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Hannu Soini, Eeva-Liisa Kronqvist
and Günter L. Huber (Eds.)

Epistemologies for Qualitative Research

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Introduction

Epistemology – A Tool or a Stance ?

Hannu Soini and Eeva-Liisa Kronqvist

What do we have to know about epistemology?

The 9th annual meeting of the Center for Qualitative Psychology was held in Northern Finland, near to the city of Oulu. The seminar was started with two crucial questions leading the participants to the theme of the conference. The orientation followed the line of the former meetings of the Center for Qualitative Research in Psychology helping participants to reflect own ways of doing psychological research. In the beginning of the conference we asked the conference participants a very simple question or a question which sounds simple; what do you want to know about epistemology. In small groups the participants expressed they want to find answers to questions like - what is epistemology, are there many epistemologies, what do we mean by epistemology and what epistemological approaches do we have in psychology. During the two conference days these questions we reformulated and new themes were elaborated by the participants. At the end of the seminar the participants were finally asked "in what questions did you find answers?" Here we summarize some most interesting themes that the conference participants discussed during the small group meetings. The themes are following, of course, the interest of the writers of this introduction; many other interesting questions were also discussed.

The groups discussed first *for what purposes do we need epistemology?* Much of the debate in this field has focused on analyzing the nature of knowledge and how it relates to similar notions such as truth, belief, and justification. Epistemology also deals with the means of production of knowledge, as well as skepticism about different "knowledge claims." The knowledge and its characteristics are defined by the way knowledge and the basic foundations of knowledge are found. There should be evidence of this kind for the knowledge to become generally accepted and public, truthful and believable. Traditionally, objectivity and truth are the classical criteria for evaluating knowledge. This brings us to the approach, which emphasizes the scientific method as a way to arrive at knowledge.

Following the ideas of Joseph Maxwell's outstanding key note lecture, the participants stated that epistemology is not a stance you have to decide beforehand or to follow literally regardless of the demands you meet in your study. Instead, it is a tool you may use as a researcher in your personal way to – first to formulate appropriate questions, then finding reasonable answers. However, the chosen epistemological stance needs to be argumented. It was also suggested that we should choose a dialectical approach to epistemological questions.

What epistemologies do we have in psychology?

Traditionally in philosophy the basic epistemological questions have been concerned with the origin of knowledge. In the psychology there have been two opposite theoretical approaches – rationalism/nativism and empiricism/associationism. The first one – the Platonic view looks at the origin of knowledge being based on innate ideas. Experience provides the occasions for knowing. The empiricism or Aristotelian view sees – on the other hand – the origin of knowing developing from a clean slate and the experience being the source of knowledge. If one common and unique natural-science ideal of knowledge is rejected it does not mean that a new common epistemological position has to be formulated. Many teachers at the university may share the experience that some students when starting to prepare their master's thesis have beforehand decided to apply qualitative methods in their study. They have not yet specified the topic of their research, but they already know their epistemological stance. They easily go straight to the methods without thinking why and how the research questions could be answered. In this situation teacher starts to wonder what students may think or know about *epistemology*.

Why do we do what we do?

One of the conference participants (Ceglowski 2000, pp. 88-89) tells us a story about her mentor Norman Denzin, which describes the problem typical for epistemology:

> I am sitting in a classroom at the University of Illinois. The windows are open because it is warm and we all know that Norm will want a smoke. A few minutes after two, Norman Denzin, unkempt long gray hair, dressed in old baggy shorts and shirt and $2.00 rubber thongs, reading glasses around hid neck, pack of Camels hanging out of his pocket, enters and sits down. His watercolor blue eyes study those of us sitting in front of him. He pulls out a cigarette, lights it, and in his booming voice tells us his story:
>
> Right after I think it was Kennedy died I was sent out to interview people. As I went house to house I met people crying, unable to talk. Christ, I didn't have the heart to ask them the survey questions. I realized that I didn't believe in what I was doing. It was then, in this epiphany that I decided there had to be a different way of doing research. It was then I started to think about qualitative work.
>
> As Norm finishes his story, he looks out and smiles at me. Perhaps it is the combination of the story, the smile, and the autumn leaves rustling through the open windows that make this memory so vivid. Yet I know that Norm' story calls me to enter the lived experience of those I study. With his help, I plan to conduct my study (about Head Start). What I do not realize is what doing research in this way entails. I do not understand what it feels like to enter into the lives of (others).

