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Workshops as an Essential Practice in Doing Biographical Research

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Abstract The aim of the paper is to share our reflections on the meaning, goals, and course of analytical workshops, which are treated by the authors not only in terms of methodological procedures, but also as a process of grounded theory building, where the phase of collective work is pivotal. We present the idea of workshops worked out within interpretative sociology and qualitative analysis and developed in different fields, yet we mainly focus on biographical research analysis. The knowledge and practice transfer between scholars in this respect is also one of the frames of our reasoning. The paper consists of several sections: firstly, we present a short overview of workshop practices in the field of biographical research referring mainly to students' workshops; in the second part, we describe advantages of workshop practices for researchers and their possible outcomes; the third section describes examples of research and analysis of the same empirical material done by researchers representing different methodological approaches; finally, we finish with concluding remarks.

Keywords workshop, qualitative data analysis, biographical analysis, Grounded Theory

The topic of this paper can be considered insufficiently academic in terms of scientific discourse or scientific aims it deals with. Thus we believe that sharing reflections on the meaning, aims, and course of workshops is not only about the description of methodological procedures, but also the presentation of the process of grounded theory building where the phase of collective work is pivotal. One more argument that has encouraged us to write this article are some other texts devoted to this topic which we will refer to (e.g., Riemann, Schütze 1987, Riemann 2005, 2006, 2010, Schütze 2008, Schütze 2014). They mainly deal with students' activities in biographical analysis whereas we would like to focus more on the scholarly research work.

We also find the idea to reflect on workshop practices reasonable because nowadays they are mainly associated with educational or didactic processes. Moreover, workshops have recently been related to an individual development in accordance with modern pedagogy and psychology. Workshops are also part of a modern neoliberal discourse professing skills development, personal competences, cre-

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ative thinking, life-long learning, permanent education, et cetera. If we randomly examine information on the googled website, for example, the University of Rochester persuades students to take part in the workshops that offer "interactive, course-specific, problem-solving sessions comprised of small teams of students led by a specially trained student facilitator. Workshops meet each week to tackle rigorous material designed to build conceptual understanding and problem-solving skills. Faculty members are closely associated with Workshop activities and their groups of student leaders. These 'near peer' leaders are carefully chosen and well-trained by faculty and learning specialists in the course content, group dynamics, the basics of learning theory, and diversity issues. The credit-bearing leader training program prepares leaders to help their Workshop participants tackle demanding course material together. Benefits: Overall, Workshops provide the added benefit of an enhanced sense of community."[1]

The quotation illustrates the workshop activity and the language used to describe it: specific skills can be developed with the help of trained leaders who know how to achieve the goal. At the same time the idea of partnership seems to be the main framework of the situation. It is not our intention to criticize this advertisement. We treat it just as an illustration of a contemporary understanding of this activity. Our point is that, on one hand, the idea of a workshop may be devaluated, or even overused by the men-

[1] The quotation comes from the website of the University of Rochester chosen from Google's search results after entering the term 'workshop education' https://rochester.edu/College/CWE/model.html (Retrieved February 2019).

tioned discourses, while on the other hand, it can be misinterpreted when understood only according to the contemporary mainstream meaning. It must have happened thus when our colleague's research project was rejected at the initial stage of the formal evaluation in the National Science Center because during the project course the author had planned to organize a few workshops focused on data analysis. It appears that the evaluators regarded workshops as skill training activities and rejected the project as it might not have had any educational impact. This case demonstrates that there is no space for different meanings of workshop practices in social sciences, at least in a very stereotypical, yet at the same time, modern and most 'European'[2] way of thinking.

In the paper we would like to present different perspectives and understanding of using and practicing the idea of workshops. The dictionary explanation says it is "a meeting at which a group of people engage in an intensive discussion and activity on a particular subject or project" with the following synonyms: seminar, discussion group.[3] Accordingly, it is devoted to data analysis and in-depth work on empirical material, a sort of seminar work ("seed plot" according to the Latin etymology of the word) essential for the process of inductive proceeding and theoretical reasoning. What is especially important, this way of work is crucial in students' education when they do their own research, and scholars work on their own projects.

