustrating the online e-system. Let us start with line 3 “Curriculum and reading list” in Table 3.

²⁰ like the ECTS

²¹ All students, tutors and professors (anybody) need a personal log-in code to get access as you will see if you click any of the lines in the Table 3)

²² After the course ended and was archived, some of the text that comes up now is in Norwegian. For our purpose here, this text can now be ignored.

²³ E-mail communicating is part of the options, in particular in one-to-one communication.

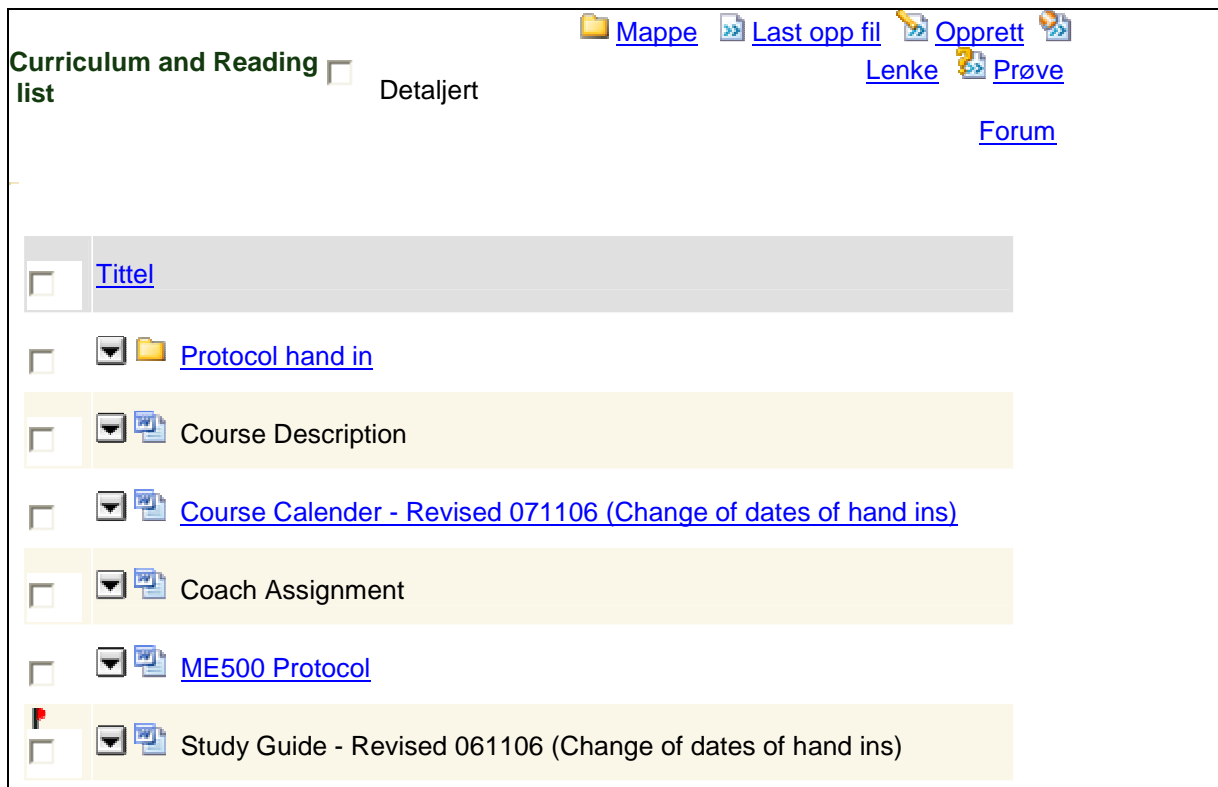


Table 3.1. Curriculum and reading list²⁴.

This folder gives you access to “Course Description” with course information changes or revisions included. “Coach assignment” shows you an overview over what method(s) each of the students have chosen for his or her proposal including an overview allocating students to professors for coaching. Of my six students, two will use qualitative method(s) and four mixed methods. This student group consists of 5 students from different African countries and one from my own country, now staying in Latin-America.

The next line, “Course material”, in Table 3, gives you access to electronic supplementary articles ready to load down.

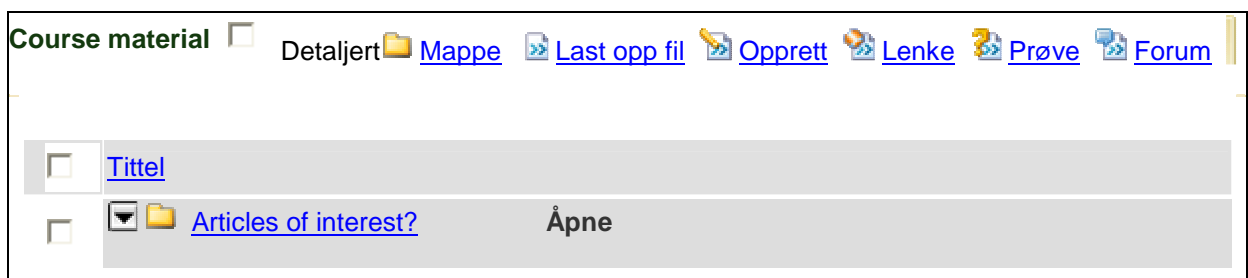


Table 3.2. Course material.

It should be mentioned that at the very start of the study each student receives all course curriculum electronically (a CD) or as hard copies (books). Students also have access to the rather extensive list of online (and other) journals subscribed to by our University Library, and are free to load down and print full texts wherever they sit working in the world.

“The archive” is the third available space (still Table 3):

²⁴ For all tables, ignore all Norwegian text (all the non-English words in this archived version).

Archive	<input type="checkbox"/> Detaljert	Mappe	Last opp fil	Opprett	Lenke	Prøve	Forum
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tittel					
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Examples of Proposals					
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Individual folders					
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Online workshop (Mod. 4) - upload thesis prop., methods section and PPT (if you have figures_tables, write them in your PPT) here.					
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	End of course reflections - upload by the 12th of December (Ikke aktiv) (Anonym)					
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The connections between UT 500 and ME 500.doc					
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Online Workshop					
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Maung Intro					
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Nine Million Bicycles					
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	An example of a storyline					
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	ME500 Critique by					
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	ME500 Critiques					

Table 3.3. The Archive²⁵

This shows a variety of activities and documents. A couple of examples will do. Each student has his or her folder in the “Individual folders” where they can upload activities like their own Master Thesis Proposals, whereas the “Online workshop” folder offers help or instructions for the students as to the actual workshop in this QM module:

²⁵ Line three in the table: the full parenthesis is as follows: “(if you have figures_tables, write them in your PPT) here.”

ME500 Module 4: Online workshop

Date and time: Week 48 (27.11 to 01.12)

Procedure

As described in the Study Guide, you will be presenting your work so far to your peers in your group and receive as well as provide feedback on your work. Workshop forum will be set up for each group. You will upload the following material to your forum by the start of Nov 27th. (Say 09:00 Norwegian time) Remember these are all work-in-progress

- Powerpoint slides presenting your work
- A one or two-page “proposal-at-a-glance” summarizing your proposal with figures if necessary
- Your thesis proposal
- Your methods section

You can decide the exact format of the workshop. Our suggestion is as follows:

Day 1 (i27.11) – upload material, read the uploaded material

Day 2 and 3 (28/11 and 29/11) – discuss the proposals with a minimum of two proposals per day.

Day 4 (30/11) - write and upload the critiques

Day 5 (01/12) – reflect on the feedback you have received

Discussion Guidelines

When you discuss the projects, determine if it is a well-formed proposal. This means...

Table 3.3.1. The “Online Workshop” folder in the “Archive”: extract.

The “ME 500 Critiques” shows instructions for a particular student task in one of the modules. Each student’s work in this module will be critiqued by two co-students. This then is the overview of student-combinations or pairs known as “critical friends”, a pedagogical practice.

The archive thus contains a mixture of material all relevant to the particular course. The students need to go online to check if new material has been added. But, when we do, we also leave a message in the front-page that comes up on your computer when you log into the system (for an illustration, see later).

The content of the next line in Table 3, “Discussion Forum” varies according to the course. For another course, “The Global Environment Issues (GEI) Course”, UT 400, the students uploaded group work in their group portfolio:

The screenshot shows a web interface for a "Discussion Forum". At the top, there is a header "Discussion Forum" with a search icon and the text "Detaljert". Below the header, there is a table of forum entries. Each entry consists of a small icon, a title, and a summary of contributions. The entries are as follows:

Icon	Title	Summary
	Tittel	
	Opp et nivå	
	Task 1.1 (indicators) - Polar bear group	(12 Bidrag, 12 Ulest)
	Task 1.1 (indicators) - Wolf group	(8 Bidrag, 8 Ulest)
	Task 1.1 (indicators) - Lynx group	(7 Bidrag, 7 Ulest)
	Task 1.1 (indicators) - Wolverine group	(17 Bidrag, 17 Ulest)
	Task 1.2 (socio-economics) - Polar bear group	(41 Bidrag, 41 Ulest)
	Task 1.2 (socio-economics) - Wolf group	(30 Bidrag, 30 Ulest)

			Task 1.2 (socio-economics) - Lynx group (43 Bidrag, 43 Ulest)
			Task 1.2 (socio-economics) - Wolverine group (87 Bidrag, 87 Ulest)

Table 3.4. Discussion Forum UT 400.

The first, Task 1.1 for the Polar bear group²⁶, shows the Polar bear group's work for this particular task. Again, we can click our way to a detailed overview over the group discussion showing who has written what and when including number of other students who has read each comment (each click is electronically registered). This way we can also register activity at individual level. The tutor and professors' comments are inter-sectioned the same way.

Chatting, line 5 in table 3, has not been used for this course, and the folder is empty (hence no Table 3.5). As for "Hand-ins", several modules demanded the students should upload hand-ins as part of the mandatory tasks and activities:

Hand-in	<input type="checkbox"/> Detaljert	Mappe
	Tittel	
		ME500 Final proposal - due 15th of December (Ikke aktiv)
		ME500 Methods section - due 15th of December (Ikke aktiv)
		Preliminary Master Thesis Proposal (Ikke aktiv)
		Written critique of two presentations due on the 30th of Nov. (Ikke aktiv) Åpne

Table 3.6. Hand-ins.

This table shows all hand-ins for "our" course. Time for submission per hand-in is electronically registered and put online which makes it hard for the late-comers (for deadlines we use Western "military" time). However, in case of anticipated problems of one kind or another (technical, cultural or other), students are encouraged to contact us in advance for an amicable solution if their argument is regarded legitimate (the pace in e-learning demands a rather strict rhythm).

These tables briefly illustrate the Fronter e-learning system. However, as courses run parallel, students will have to operate parallel boxes at the same time e.g. discussion forums and deadlines for uploading hand-ins just as in FTF studies. It takes a clear head combined with a certain level of computer knowledge to succeed. As foreseen, some students face more problems than others, a religious holiday suddenly overlaps with a deadline e.g. the date for id is regulated by the moon, not by a fixed date, a close relative is to be buried and the ceremony is not just attending the church ceremony next block, network is down, up and then down again, there may be a political or other riots making access to library, the computer room or the net- café complicated, female students may at times have to handle more strict gender roles. This accentuates the need for certain flexibility and good communication as crucial in e-learning for all participants involved, also built into the e-pedagogic used.

²⁶ As shown in the table, the other students named their groups the Lynx group, the Wolf group and the Wolverine groups.

E-pedagogics

The study programme links up education and research on sustainable development with new information technology, and a e-learning pedagogic based on a social constructivist approach. The approach accentuates the students and the expectations towards their own active contribution and responsibility for learning making it a place for relational learning (Knowles 2002). This makes pedagogical practice crucial such as group work, discussions and joint assignments, and each student is expected to be active as well as responsible for making the most out of the learning environment. Learning how to operate the Fronter system then becomes a key to participation. This also interferes with the classic hierarchical teacher-student relationship by the lecturer rather as a facilitator or an e-moderator (Salmon 2003). The high activity level minimises the free rider problem.

Institutions that apply ECTS are obliged to follow certain criteria which also facilitate studying online in the absence of personal FTF contact with the teacher who traditionally has been waved as basic in teaching. All course catalogues have

to be published on the web, including detailed descriptions of study programmes, units of learning, university regulations and student services. Course descriptions contain learning outcomes (what students are expected to know, understand and be able to do) and workload (the time students typically need to achieve the learning outcomes), expressed in terms of credits²⁷. In most cases, student workload ranges from 1,500 to 1,800 hours for an academic year, and one credit corresponds to 25-30 hours of work²⁸ (http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc48_en.htm).

This makes it possible for students to keep in rather good control as to what we expect from them after having completed each course and the expected workload to get there. Also, the ECTS system facilitates comparisons and transfers internationally, a highly relevant moment for students both in the North and the South²⁹.

Let us now look further into practice from one of our qualitative research courses.

Teaching QM online

Whereas the previous section described the system with instructions, content and activities, this section will focus on the daily operation of the system.

Communicating online: practice

Let me comment chronologically from recruitment, via teaching and learning to doing and writing up the master theses.

Making marks matter: equality in practice.

There are 12 NOMA scholarships available for students from the partner universities in the South. The scholarships will cover expenses such as travels, accommodation and food for the FTF sessions, travel insurance, visa, a monthly

²⁷ All is included in Table 1- documents.

²⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc48_en.htm

²⁹ For the ECTS system, see http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/ectskey_en.pdf

allowance, lap top³⁰ and curriculum. A formal uneven distribution of cash and computers thus becomes a facilitating mean to compensate for initial (start-up) inequality. However, it is required that all self financed international students³¹ are registered students at University of Agder, and will need a residence permit and be able to document that they have 85.000 NOK or €9540³².

Country of origin becomes relevant in at least three ways. It is crucial as to who may be considered rightful applicants (see footnote 2), access to scholarships, and the documentation required (cf. resident permit requirements). According to our experiences, the recruitment policy facilitates for diversity in the student group, itself an important element when doing qualitative research in complex societies.

As for tutors and lecturers, we started out as fairly "White and Western", but with an aim of becoming more multi-ethnic by recruiting from the South. Structural categories are not unproblematic. Are you Western or non-Western if you are born in the South, but studied, employed and making your career in the West? What about a White person born in and living in the South? Are complex societies in a global world geographically bound? However, the group has moved to become more mixed or diverse with more members from the South of mixed ethnicities and cultures though still male dominated, apart from at tutor level (making gender ranked?). This has in general made the hyphenated-member-dilemma less prevalent (Fine 1996).

Making common ground: Two Face-to-Face sessions (FTF)

To make the environment conducive for learning is part of the pedagogic concern. This calls for a good start as well as a good process and is baked into the structure by help of two sessions where all participants meet at the same geographical place.

At the very beginning of the first semester, students, professors and tutors meet face to face for 2-3 weeks. This meeting takes place at the University in the North (Norway). Apart from getting to know each other facilitated by a number of social activities, all students will be introduced to the learning resources, computer technology and the pedagogics applied. This is required to make all students handle the technical aspect of studying online. Variation in competence is huge. The first FTF aims at reducing the systematic technical gaps. By use of different ways of playing and communicating, all participants (students as well as lecturers) also learn to know each other by name.

Calling out your name

All participants stay in a huge circle and one by one we call out their names. The lecturer in charge of the session starts up by throwing a small ball over to the person next to him or her while calling out his or her name. If you have forgotten the name, the person or the other members will assist, and you then loudly repeat the name. The person then returns the ball to the lecturer who now throws it to the next person in the circle and continues this way till the full circle is done. Now the next person repeats the procedure.

Having listened to 20 rounds and much laughter, you are bound to succeed. From the start names come out in all variations to much joint amusement (think of the Norwegian Åsleik, Trygve or Aslaug). When you later go online and your name and

³⁰ Initially a lap-top was not included, but adding a personal, portable computer to the student's basket, reduced problems considerably.

³¹ From countries outside EEA

³² 1 Euro= 8,91 NOK January 30, 2009 as a state requirement.

face (photo as in Table 6 below) get on the screen, you recognise the person and hopefully keep up the good mood.

The second FTF session is organised by one of the collaborating universities in the South (2006 in South Africa, and 2008 in Sri Lanka) and is dedicated to matters arising in the process and to prepare the thesis work.

Teaching and learning QM online.

I will start out with nipping into the interactional matter or the doing of student activities by showing extracts from the online debates still archived.

Online: Handling the asynchronous discussion

The “Discussion Forum”, works well to illustrate.

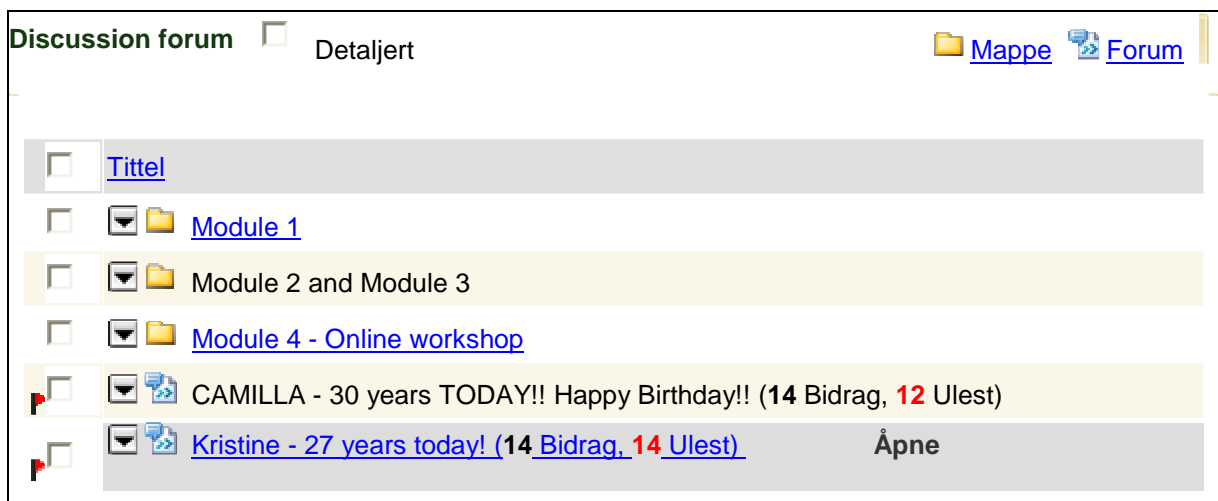




















Table 4. Discussion Forum ME 500.