> This is why I am a qualitative researcher and this is the reason I research the way I do. It is inherently valuable and immeasurably human.

This episode nicely shows us that when we as researchers choose the way we do, it is actually strongly a personal question. Knowledge is created in social interaction between investigator and respondents and the "results" or "findings" are literally created as the investigation proceeds (see e.g. Denzin & Lincoln 1994).

The Epistemologies for the Qualitative Research presents articles on four extensive themes about qualitative research and the psychological and educational research. *The Epistemologies for the Qualitative Research* seeks to highlight and illustrate the variety of epistemologies and the personal stance every researcher have to take to these questions. The first topic is concentrated on the epistemological questions. The article by Joseph Maxwell is based on his key note presentation at the 2008 workshop and it presents epistemological heuristics for qualitative research. The second topic includes two viewpoints to practical and strongly context-based debate of brutal computer games and specified early communication. In his presentation Günter Huber describes how fans of brutal computer games react to critique of their hobby. Concluding from their reactions Huber asks how does the world look like in which these people are living and are there links or borders between their virtual and real worlds. Finally Huber debates the epistemological problems the researcher meets when trying to interpret correctly the reactions of killer game fans. Mechthild Kiegelmann's article presents how baby signing is understood by parents and how the gestural communication and speech communication are developing. The article has both practical and theoretical relevance on communicative practices in parent-child interaction. Also the ethical considerations are discussed.

The third topic includes articles on educational questions and issues like interculturality, diversity, and vocational training. The first article written by Samuel Gento, Antonio Medina and Jorge Pina clarifies theoretical questions on inclusion. The article presents an empirical study in which the possibilities and difficulties of implementing inclusive educational treatment of diversity in educational institutions are investigated. An interpretative-symbolic approach was used in the data analysis. Diversity as an educational treatment is a challenge and it requires resources as well as specific methodologies and curriculum planning. Karin Schweizer and Petra Korte describe the results of interviewing experts in high technology vocational training about their beliefs and epistemologies. The analysis is based on step-wise documentary method and the results showed that reciprocal expectations and uncertainty, the atmosphere and culture of learning, and cross-linking and communication between all actors (companies, trainers, parents and pupils) appeared to be essential. María Concepción Domínguez, Antonio Medina and Jorge Pina describe in their article how to create professional intercultural models using self-analysis of reflective experience. The collection of data was based on the project method and shared work, collaborations and sharing experiences from different cultures.

The fourth topic treats how theoretical and methodological solutions may define the chosen epistemological stance. In her paper, Jelena Pavlovic asks how

discursive psychology can be used as a resource for qualitative research. Following the ideas of social constructionism and Kelly's theory of personal construction (PCP), she seeks methodological possibilities for collaboration between discourse analysis and PCP techniques. According to Pavlovich, both personal construct theory and social constructionism share participative epistemology in the research process.

Teemu Suorsa goes to more fundamental questions by reminding us that scientific concepts in psychology have their history and "local background." Suorsa analyzes carefully the origin of empathy in English and German languages and their Finnish equivalent "myötäeläminen." Empirical evidence is always formulated from unique and local circumstances. Following the ideas of Jaan Valsiner, Suorsa underlines that the challenge in scientific psychology is to produce universal knowledge through respectful investigation of local phenomena. This task requires, however, applying our minds to careful analysis of the history of the scientific concepts we use in our studies. Salvora Feliz, Tiberio Feliz and Maria Carmen Ricoy want to listen to people's voices concerning their everyday lives and especially their opinions about their homes. The authors emphasize the pragmatic point and users' views to the architectural design of homes. It was stated that different groups of people have also quite different views and perceptions about homes, which should be payed attention to in architectural designing. Another kind of participation and way of listening to everyday life experiences is presented in the article of Maria Carmen Ricoy, Salvora Feliz and Tiberio Feliz when they describe the use of diaries and self-reflection on the practical training periods during the university studies. The diary method is used as a way to promote and enhance the practical learning especially in social education programs. The content analysis of diaries is described and various categories could be found. The method could at the best be a useful way to support students' self-reflection.