The idea of such workshops appeared in qualitative research of social sciences in the 1970s, so it was much earlier than the contemporary *workshop boom*. Yet we have got the feeling that nowadays scholars sometimes do not see their potential for interpretative and theoretical reasoning. Even if they find the idea of working with data meaningful while considering students' education, researchers do not often appreciate workshops' theoretical and analytical advantage when working on their own projects

The paper consists of several sections: at first, we present a short overview of workshop practices in the field of biographical research referring mainly to students' workshops; secondly, we describe advantages and possible outcomes of workshop practices; the third part describes examples of research and analysis of the same empirical material done by researchers representing different methodological approaches, and finally we finish with concluding remarks.

From Idea to Practice

Alluding once more to the contemporary common use of workshops we should point out that, as we have noticed above, they are not an achievement of modern education trends or new innovative approaches because their idea, at least in qualitative research, appeared a few decades ago. Here we

[2] We allude here to lots of different kinds of workshops and training organized for various purposes from the European funds for different projects. The paradox of these activities lies in using opportunity structures created to build educational projects that are sometimes not necessarily useful, yet remain a very good source of earnings for institutions that organize them. They are frequently labelled as innovative enterprises, however, workshop participants sometimes do not feel real advantages as it happens that they have more knowledge and experience in the field. This is one of the mechanisms that, in our opinion, spoil the idea of workshops.

[3] Oxford Dictionary https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/workshop (Retrieved February 2019).

particularly focus on biographical research, but it must be stressed that the practices within the workshop frame that we are going to describe are (or should be) a central part of interpretative sociology and hermeneutics. Considering our interests, we will refer to two inspirations – grounded theory building and an autobiographical narrative interview analysis.

The first one is Anselm Strauss's way of work considering both teaching students and research team work. According to Fritz Schütze "the most important part of making sure that the legacy of Anselm Strauss's approach to research work will go on is to convey to the students the very style of *communicative cooperation* that Anselm Strauss would bring to life in his research group" (2008:124). Schütze continues that Anselm Strauss's "research meetings and seminars became a role model for research workshops with colleagues and/or students, which were started by those who went back to Europe to their 'home universities'" (p. 126). As is known in the case of Strauss's work, his way of doing research led him to establishing certain practices related to the field work like triangulation of methods and a very systematic process of collecting data, team work including a collective analysis, discussion, and creating theoretical memos which finally led to assumptions of grounded theory (Strauss 1987). We will come back to these notions later on. At the same time this style of work enabled him to build the research team consisting not only of scholars, but also practitioners. "For many years Anselm Strauss trained nurses to become qualitative social researchers alongside students of sociology" (Riemann, Schütze 1987:2).

The second way of doing research, as well as educating students in order to prepare them to analyze social reality has been developed in the tradition of the German interpretative sociology.[4] Although German scholars, especially Fritz Schütze and Gerhard Riemann, stress having been influenced by Anselm Strauss's work (both of them visited him in the United States and took part in student courses and research meetings), their work may be considered as a reciprocal way of building the idea of collective work. In this respect it can be seen as one of many examples of transferring ideas due to transatlantic journeys which have inspired American and European sociologists and contributed to the development of sociology in Europe and in North America. Although we cannot find this very case in *Transatlantic Voyages and Sociology: The Migration and Development of Ideas* (2010) – the book showing how German and American scholars developed their thoughts being influenced by other European/American inspirations – we think it is a very good example of mutual learning from each other.

Schütze describes this process as follows: "Werner Kallmeyer and I started to have some sort of early type interdisciplinary student research workshop in Bielefeld University. We started with that probably in 1974 and continued this up to 1979. We did this every Friday afternoon for roughly four hours, and the students endured this working on empirical text materials happily. In addition, we invited almost all the young experts in sociology, or linguis-

[4] For example, we can point to Fritz Schütze, Gerhard Riemann, Ulrich Oevermann, Gabriele Rosenthal, Wolfram Fischer, Lena Inowlocki, Katja Mruck and also to some other texts on this topic, for example, Allert, Dausien; Mey; Reichertz; Riemann, (2014), Reichertz (2013), Dausien (2007).