For an illustration: “Module 2 and Module 3” (see Table 2) shows the group folders. If we click on this line, a new set of lines comes up, one per group that gives access to the group’s online asynchronous discussions as for “Anne’s group” with an introduction by the tutor (as for the other groups) :

Tittel	Skrevet av	Dato	Lest av
Anne's group	Tutor	2006-10-29	26
Hello Group	Student 1	2006-10-30	22
Re: Hello Group	Student 2	2006-10-30	22
re: hello group	Student 3	2006-10-30	22
Question	Student 1	2006-10-30	22
Hi, good friends!	Anne Ryen	2006-10-31	22
Re: Hi, good friends!	Student 2	2006-11-02	16
Hello Group	Student 4	2006-11-01	22
Hi, student 4!	Anne Ryen	2006-11-01	21
To all of you! Have a look here:	Anne Ryen	2006-11-01	24
Re:To all of you! Have a look here:	Student 2	2006-11-02	20

 Nicely put	Other professor	2006-11-03	18
 Thank you Anne	Student 5	2006-11-04	16
 re to all of you, have a look	Student 6	2006-11-09	15
 re: to all	Student 3	2006-11-02	18
 Thanks Anne	Student 4	2006-11-03	16
 Re: Thanks Anne	Student 2	2006-11-03	17
 Question	Student 2	2006-11-08	17
 Re: Question	Student 4	2006-11-09	15
 Another Question	Student 7	2006-11-10	16
 hi guys	Student 6	2006-11-10	17
 Very good, student 6!	Anne Ryen	2006-11-12	16
 Re:Very good, student 6!	Student 2	2006-11-13	14
 Very relevant questions, so...!	Anne Ryen	2006-11-12	18
 Re: Very relevant questions, so...!	Student 2	2006-11-13	13
 Anne	Student 6	2006-11-13	14
 Hi - look at lists of references!	Anne Ryen	2006-11-12	17
 Re: Hi - look at lists of references!	Student 2	2006-11-13	14
 a lurker	Student 8	2006-11-14	17


[Nytt innlegg](#)

Table 5. The online discussion in Module 2 for “Anne’s group” (the six students I coach). Extract.

The figure shows the group-communication for the period October 29 till November 18 (Nov-15-18 excluded for practical reasons, and names replaced by number or category). To join in with a new comment or question, you click “Nytt innlegg” in the bottom right corner (in English when the course is running). By clicking a line the full comment comes up on your computer. Non-group members can also join in our discussion as shown by student 7 or “a lurker”, student 8. This is like walking down the corridor with the colloquiums and you stop to listen to or join in with a comment to one of the groups before you return to your own.

Here is an illustration (my comment Oct. 31):

Hi, good friends!



[Anne Ryen](#) 2006-10-31 00:21

Glad to see you are all so active - definitely it will pay off in the long run!!

I just put my closing remark to module 1..., but let me copy last part of my message below here:

"So now, we are on to Module 2, and I hope you work well on getting the main ideas from the different methodologies as we put them in ME 409!

In general we select literature that is relevant (some general, some specific) for our own thesis - methodology and method(s). I'll be out there looking for possible literature that might be of particular

interest to each of you...I will also give you some web-addresses to online journals that will be useful for you also after your master is completed!! (most of our life takes place after the thesis...)

Camilla, you ask a specific question as to ...I simply think you should make sure you do get the main ideas...and then later we can come back to what is of most relevance to your own thesis - that goes for all of you. Hope this makes sense!

(we are back to wintertime here now which means we have delayed everything by 1 hour compared to last week - so in case you`re travelling to this part of the world - do check your watches!)

Sleep well...

Anne

Lest av: 22

Table 6. My comment October 31, 2006 ("Anne`s group", line 6 in table 4.2.1).

The bottom line shows this comment has been read by 22 students. The next day there were four comments or questions, so I went back online, and the good discussion went on. Challenges here is to make students feel confident to join in (your comments will not go away as in an oral debate – in case you regret), learning how to join in as to greeting procedures, initial or introductory phrases, politeness etc. that all are more extensive in traditional societies (cf. for examples of recipient-designed talk in a multi-cultural context, see Ryen 2008a and b). In an international, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural group, we observed great initial variations in competences.

Diversity: dimensions of learning

Here is an illustration from "Written critiques" (Table 3.6) where students submit their critical friends assignments:

My comments on the proposal by... (Student`s name)

CASE: To examine factors prompting the dropout of PRIDE and the PTF clients

1. Is the topic interesting and important?

I think the topic is very interesting and important. ... Also considering the fact that not many studies have focused on why people drop out I believe that your study can contribute in increasing the knowledge concerning factors prompting drop out. The topic has also been in the media these days related to the Nobel peace prize which makes the topic even more relevant to focus on at least the success part of MFIs.

2. Layout

You have a nice structure in the proposal and in the method section. Just a few comments on how to improve....

...

8. Conclusions

Based on my comments and discussion I believe that the research project is doable. Some changes will be needed related to sample size, methods to use and how to analyse data, but if these changes are made the research project will be interesting, doable and also have the possibility to contribute to increased knowledge about MFIs and factors prompting drop out.

GOOD WORK X (name) AND I AM LOOKING FORWARD TO READ THE FINAL VERSION. (name) ;=)

Table 7. Illustration of a student`s critique of a co-student`s master proposal (front page and name omitted).

This activity implies getting familiar with ways of seeing and of writing different from your own, and to frame your response in ways that enable your co-student to grasp what you say, and preferably in a way that motivates him or her to improve his or her work.

Students from the North, tended to go right in, initiate debates and very early in the process promote themselves as weavers for the groups. The Norwegian students would also “celebrate” co-students` birthdays as we see in Table 4.2 lines 4 and 5 which includes compliments and “invitations” to parties:



(NAME) - 30 years TODAY!! Happy Birthday!!	 Alltid åpen
	
The best greetings and millions of hugs to the worlds most youthful and sporty 30 years old! I hope you are enjoying the day in [country] with friends, good food and a bottle of ["drink"]! You're the best! I wish I was there with you!!	

Table 8. A birthdays in our group

By time this procedure was adopted also for other students. Since activities also generated credits, Western students may initially have benefited from such opportunities. However, learning also includes looking at how co-students communicate. We did get reports telling us about the confusions some male students in the South experienced with the Northern female students who totally ignored or violated old standardised gender expectations still in operation in more traditional communities. For some of the female students from the South, this was their first experience with gender equality in practice. So, the structure of e-learning ignored pre-fixed categories like sex or family background exposing participants to ways of doing being an online student. In a meritocracy, students from the North pursue their way thus motivating ambitious students from the South to climb their platform.

According to one of our female students: “This is the first time I have dared to open my mouth in a plenary session, and the first time I have heard my own voice” (female student from the South).

To others it was more problematic. A male student from the South who would benefit from his ascribed status in his own community, would now loose his privileges. This is the other coin of (gender) equality, and may easily cause individual level problems especially when taking place in a virtual space with no real-life companions. This is part of our concern for the QM learning environment. The cultural meeting between communicating styles can be confusing which eventually made us introduce “Protocol of communication between students and supervisors” (cf. Table 3.1) for the master thesis supervision. A document all had to sign.

Also, to make sure that students manage to pick up vital information along the process, you automatically get all new messages from the course instructors when you log on to the system. This is the information that was on the day the course ended and preserved in the study archive (newest on the top):

- ⇒ Remember to fill in the End reflections for both UT500 and ME500
- ⇒ **Save early, save often!**
- ⇒ The last leg!
- ⇒ Ladies and Gentlemen, the online workshop has begun, but do you know where your documents are? Seven of you have not uploaded anything in the workshop folder under Archives. **That was a requirement.** So is the material you are supposed to upload. Not all of you have done this. I do assume that you all know

what you are doing. I know what I have to do. **Points are being slowly deducted with every passing hour.**

⇒ ME 500 Thesis proposal and methods section - **additional info**

All these worked to build up a feeling of community.

Variety in assignments

Marks were based on a number of different qualitative methods activities:

<p>Task 1 Learn about the fundamental elements of research methods in social sciences research and the role of research.</p> <p>Activity A (1h) Mini lecture. (On-line lecture in writing by professor)</p> <p>Activity B (8h) (Reading 2 book chapters on QM specified in the study guide).</p> <p>Activity C (8h) Discuss in your group (in the “forum”):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ What is the essential difference between qualitative, quantitative and action research in terms of ontology, epistemology and axiology?▪ How does this influence our choice of research method and research question? Does the choice of research method affect the findings from a research project? If so how? <p>Write an individual summary of the discussion (1 to 2 pages). Put the document in your portfolio folder. Find an appropriate title.</p> <p>Task 2 Generating a research topic</p> <p>Activity A (10h) In the online forum, generate as many research topics as you can ...Then select one and generate specific research problems. These can be turned into project proposals for the assignments in this course and they are also possible thesis research problems.</p> <p>Activity B (8h) The tutor will now put you into groups. Discuss (in the “Forum”):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ What is a good research topic?▪ How do you know you have a good research problem? <p>Make a group summary (1-2 pages) of the discussion and put into your group folder.</p>

Table 9. Student activities. From Research Methods` Study guide.

This module demands the students do individual as well as collective assignments that all have to be submitted in the correct folders, and demand student communication, coordination and completion. Tutors and professors can follow their discussions, guide and respond along the process. To follow a module means rather hectic work for everyone included since it is expected that tutors and professors follow and respond to students at a daily basis.

To focus on the contextual matters is vital in multi-cultural, complex societies:

Activity B:

Spend 1 hour searching for research ethics guidelines in your own country.

Alternatively: search for the same in the country where you will do your fieldwork. If you cannot find any, tell your fellow students where you searched (universities, other institutions etc). Share the web-addresses with your student colleagues in the common forum.

Write your individual hand-in:

A.

What are the major (select a few only) ethical challenges in working with your master thesis? (include the web-address or ref. to the guidelines you refer to)

B.

How would you handle these challenges in order to do ethical research?

Write an individual summary (1500-2000 words) and put in your portfolio folder by the **20th of March**.

Table 10. Research ethics.

A and B showed ethical dilemmas where a large share in the South would be unknown to researchers from outside the South. This also works to inform and prepare supervisors for discussing hurdles during data collecting and when writing up the thesis (for illustration see Reissman 2005, Mertens and Ginsberg 2008, Ryen 2008 a and b).

Let us now discuss some major experiences from e-learning qualitative methods.

Discussion

What became of qualitative methods in this online, constructionist informed study? Our innovation is an official success, supported by external funding, receiving new external grants to pursue the North-South capacity building and enormously popular in the South (and North) as reflected in the constant increase in number of applicants. In the conclusion I will apply a wider contextual perspective with reference to the North-South issue and the neo-colonial, indigenous methodology debate as a prerequisite for transformation.

Innovative QM teaching as introduction to diversity and reflexivity

Our student group is mixed across sex, nationality, ethnicity, culture, academic background and family situations and obligations. The composition of activities built into a constructionist e-learning system makes the students collaborate in flexible smaller and larger groups, initiate weavers and take responsibility for leading the work until the very end-product. This conditions strategies for making good connections and community in the group (Hyerle 2009).

Community and dialogue

Our approach also invited to one-to-one time with students with responsive dialogue by being accessible for the students online via Fronter or e-mail depending on the nature of issue from academics to more personal or family matters. Tutors (cf. "Anne`s group" in Table 5) who are in charge of the daily interaction can also call for us to respond to particular students or questions if necessary or recommended. As lecturers and coaches we respond to the group or the individual students as in "Hi,

good friends”, Table 5 and “Hi, student 4” (from me), or “Nicely put!” by “other professor”. Students` quotes affirm the meaningfulness of such brief connections (Hyerle 2009) as in “Thank you Anne” by student 5 or “Thanks Anne” by student 4 (there may be many reasons for such flatter, though my point here is the positive environment such barter construct).

We also design activities to maximise individual and small-group contact which increases attention to and meaningful dialogue with the students as they eventually do themselves as in “Hello group” by student 1 and 4 or the responses to my “To all of you! Have a look here” by students 2 and 6, or in “Question” from student 2 and a follow-up question “re: Question” from student 7. As to positive comments to individual students, I try to acknowledge each student or make each of them “visible” during a module,- there is always some minor or larger good effort done by individual students. Written comments were given in different ways from comments in the online asynchronous communication till using “track changes” in the document when responding to individual as well as group drafts or hand-ins. This is incredibly time consuming though the student response is excellent like: “I have never before received such detailed comments. It was incredibly helpful. Thank you, Anne”(Student).

Interspersing personal talk is another way to make healthy connection with students or to make a difference as in the birthday greetings where we would follow-up a student initiative to participate in creating a positive and inclusive learning environment. The same goes with treating everybody with respect (Glenn 1996 and Deiro 2005), cf. the protocol for good communication (also the web is a space for power). The title shows how one of the African students addressed me by “Hi, Madam, I have a small question” reflecting his on-campus cultural practice brought into our online communication in ways that contributed to mutual respect.

Diversity and reflexivity across socio--cultures

These experiences were crucial to the positive mood created in the whole study group. Bosalek and Matthews (2009) in their article “E-learning: A cross-institutional forum for sharing socio-cultural influences on personal and professional identity” focus on the outcomes of innovative pedagogical practices in e-learning and the context for relational and contextual learning (Knowles 2002) based on an e-learning module on advanced social work ethics, especially using the device of students as “critical friends” by reading and critiquing their partners’ essays as we saw above.

This also illustrates how the lecturer is transformed into a facilitator or e-moderator (Sánchez-Casal and MacDonald 2002 in Bosalek and Matthews 2009). Bosalek and Matthews accentuate how this pedagogical practice invites to identifying commonalities with and differences from each other (2009) illustrated with a student’s comments on their own ability to think about their own work: “...It was through reflecting on her work, that I realized my views were different from hers, if not only, then mostly, because of my own experiences”(Student, p.241). The authors highlight the impact on meaning-making and achieving learning objectives by concluding that “...these students utilized a “virtual forum” to successfully identify and explore the ways in which social, economic and political factors in their respective social-cultural contexts affect them personally and professionally.” (p.244-245). However, the crucial question here is to what extent teaching qualitative methods would benefit from this approach and pedagogical practices (also Moritz 2009 refer to how communicative activities in net-based working processes stimulate productive thinking and abductive reasoning).

From moduls to master theses: What happened to qualitative methods?

We used the same pedagogic practices in teaching QM to motivate to learning and reflexivity. If reflexivity worked, this should also be reflected in their theses. They were well trained in reflecting on and in writing up research topics and problems in quantitative as well as in qualitative research, in describing the research process in both methodologies, potential quandaries in the field, ethical issues and ways out.

Relevance?

As we saw in the idea behind the study programme, it “is primarily concerned with development, facilitators and obstacles whether environmental, social, economic or political”. A selection of Master theses titles show that qualitative studies are used to explore developmental relevant issues. Topics range from sustainable fresh water management in urban areas to microfinance and empowerment of women, waste and waste management, microfinance clients` drop out, local community involvement in conservation and management of national parks, food security and sustainable development at household level, community-based eco-tourism and many more. The projects are often described as case studies of organisations, local communities, wards or municipalities in different countries. Students are free to choose research topic to invite perspectives from the South both in defining problems and in choosing sites as long as economically and practically possible. Examples of practical and other problems could be gender as a problematic issue in strict religious communities, roads and transport, negotiating access when gate keepers demand bribes, at times to do research in your own home town due to local norms of hierarchy, politeness and time, and some places may be ridden by crimes or political riots that seriously can delay your work and expose yourself to danger etc.

Qualitative methods in practice?

The majority of the students irrespective of country of origin use qualitative methods, in particular the interview method alone or in combination with one or more other methods.

But, if we look into some of the theses, we identify certain QM issues that seem to be problematic for students especially from the South which is my focus. I have selected ten or approximately 1/3 of the total number of theses, or close to 2/3 of the theses by students in the South.

The first is the *selection of methods*. In the final product as well as in the QM modules a very high number of students from the South want to combine methods. The dilemma is the number of methods. Frequently we find combining observation with both group and individual interviews. To illustrate, one student writes s/he will use secondary data (“review of books, magazines, articles, reports and other sources available”) and primary data collected by interviews. S/he will use a semi-structured interview guide (at times supplemented by household interviews to “witness and confirm”) and do focus group interviews or “focus group discussions” with women’s groups, men, members in the same sub-groups and combination of men and women. S/he will also use observation and what s/he refers to as key informant interviews and in-depth conversations.

Second, the argument is classic: “the implication [is] that problems specifically associated with one particular approach might be overcome by others” (thesis year

2007:22³³). However, there is no further discussion. Another student defends using the interview method this way: An interview is a qualitative research method that provides real and in-depth information about a particular issue as argument given by Ryen (2002) that, "Social reality is transparent in people's words and action. Given that the researcher follows certain technical guidelines in the interviewing". Still, another refers to Silverman as to how to get authentic data. Both citations show misinterpretations of vital parts of the curriculum. Their arguments seem to have passed the supervisors' checks.

Third, let us look into the *presentation of data*. In one of the theses, we find a number of tables presenting the socio-economic background of the involved (N=30). The biggest dilemma is that all tables are presented as separate tables with no possibility to link data across tables by tracing individuals along the different tables (the low number of participants makes it theoretically possible to do this manually). On the one side we get to know about participants' characteristics like ethnicity, religion etc. and on the other what kinds of loans and services people get. We also get to know the purpose of seeking microfinance, but we cannot link the tables at individual level for example to look at who invests in education and for whom (what family members etc). By this fragmentation of data, we are left with thin, isolated descriptions.

When data are used more qualitatively, they may report stories:

One woman revealed that education from ...[the org] improved her business tremendously. She said that, before she joined the credit union she used to send foodstuff to [place], the nation capital, without purchasing goods from there for sale in [other place]....(Ryen 2007:73).

Or by rewriting stories:

It was reported that most of the members who were in good standing had access to educational loans for the payment of school fees and educational expences. Married people used more educational loans than unmarried people....Moreover most members and non-members felt they were old and could not study...(Ryen 2007:75).

The dilemma is not with the data as such, but with the lack of analysing the data. A rather naïve approach to the status of the data is also seen in this extract:

As evidence of increased productivity in agriculture the interviewees showed me the marked difference in the coffee trees in the well attended coffee farms belonging to graduates of (organization) capacity building programme. The coffee trees in the well attended farms looked dark green and thriving, but those in the unattended farms appeared yellowish and scorched. (Photo used as evidence).

These extracts reflect an approach to reality as external with the interviewees' reports as the authoritative versions used by the researcher. Data are not analysed beyond the isolated citations or observations. Reports are treated as "true" mirrors of social reality "as it is". Static reports suffice. Also, in most cases there is no differentiation between to observe (as a method) and merely to see (casually). We also find simple claims like: "In this study, I investigated the study variables without the influence of my preconceived ideas." (Ryen 2007:24)

³³ Due to the critical angle, I have chosen not to use the names of students or supervisors. However, the theses are public.

It is problematic with mistakes such as with the literature (irony seems to be problematic) and the concepts that are misread such as with “negative cases” being used as references to people with different or opposing meanings where “negative” simply is heard as “disagreeing with” (like yes/no, agree/disagree with “no” and “disagree” as “negative cases”).

How: the dilemma of sustained QM incapacity?