It was in the middle of the arctic area's darkest season when the questions of epistemologies were raised to the focus of psychological research by the group of qualitative researchers. The understanding of the local meaning of scientific concepts in not the only important factor in science. The uniqueness of the given place where the questions of epistemology in psychological research are discussed is also of most significant issue. This time it happened to be in an arctic environment, where the nature seemed to be very near to us. When the darkness was descended and Northern lights were on the sky, we found out that questions still remained open, but our minds certainly were working with them.

Chapter I

Epistemological Heuristics for Qualitative Research

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Epistemology, as a technical term in philosophy, refers to how we know and the relationship between the knower and the known. It is distinguished from ontology (what exists, and the nature of reality) and axiology (values), as well as methodology. However, a broader use of "epistemology" is common in writing about approaches to research, a use that includes ontology and sometimes axiology and methodology. For example, Christine Sleeter, in a review article on "Epistemological diversity in research on preservice teacher preparation for historically underserved children", describes epistemology as referring to "how people know what they know, including assumptions about the nature of knowledge and reality" (2001, p. 213). Citing Gregory Bateson's concept of "a net of epistemological and ontological premises," and drawing on Thomas Kuhn's work, Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 19) refer to this net, including methodological premises, as a *paradigm*.

Beginning in the 1980s with the "paradigm wars" between quantitative and qualitative research, epistemology has been the subject of considerable controversy. Guba and Lincoln (1989, 1994; Guba, 1990; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) argued in several influential works that the appropriate epistemological paradigm for qualitative research was constructivism, the position that our understanding of reality is a social construction, not an objective truth, and that there exist "multiple realities" associated with different groups and perspectives. Lincoln and Guba (2000, p. 168) termed this a "relativist" and "transactional/ subjectivist" position, in opposition to views that were variously labeled positivist, realist, objectivist, or empiricist; the latter "assume the possibility of some kind of unmediated, direct grasp of the empirical world and that knowledge ... simply reflects or mirrors what is 'out there'" (Schwandt, 2007, p. 38).

This view that constructivism is the only legitimate stance for qualitative research is part of what has been called the "purist" perspective (Greene, 2007): that quantitative and qualitative methods are each inextricably tied to a specific set of ontological and epistemological assumptions, and that it is therefore impossible to combine the two approaches or paradigmatic stances. This view gained broad acceptance in qualitative research during the 1990s and continues to be a widely held position. While constructivism is a term with a number of different meanings (Hacking, 1999), and while even within qualitative research there can be found "strong" and "weak" versions of constructivism (Howe, 2003; Schwandt, 2007), there is a pervasive assumption among qualitative researchers that qualitative research is grounded in a constructivist or subjectivist epistemology (e.g., Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 4; Lincoln & Guba, 2000), and

that epistemological positions that are incompatible with these are not legitimate stances for genuinely qualitative research.

This view has not gone unchallenged. Hammersley (1992b) argued that the view that qualitative and quantitative research can be seen as two distinct "paradigms" is untenable, and that both approaches can be analyzed into a substantial number of separable components, which bear no logically necessary relationship to one another. And Pitman and Maxwell (1992) showed that the supposed paradigmatic unity of one area of qualitative research, qualitative program evaluation, was largely illusory, and that major figures in this field held widely divergent and conflicting views on many of the ontological and epistemological issues regarding the use of qualitative approaches for program evaluation.