tics or anthropology, who would do sociolinguistics and sociology of language in West Germany, and they really came to our workshop without any payment. Werner's and my workshop was principally open-ended, but normally, it started at 2 o'clock p.m. and would end about 5 to 6 o'clock, although it was officially 2 hours long. We would look at materials, and many of the empirical text materials were collected by our very interested students. So they would put tape recorders into their flats shared with other students and would, for example, record naturally occurring narratives of personal experiences. These naturally occurring narratives, in turn, were used to compare them with interview narratives in order to find out about possible essential changes caused by the professional action scheme of interviewing and the possibly changed (probably declined) capacity of interview narratives to express personal experiences" (Kaźmierska 2014:316).[5] The quoted description points to different aspects of mutual learning from/by invited experts and students involved in the process as active actors/researchers. As a consequence, workshops were not only a way of teaching students, but also a process of analytical reasoning whose aim was to enrich reflections on the method for both students and scholars. It should also be stressed that one of the features of such practices is that it is a time demanding activity deserving far more time than other regular courses and it should not be regulated by standard time slots dedicated to teaching. It may be problematic when students' curriculum or timetable are not flexible enough for such work. Unfortunately, it is frequently the case as regards strictly institutionalized educational processes where any changes in routine organization of course organization are very difficult to proceed.

Then Schütze went to the United States and thanks to the cooperation with Anselm Strauss he learned "what the role of the workshop moderator should be, how she or he would carefully listen to a narrative report about the collection of new data and to their description in the beginning of the research workshop, how she or he had to be carefully retrained in order not to overrun other participants with her or his interpretations and suggestions, as well as how the moderator could be most encouraging and propelling for the ongoing analysis of the reporting participant by putting in unexpected contrasts (from his personal experiences, too) and by inventing some sort of "ideational variation" (Edmund Husserl)" (Kaźmierska 2014:316). Coming back to the thought that the Strauss – Schütze relationship was a reciprocal way of building the idea of collective work we should also add that it was Schütze who encouraged Strauss to "tape the proceedings and let them be transcribed in order to produce empirical instances for his rich book on research work and its steps and methods *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists* of the year 1987" (Kaźmierska 2014:316).

Afterwards Schütze continued this work which was described in the text by Riemann and Schütze and published in 1987, after six years of their teaching experiences. It can be considered as the first published analysis of this type of practice based on biographical analysis approach and particularly on

[5] This and ongoing quotations come from the interview with Fritz Schütze conducted by Kaja Kaźmierska and it is cited as: Kaźmierska, Kaja. 2014. "An Interview with Professor Fritz Schütze: Biography and Contribution to Interpretative Sociology." *Qualitative Sociology Review* 10(1):284-359. Retrieved Month, Year (http://www.qualitativesociologyreview.org/ENG/archive_eng.php).

autobiographical narrative interviews. Although a lot of time has passed since then and the experience in this field has surely developed, yet the main assumptions presented by the authors have remained the same. First, we may put the question why such a text (as the authors claim "down-to-earth") was written. It was published in the Newsletter of ISA 38 RC Biography and Society. The very Newsletter up to now has had rich tradition of giving the floor to (although in an informal sense as not published in regular periodical, but distributed among 38 RC members) important and sometimes very engaging discussions. Placing the text in the Newsletter means that it was dedicated to an international environment of colleagues doing biographical research and quite possibly also teaching. The idea to share teaching and analytical experiences was supported by impressions of fruitful experiences in students' education, as well as working out the way of doing biographical research in general. Although the authors do not stress it openly as they do not want to "sound normative or strictly didactic" (p. 1), they wanted to encourage other scholars to develop such practices.

Referring to their work with students, the authors distinguished differences between students of sociology and social work. Whereas the former were better prepared in terms of applying sociological theories and reasoning the latter had "a rich knowledge of social situations and - having dealt with many 'social cases' in their practical studies or professional work situations – they [were] familiar with an attitude of carefully scrutinizing the dynamics of (collective or individual) single cases and the related empirical documents" (Riemann, Schütze 1987:2). As a result, social work students needed to work on "analytical distance, technical skills for qualitative sociological analysis" (p. 2). On the contrary, sociology students presented "disregard for concentration on case analyses ("What can you learn from such few cases?"), which derives from their lack of previous professional, practical experiences" (p. 3).

These two attitudes rooted in theoretical and practical background demonstrate the most important features of data analysis when both the theoretical reasoning and sociological imagination based on one's experiences, as well as a bit of a naïve fresh look at the data are equally needed for an analysis. Moreover, they should be multiplied by a 'choir' of voices – participants of the workshops who have equal opportunities to express their interpretations. It should be emphasized that the described process relates not only to students' education, but it is a crucial condition for doing biographical research by scholars. We will develop this idea in the next section, however, here we already want to point out an imbalance that very often occurs between theoretical and analytical perspectives when working on empirical material.