We need to ask ourselves how such observations still are possible, and I will briefly reflect over some possible sources.

Exporting Western methodology?

To import methodology books to African universities can be important when such material is missing. However, many books do not fit into the local context due to lack of illustrative material from the South combined with absence of references to national or regional authors that could have motivated to critical thinking of another sort. If philosophy matters to theory of science, such material frequently though often implicitly, is grounded on western, not African philosophy. Gordon takes this seriously in his writings about “Africana philosophy and their hybrid, mixed or creolized forms worldwide”(2008:1) by claiming that “Africana philosophers...are some of those who see the liberating aspects of thought among those who live this question from the underside of the modern life” (ibidem:32). By silencing this, studies may come to invite to copying or imitating rather than to critical reflect on the contextual-universal matter of methodology (Alatas 2004; Ryen 2007a and b). The alienation may even make local daily competence irrelevant since there is nothing familiar neither with the illustrations in the study material nor with the context in which the illustrations are situated. This might be exacerbated in pre-colonial contexts depriving exercises such as “critical friends” of their reflexive potential in mixed groups.

My critical comment is not with the naturalist or rather positivist approach in these theses, but with the lack of awareness of alternatives as well as with the absence of attempts to validate data (like checks and balances when reality is seen as external).

Scientific or mundane?

Classic textbooks tend to treat data collection as taking place in a scientific context hence prescriptions for good interview behaviour. The classic interviewer-respondent relationship is conditioned upon a hierarchical, disciplined communication with the aim to elicit pre-stored data. Interestingly, after twenty years of fieldwork in Sub-Saharan countries, I notice the disparity to how language is being used in daily practice with “truth” as narrated and highly contextual and talk as more circular (Ryen 2002). This bears parallels to parts of the Western academic community as well with focus on a rather simple approach to the referential aspects of language (for an alternative see Silverman 1998). Let us therefore also look into how such practices can be sustained.

Confusion or credibility?

In 2007 there was an evaluation of the use of marks at master level. The committee from three different Norwegian universities selected five theses for discussion. Here are the results:

Thesis No	Marks	Justification
1	D,D,B	-
2	C,E/D,F	poor or invisible empirical material
3	B,C,D	the two first find the analysis to be good
4	B,C+/B-,C	varied arguments: poor discussion, poor methodological approach and "report format"
5	A,A/B,D	D: methodology weak, no discussion Of context/structure

Table 11. External evaluation of five selected master theses from the online Master Study Programme.

This shows a rather huge variation in evaluation like D-F for no.2 or A-D for no.5 where the range goes from A as the best till F for "failed" despite national descriptions of requirements to the different scores or marks. This also shows there is no joint perception of what qualifies as a good, not so good or poor master theses. The evaluation goes beyond mere methodology and does call for at least an internal debate and action plan as to how the programme should deal with the credibility issue in research, qualitative research included (hence the wider external debate on the issue). It is not unlikely also to assume a variation within the supervisors' team with consequences to how students are guided through the research process hence the observations referred above (guidelines rather than rules or commands).

In a longer perspective this means the students will let their experiences from their master theses inform their further work.

This brings us to our next question.

Mechanism for neo-colonialism?

If we use reflexivity to critically look into the QM courses for this study, we may get closer to the complexity of the qualitative methods mystery. The majority of the professors from the North can be described as QM users, not as QM specialists. This makes it more problematic to promote QM as not merely a simple tool, but as crucial to the credibility of students' research findings as well as situated within an ontological and epistemological debate. Anthropology had for long a relationship with methodology captured in "fly on your own", economics and ICT has (for many reasons) no tradition for strong (or any) voices in methodological reflexivity in qualitative research dominated by sociologist, educationalists and others (as reflected in the disciplinary backgrounds to contemporary contributors and their historical reviews in major QM books like Denzin and Lincoln 1996, Gubrium and Holstein 2002, Seale et al. 2004, Flick 2004, Holstein and Gubrium 2008 or Mertens and Ginsberg 2009).

This may account for the observations in the theses from the South. However, based on my own experiences from supervising South students, this can be even more complex. With a rather positivist tradition last decades in the South, the constructionist pedagogic used may have reinforced this tendency when not seriously challenged. This may not have been deliberate, or at best related to selective perception. Tutors and the majority of the supervisors may have worked as passive transmitters of the old methodology regime by not exposing students to critical questions with reference to alternative epistemologies and practices either in the West or in the South or to critically pursue the credibility issue in qualitative methodology. As such, traces of neo-colonialism (as well as rather poor qualitative methodology) may have crept in the back door to the study. QM was not on the agenda for the second FTF session with the students and the coordinator's reply to my question "why?" was that "we don't see methodology as so important".

No doubt, to operate e-learning modules based on constructionist strategies is incredibly time-consuming (Hurley 1999) which made me withdraw after the first round with these methodology modules. However, it was a pleasure to give an introductory lecture for the next group of students. I was also invited to sit in for a lecture on Habermas by a professor from the South followed by students' questions. This invited to start my lecture by contextualising Habermas in the Frankfurter school and their claims to the social sciences, and to correct the response to the student who was told off when he wondered if one also could use qualitative methodology in action research.

I argue that we need to look at the mechanisms that continuously maintain the relevance of the critical voices from the South towards Western lack of reflexivity on alternative perspectives (Mukherji and Sengupta 2004). Though the slowness of social change to improve the poverty issue in the South is outmost complex, we also need seriously to recognise the potential inherent in qualitative methodology.

Conclusions: transfer or transform?

Qualitative research has blossomed last decades though the reasons are multiple from increased credibility in the research community till mundane practical arguments like lack of knowledge or even courage to do quantitative studies or limited economic funding. Last decade especially, we saw an upcoming focus on indigenous knowledge and alternative method questions (Denzin et al 2008, Smith 2005, Sardar 2006, Mukherji & C. Sengupta 2004, Ryen 2008a and b, Carpenter and McMurchy-Pilkington 2008). These debates take qualitative methods into the question of how to make research findings matter in the local context especially outside the West and in cross-cultural research contexts, in particular.

To transfer competence and capacity via higher education initiatives is a great endeavour, but it takes treating methodology seriously. To cite Mertens and Ginsberg on transformative research:

...the transformative paradigm...embraces the critical examination of versions of perceived reality in terms of the cultural and societal parameters that have traditionally permitted those in positions imbued with formal authority and power to define reality for those who do not share this privileged position (2009: 486).

This positions qualitative methods, not in the periphery, but into a more central location in the knowledge production inside or outside the South, FTF or in CMC in any e-learning study.

In his discussion of survey interviews Cicourel (1964) argues that utterances always are occasioned with sense making based on unspoken meanings and aspects of settings, and never context-free. This means, we need to understand participants' use of categories in particular activities. "Success" is such a category that needs to be explored, so let us look into the contexts in which it is being used. From an economic institutional perspective, nearly all students in our study get through the full process to the academic certificate. Based on the new model for financing university institutions funding is now linked up with number of students passing the exams, and no longer per registered student. This makes it an economic success. At national level, the external funding involving a number of universities in the South also makes it a networking/South success. It involves a rather big academic staff and has invited to cross-department collaboration which also contributes to inter-organisational optimism.

The last question then, what about a qualitative research success? No doubt, students' enthusiasm is excellent, so by time we hopefully also can offer not only supportive participatory environments, but also a space for learners to "become actively engaged in knowledge communities" (Bosalek and Matthews 2009:236) though firmly based on the contemporary qualitative methods debates.

The main goal of (Norwegian)³⁴ development cooperation is to contribute towards lasting improvements in the economic, social and political conditions under which people live in developing countries, with special emphasis on assistance which benefits the poorest sector of the community³⁵. http://www.norad.no/default.asp?V_ITEM_ID=1209

This is where the success should guide us.

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³⁴ Author's parenthesis.

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Teaching Visual Grounded Theory.

Abstract

The paper is based on personal 20-years experience of teaching methodology of grounded theory and qualitative methods.

In the following paper I would like to show the usefulness of visual analysis in teaching methodology of grounded theory. A very important tool is to use pictures and a sequencing of pictures, which give a comparative insight into empirical data and teaches the comparative method that is so important to generate theory (Glaser 1965; Glaser, Strauss, 1967; Glaser 1978). Students can learn how to compare and find patterns in empirical instances, which have visual character. Some of the sequences show stages of action and the sequence that all together is a linear representation of activity. Sequence of pictures helps to build the pattern that is conceptual understanding of the phenomena being studied.

In other case, the sequences of pictures given to students are not planned. They are almost accidentally created and force students to find patterns by means of the comparative analysis. We should always know what had happened before a picture was taken as well as afterwards, it is similar to sequences analysis in textual data (Silverman 2007). We should always be aware of the context of analysed activity.

Students are also encouraged to make a theoretical sampling and saturate categories using data from photos and other visual data. This helps them to proceed with the research from empirical incidents to conceptually elaborated properties of categories and finally to the definition of category and formulating the hypotheses. In this way they learn visual grounded theory that is using the visual images for generating categories, properties and hypotheses and also for presenting results of analysis in the final report.

Keywords

Visual grounded theory; Homelessness; Photography; Visual sociology; Qualitative data analysis; Visual processes; Teaching qualitative methods; Qualitative sociology.

The methods and knowledge about teaching of qualitative research is developing very rapidly now. There is possibility to learn how to teach from the description of cases of teaching (Hurworth 2008). We see a lot of innovations in the

field of teaching There are trials to teach research through internet by organizing Research Park On Line giving the possibility for creating the community of researchers learning from each other, exchanging the ideas and participating in the common research (Chenail 2004). Building the learning objects in such environment also help in teaching qualitative research and analysis, e.g. in grounded theory methodology (Chenail, Spong, Chenail, Liscio, McLean, Lenworth, Cox, Shepherd and Mowzoon 2006).

You Tube, the internet video hosting service, also can be a very good teaching devise by using video recordings of lectures, Power Point presentations on many topics and also collecting data plus showing the context of collecting data, recordings of actions and, at the end, analysis and presentation of results. We can find on YouTube many video clips introducing to qualitative research methods (Chenail 2008). There are also the clips teaching grounded theory from data preparation for coding, analysis and constructing grounded theory³⁶ and others explaining constant comparative method and triangulation³⁷.

Some online journals help in tutoring about writing the papers based on qualitative research. The Qualitative Report journal³⁸ helps the newcomers in qualitative scientific field to write their research reports in the form of academic papers. The help is associated with the access to resources (books, papers), with copy editing and teaching writing format and by giving intensive and extensive feedback to the authors (Chenail, St. George, Wulff, Duffy, Laughlin, Warner and Sahni 2007).

In my practice I usually teach qualitative methods through projects. Students receive a general outline of a research project and how to do a field of study. The most often used methodology of research and data analysis is grounded theory methodology (GTM). After introducing students to methods and procedures of research and analysis of data we start to collect data. Data is collected with different techniques in order to learn how to use them and to find different “slice of data” (including data from internet), that help in generating the properties of category, especially these connected with conditions and consequences (Glaser and Strauss 1967). During the process of collecting data we analyse data in the classroom – these are basically analytical sessions. The all students share data and memos and categories from one project to analyse and go forward in developing properties of categories and constructing hypotheses (see Corbin and Strauss 2007; Charmaz 2006; compare also Hesse – Biber 2007).

We have three goals of this paper to achieve. First and the most important is to describe the ways of teaching grounded theory by using visual images. The two other goals are subservient to the first one: to describe visual grounded theory as it is used in practice and the last one to show the analysis of visual data by presenting brief results of a research on homeless people.

A didactic and, at the same time, a research project on homelessness have been partially accomplished in Lodz³⁹. The students participating in the project studied specialization of social work. One of the didactic aims of the project was to teach the students sensitivity and “intimate familiarity” of the field and finally to generate more formal categories and construct hypotheses to get basic knowledge on grounded theory. The research project was connected with the general outline, which was prepared beforehand, in order to gather the most important information on

³⁶ see for example: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=em3dRhwQEAA>

³⁷ see for example: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FtyNe9w5Pb4>

³⁸ <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/>

³⁹ Lodz University, June and July of 2008, twenty students involved in the project

“being homeless”. The strategy of research applied in this study is grounded theory and the qualitative methods of research are: narrative interview (20 interviews done and transcribed during one month), open-ended interview (40 done during one month and transcribed) and photography (800 photos done during one month and described) and repeated visits in shelters. There were at least 60 homeless involved at the project during one month. Data were collected either at the shelters or in the places where homeless people lived (streets, forest, allotments etc.). Homeless people were asked to show the photographer their silhouettes, it means their photos with physical objects and surrounding that indicate their identity and past, present and future orientation to life. We started our research with collecting photos of homeless people from Internet and with analysing them. We used also other data on homeless people from Internet (video, journal articles and plain information).

This is the manner in which not only do I teach technical aspects of carrying of empirical-sociological research, but also sociological, theoretical as well as social sensitivity. All these sensitivities are obtained by analysing collected visual images of investigated problem. We want usually to be very close to the contexts of activities of the researched subjects and we are also interested in their experiences. The data elaborated conceptually were evaluated further by new data (and new kind of data) and further by theoretical elaboration that we did together in the class. We follow here the constructivist tradition of grounded theory with reference to pragmatist tradition (Charmaz 2006; Bryant and Charmaz 2007; Prus 1996; Bryant 2009).

If we see things from the field presented in photos, we can try to put ourselves in the context as a participant of this situation or to be an observer. In both cases we are close to the investigated situation. Obtaining “intimate familiarity” is also the question of memory. Photos could be a good “artificial limb” of our memory. Pictures can sometimes give more information about the conditions of life than investigated social actors (see the paragraph “Saturating the category and theoretical sampling”). Being familiar with the situation is connected with our ability to obtain and process as much information from the field to our computer files, as it is possible. Photography is very helpful here. Moreover, it links the empirical context with analytical categories, what is so important in the constructivist approach of grounded theory. We see the links directly, what is indicated by category and we strictly keep track of our conceptual thinking to empirical (visual) data. It is very important in evaluation of the research that is done in grounded theory style (Corbin and Strauss 1990, 2007). What we actually do, it is a practice of visual grounded theory, that is associated with using visual data as a base for generating codes, categories and properties of categories and also for the theoretical sampling, saturating categories and for using constant comparative method in analysing of data. Finally visual images are also important in presenting elaborated theoretical statements and theory. The all kind of visual data could be used in analyses. We can paraphrase the dictum of Glaser that “all is data” for a dictum “the all visual data could be analysed”. We remember that data are constructed and we should also analyse the context of constructing it. Visual data are also helpful in constructing the theoretical hypothesis/thesis. We can do it as A. Clarke does. She used both grounded theory and situational analysis for analysing discourses with extension to the historical, narrative and visual discourse materials to generate situational maps of these discourses (2005) or, as we do, to concentrate on visual data as a very important “slice of data” in generating theories of visual processes or just “visual properties” of categories that later we construct as a theory. However we should remember about of visual data as visual modes that can be implicated and “realism of gaze” should be carefully analysed: “Who gets to look. At whom or what? Who is in control of seeing? Who/what is the object of the gaze? With what consequences” (Clarke 2005: 210). Interpretation of images is not discovering

the truth (Clarke 2005). If a researcher gazes this context by his research and by photographing or video recording of subjects of research, the context of gazing should be also analysed. Therefore we also analyse the context of visual data production and use it as a data for our analysis.

Ethnographic visual research on homelessness as an example in teaching

We want to show our way of doing visual grounded theory basing on the research on homelessness. There are examples of qualitative visual research on homelessness that use the cooperative approach, in which the researched people **take active part** in producing data.

Radley, Hodgetts and Cullen (2005) researched homeless people taking photographs. They wanted to determine how homeless survive and live in the city and how they visualise it. They asked 12 homeless people to take photographs and show 'key times in their day, of typical activities and spaces, or anything else that portrayed their situation' (Radley, Hodgetts and Cullen 2005). The interviews were conducted before and after taking photos. The photographs added very important information that could not be obtained by interviews alone, the information on space and material objects, according to authors.

Another qualitative research is on "homeless places" as homeless people see them. It is a research on geography of homelessness, on "known" spaces and "hidden" spaces (Johnsen et.al. 2008). A group of homeless people were asked to take pictures using disposable cameras delivered by the researchers. The research was a kind of auto-photography (or self-directed photography) that was taken after conducting in-depth interviews (personal history, the route into homelessness). After obtaining pictures the homeless photographers were reinterviewed about the pictures. The pictures provided photo-cartography of the habitats of homeless people. They showed well-known places as car parks, hostels, street drinking sites, squats or less known areas such as camping sites and places to beg. However some places were not photographed because of inability of access to them (Johnsen et.al. *ibidem*,).

We have got also the classical work on a specific homeless people, the hobos, by Nels Anderson (1923/1965). He used photos in the book, however they were not analysed. The photos seemed to be illustrative and prove of the textual descriptions of the life of hobos. They show the places of living, jungle camp or summer resorting (Anderson *ibidem*), and the places of dining on the "Main Stem" in Chicago (Anderson *ibidem*), but also they are illustrations of some actions, e.g. educational movement among the hobos (Anderson *ibidem*), or "street speaking" concerning the economic arguments on hobos situations and also religious teaching (Anderson *ibidem*).

The photos were used as the auxiliary data about homelessness in the above investigations. We try to use such data for analytic purposes to generate categories, properties of categories by using the coding procedure, memoing and comparative method (Glaser 1965; Charmaz 2006; Corbin and Strauss 2007), in this case comparison of photographed objects, and trying to conceptualise differences and similarities between them. We are not interested in the pure ethnographic description and/or presenting only the description of experiencing the homelessness. We want these kinds of data conceptualize by using the classic grounded theory analytical procedures.

Analysis by comparison of pictures in sequences – artificial sequencing.

Pictures provide substantive knowledge about the field, and they are very important in ethnographical endeavours. However, comparing described and coded pictures gives a possibility to generate categories and their properties. If we compare pictures of homeless people, we can generate the properties of conditions of their life (homological comparisons)⁴⁰. If we compare photos of a homeless man and an entrepreneur or manager, we generate properties of categories describing social stratification or social stratifying process (analogical comparisons)⁴¹. We can elaborate during comparisons differences substantively and immediately conceptually at the same time; they become the source of distinctions and properties. Below the analysis of the pictures comes from research and theoretical memos that we write after coding and comparing the pictures.

While watching the sequence of pictures we commence **a comparative process**. Without comparing things we are unable to typify and create the plan to act. Our mind works comparatively, it demands sequences to create the plan of action or action itself that exists only in time, that means, in an ongoing process. The process is an emerging activity of behaviours that are successively compared.

We can have a natural sequence from **naturally photographed action in progress**. We take pictures one by one to show how people act, work, teach, produce something etc. By means of photographs we represent what is “really” happening in the observed situation. We can also create stills from video-camera recordings that represent particular actions, e.g. debating, playing, walking, fighting, etc.⁴²



⁴⁰ Homological comparisons are aimed to explain a phenomenon and to show the transitive forms of the phenomenon on the base of comparisons of objects from the same substantive field.