More recent discussions have begun to recognize that qualitative research is informed by a variety of epistemological views. Denzin and Lincoln, for example, in their introduction to the second edition of the *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2000, p. 11), acknowledge that qualitative researchers don't all share the same epistemological assumptions. However, they assume, or at least write as if, qualitative researchers can be divided into distinct "camps" or "moments," including postpositivist, constructivist, and postmodern. Lincoln and Guba also modified their views on whether one could combine different paradigms to a "cautious 'yes'" (2000, p. 174), but they saw this as productive only when the axioms of the two paradigms are similar. Combining contradictory or mutually exclusive axioms was still seen as problematic. And Denzin (2008), although he calls for greater dialogue *between* paradigms, does not mention the possibility of the integration of divergent perspectives *within* specific interpretive communities.

My argument in this paper is not simply that qualitative research can be conducted from a number of different ontological and epistemological perspectives. It is also that there are significant advantages to incorporating diverse, even "contradictory," epistemologies in one's conceptualization and practice of qualitative research. This argument has been advanced for mixed method research by Greene (2007), who refers to it as the dialectic stance toward mixing paradigms. In this approach, divergent and even contradictory positions are brought into conversation with one another, in order to deepen our understanding of the phenomena studied and to open new paths for exploration. "Important paradigm differences should be respectfully and intentionally used together to engage meaningfully with difference and, through the tensions created by juxtaposing different paradigms, to achieve dialectical discovery of enhanced, reframed, or new understandings" (Greene, 2007, p. 69). The goal is not to determine the "correct" position, but to generate a fruitful interaction.

The philosopher Richard Bernstein (1992) provides an example of this perspective in his analysis of the views of Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida. He uses Theodor Adorno's concepts of "constellation" and "force-field" to argue that, while these two thinkers cannot be reconciled, they do *supplement* each other, and constitute "two intertwined strands" of the modern/postmodern condition:

I do not think there is a theoretical position from which we can reconcile their differences, their otherness to each other – nor do I think we should

smooth out their "aversions and attractions." The nasty questions that they raise about each other's "project" need to be relentlessly pursued. One of the primary lessons of "modernity/ postmodernity" is a radical skepticism about the possibility of reconciliation – an *aufhebung*, without gaps, fissures, and ruptures. However, *together*, Habermas/Derrida provide us with a force-field that constitutes the "dynamic, transmutational structure of a complex phenomenon" – the phenomenon I have labeled "modernity/postmodernity. (1992, p. 225)

This approach to employing divergent perspectives has been taken even further by the sociologist Andrew Abbott. In two books, *Chaos of Disciplines* (2001) and *Methods of Discovery: Heuristics for the Social Sciences* (2004), Abbott argues for a heuristic view of the sort of grand debates over epistemological and methodological issues in the social sciences that I have described. He describes several different kinds of heuristics, but I want to focus on one particular kind, which he calls "fractal heuristics." His view is that if we take any of a large number of debates between polar positions, such as positivism vs. interpretivism, analysis vs. narrative, realism vs. constructivism, and so on, that these issues can play out at many different levels, even within communities of scholars that have adopted one or the other of these positions as characterizing their field at a broader level. Thus, within the community of sociologists of science, which is generally seen as constructivist in orientation, there are internal debates that can be seen as realist vs. constructivist, and the debates often play out in terms of realist or constructivist "moves" by particular scholars within that community.

Abbott argues that the function of heuristic uses of such polar positions as realism and constructivism is to open up the debate, to reveal new ways of making sense of the things we study. He claims that philosophical paradigms, rather than constituting grand, overarching frameworks that inform and control the theories and practices of particular disciplines and subfields, instead often function as heuristics, conceptual tools that can be applied in an endless number of specific situations to break out of theoretical blocks and generate new questions and theories. He even suggests that this is the way these grand paradigmatic positions originated: as useful heuristics that later became abstracted and formalized into high-level philosophical systems.

From this perspective, epistemological positions look less like the traditional view of "paradigms", and more like tools in a toolkit. "Logical consistency" is the wrong standard to apply to a toolkit. You don't care if the tools are all "consistent" with some axiomatic principle; you care if, among them, they enable you to do the job, to create something that can meet your needs or accomplish your goals. In the same way, consistency is the wrong standard to apply to an individual's or a community's ontological and epistemological views. These views, seen as heuristics, are resources for getting your work done.