To continue the main theme of this section, as early as in Kassel in 1980s student research workshops (the so called Forschungskolloquium [FoKo]) became a regular and central part of Schütze's teaching activity. He continued this style of work at the University of Magdeburg up to his retirement (Kaźmierska 2014:317).[6]

[6] For a detailed description of this process, see "An Interview with Professor Fritz Schütze: Biography and Contribution to Interpretative Sociology." *Qualitative Sociology Review* 10(1):284-359. Retrieved Month, Year (http://www.qualitativesociologyreview.org/ENG/archive_eng.php).

The idea was also developed within an international frame. In 1997 the first *Tri-National Research Platform: European Identity Work* was organized. The workshop was initially grouping researchers and students form Magdeburg, Bangor (Wales) and Lodz Universities, and then grew in its scope, including Bamberg and Belfast Universities. Including some breaks the workshops continued up to 2013 that is as long as Polish and German students were involved (Piotrowski 2014:365). The four topics that were jointly explored were a biographical analysis, analysis of the collective, especially national and European identities, analysis of professional work; and a case analysis of social work and professions (Schütze 2008:123-124). It should be emphasized that these workshops were organized not only within the framework of students' curriculum, but also aimed at reciprocity of variously culturally grounded perspectives, as well as focused on research work. The materials for analysis were taken from ongoing projects (like Welsh Identity, European Identity, biographical experiences of communism in Poland and East Germany). Therefore, it was not only students who had an opportunity to study the mentioned social phenomena and processes within the framework of an interpretative paradigm and qualitative research, but also scholars could explore their projects working together with students when analysing empirical data.

We devoted much space to student workshops, because they are well-described in literature, and they are also precious and we think still quite extraordinary illustrations of teaching practices. At the same time they do not differ in their form when compared to researchers' workshop. Actually, they have the same framework in both cases. When enumerating the most important features we should expose: 1. 'research *colleague*' relationship; 2. the idea that the procedures (both data collection and data analysis) are communicative; 3. readiness for reciprocity of perspectives – what Schütze calls *communicative cooperation*; 4. way of proceeding; 5. similar goals, which is a discussion of various frames of interpretation, especially those which may differ from the researcher's goals and perspectives; 6. avoiding normative statements ennobling any perspectives.

Significance of Research Workshops

In the case of research workshops we can think of at least three possible circumstances. 1/ The first is the project workshop of team members to discuss empirical data and work on them. 2/ The second is when a researcher or a research team invites other scholars to do the data analysis. 3/ The same material is analyzed by scholars representing different methodological approaches and/or an analysis is done within an interdisciplinary frame.

Referring to the first option we would say that this type of work should have exactly the same dynamic as students' work on the data. The process is described based on an analysis of an autobiographical narrative interview. First, the interviewer describes the research situation and gives all possible information about the interaction, answers questions asked by the other team members. Then the initial phase of an analysis starts when everybody expresses their first impressions after reading the transcription. The participants present their first ideas, as well as possible interpretations. This stage

is followed by the main steps of the narrative interview analysis: sequential structural descriptions of the textual presentation (the sequence of presentational units), analytical abstractions (what is special 'case distinctive' and what are general features of the case), contrastive comparisons (comparison to other cases by looking for minimal and maximal contrasts).[7] Creating theoretical memos during and after the meeting, where the most important results of the analysis are presented, is a very important stage of work, even if still not systematically ordered it should be put down and serve as an outline for further work. "Writing theoretical memos is an integral part of doing grounded theory. Since the analyst cannot readily keep all the categories, proprieties, hypothesis, and generative questions that evolve from the analytical process, there must be asystem of doing so. The use of memos constitutes such a system. Memos are not simply the 'ideas'. They are involved in the formulation and revision of theory during the research process." (Corbin, Strauss 1990:10). This practice of grounded theory is a very important element of biographical text analysis and it plays exactly the same role as described above.

The second circumstance for holding the workshop is to present data to other scholars. This case refers both to an individual work of a researcher and to the project team work. Other researchers invited to do analytical work on the collected data present their ways of analysis and approaches to certain biographical and social processes. Such a workshop can be of different dynamics. It can be quite similar to the first variant, but it may not include a systematic, step-by-step analysis, that is, a structural description, participants rather concentrate on some crucial parts of the narrative, analyze some fragments and discuss general features of the narrative. The most important feature of this type of workshop meetings is reciprocity of perspectives understood not only in terms of communicating one's point, but also learning from one another. Thus building the field for reciprocity of perspectives and communicative cooperation is both part of the research process and has a formative power for a researcher by enriching his/her knowledge, interpretative skills, and sociological imagination. Here we should refer to the idea of triangulation that "can be traced back to Campbell and Fiskel (1959). This was later developed by Web (1966) and elaborated by Denzin (1970) beyond its conventional association with research methods and designs" (Yeasmin, Rahman 2012:154).