⁴¹ Analogical comparisons are connected with looking for the pattern of interpretation on the base of similarities of formally differentiated objects, often from different substantive areas.

⁴² see The sequence of four pictures from Liberman 2004 and www.thdl.org/DebateTutorials; see also Goode 2007 and Konecki 2008, stills from video camera recordings showing actions



The sequence of four pictures from video recordings shows the Tibetan philosophical debate – natural sequence (Lieberman 2004 and www.thdl.org/DebateTutorials).

We can also create **artificial sequence for comparing things or actions**. Let us examine sequence of photos taken mainly by homeless people from a Photographic Club functioning in the shelter in the city of Lodz (photos by homeless were taken from the Internet what is indicated under each photo) and others. We analysed it together with students of social work during practical classes where I taught visual grounded theory (June 2008 in Lodz). It was just the beginning of the research and we have a vague and common sense perspective on homelessness. In this way we obtained a visual perspective of the world from the point of view of homeless people because homeless photographers had taken the pictures. Although this seems to give a direct access to the attitudes of homeless, we should remember that some conventions of photography and technical aspects of photographing create visual data and they are not absent in any act of photographing the world (Banks 2007). Also homeless people have some idea what is photography and photographing?

We took some photos for analysis that were not fully intentionally chosen to represent some topics of homeless life. They also do not represent any action step by step. They were chosen almost on random, just to show something interesting to the sociologically/socially oriented students and to start description of photos and open coding of them. However, we should remember that mainly homeless photographers took the photos. The students analysing pictures were studying social work and were sent to shelters for homeless people and to the streets to find homeless people and conduct open-ended and narrative interviews and to take pictures of physical objects and spaces that show their identity and orientation to the past, present and future life. We attempted to prepare and to make students sensitive to the topic of homelessness by presenting them some pictures and analysing them together in the group and start conceptual thinking on it.

We usually start our analysis in style of grounded theory from one photo that is described in details (see also Suchar 1997 about using photos in grounded theory research). In the first photo we also find some distinctions between objects, people,

space aspects, that usually start the thinking process and analysis of the visual images. In the first picture we see a homeless man raking the rubbish from the lawn⁴³.



Photo 1: Raking the rubbish up; the work of homeless man. Contrasting⁴⁴.
(<http://zik.com.ua/pl/news/2008/04/15/133504>)

The picture was taken from the ground level perspective; the rubbish is seen in the foreground. In the background we can see people, so called “normals” and cars, (one is rather an expensive 4x4 Suzuki). What we see in the picture is the visual process that could be called “**contrasting**”. Maybe the photographer is contrasting, together with the viewer (analyst), what is already socially contrasted. “Normal life” and wealth are visually presented in the background of poverty presented in foreground. Social world is seen in this proportion and that direction, first poverty, second wealth, at least at this picture. We see here the opposition of “homeless – normals”.

In other photo, the contrasting is going in opposite direction (see Photo 2: Easter in the shelter). We can see officials in the foreground, that came to the shelter for Easter celebration sitting at the table together with homeless people. There is more light directed onto the officials. They are well dressed, the men are wearing suits and ties and the women are dressed in two-piece costumes and have visible jewellery. They sit separately from the homeless and enjoy conversation with within their own circle. There is some dividing space between this group and the homeless. When we make a planimetric division, the dividing the picture space is almost in the centre of the picture. In the background we can see the homeless, generally looking around and remaining silent. “Contrasting” is a social process that is also visually elaborated. Detecting the distinctions might be a kind of definition of the situation by the photographer (a homeless man from the photographic club); however, the pictures are related to a real situation and, for a sociological observer, social-structural relations are visible at the first glance. In this particular case, the direction of seeing the social structure is reverse, compared to the first picture, in the

⁴³ The sequence of analysis that is presented below is different from the sequence of the first presentation of pictures when we saw the pictures for the first time and started to analyze them. The sequence created later (ordering of pictures) changed according to our progress in the analysis. We started from the first picture and from category of “contrasting” process, however, not because the pictures were arranged in the way imposing the generation of this category. The arrangement of sequence of pictures during analysis and presentation is the effect of analysis and choosing particular topic by analysts.

⁴⁴ Inscriptions below the pictures are codes of analysts; sometimes there is more than one code.

foreground we can see “normals” that are here officials, and we can see homeless in the background (opposition of “homeless – normals”).



Photo 2: Easter at the shelter, visual process of “contrasting”; Easter celebration; there is a remarkable space between officials and homeless sitting at the table⁴⁵.



Photo 3: “Contrasting” at the station; bench; the process of “benching” (photo taken from the research project).

The “visual contrasting” of the official person to homeless people is visible in the Photo 3. Almost a quarter of the picture is filled with the body of the policeman and the intimate space around him. He is standing and looking down at two homeless men sitting at the bench somewhere at the station. One of them keeps his head down and is looking downwards, searching for documents (probably). Towards the right side we can see “normals” also sitting, however, at other bench. There is a pillar between them, giving the meaning of visual separation. We see the space dividing the two worlds. We also observe a “normal” man buying a ticket at the cashier. Here, once again, we have the homeless surrounded by the so-called “normal” world. Visual contrasting is mainly achieved by framing picture with the focus on the policeman, who is probably asking the homeless man for his ID card. The policeman is a main figure in the picture, representing the official world and the homeless men are outcasts because they are without home and are easily recognized not only by the police. We can observe the postures’ opposition of Standing-Sitting (official – homeless).

⁴⁵ Photos of Easter Celebration in the shelter come from the website of the Photographic Club of Homeless Shelter of St. Brother Albert’s Aid Society in Lodz, ul. Szczytowa 11. (<http://www.bezdomni.ovh.org/easter.html>; retrieved: 01.06.2008).



Photo 4: Work on Contrasting; door as a dividing line between the scene and the coulisses (ante-room); food; photographers work; Easter Celebration (<http://www.bezdomni.ovh.org/easter.html>).

In the background of Photo 4 we can see a homeless photographer taking pictures. By his side there is an official discussing something in ante-room. The open door here is dividing the scene, where the ceremony is held, and the space behind the scene, the coulisses. We see the officials and homeless photographers working to show what is interesting and important for them. The contrast of the two social worlds is the most interesting thing that is emerging from the distinction of the scene and the coulisses⁴⁶.

Looking at the sequence of photos below we, as external observers, can get the impression of **“the atmosphere of waiting”**. However it is very particular situation, because the waiting here seems to be for nothing concrete and nothing specific. There is rather nothing to do concerning homeless men. Photo 5 shows the homeless sitting on the bench, one is reading a newspaper, the other one, without shirt (probably it is hot outside) is smoking a cigarette (we see the length of the cigarette, how far it is smoked out?), and one homeless with a deformed head is looking into the camera. The atmosphere resembles holiday, however, we can see the bench situated near the shelter for homeless, where there is no holiday, but only permanent homeless life. “Eating and sleeping” are the properties of “the atmosphere of waiting” (see Photo 6). “The atmosphere of waiting”, in turn, is probably a property of “homeless life atmosphere”. There is no visible opposition in the picture, no contrasting. World and life are passing slowly and peacefully.

The atmosphere of waiting is created among groups (see Photo 7). A very important element of the life of homeless people and “the atmosphere of waiting” is “sitting on the bench” (see Photo 7). We can observe it in a number of photos. Bench is connected with waiting as in the situation at the station (compare Photo 3); however, homeless people do not wait for anything concrete and special. Bench, then, as a physical object and space induce some specific action that we call “benching” (subcategory of “the atmosphere of waiting”). They are just sitting and waiting... Waiting and sitting are always connected with leaning forward and keeping the elbows on the knees or thighs. The position gives the impression of tiredness; the smile is absent or very delicate. There is no picture showing the body position of homeless kept straight.

⁴⁶ We can find at least three photographers in the Photo 4, one at the back taking picture, one on the right side, working with Canon camera and one taking this picture.



Photo 5: “The atmosphere of waiting”; relaxing - on the bench; benching, place of sitting (photo taken from the research project).



Photo 6: Homeless sleeping at the table. “The atmosphere of waiting”, food, “eating and sleeping” (photo taken from the research project).



Photo 7: Sitting at the bench. Benching. The place of waiting. Group character of “the atmosphere of waiting”. Relaxing — smoking; homelessness by different age, delicate smile, leaning forward and keeping the elbows on the knees or thighs⁴⁷.

Looking at the sequence of pictures we find certain patterns. There is more than just “the atmosphere of waiting”, we can generate another visual process’ category: **“focusing on food”**. Many photos show food, the act of eating or food in the background, when the other action is photographed. Food is associated with many other actions. We see food in the background in Photo 5, a man is sleeping after eating. Photo 8 shows the act of eating during the ceremony. Photo 9 shows the focusing of the photographer on food that is given away for free during a charity event.

⁴⁷ http://www.ltf.com.pl/wystawy_w_galerii/w_o_obiektyw_bezdomnego.html



Photo 8: Focusing on food. Food – Eating (photo taken from the research project).



Photo 9: Focusing on food; charity event (photo taken from the research project, from the Shelter of St. Brother Albert's Aid Society in Lodz).

Detailed Description for New Categories

While looking for the sequence of pictures students can find other patterns of behaviour or cultural arrangements of objects. However, we should remember that artificial sequences, which offer an opportunity for comparison, could leave some photos outside of the patterns. We should be very careful in order not to ascribe them to any patterns and force the data to the pre-existing and/or just generated categories. Such pictures could be analysed separately and given the possible interpretation, taking into consideration only the content of the picture (see Photo 10 below) and help us to generate new categories and/or properties.

What we should do first in our pre-analytical work is to make the detailed description of a photo? We start from the description (see the example below).

Description of Photo 10. A homeless man with the bag sitting on the bed.

Description of the Photo.	Open Coding
<p>The photo presents a homeless man with a bag. The head of the homeless is in the centre of the photo (nearly, view from planimetric division). He smiles, slightly showing his teeth (he has moustache), he is looking up, and the head is turned slightly to the right. He sits on the bed with his legs astride. He holds the bag in his hands. He has a watch and wears a flannel shirt. He is neat, shaved, with clean hands and nails. At the bottom part of the picture there are (in three – parts horizontally divided picture plan) a piece of the bag and a part of an arm of the bed. There is a shelf with some objects on the left side of the photo (the centre of a horizontal plan). Part of the shelf is hanging above the bed. There are some objects on the shelves: a clock, a lamp (? probably), a jar, a box (? probably tea box), radio, and “a head-decoration”. There is a clock with the poster behind (poster with the inscription 2000) on the wall (this is an upper side of the horizontal plan– from planimetric division of the picture). The clock shows 12.28.</p> <p>Above the head of the homeless man from the left side of the photo we can see the calendar from 2003 year with a landscape of a forest and a lake. On the right side of the photo there are some clothes hanging on the hook (jacket, beneath shirt and short overcoat probably?). Further on the right side there is a window and we can see the sun-lit leaves.</p> <p>On the right side of the picture there is a towel (probably?) on the arm of the bed (lower section of the photo).</p>	<p>Bag (Private objects; property); “Framed head”</p> <p>Smiling (expression of emotions– contentment)</p> <p>Sitting on the bed (private space – public space); Keeping the bag, watch (Private objects); Being neat.</p> <p>Arm of the bed– the boundary of private space; shelf – (private objects)</p> <p>Shelf – (Public space/private space)</p> <p>Clock – (private objects)</p> <p>Clock, time (private objects).</p> <p>Calendar (private objects).</p> <p>Division of the space. (Private space – public space); Clothes.</p> <p>Private space – public space.</p>

After completing coding and description of a photo, students can write a memo in order to understand better what the situation is in this separately analysed picture⁴⁸. Memo helps to elaborate generated codes and find more abstract codes. Photos seem to be very meaningful for interpretation of life conditions of homeless people in a shelter. They allow detailed descriptions and create minutiae codes that would be not constructed by using only textual data for the analysis.

⁴⁸ A. Clarke suggests writing so called „specification memo”, that helps “to break the frame, so that we can ‘see’ an image in multiple ways”(2005; 226-227) . We should then, according to Clarke address such topics as: selection, framing, featuring, viewpoints, light, color, focus, presence/absence, intended/unintended audiences, composition, texture, scale and format proportions, technical elements, single or multimedia, relationship to Other Work in Same Media, references, remediations, situatedness, relations with visual cultures, commonness/uniqueness, work of the image, injunctions to viewers (Clarke 2005).

**Memo to Photo 10. "A homeless man with a bag sitting on his bed"
Lack of division for private space and public space. Private objects, property.**

If we take into consideration the distinction: "private – public", we can observe the mixture of private and public space. The clothes of homeless man are hanging on the hook and are clearly visible in the background. The situation is similar with the towel on the arm of the bed. The right side of the photo (divided vertically into two symmetrical parts) presents private objects, which, in our culture, are usually kept in private space not available to the public view. We do not usually present the interior of our wardrobe to the strangers.

On the left side of the photo (close to the lenses of the camera) we can see private objects available also to the public (shelf with private objects). Here we can observe so called "durnostojki", the objects that are usually decorative objects in our homes kept on/near mantelpieces, shelves, some recesses in the walls, etc. These object are supposed to present our identity to the public. The majority of these objects in the shelter have functional rather than decorative character (a clock, a radio, a lamp), although some are decorative (head – decoration).

Private space is mixed with public one. Homeless people have small chances to keep the private objects in private space not visible to the public in the shelter. The only private place is a bag that the homeless man holds in his hands. The rest of the objects, even the ones situated further from the eye of the camera, are suitable for public view and observable, what is documented in the photo.



Photo10: A homeless man with a bag sitting on bed; bedding; to be confined for space (photo taken from the research project).

Comparison for More General Concepts

We may also inspire students to think in a more general way by providing them with a sequence of photos from different contexts that have some analogical similarities (open-analogical comparisons).

If we compare pictures of homeless people and entrepreneur or high rank manager we can immediately find some social class cliché to interpret differences (see Photo 10 and 11). Sociologists tend to think about the social world in the categories of social stratification. Students should also think about the patterns of visual and cultural representation of different body positions in social class terms.

We mentioned earlier that heads of homeless are usually leaning forward and their elbows are kept on the knees or thighs (compare also Photo 7). This tired-like or timid position could be contrasted with a straight position of a high rank manager.

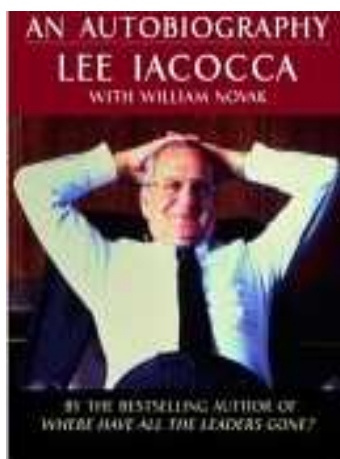


Photo 11: Lee Iacocca on the front page of the Autobiography, “above position”, assertiveness/self - confidence, “formal–informal” pattern of self-presentation (Lee Iacocca and William Novak 1984).

A very significant photo is printed on the front page of the book. It shows the author, a great manager, Lee Iacocca, who presents himself in a very assertive way with both hands kept behind his head, smiling to the photographer (not opening his mouth) and looking directly at him (and to any other spectator) from the “above position”. He does not wear a jacket, suggesting informality, however, he wears a tie that, on the other hand, suggests some formality and position in business world. It creates distance to the audience. Only a recognised man is able to combine informal style of self-presentation with formal one, and in that situation “discrepant” styles of presentation of oneself become socially acceptable in the same context of self - presentation. He is looking at the viewer-photographer with such assertiveness in order to show that the alter ego does not belong to his world. Such “formal–informal” pattern of self-presentation is possible to achieve if a person is professionally experienced and has had many successes in the past (see Mastenbroek 1996).

If we include Photo 11 in the sequence of previously analyzed pictures, our analytical perspective will immediately change. Students start to think about the **class generated/associated forms of visual representation of social position. When comparing Photos 10 and 11 we can see two men smiling, however, in a different choreographic context.** Homeless smile is a timid smile (compare also Photo 7). That interpretation is based on the way he is holding his bag. The bag is kept near the body; he is sitting on his bed in the shelter surrounded by not clearly separated private and public space and objects. The manager, in turn, is sitting on his armchair and his informality (no jacket, and hands kept behind his head) were deliberately arranged to show his assertiveness and superiority. The picture was taken from below the line of his head. The picture of the homeless man was taken from above. Iacocca is not showing his teeth when smiling, while the homeless is. The latter is not looking directly into the lens of the camera; Lee Iacocca is looking directly into the eye of the camera.

This short sequence shows the class background of representing the social position in the photos. These patterns are created not only by behaviour of a photographed individual but also by the photographer. In case of homeless men they were also homeless photographers, therefore the representation of social position is based on the local perspective of the actors, who are looking at their colleagues, as they perceive themselves. Without creating a new sequence, by adding the picture of Iacocca, we could not generate the new patterns of interpretation. **The artificially created sequences are the tool for the analysis and at the same time didactic devices to start categorical and pattern analysis by using comparative method.**

Saturating the category and theoretical sampling.

Saturating the category means finding and naming all possible properties of some conceptually labelled phenomenon. If the instances indicating some properties reoccur all the time during collecting of data and analysing them, we can say that the category is saturated (see discussion on the problem of saturating the category in Charmaz 2006). The theoretical description of category can be elaborated in conceptual details. We should do then theoretical sampling, it means look for the new data from different contexts to compare incidents and properties and saturate the category. Looking for the images or video - recordings from different contexts to saturate category with the new incidents indicating new properties (Schubert 2006) helps also theoretically elaborate the core category and investigated processes. Different contexts provide data about the thorough spectrum of the phenomenon described by the category. Practically theoretical sampling is connected with theoretical work that we do during analysis. We should look for the new data and contexts basing on the theoretical questions that come from our analytical memos and commentaries on the elaborated categories.

We can saturate a category with “pictures” referring to properties of a category. Some categories could be better analysed with this kind of data, **e.g. physical conditions of homeless life than by using textual data.** The category is broad, however, it is ideally fitted to describe the sequence of pictures gathered during field study. Students can see that some data chosen from the same substantive contexts have something in common and, by using constant comparative method, produce patterns by analytical work (homological comparisons).

Such a very broad category could be saturated also by data that come from previously analysed photos. We can see that physical contexts and physical objects are the main aspects of the category that could be saturated by using photos as the representation of physical conditions of life. In the same photos we can find many instances indicating different properties. One photo could be full of very rich data for analysing and saturating categories.

The category is connected with instances that indicate the following properties: “focusing on food” (Photo 8, 9 and 13), lack of division between private and public space (Photo 10 and memo to this Photo, Photo 12 and 14), “relaxing place” (Photo 5 and 7), food (Photo 6 and 12), “to be confined for space” (Photo 12 and 15), place for celebrations (Photo 2 and 13); “places for benching and bedding” (bench on Photo 5; bed on Photo 15 and 17), lack of private objects/property (data from interviews).