In this paper, I want to make a case for using multiple epistemological perspectives within a single methodological tradition. My use of "epistemological" in the title is meant in Sleeter's broader and widely-employed sense that includes ontology, and I will discuss both ontological and epistemological premises in qualitative research. However, I want to avoid confusing the two, not just because I think the differences are significant, but also because there are

important relationships between ontology and epistemology that I want to address. In particular, I want to resist the tendency to collapse this distinction, folding the two into one another so that they become simply reflections of one another (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, pp. 175-176). An example of this "ontological/ epistemological collapse" is Lincoln's statement that "the naturalistic/ constructivist paradigm effectively brought about the irrelevance of the distinction between ontology and epistemology" (1995, p. 286), as well as that between axiology and methodology.

I do not think the distinction between ontology and epistemology is "irrelevant," and I hope to show how it can be usefully employed by qualitative researchers. With Abbott, I see epistemology and ontology, not as a set of premises that governs or justifies qualitative research, but as *resources* for doing qualitative research. In employing Abbott's analysis, I emphasize not so much the fractal aspect of his argument as its heuristic aspect.

There are a variety of ontological/epistemological paradigms that have been discussed in relation to qualitative research, including positivism/postpositivism, constructivism, critical theory/emancipatory research, pragmatism, realism, and postmodernism, among others (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). There is also considerable diversity of views within each of these positions.

In what follows, I want to focus on one particular epistemological opposition: constructivism vs. realism. I have chosen this opposition because, as Abbott says, it "is probably the most familiar of these debates" (2005, p. 187), and one that has been central to the identity of qualitative research. In addition, constructivism has been the subject of considerable philosophical scrutiny (e.g., Hacking, 1999), and realism, although it has gained increasing attention as a possible alternative stance for qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Hammersley, 1992a; Maxwell, 1992, 2002, 2004, 2008; Smith & Deemer, 2000), is still quite controversial. I examine a number of joint uses of the perspectives of realism and constructivism to illustrate the heuristic value of combining divergent ontological and epistemological perspectives.

The most valuable analysis of the actual use of constructivism, for my purposes, is that of Hacking (1999), who makes several important points about this approach. First, he notes that claims that something is socially constructed can be employed in both global and local ways – as a general claim about the nature of social phenomena, or as a claim that some particular entity is a social construction. The latter type of claim is specific rather than general, and does not entail that anything else is necessarily socially constructed. As Hacking states, "you might be a social constructionist about brotherhood and fraternity, but maintain that youth homeless is real enough." (199, p. 6) This view fits well with Abbott's analysis, which also implies that a claim that something is socially constructed (or, conversely, real) is separable from other claims about different things.

A second point that Hacking makes is that there are two distinct meanings of "socially constructed." The first meaning of a claim that "X is socially constructed" is that X is a result of social and historical events or processes, and could well have been different from what it is. However, this is an ontological

claim that is not incompatible with realism, and is relatively uncontroversial. The more important meaning, particularly in qualitative research, of "X is socially constructed" is that the *idea* of X is a social construction rather than representing an actual part of reality that exists independently of that idea. This is an epistemological as well as an ontological claim, since it addresses our *knowledge* of X, and is opposed to the realist view that our idea of X is an accurate understanding of X. It is in this sense that constructivism and realism are divergent approaches to some phenomenon.

Hacking's detailed discussion of several specific objects of constructivist claims (mental illness, child abuse, weapons and weapons research, and the deification of Captain Cook by the Hawaiians) can be used to illustrate many of the points that Abbott makes about the heuristic uses of such concepts as constructivism. In each case, Hacking shows how the phenomenon in question is resistant to simplistic analyses as being either "real" or "a social construction." Both realist and constructivist approaches can make a contribution to the understanding of the phenomenon in question.