Also from four, distinguished by Denzin, forms of 'triangulation', the methodological represents the most common meaning of the term (ibid 157), here we can compare the workshop interactions with investigator 'triangulation' (using multiple observers instead of a single observer in the form of gathering and interpreting data), theoretical 'triangulation' (using more than theoretical positions in interpreting data) (Denzin 1970:301). We can say that triangulation is used here on a "meta – level" as it is not only focused on the very data, but also on researcher analysis.

In the case of a researcher/team project, the author(s) is/are competent in their field research. It is obvious

[7] It is not our aim here to characterize in detail all the steps of the analysis. A detailed description can be found in Schütze 2008.

that for exploring certain social phenomena or processes expert knowledge is needed and it increases along with the research development. Thus other participants of the workshop gain access not only to the data collected in the project, but can also acquire knowledge and a general idea of the investigated topic. In other words, participants have a precious opportunity to get access to the aspects of social reality that they are not familiar with while working in other fields. As a result, during the workshop they often ask a lot of questions about the topic, social environment, social/historical background, et cetera. Therefore the first part of the workshop may be quite long. At the same time during this phase the researcher/team is not only exploited as an "information box". The process of responding to questions activates theoretical thinking on the problem, but also, what often appears even more difficult, answering naïve questions of researchers who do not know the investigated problem. This situation makes the researcher think about statements which he/she has treated as a sort of background knowledge in the Alfred Schütz's sense, thus obviously not demanding analytical or theoretical explanations whereas during the workshop they may be required by others. Sometimes it is just a sort of an intellectual exercise, but it also happens that it demonstrates the researcher's focus on one perspective that may develop into a kind of schematic or sometimes even stereotypical or routine thinking about the problem. It may cover other possible ways of interpretation or aspects of the studied processes and/or phenomena. To sum up: this phase of exchanging questions and ideas is very fruitful to all the participants as it helps to extend general sociological knowledge and it helps to change the perspectives or at least realize that other quite reasonable approaches are worth considering.

The next phase of the workshop relates directly to the material and consists of two or three phases (depending on available time). Participants express their first impressions, share their own experiences related to the studied case, point to possible analytical dimensions. If there is enough time participants proceed to a detailed analysis of chosen aspects of the narrative on the base of a structural description and specific features of the interview. It is followed by a phase for concluding remarks and looking for further possible ways of analysis including analytical abstraction and contrastive comparison.

This collective work on the material helps to extend its analytical context and enrich the process of an ongoing analysis thanks to the joint interpretation. Interactive frames of the workshop create opportunities for perspective comparisons which offer a chance for understanding obvious and partly subconscious mechanisms of inter-action (in the Harold Garfinkel's (1967) sense of 'seen but unnoticed'). This strengthens an analytical process by giving an opportunity to point to other basic relationships between the biographical identity and the society and their collective representations. Thus thanks to activating the process of reciprocity of perspectives, the reflection on one's own society may be enriched, that is, the process of the joint interpretation is usually accompanied by the process of mutual learning.

As a result this kind of workshop can be considered not only as a helpful procedure, but a crucial

analytical step. If we refer to the founders of this idea, Anselm Strauss states: "two or more researchers are discussing either data or just ideas that pertain to joint research. In effect their exchange can result in coding (new categories discovered, relationships among categories discussed). Or, a number of generative questions are raised, hypotheses are suggested, comparisons are made and perhaps explored. This kind of discussion can even occur between a solo researcher and an understanding colleague, but usually it has more focus and thrust if it occurs repeatedly between or among research teammates (Strauss 1987:130). Gerhard Riemann and Fritz Schütze (1987:4) stress that "the central cases and basic research steps should be articulated and 'heard': powerfully involved in qualitative social research".