Photo 12: To be confined for space; food, private objects; decoration (photo taken from the research project).



Photo 13: Life in the shelter. Easter celebration. Table, place for celebration. Organized celebrating. Celebrating; focusing on food (<http://www.bezdomni.ovh.org/easter.html>).



Photo 14: Life in the shelter; privacy; private – public space; to be confined for space; bed; bedding (photo from the research project, from the Shelter of St. Brother Albert's Aid Society in Lodz).



Photo 15: Life in the shelter; to be confined for space, private/public space, and private objects, bed, bedding (photo taken from the research project, from the Shelter of St. Brother Albert's Aid Society in Lodz).

Photos 14 and 15 show the property “being confined for space”. We can find more photos that show insufficient space to live in a shelter. They all show physical objects that are property of the homeless near their bed or even on it. There are 14 people that sleep in the aforementioned room and “everybody would like to have his own room”, said one interviewee.

One of the most important objects, indicated by homeless people to be photographed, is bed. Private objects are hardly ever photographed. A bed becomes the centre of their life, although as we mentioned, this private space can be quickly transformed to public one. Below one's bed we may often find a private repository (see Photo 16). **We should add that “the physical conditions of life” induce some kind of action, see the theses below that are implication of the thesis above:**

1. If the bed is the centre of life, then “bedding” is one of the most important activities of homeless people. Similarly a bench, which induces the act of “benching”.
2. Consequently “the atmosphere of waiting” is co-created by physical objects and space of living and also by activities induced by interpretations of these physical surroundings, e.g. benching or bedding.

We look, then for the properties of conditions of life to saturate the category and for other activities induced by “physical conditions of life” to ground second hypothesis. The best data seems to be visual one.

Thesis 1. Physical conditions of life-> activities: bedding, benching -> the atmosphere of waiting

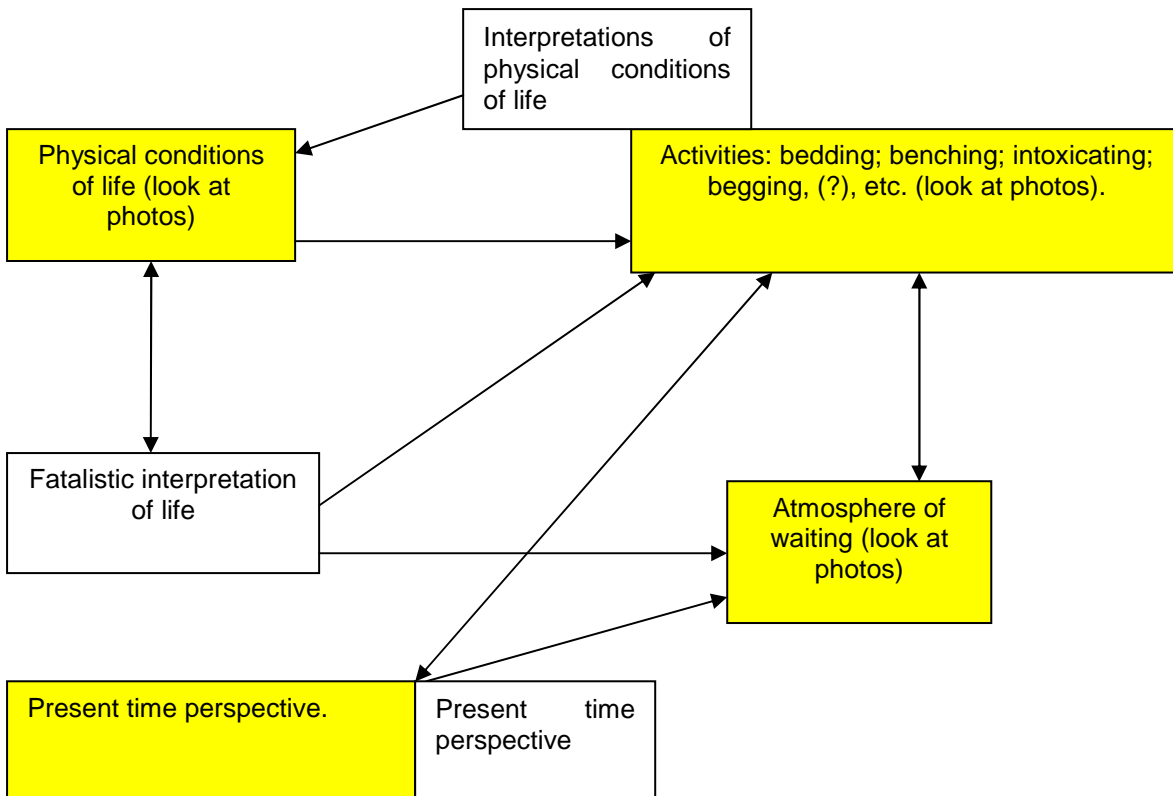


Diagram 1. The connections between categories (the yellow boxes indicate mainly the visual background of data for generating the categories; white boxes indicate the interviews as the basis for generating the categories).

What is important here is that “the physical conditions of life” are not external features of the life of homeless people, they can not be analysed separately from the interpretations and actions that are connected with them. Physical conditions of life through interaction with a human being turn into actions, e.g. a bed transforms to bedding or a bench transforms to benching. **The interaction with physical objects and space produces a new kind of activity (thesis).** If somebody interprets one’s space for living as difficult but bearable or not having physical objects as an excuse for “doing nothing” (it is also an activity) then there is a possibility to act passively and to do “bedding, benching, intoxicating, begging” and create the “atmosphere of waiting” that reversibly reinforces the activities.



Photo 16. Private place; private objects under the bed; the centre of private life, the place for bedding (photo from the research project, from Shelter of St. Brother Albert's Aid Society in Lodz).

Outside of the shelter - theoretical sampling and comparisons for saturating categories

The physical conditions of life are connected with living in shelters or in dosshouses. We noticed together with students, during the analysis of data, that we have mainly data on homeless coming mainly from shelters. So we decided to sample data from another contexts.

If we go outside of the shelter to other places of living occupied by the homeless, we can see other things, e.g. the place of living, how homeless people prepare food in the ruins, how they are dressed when it is cold outside and whether open house can protect them from cool weather? So, the students went outside of the class to see directly the contexts of homeless life.



Photo 17: The three hobos in Chicago, 1929.
(<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:ThreeHobosChicago1929.jpg>; 22.08.2008).



Photo 18: The place of living of the homeless – hobo; allotment; shed (photo from the research project).

The Photos below show the place of living of a homeless man (physical conditions of life).



Photo 19: The place of living of the homeless – hobo; ruins, near railway station of Lodz Fabryczna, centre of the city (photo from the research project).



Photo 20: The place for spending time during rain and cool weather at nights and place for drinking – information from an interview with homeless man (photo from the research project).



Photo 21: A homeless man, a kerb, a bottle of vodka, drinking place (a place near the Faculty of Economics and Sociology, Lodz University; photo from the research project).

The saturation with images should usually refer to verbal data. We should get some information directly from the homeless in order to understand meanings of physical conditions of life. However, the pictures we analysed were also taken by homeless, therefore the participants' meanings of conditions of life is inscribed in the physical objects and space presented in the photos. Homeless photographers and homeless directing photography chose what they wanted to show to others, what is important to them and, simply, how they live and what they usually do in some places. **Students of social work could receive the perspective on life directly from people that they will be working with in the future. Photos could be also**

treated as a sensitising tool for teaching how to do research and understand the perspective of the people?

The homeless people living outside of shelters do not say much in the narrative interviews about their present life. They mainly talk about the past. On the contrary, in the photos they show their present life. The photos show actual life and objects and space from their present life: shoes, railway stations, dust bins, streets, sheds, ruins where they sleep, benches where they sit or drink, etc. **The interviewees say that they do not possess anything.** Generally they refuse to be photographed. They hardly ever let the objects that belong to them to be photographed. They mainly show space, social and physical surrounding of living in the streets. Their visual imagination is limited to **the present conditions of life** and these conditions are connected mainly with the public space where they live. They show themselves in solitude, as in pictures below, although the interviewed homeless man was living on the street with another homeless friend. In shelters the homeless more often show their friends to be photographed.



Photo 22: The shoes. ("They can be useful. I found them today"; photo from the research project, homeless living outside of shelters).



Photo 23: Shed near railway station. The place of living (homeless living outside of shelters, photo from the research project).



Photo 24. Railway station Lodz Fabryczna (centre of the city). The place of staying and living (homeless living outside of shelters, photo from the research project).



Photo 25: Dust-bins give a possibility to get something valuable and exchangeable for money; the place of work (homeless living outside of shelters, photo from the research project).



Photo 26: Homeless sitting on the kerb; (homeless living outside of shelters, photo from the research project).

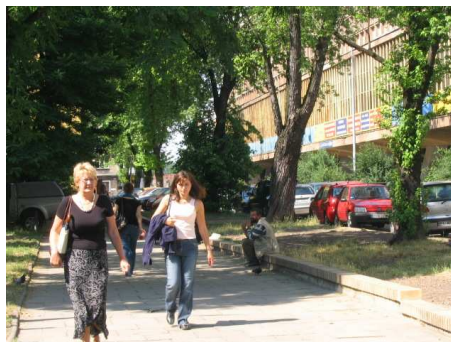


Photo 27. Homeless sitting on the kerb; space close to Faculty of Economy and Sociology UL building (homeless living outside of shelters, photo from the research project). The photographer (student) was a little bit embarrassed to take a photo and took the photo with a homeless man in the background (see and compare Photo 26).



Photo 28: The place of living, spending time. Mess, bottles of vodka, newspapers, cigarette packets, the place of drinking; intoxicating. (homeless living outside of shelters, photo from the research project).

Visual contrasting of time perspectives. Co-constructed sequences of visual images of time

The categories are constructed during the research analysis. The analysis below shows the co-construction by researchers (me and students) and homeless people the visual aspects of time perspectives. The category is saturated by collecting data from different contexts of homeless life.

We see also that physical artefacts can be associated mainly with the present time perspective. So the visual world of homelessness is concentrating on the actually available physical objects. When the researcher asked homeless people to show their past, present and future they tried to cooperate and showed the icons of these time dimensions in their life history. Temporality is embedded in physical objects. Having them, and showing, is associated with evoking the memory of them. However, the biggest problem for the homeless was to show objects connected with the past and with the future. They usually did not have the objects from the past with themselves. Sometimes they belonged to the members of the family and stayed with them. **Sometimes homeless indicate their past by showing the homes, where they used to live, to be photographed (Photo 29), or showing the photo “from previous life” (Photo 30).** Such photos are icons of the past. Not many homeless showed them or have them. These visual icons are contrasted with actual conditions of life and likely future conditions. Actual life is characterized by dustbins, where the homeless look for valuable things (Photo 31). One of the homeless showed home from the past and the ruins of the barrack where he will live in the near future, in this way he contrasted past and future (Photo 32). However, the future is connected only with homelessness.



Photo 29: The place where the homeless lived before (perspective of the past; photo from the research project).



Photo 30: Photo of the picture from their “previous life” (perspective of the past; photo from the research project).



Photo 31: Reality of living in the street; present time perspective. Working in the dustbins (photo from the research project).



Photo 32: Future place of living – the future perspective (photo from the research project).

As it was mentioned earlier, homeless people usually show the places and icons from their actual life. They are immersed in the present. Some of them show the places where they spend the most time:

Q: If I am going to take picture and show your previous life and present and future life, then what should be on these pictures?

R. I never thought about it, so it is difficult to say. However, there is such place, because I work in a laundry, it is my small hobby, maybe not only hobby, but I found a place here, to be alienated from the rest, there I am alone, I have everything what I need, including TV set, and other things. I spend there as much time as I can.

The visual images are co-produced together with the interviewer, we can see from the sequences of utterances and his comments that homeless man has no experience with such questions and issues of contrasting time. However, he answered and showed the place of great importance to him now (Photo 29).



Photo 33: The most liked place in present time, laundry. No references to past and future.

The present conditions of life are also associated with some activities that are performed in the shelter. There is a photographic club in one of the shelters in Lodz and the homeless man points out to the collection of photo cameras presented on the shelf (Photo 34), near the place where he lives (Photo 36).



Photo 34: Collection of photo-cameras in the shelter; photographic club; present time, photographing (photo from the research project).

Homeless can also show the objects that they are proud of, e.g. a pond that was constructed by him, in front of the shelter. It is his pride embedded in present time, although the pond was constructed few years ago. It was not well built and water is leaking (see Photo 35). The homeless man made a few vague remarks about the future that some woman is going to take him to Italy, although this remark seemed to be unrealistic.



Photo 35: Cobblestones in the pavements and a pond in front of the shelter have been constructed by a homeless man. Proud in the present time (while taking the picture the student unintentionally captured the tent in front of which one of the homeless was sleeping; photo from the research project).



Photo 36: Seat of the photographic club and the place of residence of the homeless man (photo from the research project).

Conclusions

The analysis of photos and analysis of contexts of photographing, that we did, reminds the research of visual ethnography. Images are “everywhere” (Pink 2007). We would like to say, that visual ethnography is a method of collecting data where the visual images are used to enrich our observations and textual data that we gather and/or produce. The methodology of grounded theory is a set of procedures helping in elaborating the data collected in the field. The ethnography or participant observation and interviews used together can only help to be close to the participants and reconstruct conceptually participants’ experiences (Charmaz 2006; Bryant and Charmaz 2007). The photos could be extremely useful in grounded theory inspired by symbolic interactionism, where the “intimate familiarity” and definitions of situations by participants are so important in understanding and explaining their life (Strubing 2004, 2007; Clarke 2005). The visual images that have been used in our research had a great importance in generating categories that are sensitive enough to get their meaning in the imagination of the everyday life’s participants and readers of the theory. They had also a great importance in teaching our students the theoretical sensitivity (Glaser 1978), “sensitivity grows with the exposure to data” (Corbin and Strauss 2007: 230). Visual images give the naturalistic outlook at the researched field and show how the data are constructed and, at the same time, how theoretical categories are created?

We could see then that construction of categories by using sequencing is a very helpful teaching device **to generate more general categories** through search for patterns. Sequencing could be stated after theoretical sampling of visual data from different contexts that are chosen after a theoretical analysis. Comparing pictures forces students to find in the photos something common and different in the investigated incidents at the same time. The analysis and sampling are strictly connected procedures in grounded theory.

However, we should also be very detailed in the description of photos to see the inner processes going on in the photographed and represented empirical site and finally “to open” the picture for analysis. If the picture does not fit to the sequence patterned by analysts, it should be very carefully analysed and eventually becomes the picture for opening a new sequence for analysis (see Photo 37 in Appendix that was dropped from the initial analysis). Analysts to define and later refine their new category should create the sequence and a new pattern, which has been generated by a new distinctions found in the pictures. Theoretical sampling creates the sequence, when the new pictures are sampled from the new empirical sites, which are chosen on the base of theoretical analysis and writing memos.

Using photos of objects and spaces could support saturating a category and teach students the procedure. Physical objects and spaces are strictly connected with activities and they co-produce activities together with the actors that interpret them. We can sometimes see more from the pictures than from verbal accounts of the researched people. The homeless people can not always give explicit and verbal account of their conditions of live. They are accustomed to their life conditions and are not each time able consciously to describe it fully and with details. Their surrounding is taken for granted by them. Photos very often show more than a photographer intended to show, they show a context of action. The background and small details are very important information on many aspects of homeless life (e.g. lack of division for private and public life) that should be elaborated conceptually. The visual representations of place of living could help us to saturate category, e.g. “physical conditions of life” with the full and detailed properties referring also to activities being the consequence of “physical conditions of life”.

We should use the constant comparative methods and compare the types of researched subjects shown in the photos. Sequencing is subservient procedure to constant comparative method. First we build sequence on the basis of analysis and theoretical sampling⁴⁹ and then we compare data and properties. When we **compare pictures** of the homeless living in shelters with the pictures of homeless living in the streets we see that pictures from the shelters show homeless in the group. The homeless in the streets are more “self-dependent” and live alone or in pairs. It is also very effective to compare the pictures for generating the properties of the category of “time perspective”. Constant comparative methods seemed to be the most important method of visual grounded theory and also teaching devise in showing the analysis and elaborating of theoretical categories and hypotheses. However the procedure could be only used together with other ones as: theoretical sampling, saturation and sequencing of visual data.

There could be put a question: should we achieve theoretical level of GTM when we teach it? Should we generate a theory? I think that we should get to the theoretical level when analysing data and come back to the field after theoretical sampling and analysis of the data. There can be no final theory as a result of the teaching grounded theory but we should reach some level of consolidation of categories (see Diagram 1) and some hypotheses should be formulated. Teaching by projects should show some research results and, if data are analysed, theoretical results, although the questions and indications to rise new problems and/or built new categories are very important in the educational process (see Photo 37).

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⁴⁹ Except the initial sequencing at the beginning of research and analysis when we use sequences that are not preceded by earlier intensive research.

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Appendix



Photo 37: Photo not used in the analysis, only presented in the first sequence; it can open a new category – “homeless living with lameness; the picture does not fit to “contrasting” category, however we see a double separation at the table: separation from “society” that means from “normals” and also others homeless people; homeless sitting at the table’s corner.



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“I’ve found more difficulties than I expected to”: Raising questions
from field experience

Abstract

Sociology students in Portugal have usually been taught methodology and epistemology in a classical, scholastic way. If students are provided with practical contact early on, this can help them to better understand and apply theoretical concepts conveyed through lectures. During their last graduate year, Sociology students of the University of Minho are expected to design a full research project and to conduct exploratory research, completed by the last semester, and this includes either a residence period or a research seminar. To ensure this works well, methodology units are organised on a weekly basis, according to two types of classes: 1) theoretical and 2) theoretical-practical, with the purpose of gradually enabling students to develop the competencies they will need to graduate. Focusing on the teaching experience of qualitative methodologies, and using as an example the teaching of observation techniques, the purpose of this article is to illustrate the advantages of offering the students early contact with the “field”, and prepare them for future full-scale research. These advantages are acknowledged by students, as evidenced in their written evaluations of their field experiences. However, it is important to note that this type of learning is most fruitful when students have been previously trained in the use of the written language – namely aiming to develop their ability to describe – and social theories.

Keywords

Teaching qualitative methodologies; Field experience; Student feedback.

In Portugal, Sociology students have for a long time been taught epistemology and methodology matters in a classical, scholastic way. Especially when it comes to qualitative methodologies, this enlarges the distance between research theory and practice, preventing them from actually coming in touch with and sensing the multiple problems that the study of social reality raises during their training period. If they are provided with such contact early on, this will help them to better understand and apply theoretical concepts conveyed through lectures. The importance of discussing different ways of teaching social research methodologies is twofold: it addresses the quality of the latter in terms of its outcomes for students as future professionals; and points out weaknesses to be overcome in the context of higher education organisations.