The described dynamic of there search workshop is also based on our own experiences as participants taking both the role of researchers presenting own materials and scholars working on other researchers' data. Since 2011, in the Department of Sociology of Culture at the University of Lodz, there search workshop called Biographical Research Seminar[8] has taken place. Researchers representing different levels of experience (M.A and PhD students, scholars at various stages of their research and scientific careers) can present their research projects. They are expected to send their empirical material in advance (e.g., autobiographical narrative interviews, in-depth interviews, memoirs, diaries, and other biographical data) to enable other participants to prepare for the meeting. The seminar is open to everybody and remains interdisciplinary. It gathers sociologists, pedagogues, psychologists, historians, cultural studies researchers, anthropologists, geographers[9] coming from various academic centers in Poland. The topics presented are very diverse, just to mention a few: migrants identity problems, local oral histories of certain social worlds, for example, fosterers, professional identities like lawyers, teachers, social workers, street workers; mental patients; war, artists' experiences; disabled people considering sport activities, excluded persons; homeless people, domestic violence, monastery experiences, et cetera. So far there have been about 60 seminars. They last from 1 p.m. up to 6-7 p.m.

All the phases and processes described above take place during the biographical research seminar. It is worth stressing that the dynamic of interaction and also researchers' reactions are quite similar to the interaction process of students' workshop. Therefore referring once more to Riemann and Schütze's paper it can be noted that: "The formulation of propositions of general properties of the case induces the other group members to question them or even to formulate counterpropositions, and this working of the communicative scheme of argumentation leads to a considerable densification of the results of analytical abstraction, contrastive comparison, and building of theoretical models" (Riemann, Schütze 1987:4). The authors also notice that it can be occasionally painful for students "to undergo substantial identity changes due to the fact of becoming aware of the intricacies of naturalistic inquiries into

[8] In 2016 the Section of Biographical Research was established in the Polish Sociological Association and since then the seminar has been also organized within its framework.

[9] We enumerate all the researchers we happened to have, yet the majority is represented by sociologists and pedagogists.

the dynamics of single cases" (p. 2). The same sometimes applies to experienced researchers who leave the seminar with a painful feeling that their intricate analyses and conclusions appear not to be the only possible ones and perhaps require rethinking. We deliberately quoted comments referring to students to show that the process is exactly the same. Obviously, it is not the aim of the seminar to be normative and dogmatic; *communicative cooperation* and reciprocal approach of each participant give opportunity "for sharpening one's senses regarding the theoretical and methodological grounds of one's approach" (p. 1).

Doing Biographical Research

In this section we would like to present the third mentioned possibility of "workshop style" analysis when the same material is studied by scholars representing different methodological approaches and/or the analysis is done within an interdisciplinary framework. The title of the section is taken from Gerhard Riemann's text, which within the framework of the Research Committee 38 'Biography and Society' during 14th Congress of the International Sociology Association in Montreal invited scholars to show how they approach and understand the same text of an autobiographical narrative interview with a Turkish migrant woman called Hülya (Riemann 2003:8-9). The novelty of his idea was related to the fact that a typical scenario of paper presentations at a congress session was changed into a workshop-like meeting; although, still limited by time constraints, yet giving a chance to show and see the process of working on the text. The presentations were supported by vivid discussions and Riemann's encouragement to work on the material and analyze it with students (Kaźmierska 2014:6).[10] As he wrote: "The choice of the present participle was meant to stress that what is actually occurring in biographical research should become visible and should thereby become a matter of open discussion and self-reflection: that is, of becoming aware of the specific presuppositions, blind spots, and features of one's own approach by seeing it in the light of the work of others" (Riemann 2006:8). Therefore the aim was to show the necessity for exchanging perspectives and show that there is a need for constant *communicative cooperation* and reciprocal attitude, especially when different approaches appeared in biographical studies. We found this thought very inspiring because we think that nowadays there are many different ways of analyzing biographical materials and the most important problem relates not to a variety of approaches, but researchers' methodological and theoretical self-consciousness.

Another example of the same practice can be found in Qualitative Sociology Review No 1 from 2014, where, following the Riemann's idea, researchers presented their analyses of the autobiographical narrative interview with Natalia who spent some of her adolescence in a residential care home for children. The material discussed in the session was entitled *Biography and Emotion – different approaches in dealing with the life sto-*

[10] This suggestion could successfully spread and develop some time later when the volume of *Forum Qualitative Social Research* entitled *Doing Biographical Research* was edited by Gerhard Riemann in 2003 (published on the Internet), and three years later it also appeared in the paper version in *Historical Social Research* (2006). Both editions contain articles based on the Montreal sessions, texts of other authors, and the interview transcript.

ry of Natalia during the conference *Emotion, Ethics, & Performative Praxis,* held in Lodz in 2012.[11]

In either case the researchers were able to present different approaches within the framework of a qualitative analysis and thus show interpretative potential of the same data. Moreover, the interpretations appeared to be quite coherent yet researchers exposed different aspects of biographical experiences and social phenomena, exactly as it happens during the research workshop. The published texts along with the transcription of the interviews could serve not only as scientific texts based on the data analysis, but also as a sort of instructive procedure showing both the workshop-style reasoning and the necessity to keep the frame of *communicative cooperation*.

Concluding Remarks

As noted above, it may seem that the topic of this text is "much down-to earth," to quote Riemann and Schütze. On one hand, the presented thoughts may sound quite obvious, while on the other hand, if we observe that such deeply analytical work, even among collective projects, appears not to be such common practice, our reflections may be found reasonable.

When stressing the importance of workshop work, especially during the course of one's qualitative research, we also want to express some criticism of the quality of contemporary research practices. We think that the described style of work based on a systematic, careful, and time-consuming analysis of empirical data, is very often neglected. Several reasons account for it. The first is an observed disorder in biographical research connected with a variety of perspectives; secondly, there is a conviction that biographical approach is chiefly an easy and intuitive way of reasoning; thirdly, there is a postmodern attempt to mix interdisciplinary attitudes and ways of interpretation, where the text analysis is not treated as the main source for conclusions about social processes and phenomena (see e.g., Riemann 2003, Czyżewski 2012, Kaźmierska 2014). Last but not least (which is directly connected with the third point), biographical research is often used as illustration material for the researcher's thesis and assumptions not treated as an 'independent' source of reasoning. In other words, the theoretical potential of the narrative data is neglected. Moreover, "[w]hile biographical research has become of interest to a number of sociologists, a certain impatience with methodological aspects of biographical analysis, as well as a seemingly weak theoretical benefit from such efforts, have led to some critical judgments" (Apitzsch, Inowlocki 2000:53). The reason for this impatience can be associated with a specific lifestyle when doing biographical research, related to a particular academic tradition, based on ongoing discussions, seminars not necessarily limited in time, freed from the time pressure and project requirements discourse, whereas nowadays there is a need to work within project timeframes and effectiveness being measured by a number of projects and publications. The biographical approach runs counter to such a style of work though, as it requires

[11] Papers published on the basis of the conference, as well as the interview transcript were published in Qualitative Sociology Review Vol. 1 2014, http://www.qualitativesociologyreview.org/ENG/volume28.php.

patience, time, and systematic reasoning, where the difference between the "gross" (work measured in time invested) and the "net" (quick results) is either discouraging or tempts the scholar to proceed quickly without material grounds for interpretation (Kaźmierska 2018:396).

We hope that our reflections on the topic would encourage researchers to devote time to the collective data analysis and create workshops and seminars that would offer space for doing biographical research. We also believe that developing such practices can help to avoid the frequently expressed dubiety of analysis relevance and validity. The workshop analysis not only shows the complexity of empirical data, not only gives the floor to present different interpretations, but also helps the researcher to see main features of the studied case and finally makes him/her more conscious of his/her own analytical approach. Last but not least this approach is one of fundamental elements of grounded theory which can be considered as one of the most common methodological practices in the field of qualitative research thus it would be good if researchers incorporate workshops to their "daily" methodological routines.

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Praca warsztatowa jako warunek *sine qua non* badań biograficznych

Abstrakt: Celem artykułu jest refleksja na temat wartości pracy warsztatowej w metodzie biograficznej. Wspólna praca nad tekstem jest nie tylko elementem pracy analitycznej, ale powinna być uznana za jeden z niezbędnych kroków procedury analitycznej prowadzącej do refleksji teoretycznej. Artykuł składa się z następujących części: krótkiej prezentacji historii idei warsztatów analitycznych w polu badań biograficznych zwłaszcza w odniesieniu do pracy ze studentami; opisu korzyści charakterze edukacyjnym, analitycznym i teoretycznym, jakie płynąć mogą z pracy zespołowej; charakterystyki konkretnych przykładów warsztatowej pracy badawczej i jej rezultatów w formie tekstów pokazujących różne podejścia analityczne i teoretyczne.
Słowa kluczowe: warsztat, analiza danych jakościowych, analiza biograficzna