This article begins by offering a brief overview of Sociology in higher education in Portugal focusing on the characteristics of sociology in Portugal and highlighting the dominant approaches, especially in methodological terms. The purpose of this background is to provide a context to understand the work that has been developed specifically in the Department of Sociology of the University of Minho (Northern Portugal) regarding methodology courses. The Sociology graduate course of the University of Minho distinguishes itself from other Sociology graduate programmes for encompassing three methodology courses, all of them mandatory – the first, focuses specifically on methodology and epistemology for the social sciences; the second, on quantitative methodologies; and the third, on qualitative methodologies. By their final graduate year, students are expected to design a full research plan and to conduct exploratory research, competencies they will have to master by the last semester, which includes either a residence period or a research seminar. To ensure this, methodology courses are organised, on a weekly basis, according to two types of classes – theoretical and theoretical-practical – with the purpose of gradually developing the competencies students will need to graduate.

Although the qualitative methodology course encompasses several lectures and exercises on different research techniques, each year one of them is prioritised and students must produce a small research report. During the school year of 2007/2008, exercises on observation techniques were used for this purpose. An assessment of this work is used as an example to show the advantages of offering students an early contact with field practice, thus preparing them for full-scale research, which is often an essential criterion for postgraduate research positions. The advantages of this teaching/ learning methodology are also acknowledged by students themselves, which can be seen in their written evaluations of such experiences. However, it is important to note that this type of learning is most fruitful when students have been previously and successfully trained in the use of the written language – namely aiming to develop their ability to describe – and social theories. These matters will be addressed in part two, where current challenges to qualitative research teaching are discussed.

Teaching social research methodologies in Portugal

Sociology degrees are relatively novel in Portugal. The first graduation degrees in Sociology were created after the fall of the dictatorship, in 1974, among other reasons because the regime tended to envisage this type of knowledge as threatening and contentious. There is nevertheless, a relatively long tradition of social and sociological thought that can be traced back to the 19th century. It is, however, during the 1950s and 1960s, a period marked by an industrialisation upsurge, that research on social reality began to expand under the influence of intellectuals and scholars often linked to the regime itself, guided by the intention of dealing with ongoing changes and identifying obstacles to economic modernisation (Pinto 2007).

The semi-peripheral characteristics of the Portuguese society, the institutionalisation of Sociology as a discipline and autonomous field in Portugal, and the fact that most of those scholars have come from other disciplinary fields has been pointed out as fundamental contribution to the country's sociological thought and direction: e.g. some consensus around the paradigm of critical rationalism; a marked opening to inter-disciplinary thought; a strong investment in the problematisation of research objects (Pinto *ibidem*); and a certain estrangement from some intense discussions, which characterise other social realities, such as the opposition between qualitative versus quantitative methodologies (Gonçalves 2006).

If, as Gonçalves (ibidem) contends, Portuguese Sociology curricula have been characterised by a concern in highlighting plural theoretical and methodological approaches, and Portuguese sociologists seem to be more prone to considerations concerning the fulfilment of scientific validation than to marked animosity against specific theories or methodologies. It is possible to notice a certain tendency towards more structuralist approaches, to logical-deductive reasoning and to quantitative methodology. In fact, qualitative research techniques, such as participant-observation or certain interview types, when present, are usually mobilised during exploratory phases of research, or as a means to expand conclusions drawn from the application of quantitative instruments such as questionnaires. Qualitative methodologies and techniques are thus very seldom used in isolation, especially in the work of published scholars⁵⁰.

The Sociology graduate programme at the University of Minho has always been unusual when compared with other courses in Portugal, both due to the importance given to theoretical approaches more focused on the (micro)analysis of social (inter)action and to the length of student training in social research (currently encompassing four semesters, whereas in most graduation plans it covers two semesters). Regarding the latter, it is understood that students' early contact with social research instruments and their implementation in the field is of the utmost importance; both to facilitate first-hand understanding of epistemological matters and to develop competencies fundamental to the sociologist's work. In this sense, I have tried to comply to Delyser's (2008) vision, who argues for a teaching model that simultaneously attends to the understanding of methodologies, epistemologies and theoretical foundations, and the active coaching of students' research abilities instead of expecting these to develop on their own once in the field. In fact, epistemological and theoretical proficiency appear to be intimately linked to firsthand field work experience, since a full understanding of the implications and requisites of social research – designing a research plan, construing a theoretical object, designing data gathering tools, and so on – can be best accomplished when its problems are actually experienced by students themselves.

During the third semester, Sociology students attend a course on Social Research Methods II, which focuses on qualitative methodology and techniques. The course starts with a discussion of the epistemological and theoretical assumptions of qualitative methodologies, covers several observation techniques (including participant-observation), life-story interview, focus groups, and content analysis, and ends with the writing of qualitative reports. Besides lectures, students are expected to work on specific readings and to solve exercises on each subject. Since they are supposed to deliver a final research report on a specific study object by the end of the semester, such exercises are conceived so as to progressively contribute to its completion.

Training observation techniques: an experience

During the year of 2007/ 2008, students were asked to choose a subject that could be researched using participant-observation techniques considering access, time, and resource constraints, which would be the topic of their final research report. A series of exercises were designed so as to contribute little by little to the

⁵⁰ One notable exception is the work of José Machado Pais, who has been one of the very few Portuguese scholars devoted to publicise the importance of qualitative research methodologies in the analysis of social phenomena.

elaboration of this report. Exercises were designed to get increasing difficult, and were adapted from Janesick's (1998) proposals.

Specifically, students were sequentially asked to observe and describe: 1) an animal, during one hour; 2) a single person and his/ her actions in a public environment, with his/ her knowledge, during half a day; 3) a complex (public or private) environment with several individuals, during a week. All exercises were designed so that, by the time exercise 3) had to be planned, previous experience would help. All exercises were written and delivered in theoretical-practical classes, followed by a discussion of the students' impressions. Apart from diverse queries emerging from field experience, discussions were based on the students' answers to a series of questions included in each exercise relating explicitly to: 1) the main difficulties they had found; 2) how they had felt during the course of the exercise, especially whether they had ever felt surprised and if so what had surprised them; 3) what they felt they had learned.

Apart from an evaluation of these results, the analysis of student evaluation forms supports Sells, Smith and Newfield's (1997) findings, who have concluded from their own teaching practice that students' field experience, besides enhancing their research skills, tends to be perceived by the latter with clear enthusiasm.

Learning through field experience: some results

In the course of the assignments, most students seem to have built up their awareness of the difficulties and decisions researchers are faced with when conducting empirical research. Since qualitative research, and particularly ethnographic methodologies based on observation, do not obey logical-deductive research plans supported by a previously defined and closed theoretical-analytical model, but rather to a logic that is constructed along the way (Becker 1994; Denzin 1997; Denzin and Lincoln 2000), most of them start by stressing an initial sense of being "lost". This refers specifically to difficulties in deciding exactly what is important to observe, as well as how to record the information. This seems to be particularly true when the settings and the object to be observed become more complex, as in exercise 3), since both the amount of information and the presence of several individuals tend to render such decisions more complex.

A point that is frequently made by students regarding the problem of determining what information is important is the need to repeat their observations. Students gained an accrued sense that one single observation is scarcely enough to account for an object's characteristics, attitudes, or conduct, since patterns tend to emerge with time. In fact, such consideration is often linked to what most of them tend to consider a surprising fact: that there is much more to be observed than they had expected. Statements such as "I had never realised cats' complex cleansing rituals, or details such as changes in eye colours and shapes depending on whether they are alert or not", or an amazement with what some call "an incredible amount of detail that we usually ignore" are quite frequent.

When students have to observe human beings they tend to mention the difficulty of accounting for the inner worlds of the observed. Although this was also pointed out regarding the observation of animals, especially when their own pets were chosen for this purpose, in this case, the main trouble seemed to be an inclination to humanise them; that is, to ascribe them specifically human characteristics⁵¹. As for the

⁵¹ A matter which has, in fact, recently been the topic of a special issue of the *Qualitative Sociology Review*...

observation of human beings, students tended to be divided between, on one hand, the idea that it is easier to understand them and their conduct, since they believed they share cultural meanings and understandings, and on the other hand, the idea that it is more difficult to because of the risk of ascribing taken for granted or assumed meanings. In both cases, emotions are central in self-evaluation reports and tend to relate to a central aspect of field research: emotional involvement with the observed and the need to watch one's emotions in order to be as objective as possible.

In fact, students often highlight that they had to be very careful in their interpretations, namely to avoid ascribing their own motives or characteristics to others. One of the students' quotations that referred specifically to exercise 2), is particularly enlightening:

I faced numerous difficulties, namely regarding the person's inner aspects. [...] My observation focused essentially on physical traits and gestures, which I interpreted in a very personal way. I did not know the person, which is a disadvantage to my work, but then that was the very idea of it. The fact that I did not know her allowed me to always find out more than one meaning to a single gesture, numerous justifications for a single attitude!. [...] I wish I had more time to observe her, to interact with her, at the very least to be able to confirm, or to construct a more real account of the person...

In fact, many students refer to a specific characteristic of observation techniques – which they had not been authorised to use – as being fundamental to sort out “accurate” interpretations: its reliance on informal interviewing, which would have allowed them to question actors, both as a way to improve field notes and to include the latter's own motives and justifications in the analysis.

Such considerations tend to emerge as intimately linked to the awakening of the students' curiosity both with aspects of social interaction they had never thought about before and with a concern for the actors' inner worlds, which could only be accessed through a more prolonged presence, interaction and profound contact (if ever!).

Another recurrent issue in the student reports is the influence of the observer over the observed, and vice-versa. Especially in the case of exercises 1) and 2), students notice both how the fact of observing people or animals who know or sense they are being observed changes the latter's conduct/ behaviour, and the fact that they themselves may alter their conduct, at least during the initial moments of observation . Students are usually able to account for the actors' relative awkwardness in the way the latter move, act, or even looks at the observer. With time, however, they believe that most actors tended to forget their presence, at least occasionally, even though this has not always been the case. When observing animals, and when the latter are not their own pets, the most common references go to the animal's curiosity towards the observer.

More specifically, students recognise they feel awkward when asking someone to allow them to observe him/ her and when they themselves feel they are being observed either by the animal or by that person. In the first case, they tend to mention their surprise when people accept submitting themselves to such an experience, in some cases even attempting to actively “co-operate” with the observer by asking the latter where should they stand or what should they do. In the second case, it is quite interesting to see the students' clear perception that their own moves are scrutinised also by animals, which usually leads them to refrain their conduct so as to avoid interfering in their customary behaviour.

This type of exercise seems to be particularly fruitful since they enable the student to turn abstract concepts into first-hand knowledge: during subsequent classes, for example, students seemed to have less trouble linking what they read in textbooks with their previous practical experiences of 'doing' observation. But there is another important outcome: field experience seems to enhance students' perception of their own insufficiencies. When students were asked what they felt they had learned answers tended to highlight the need to "improve" writing skills and/ or a series of matters linked to an insufficient mastering of sociological theories.

Students' awareness of their trouble with written language sometimes relates to a poor command over its basic grammatical conventions – sentence construction, punctuation norms, and so on –, which made it difficult both to write down observations and to feel they could adequately convey their results to others. But most frequently they were linked to the fact that qualitative research writing not only has its own conventions, but it also works as a process of "stitching" data and theory (Becker 1994). Since formal education continues to privilege logical-deductive reasoning, they have been trained for years to write in a similar way, and it can be hard to master alternative ways of doing it.

The role of sociological theories in social research in general, and in qualitative research specifically, is harder for students to grasp on their own. Considering that concepts are essentially ways of looking at reality, they have an important "sensitising" role (Blumer 1969). Sociological theories are thus fundamental tools for social research, since they point out ways to proceed. So, both a part of students' difficulties relating to this matter and their inability to exactly pinpoint their origins seems to be also linked to the privileging of structuralist approaches in sociological theory courses and to the fact that these are usually communicated during lectures with a clearer scholastic layout. This brings attention to the need to render such lectures more operational and to provide learning contexts that may allow students to better perceive their operational character and their fundamental role for researchers, which has also been pointed out by Campenhoudt (2001)⁵².

Conclusion

The importance of discussing different ways of teaching social research methodologies is twofold: it addresses the quality of teaching in terms of its outcomes for students as future professionals; and points out weaknesses to be overcome in the context of higher education organisations. This article has focused on the advantages of offering students an early contact with field practice, thus preparing them for full-scale research. Results have been highlighted, based on a teaching experience of qualitative methodologies using practical exercises.

Such results may be subsumed under three major headings, showing that: most students gain a greater understanding of the difficulties and decisions researchers are faced with when conducting empirical research; more abstract matters dealt with during lectures – namely the ones pertaining to epistemological matters and the importance of theories for the comprehension of social reality – appear to be better grasped once the field has been experienced firsthand; students are able to better identify their own limitations on several levels, especially in terms of their mastering

⁵² In fact, the author's work constitutes a very interesting textbook for teaching sociological theories, showing how specific theories can be actually used in social research. The book provides examples that range from structuralist to social interaction approaches.

of sociological theories and of a writing genre heavily dependent on the ability to describe.

Difficulties identified by students in their evaluation reports, their gradual assessment, and the outcomes of class discussions have underpinned the need to design and include in qualitative methodology courses, exercises especially focused on improving descriptive writing skills and inductive reasoning. But they have also pointed out to the need to improve the articulation of the relationship between social research and sociological theory courses.

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What do we study studying body?
Researcher's attempts to embodiment research.

Abstract

The article presents researcher's attempts, methodological problems and queries in embodiment research during a Grounded Theory Methodology based study on social world of ballroom dancers. The research has been conducted among ballroom dancers, flamenco dancers, belly dancers, dance instructors, choreographers and judges. One of the aspects of the research is social construction of embodiment. In the article I will present techniques and methods of research such as autoethnography, interview, observation, photo and video analysis as well as kind of results they may give and what is really studied when using these methods. I will also present how one experiences his/her body in this group. I will try to answer a question: what is the real result of researcher's attempts in embodiment study in sociology; do we really study body, or its social practices, socially constructed individual experience; how deeply can we make the research when our object (somebody else's body) is not entirely intersubjectively available for our recognition.

Keywords

Grounded Theory Methodology; Interview; Observation; Visual Data Analysis; Embodiment; Dance.

The aim of this article is to present researcher's attempts and some methodological problems in sociological embodiment research. I will show research techniques which I have used in my Grounded Theory Methodology (GTM) based study on social subworld of ballroom dancers. The research has been conducted among ballroom dancers, flamenco dancers, belly dancers, dance instructors, choreographers and judges. My main interest was an ethnographic description of a social sub-world of ballroom dancing, but it has soon turned out, that even more interesting are embodiment changes.

GTM is a research strategy, which bases on a constant and permanent researcher's dialogue with data, more important than theory or existing scientific knowledge. This methodology has been created as a result of doubts in positivist belief in objective cognition, testing of hypotheses by quantitative research methods (Charmaz 2006). The foundations of GTM are the following: parallel data collection and analysis; constructing analytical codes and research categories from data, not from hypotheses; using constant comparative method and comparing data with

theory on each stage of research process; constant theory developing; constructing theoretical memos, relations between categories; sampling based on theory constructing, not on representativeness; using literature after an independent data analysis (Charmaz *ibidem*).

Research course in GTM cannot be precisely planned at the beginning and subsequent stages are rarely specifically predictable, as they are constructed according to previous findings (Strauss and Corbin 1990).

In my GTM based study I have tried to accomplish those aims. That is why I have used various research techniques to get as close to the researched phenomenon as possible. As social construction of embodiment is a very demanding research field, I have chosen GTM research strategy because it gives flexibility and does not force any answer, which is especially important in a fairly new research field. I have also used various techniques including interviews, observations, photo and video analysis, autobiography analysis and autoethnography as a complementary technique. As analytic techniques, I have used open coding, selective coding, then theoretical coding thanks to which I have obtained coherent theoretical memos. I have employed methodological, theoretical and data triangulation.

As a theoretical perspective I have applied concepts inscribing in interactional paradigm. This approach states, that body is a social creation, its awareness, perceiving, but also its physicality are socially constructed. Theories that were helpful for me to explain embodiment are: Merleau-Ponty's (2001) theory concerning phenomenology of own embodiment perception, dramaturgical perspective by Erving Goffman (2000), identity conception by Everett Hughes (1997) and findings of dance researchers like Jane Desmond (1997); Mary Lorenz Dietz (1994); Judith Lynne Hanna (1988); Bryan Turner and Steven Wainwright (2003, 2004); Steven Wainwright, Clare Williams and Bryan Turner (2006) and Susan Leigh Foster (1997).

As I have mentioned earlier, in my research it has soon turned out, that I cannot study social interactions of dancers, if I won't study body, or better expressed *embodiment*, which is their basic tool of almost any action undertaken in this social world. Notion of *embodiment* I understand after The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy as "the bodily aspects of human subjectivity".

In phenomenology, which concepts I have used to explain social construction of embodiment, there are two contrasting approaches. One of them is Alfred Schutz's, the other is Maurice Merleau-Ponty's (Coenen 1989). In Alfred Schutz's conception body is only an individual's physicality, through which an interactional partner can perceive our moves. Body is treated as the main obstacle in interactions between social actors (Coenen 1989). Schutz (2008) claims also, that during scientific theorizing a scientist puts his physicality, bodily experiences aside. I must disagree with the statement. Our body is not only a matter of being in the world, or worlds, but as well a part of our cognition of the world, so it cannot be set aside. Especially when it comes to embodiment research, when a scientist is challenged by a partially communicable phenomenon, it is very useful to use one's own bodily experiences to understand it.

Term *embodiment*, as I use it in my research, has been developed mostly by European phenomenology representative Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2001). In his works he distinguishes between the objective body, which is the body regarded as a physiological entity and the phenomenal body, which is not just some body, some particular physiological entity, but one's own body as one experiences it. I define embodiment, as a subjectively experienced phenomenon, that is never objective, taken for granted, unchangeable, which we experience in various ways, transform

and through which we communicate with interactional partners. Embodiment gives off a sense, which it got during socialization, experience, to influence other “embodied subjects” (Merleau- Ponty 2001:218).

As many researchers claim (Goffman 2006; Hanna 1988 and Merleau-Ponty 2001) body is social actor’s vehicle, tool, instrument of “being” in the world. In dancers’ case, it is the first and the most important one. Dancers *incorporate* certain dance knowledge and experiences, learn how to use their bodies, change them in order to have the best tool possible. They use their bodies to constantly become dancers, to build their identities, to construct their position inside the group. Body is crucial in this social role, as this is the only way, through which a dancer may be judged. That is why embodiment research is so important. Without understanding what body is and what it becomes for dancers, we cannot understand social processes in this social world.

Body experienced by dancers

One of the outcomes of my research, concerning bodily issues, is that a dancer may experience his/her own body as a tool, as an interactional partner and as a material, which needs to be changed according to the needs of the social group. Each type of embodiment experience⁵³ may be perceived at the same time, at different times, one may dominate, none may dominate, all may appear, not all may appear. Here are some examples of how dancers talk about their bodies in each category mentioned:

Body as a tool:

It’s well known, that dancer’s face and body are an instrument, on which she plays (Barbara Bittnerowna, a prima ballerina in her autobiography, 2004:44)

Body as an actor, interactional partner:

And the worst thing for my organism, my mind, when it knows⁵⁴ that I’m a workaholic, because it has already **got used** to that and it knows, that the body starts to go flat, doesn’t it? That it is already overtired, that it has too much toxins, that it needs to rest (...) Then my body invents a forty degree fever. I’m unconscious, doctors don’t know what’s going on, maybe an inflammation, maybe something. And with my body, it is simply like this, that it invents forty degree fever, these forty degrees knock me down. **Because if he gives me** thirty eight degree fever, I will go to work anyway. I will take an anti fever injection and go anyway, cause I’m not normal in this case (...) I think it is a lack of **respect**, isn’t it? For the body (interview with a belly dancer, choreographer, dance pedagogue, judge, jazz dance student, age 26, originally in Polish)

Body as a material, that needs to be changed:

Those girls get a little makeup (12-13 year old), they get tanned, other things (...) yes, that’s when it starts, on Polish Championships, when I

⁵³ Other, very useful, typology of embodiment experience may be found in “Dancing bodies” (Leigh 1997).

⁵⁴ Words in bold are words accented by me, during analysis, words underlined, are those accented by my interviewees.

watch yyy those kids, actually the face, if you would wipe the makeup, no, not that strong, that's a fact, but still a makeup, then I would really see they're twelve, thirteen. (interview with an ex female ballroom dancer, age 19, originally in Polish)

What is also very interesting about own body perception among ballroom dancers, is that they incorporate their partners' body into the notion of "my body". This could be very well observed when I have asked my interviewees if they had any serious contusion. Almost all ballroom dancers have answered that yes, they had, or no, they didn't have but/and their partner had a serious injury and they had to stop dancing for a while. A quote from one of my interviews explains why it is perceived so:

It's (dancer's body) also my partner's possession, it's not only my body, because we have to be like one body, when we dance. (interview with an ex female ballroom dancer, age 19, originally in Polish)

This is one of the reasons why I claim, that a physical body is not the same as the body perceived and experienced by a certain dancer. What we incorporate into our bodies is another case. We incorporate moves, but also other objects. If a dancer practices a lot with a gadget, like a fan or a veil, she or he uses certain type of shoes, dress, they become a part of the dancer's embodiment, as he or she learns to use them like they use their own body. Dancers claim, that before you perform with something on stage, you have to learn to use it outside from your mind, the object has to be incorporated into your body, it has to become a part of it (Merleau-Ponty 2001). This is one of the examples of this perspective, a way of experiencing a dance with a gadget:

And when you master this, as it gives you certain inspiration, energy mmm and if you put it down, then you lose suddenly one hand, and you don't know how to behave. (interview with a female flamenco, belly dance, tribal dancer, teacher, choreographer and owner of a dance school, age 31, originally in Polish)

Incommunicable body

As I have mentioned earlier, bodily issues are only partly available for our cognition, studying them is a challenge for a researcher so it is very useful to use one's own experiences. It is mostly so because of our inability to communicate embodiment only by speech. It is then, not fully intersubjectively communicable, which poses a methodological question: how can one study something, that is not intersubjectively communicable? This was a problem yet before I decided to study embodiment from interactionist perspective. Even during an ethnographic part of my study, when I conducted interviews, my interviewees would try to make me know what they meant by showing a certain posture, gesture, movement, by asking me to dance. Speech proved not to be a way of communication flexible enough to transmit knowledge that was set *in* the *body*. My interviewees (dancers of various dance genres, but also trainers, judges, choreographers) sometimes were not able to say what they meant, as they had this certain knowledge, experience *inside* the body. The question that needs to be asked when studying a non-verbally communicable phenomenon, is how to do research, when words cannot explain experiences of persons under study.

Difficulties in embodiment communication is not only a case of dancer - researcher relation. It may be also well observed in dance teacher- student relations during lessons. Teachers use various methods to get to the student, they try to communicate what they mean using verbal and non- verbal expression. This is a difficult task, as anyone's body has their own, private experiences *incorporated*. These are just a few examples of the techniques used by teachers:

Dominika Byczkowska.: and how do you teach your/

Interviewee: truly? One-two-three (laughs), first of all, I stand in front of them, we stand in front of a mirror, I slowly show them the steps, I count it for them, I observe them, if they all get it.

D.B.: what does it mean "I count it for them"?

I: well, each dance has a rhythm, you must count it loudly, so that everyone knew, that somehow on "one" always, for example, leg is put, on "two" joining legs. (...) rhythm, music, dance. (...) and somehow, somehow they succeed (interview with an ex male ballroom dancer, ballroom dance instructor, age 22, originally in Polish)

First you learn, to do it like your teacher does (...) it's obvious, not everybody already knows, on what they should pay attention, but after a while, you get to notice it. (interview with a female flamenco, belly dance, tribal dancer, teacher, choreographer and owner of a dance school, age 31, originally in Polish)

I show, I explain, I touch, I correct. I do it with them, I do it alone, it depends, some people like to dance together, to some, you first have to show it, mm if I don't know somebody, I use everything (...) when I know a girl, then I know how to explain it to her, so I don't have to wonder, but if you come, and I don't know you, I take all the ways, because I hope, that one of them may get into you, one more, the other less, them all together, I hope, that you will do the move and that you will understand it.(interview with a belly dancer, choreographer, dance pedagogue, judge, jazz dance student, age 26, originally in Polish)

This proves, that embodiment experience is a very difficult problem to study, but at the same time very demanding. To explain this phenomenon I have used some research techniques, which gave diverse data. I present them underneath.

Techniques of embodiment research

As not a fully communicable phenomenon, when it comes to studying embodiment, it is not possible to do research only with use of narration (see: Konecki 2005; Turner and Wainwright 2003). In my research I have used various research techniques, that have given me different points of view. One of them is triangulation, a strategy inscribed in GTM logic. Generated categories are verified by new data and use of various techniques makes the gathered data more diverse (Charmaz 2006). It is also a test, that enables us to check, whether different kinds of data give similar findings (Hammersley and Atkinson 2000). I have applied three kinds of triangulation: theoretical, methodological and data triangulation. As this is a methodological article, I will describe the last two.

Methodological triangulation lets us not only diminish weaknesses of research techniques, but also makes gathered information more understandable, as data deriving from different techniques may give different points of view on the studied problem. This is very important in embodiment research, as a partly incommunicable issue. What is more, kind of used methods influences kinds of gathered data and sense given to them, which is vital for entire understanding (Charmaz 2006).

Data triangulation gives us an opportunity to verify information from different sources, like interviewees, research stages, as all data has its strengths and weaknesses (Strauss and Corbin 1990). Data triangulation may be also obtained by sampling from comparative groups (Konecki 2000). This I have received interviewing and observing dancers of various dance genres: flamenco dancers, ballroom dancers, belly dancers, analyzing prima ballerina's autobiography. This was really rewarding, as showing differences may lead us to understanding a typical character of a certain phenomenon.

In this part of the article I will present some techniques of data collection that were useful for me as they gave different information. I am presenting them one by one, as I want to compare them and show their strengths and weaknesses.

Interview is a type of professional talk, which has a set of rules and techniques and during which a certain knowledge is created (Kvale 2004). The main way of recognition is through talking, knowledge is understood as giving accounts for one's statements, not a precise world representation. It is a technique, with which I have started my research. It has given me hints and descriptions of interviewees' experiences of their own bodies.

Just as one of the basic GTM rules says, that a theory is generated during data analysis, I have first conducted non structured interviews, then, after getting more knowledge about studied phenomena, I have used more structured interviews. However, as a researcher should always stay sensitive and open for new problems, I found it useful for phenomena explanation and theory constructing (Konecki 2000).

According to researchers, if one wants the interview to bring new information and be full of data and so that researcher's influence was the smallest, we should ask the most general, non suggesting questions (Hammersley and Atkinson 2000; Charmaz 2006).

Researcher's role is to listen and observe his/her interviewee with sensitivity, that is why, it is good to ask in the beginning of the interview some broad, open and non- judging questions. Thanks to this, some unpredicted and important issues may come up (Charmaz 2006).

Being open and not judging is especially important, when we talk about body, sexuality, particularly, that dancers are very sensitive about their bodies. They are their basic tool for constructing identity and group position.

The problem with this technique is that it is never enough to say, interviewees often want to show what they mean, by certain gestures, dance moves. The knowledge and experience that are gathered inside the body, make it impossible to express them verbally. That is why I made photos during interviews and I showed photos made on dance contests to my interviewees asking them what they could see and how they interpreted presented situations. Here you have an example of two different perspectives: a laymen and an insider.

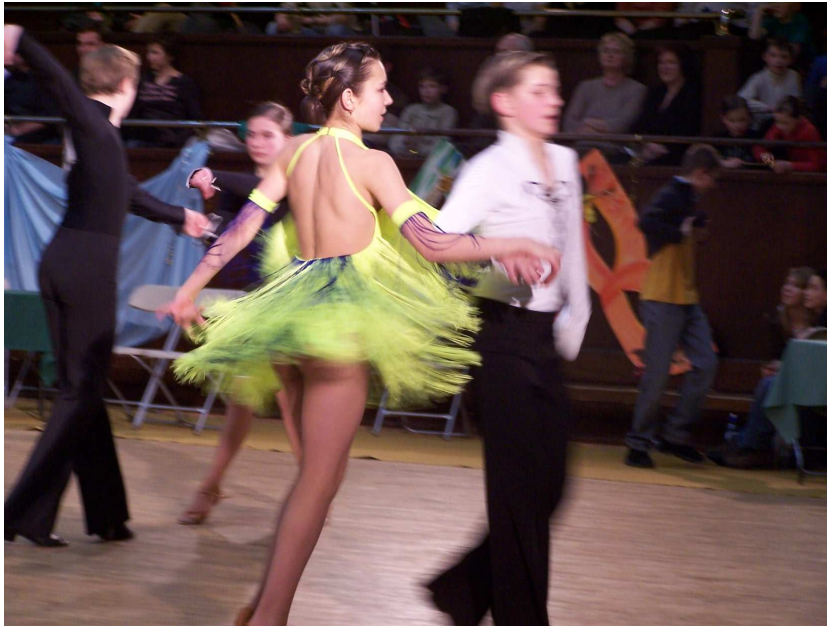


Photo 1: Made on Mazovia Grand Prix 5 February 2006 in Warsaw.

I have made this photograph (Photo 1) on one of dance contests. In everyday conversations with my colleagues about this photograph I have mainly received answers concerning naked body, visible backside. Also I paid attention to the length of the dress and naked body parts. And these are some comments from a dancer and a dance judge and teacher. They, as socialized in this group pay attention and see different aspects of the image, for me impossible to notice:

Dancer in fan development. Probably. Such a figure. (dancer, 16 years old, originally in Polish)

This is rumba or cha-cha because this is a way in which they dance the basic step. So it must be rumba or cha-cha. It's hard to say which of them, cause they in the basic figures, basic elements and not only are very similar when it comes to the way we dance, way we hold each other. In some things I could say, that it could even be samba, but the guy here stands in such a way that it's not samba, for sure (laughs). Rumba or cha-cha, I'm sure. I would even say, except this dynamic pair in the front that it's rather rumba. Rather, rather rumba then cha-cha, but I only have this feeling, looking at the pair from the back. Yes, but not necessarily, as I say, it looks like this but it may as well be cha-cha. (dance judge, dance teacher, ex male dancer, 55 years old, originally in Polish)

Technique that I have used to get data from other sources than interviews was **observation**. It is a very useful technique, as it operates with pictures and gives comments. I have done several observations on ballroom dance competitions and about 300 photos. During those observations, I have tried to receive comments on what was actually happening from dancers or viewers. I have also done observation with video recording on belly dance classes in which I took part.

A minus of this method is that we rarely know, what is really happening on the dance floor, unless we are dancers. Some situations turned out to be interpreted differently from what I could have expected. For example, situations of harsh competition on dance floor, when dancers would kick, push or bump on each other I have interpreted as hard competition, not fair play. Dancers with whom I have spoken would say, that it was rather a result of lack of space on the dance floor. If not for the

commentaries, I would have drawn wrong conclusions, influenced by interview outcomes.

Underneath I present a part of a conversation during an observation on one of dance contests. I was watching pairs dancing and talking to a dance teacher at the same time. In this part there participated dancers with high dance class (A⁵⁵):

The second pair, as he said could take their position, when they (the first pair) enter an older group, but the trainer said that it would cost them a lot of work, that the girl needs to lose weight. I said that the girl is not fat and asked why should she lose weight. He answered that if you put an engine from a small car into a Mercedes- it will ride, but how long, how fast? I said that the girl is thin, he agreed and said that losing weight would be good for her, because she will have the same muscles, same strength but she will have less to carry. He said also, that this probably won't be easy, as the girl has genetic tendencies, but if she would lose about 8 kilos, "she would have less on her stomach, legs and arms" and she would move easier. I asked why this was so important. He told me that it would be also better for her, because she's ashamed during classes, that she hides especially her stomach, on which she has fat and she should lose it to be quicker, more energetic. The trainer made me look at the girl's dress. It was very sexy and short, but it did cover her stomach. (Observation on Łódź Championships 2007).

This part of an observation gave me some ideas on how dancers treat their bodies: notions of engine and car refer to "body as a material" perspective. This citation shows as well how deeply internalized is idea of beautiful ballroom dancing body. Even a thin, sexy and skillful dancer would hide some parts of her body, probably partly to get better notes from the judges, partly because of her own complex.

Photo and video analysis has given me information about embodiment and space relations. Certain embodiment techniques are used in each type of space (official, partly official and unofficial presented at the end of this part). This is also a method, that enables us to read meanings without verbal communication. Photos and video recordings give a possibility to see how people use their bodies, how act through them and let us suppose, what kind of meaning people give to their bodies. This does not mean, of course, that we will read the meanings properly. In each dance gestures and moves depend on the style of the dance (e.g. belly dance, modern jazz, ballet), because every dance has a certain philosophy deriving from culture (e.g. ballet dance should be very delicate and light, as heaven is a great value in Western society, as African folk dances are very much on the ground, as those societies cherish Mother Earth) (see also: Grau 2005). This may cause a problem of understanding moves and gestures and that is why we should ask people from inside the dance world to comment and explain.

A minus of this method is that photo and video analysis bases on description of phenomena by a researcher. This means, that each photography is first described and only then coded and analyzed (Suchar 1997; Konecki 2005). This may cause a problem with reading meanings, especially when it comes to embodiment.

It seems, that a good method, which enables us to interpret photographed phenomena is a photo or video elicited interview. This technique gives a possibility to

⁵⁵ In Polish ballroom dance there are six classes: E, D, C, B, A and an international, highest class S.

obtain sometimes even astonishing knowledge (Konecki 2005) also about body or dance.

As an example of this technique I will present three photographs. I have analyzed them and presented them during interviews. The photographs show three kinds of space: official, unofficial and partly official.



Photo 2: Official space



Photo 3: Unofficial space



Photo 4: Partly official space

In each of the situations shown on the Photos 2, 3 and 4 there are accepted and expected different types of social action: in official space dancers present themselves on a dance floor, show the best of their skills, get judges' notes. In partly official space they make last preparations for the dance, drink, talk, exercise, while in unofficial space all things that could influence judges' notes are possible and accepted: screaming at one another (dancer at his/her pair, parents at children etc.) taking one's clothes off, eating. We could say, using Goffman's (2000) terms, that official space is a frontstage, unofficial and partly official spaces are two kinds of backstage, where social actors prepare to give their performance in front of an audience (judges).

Underneath, you can see another example of visual data: **a video recording transcript**. An analysis of verbal teacher's expressions and moves have led me to a conclusion, that certain moves are very often announced by the same word expression. This is probably because these sounds are to express an inner feeling during the movement or gesture. That was interesting, as it seems to be another method of body communication.

Second	Students' moves	Teacher's moves	Teacher's moves	Teacher's verbal expression
1.	They repeat after the teacher with about 1 second delay	She lifts her head		Pum <u>pa</u>
2.	„	She lifts her hands up, to the level of her arms		Ta tiki,
3.	„	Camel down		<u>ta</u>
4.	„	Single drops, front to the mirror		
5.	„	Chest pulled in		Ta pum, pum <u>pa</u>
6.	„	Arm shimmie	Camel down	Taka taka
7.	„	Left arm toward the mirror	Step forward with a right leg	taka taka <u>tam</u>

8.	”			Ta tiki
9.	”	Camel down		ta
10.	”		Arm shimmie	Ta tum tum, ta
11.	”	Hips’ shimmie, side to the mirror		

Belly dance classes, October 2007

Autoethnography I have used as a complementary method. I have been taking belly dance classes for three years and this has helped me to understand some of my interviewees’ experiences. Autoethnography is a method, that may be used by a person, who becomes a part (sometimes main) of the studied phenomenon (Wall 2008). This technique has appeared spontaneously in my research, during a certain lesson, when our teacher tried to explain a certain move. It has become useful for me in matters of understanding how one may change a way of experiencing his/her body, how one may receive knowledge that is set inside somebody else’s embodiment.

Conclusion

GTM research strategy has been very useful in my research, which I have tried to prove in the article. In the beginning of my study, I did not expect, that this kind of category: social construction of embodiment, would ever appear. This methodology has given me a very broad way of studying this problem and, what is crucial, a set of techniques and a perspective, that does not force any answer. I could say, that in such a sensitive and difficult topic as embodiment, where intersubjectivity is put into test, GTM leaves us free to choose, but at the same time gives a set of rules to follow, so that our study stays methodologically and scientifically clear.

I have used many research techniques and I have tried to combine them in a way, that they could help me get to know the process of social construction of embodiment. The most important was getting diverse data, especially visual ones like photos and video recordings. They have given me information that were impossible to communicate verbally, dance knowledge set in the body like certain body posture, relations in space, corporal communication between partners etc.

Narrative techniques, like interview, but also analysis of prima ballerina’s autobiography have also been important. They have given a set of data about body changes perceived by a dancer, as well as basic information on institutional expectations in dancer’s body shape, size and skills. Combination of the techniques made the research phenomenon accessible and intersubjectively communicable at least at some levels.

Embodiment as a socially constructed phenomenon cannot be studied “as it is”, but only “as it is experienced” by individuals in a certain group of people. We are also not able to experience somebody else’s body. That is why, the real effect of embodiment research are social body practices, perspectives of bodily perception gained during socialization, different approaches to body (as an actor, as a tool, as a material and other). As other outcomes of my study show, social context of bodily oriented actions is very important. I have compared some aspects of embodiment construction in few dance genres: belly dancing, ballroom dancing and flamenco. All of these dancing activities take place in different social settings. Some of them are just a way of earning money, like belly dancing, where a dancers body must adjust to market needs. This may cause serious health problems, like bulimia or anorexia, when a dancer tries to meet those needs. It is different in flamenco, which is treated

mostly as art. There are also no popular flamenco contests in Poland, unlike in ballroom dance, so competition between dancers is less intensive. This is just an example of how social phenomena like market or institutionalized competition influence embodiment changes.

Discussion

Another technique, that has not yet been used in this research is an analysis of video recordings of professional ballroom dancers performing done by another professional dancer or dance teacher. This would enable me to know techniques of body change. Of “right” and “wrong” body moves, postures, gestures and how they are defined as such.

What else may be interesting is combining sociological and medical research on body change in different social groups, in which body use is vital. Some of this has already been done in research on injuries or contusions characteristic to some professions.

For sure, embodiment studies in social sciences are very interesting, developing but challenging as well, which demands adjusting to occurring research situations. That is why I would say, that GTM, as a non- preconceptualizing methodology is very useful in this kind of study.

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Book review:

Researching children's experiences by Melissa Freeman and Sandra Mathison. The Guilford Press, New York 2009

I came across "Researching children's experiences" by Melissa Freeman and Sandra Mathison while I was participating in the research project devoted to the situation of children growing up in pockets of poverty in Poland⁵⁶, thus I began to study this book with a considerable level of curiosity and I must admit that I was not disappointed with this reading. The intention of the authors (two US researchers dealing with the analysis of educational systems and processes) indicated in the very first sentence of the preface was: "to describe and show how researchers can do research with children and youth from a social constructivist methodological perspective" (p. vi) and it seems to me that Freeman and Mathison managed to reach this aim quite successfully. Although the authors strongly underline their epistemological and methodological standpoint, a lot of their remarks have the general meaning going beyond the social constructivist perspective.

The book contains 10 chapters. The opening chapter "Conceptions of children and childhood" is of rather theoretical nature and - regarding the subject of discussion - stands out from the next chapters of the volume, thus I will focus on some details of it. This chapter treats about dominant theoretical perspectives on childhood and children as a social category and their influence on research with children. Following the quotation from Frønes – "there is not one childhood, but many, formed at the intersection of different, cultural, social and economic systems, natural and man-made physical environments" (p. 1) - the authors shortly describe how the concepts of the child and children have changed historically and culturally. Freeman and Mathison focused mostly on the 20th century theories rather unjustly avoiding the broader description of earlier historical concepts of childhood in European societies (considered for example by Philippe Ariès [1995] who pointed that the childhood was not always perceived as a separate phase of life cycle and it is itself the historical outgrowth). Yet, the modern perspectives on childhood are thoroughly described in the text. The attention of the readers from the countries in which children's rights are continuously broken should be drawn to "the principles of

⁵⁶Project "WZLOT- Strengthening opportunities and weakening transmission of poverty among city inhabitants of the Lodz province", financed by the Operational Program Human Capital within the framework of the European Social Fund. The aim of the project was to get better understanding of the process of intergenerational transmission of poverty in the urban enclaves of poverty. 13-14 year old children were interviewed with questionnaires and in-depth interviews within the framework of this project (see www.wzlot.uni.lodz.pl).

the new studies of childhood” prepared within the interdisciplinary research movement by sociologists, social anthropologists, developmental psychologists, social geographers, education researchers and social work researchers. “The unique qualities of childhood as a developmental phase, child’s autonomy and children’s rights to ‘voice opinions and influence decisions in matters relating their own lives” (Brooker as quoted in Freeman & Mathison, p. 7) are strongly underlined in this set of principles. The final parts of the chapter deal with the concept of experience and the epistemological perspective of the authors – the different notions of constructivism and constructionist approach in social research. Freeman and Mathison declare that they take “a social constructivist approach to researching children’s lived experience to emphasize the lived experiences of children and the constructed nature of research” (p. 14). In my opinion, this chapter has two disadvantages. The first one – namely the superficial treatment of early historical ways of conceptualizing children and childhood was mentioned above. The second fault is that the authors keep on repeating that they follow the social constructivist perspective in the introductory parts of the chapter, which can really annoy the reader.

The following chapters are “practice-oriented”, they describe step by step the entire process of research with children – negotiating the access for research with children (chapter 2); recruiting child participants (chapter 3); defining the researcher roles (chapter 4); different methods of researching children’s experiences from interviewing, through art and photography to journaling; written responses and the possibilities created by new technologies (chapters 6-8) and analyzing data (chapter 10). In these chapters the authors show us advantages and disadvantages of numerous research strategies and techniques providing very practical and helpful examples based not only on their own research experiences, but also on the research projects conducted by other authors in different cultural settings. The quantity and variety of the descriptions of the very practical methodological solutions is the unquestionable advantage of the book. Freeman and Mathisson make us aware of the questions which we are to face while designing and conducting a research project, give us many clues helpful in the research design – we may learn how to identify children as research participants, how to negotiate access and develop relationship with them, what kind of procedures can be adapted in contacts with “gatekeepers” – individuals legally responsible for children like parents or teachers or even how to construct the recruitment flyer. They do not escape from describing the studies of very complicated nature like children with HIV narratives collected by Blumenreich (p. 29). The separate part of the book (chapter 5) is devoted to the ethical issues in the research with children and youth (for example, the important issue of influence of different types of researcher’s role fulfillment on relationships with child participants), but the considerations on ethics are inbuilt also in other chapters.

The last chapter treats about children as researchers. The discussion about the problem of establishing the real partnership with children and young people is really interesting – once more the authors formulate the question which is not only methodological but also directs us toward the considerations of rather philosophical nature regarding the children’s status in modern Euro-American societies. Also in chapters 3 and 4 Freeman and Mathison present how the assumptions on the human nature can influence a research project – this notion is important for all scientists in all research situations.

What I especially appreciate is the Freeman and Mathison’s respectful attitude towards children and young people as subjects, which is evident throughout the entire book. They underline that a researcher has to thoroughly assess complexity of the situation of children participating in the scientific research. The authors

concentrated on the issue of voluntary participation – a child needs to understand that taking part in the project is the matter of free will not obligation. They draw our attention - also in a symbolic sense – to the important values such as reciprocity in the relationship between researcher and participant: “the reciprocity can also mean giving something back to the community”(p. 83), contributing “to the well-being beyond children and youth beyond those in a particular research study”.

When we consider the recent great interest in the area of sociology of childhood and children⁵⁷ we can state that we really need such books like “Researching children’s experiences”. This area of sociological and social research is not yet entirely recognized in all its aspects and the danger of harm for participants is probably more serious than in the research projects with adults attendance.

“Researching children’s experiences” is constructed in the “handbook style” – at the end of every chapter we can find “discussion questions” – sets of questions and practical tasks for readers. Thus following probably the authors’ intention, I would primarily recommend this book for social sciences students and for researchers who are on the beginning of their academic career, but I have to admit that also experienced scholars will find this work valuable and worth reading.

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⁵⁷ In the abstract book of 9th Conference of European Sociological Association we will find 92 abstracts accepted for the sessions of Research Network 04 “Sociology of Children and Childhood” (9th Conference of European Sociological Association, ESA 2009, European Society or European Societies, 02-05 September 2009, Lisbon, CD).



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Book Review:

More Than Just Race: Being Black and Poor in the Inner City by
William Julius Wilson. W.W. Norton & Company Inc., New York 2009

Although written with a lay readership in mind, William Julius Wilson's new book "More Than Just Race" sets out to make a major statement of interest to scholars, policy-makers and lay readers alike. Amid the usual barrage of statistical information, there is a notable intellectual development: Wilson seems to no longer understand race as declining in significance. Perhaps more importantly, he also rejects the pragmatically colorblind political discourse he once championed as a means broaden public discussion about issues of urban poverty. The evidence of this runs throughout the book but not until the last chapter is it divulged explicitly:

In my previous writings I called for the framing of issues designed to appeal to broad segments of the population(...)I no longer hold to this view...now my positions has changed: in framing public policy we should not shy way from an explicit discussion of(...)race and poverty; on the contrary, we should highlight them in our attempt to convince the nation that these problems should be seriously confronted (...) [p. 141].

Consequently, although Wilson remains intent on revealing the influence of "impersonal economic forces", the book's title ultimately shares an uneasy chemistry with the thrust of it's central arguments, which ascribe fundamental significance to the impact of race on the concentrated poverty of the inner city.

A major objective of Wilson's book is to reopen meaningful debate around the cultural factors that contribute to urban poverty. To situate the discussion, Wilson relies heavily on sociologist Orlando Patterson who argues that outrage over the infamous "Moynihan Report" helped to ignite a 30+ year witch-hunt for "victim-blamers" within the social sciences, causing scholars to studiously avoid the cultural aspects of urban poverty overwhelmingly in favor of structural factors. Wilson attempts to redress this silence with the precaution of a man practiced in the traversal of minefields. After first prolonged discussion of how structural and cultural factors collude to produce "racial inequality", each of the remaining chapters (save the last) are organized as explorations of contentious issues within public debate, each with special subsections on structure and culture respectively. Ultimately, Wilson remains adamant that "culture matters, but...not...nearly as much as social structure"(p.152). Thus, with each of the issues that he explores, Wilson dedicates his efforts toward the task of grounding cultural factors firmly within a structural context, demonstrating his conviction that "...social scientist(s)...(have) an obligation

to highlight the powerful impact of structural forces because cultural explanations are more likely to resonate with the general public and policy makers” (p. 58).

This awareness of the political implications of social science research hovers watchfully over his every formulation.

In each chapter Wilson addresses two species of “structural forces”—racialist (direct) and nonracialist (indirect)—both of which contribute to racial inequality. Equal attention is given to the corresponding two species of “cultural forces”, which include the “belief systems of the broader society” (p. 147), and “cultural traits that emerge from patterns of intra-group interaction in settings created by racial segregation and discrimination” (p. 147). The latter often seems more central to the book’s objectives, and the way that Wilson approaches it has been given a make-over. No longer offering ruminations on the norms and values of urban black males, he instead now adopts the interpretive language of “cultural frames” and “cultural repertoires”, and effectively refocuses attention to the collective processes of meaning-making within constraint. This innovation proves fruitful. For example, Wilson is able to investigate not only statistical disparities between black and Latino American marriage rates, but also the different meanings that each group tends to attach to marriage.

The topics selected for treatment include the “forces” shaping concentrated poverty, the economic plight of inner-city black males, and the fragmentation of the poor black family. Significantly, each of these issues are both materially and symbolically specific to urban black communities (e.g. “ghettoes”), and so already stand as what Wilson refers to as “racial group outcomes” (p. 21). It is clear that Wilson—taking these issues as starting points—is more concerned with revealing the interplay of intentional and unintentional processes in the reproduction of racial inequality than in considering “racial outcomes” as reflective of the properties of a given racialized social order. It might seem that Wilson’s tendency toward structural analysis along with his new interest in racialized cultural experiences would lead to an encounter with the concept of “racism”, but this fails to materialize chiefly because Wilson continues to consider intentionality a defining feature of structural and cultural processes that earn the term “racism”.

Nevertheless, “More The Just Race” seems to cover lost ground. In his measured exploration of racial subordination, he has taken earnest strides to avoid economic determinism. Yet even in advancing the cultural aspects of work, Wilson tends to treat culture and structure as though they each were reified variables. Even if he acknowledges the idea that “structure” and “culture” are enjoined, his main arguments depend on unrealistic analytical extrapolations of one without the other so that they are not treated as inseverable so much as they are placed side by side. A more fluid formulation would allow him to treat sociopolitical processes the same way as he treats the black inner city; that is, social, political and economic processes may be analyzed in terms of the racialized cultural frames that facilitate them. An example of the potential benefit is found when considering his treatment of the economic policies of the Reagan era as fundamentally structural. These policies were in fact initiatives which found political force principally through the employment of racialized cultural logics (e.g. “welfare queen” ect). Both culture and structure are at work in a way that Wilson’s treatment fails to capture. Aside these small criticisms, this work stands as not only valuable contribution to the study of social problems, but also, in its clarity and wisdom alike, as an exemplar of the promise of public sociology.

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Author-Supplied Abstracts & Keywords

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Students' Conceptions—and Misconceptions—of Social Research

Abstract

How knowledge of students' conceptions of social research can influence the pedagogy of research methods is the focus of this article. This study explains how students' conceptions of social research changed over the course of a two-semester research programme. Twenty-nine graduate students participated in focus groups, interviews, and open-ended surveys to inform the instructor's pedagogical decisions in developing the course. Data were analyzed phenomenographically, and the categories that were identified defined changes in their conceptions of research related to affect and attitudes, the processes involved with conducting research, and the end products of their research projects. Pedagogical inferences were derived from the findings, and implications for future research were outlined.

Keywords: Conceptions; Phenomenography; Social research methods.

Izabela Wagner, University of Warsaw, Poland; CEMS-EHESS, France

Abstract

This paper is a simple account of my teaching experience, the aim of which is to answer the question: "How can we successfully teach interactionism, labeling theory, grounded theory and other sociological bases related to qualitative methods with the active participation of students?". Through the examples of sociologists working in the Chicago Tradition, French sociologists working with Pierre Bourdieu, and other examples from American sociology, I show that sociological work is group activity. It is argued in this paper, that to make sociological thinking understandable to students teachers may do well to contextualize key theorists in their narrative/biographical context. The students learn, that sociologists are not magicians or genius individuals who produce attractive theories. Rather, they work in collaboration with other humans to generate knowledge. Moreover, I demonstrate that sociologists' contributions are often strongly related to and influenced by their broader life context.

Keywords: Teaching sociology; Context of sociological production; Collaborations in sociology; Sociology of knowledge; Career coupling; Chicago School.

Anne Ryen, University of Agder, Norway.

"Hi, Madam, I have a small question." Teaching QM online: Guide to a successful cross-cultural master-course

Abstract

A few years ago Centre of Development Studies at my Faculty, Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences, started an online Master's Programme in Development Management. The programme was implemented by a network of universities from the North (University of Agder/UiA) and the South (Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Uganda, Ghana) recruiting

students from across the world. The evaluation is very positive characterising it as a big success. I will now look into one particular element of this study, teaching the qualitative methodology (QM) courses with a special focus on the South context. Each course QM included has been sectioned into modules based on a variety of students' activities including student-student and student-tutor/teacher interaction, plus a number of hand-ins across topics and formats. Evaluation of the students' performance is based on both online group activity and written material submitted either into the individual or the group portfolio. My focus is twofold. First, how did we teach qualitative methodology and how did that work? Second, what about the contemporary focus on neo-colonial methodology and our QM courses? In a wider perspective the study is part of foreign aid where higher education is a means to transfer competence to the South. As such this study works to enable and to empower people rather than being trapped in the old accusation of sustaining dependency (Asad 1973, Ryen 2000 and 2007). This study then is embedded in a wider North-South debate and a highly relevant illustration of the potentials, success and hazards, inherit in teaching QM.

Keywords: Teaching qualitative methods; Online teaching; Cross-cultural methodology; Neo-colonial methodology; Africa

Krzysztof Konecki, Lodz University, Poland

Teaching Visual Grounded Theory

Abstract

The paper is based on personal 20-years experience of teaching methodology of grounded theory and qualitative methods. In the following paper I would like to show the usefulness of visual analysis in teaching methodology of grounded theory. A very important tool is to use pictures and a sequencing of pictures, which give a comparative insight into empirical data and teaches the comparative method that is so important to generate theory (Glaser 1965; Glaser, Strauss, 1967; Glaser 1978). Students can learn how to compare and find patterns in empirical instances, which have visual character. Some of the sequences show stages of action and the sequence that all together is a linear representation of activity. Sequence of pictures helps to build the pattern that is conceptual understanding of the phenomena being studied. In other case, the sequences of pictures given to students are not planned. They are almost accidentally created and force students to find patterns by means of the comparative analysis. We should always know what had happened before a picture was taken as well as afterwards, it is similar to sequences analysis in textual data (Silverman 2007). We should always be aware of the context of analysed activity. Students are also encouraged to make a theoretical sampling and saturate categories using data from photos and other visual data. This helps them to proceed with the research from empirical incidents to conceptually elaborated properties of categories and finally to the definition of category and formulating the hypotheses. In this way they learn visual grounded theory that is using the visual images for generating categories, properties and hypotheses and also for presenting results of analysis in the final report.

Keywords: Visual grounded theory; Homelessness; Photography; Visual sociology; Qualitative data analysis; Visual processes; Teaching qualitative methods; Qualitative sociology.

Ana Maria Brandão, University of Minho, Portugal

“I’ve found more difficulties than I expected to”: Raising questions from field experience

Abstract

Sociology students in Portugal have usually been taught methodology and epistemology in a classical, scholastic way. If students are provided with practical contact early on, this can help them to better understand and apply theoretical concepts conveyed through lectures. During their last graduate year, Sociology students of the University of Minho are expected to design a full research project and to conduct exploratory research, completed by the last semester, and this includes either a residence period or a research seminar. To ensure this works well, methodology units are organised on a weekly basis, according to two types of classes: 1) theoretical and 2) theoretical-practical, with the purpose of gradually enabling students to develop the competencies they will need to graduate. Focusing on the teaching experience of qualitative methodologies, and using as an example the teaching of observation techniques, the purpose of this article is to illustrate the advantages of offering the students early contact with the ‘field’, and prepare them for future full-scale research. These advantages are acknowledged by students, as evidenced in their written evaluations of their field experiences. However, it is important to note that this type of learning is most fruitful when students have been previously trained in the use of the written language – namely aiming to develop their ability to describe – and social theories.

Keywords: Teaching qualitative methodologies; Field experience; Student feedback

Dominika Byczkowska, Lodz University, Poland

Abstract

The article presents researcher’s attempts, methodological problems and queries in embodiment research during a Grounded Theory Methodology based study on social world of ballroom dancers. The research has been conducted among ballroom dancers, flamenco dancers, belly dancers, dance instructors, choreographers and judges. One of the aspects of the research is social construction of embodiment. In the article I will present techniques and methods of research such as autoethnography, interview, observation, photo and video analysis as well as kind of results they may give and what is really studied when using these methods. I will also present how one experiences his/her body in this group. I will try to answer a question: what is the real result of researcher’s attempts in embodiment study in sociology; do we really study body, or its social practices, socially constructed individual experience; how deeply can we make the research when our object (somebody else’s body) is not entirely intersubjectively available for our recognition.

Keywords: Grounded Theory Methodology; Interview; Observation; Visual Data Analysis; Embodiment; Dance

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