Abbott makes a similar argument. One of the many examples that he analyzes is Daniel Chambliss's ethnographic study of competitive swimming (Chambliss, 1989). On the basis of five years spent coaching swimming teams at different levels, and observing and interviewing swimmers, Chambliss argued that there is no such thing as "talent" as an explanation of high performance; it is a myth that romanticizes and mystifies what he called "the mundanity of excellence." He supported this claim with detailed evidence from his observations and interviews, showing that high performance is simply the result of dozens of specific skills, learned or stumbled upon, that are repeatedly practiced and synthesized into a coherent whole. Abbott sees this as a constructivist move in the debate over sports performance; it asserts that "talent" is a social construction that does not refer to any real causal factor, but is simply a vacuous "explanation" for high performance.

This move was consistent with the field of sociology of sport, which was generally seen as constructionist in orientation. However, underlying Chambliss's argument for a constructivist interpretation of "talent" was a realist move, identifying actual skills and practices, and "excellence" as the outcome of these, as real phenomena rather than simply constructions. As a result, his work was attacked by others in this field for not treating "winning" (and the skills that led to this) as itself a social construction. Chambliss's reply was that while selecting winners on the basis of elapsed times, rather than the beauty or precision of their strokes, was certainly a social construction, once that construction was made, the factors that led to success in terms of that standard, and the outcomes of races, have a real existence independent of how they are construed by participants and judges.

Abbott argues that the debate over Chambliss's work shows the power of making a "realist" or "constructivist" move, even within a largely constructivist field, creating new leads for research. He states that "the idea of heuristics is to open up new topics, to find new things. To do that, sometimes we need to invoke constructivism, as have the students of occupational prestige. Sometimes we need a little realism." (Abbott, 2004, p. 191)

Hacking provides an example of the reverse strategy to Chambliss's, an initial realist move in response to a predominantly constructivist understanding of a phenomenon, using the work of Hirschfeld (1996) on race. The dominant view of "race" in the social sciences is that it is a social construction rather than an objectively real property of individuals. Hirschfeld argued, based on extensive experimental data, that children have an innate tendency to sort people according to "racial" characteristics, and to treat these as real properties. Hacking argues that Hirschfeld's argument shows that "unqualified constructivism about race clouds our view," making it difficult "to explain the prevalence of concepts of race and the ease with which they can be conscripted for racism." (Hacking, 1999, p. 17)

In the remainder of this paper, I want to focus on the value of some realist "moves" in qualitative research. I do so not only because I believe such moves can provide a valuable perspective in qualitative research, but also because they have widely been seen as incompatible with the constructivist "foundations" of qualitative research.

Schwandt (2007, p. 256) defined realism in a broad sense as "the doctrine that there are real objects that exist independently of our knowledge of their existence." However, there are many varieties of realism, ranging from naïve or direct realism – the view that we directly perceive things as they actually are – to more sophisticated positions that recognize that our concepts and theories necessarily mediate our perceptions of reality. Schwandt stated that "most of us [qualitative researchers] probably behave as garden-variety empirical realists – that is, we act as if the objects in the world (things, events, structures, people, meanings, etc.) exist as independent in some way from our experience with them." (2007, p. 256) Conversely, Shadish, Cook, and Campbell (2002) argued that "all scientists are epistemological constructivists and relativists" in the sense that they believe that *both* the ontological world and the worlds of ideology, values, etc. play a role in the construction of scientific knowledge (p. 29).

Such positions adopt an ontological realism, but an epistemological constructivism, asserting that there is not, even in principle, a "God's eye view" that is independent of any particular perspective or stance. Lakoff states that such versions of realism assume "that "the world is the way it is," while acknowledging that there can be more than one scientifically correct way of understanding reality in terms of conceptual schemes with different objects and categories of objects." (1987, p. 265) I will refer to these sorts of views as "critical realism," using the term coined by Bhaskar (1978, 1989) for his version of realism to include other realist approaches that share this stance of epistemological constructivism (Maxwell, 2008).

Given the prominence of realist views in philosophy, and the prevalence of a common-sense realist ontology in qualitative research, it is puzzling that realism has not had a more explicit influence on qualitative researchers. Despite the early advocacy of an explicitly realist approach to qualitative research by Huberman and Miles (1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994) and others (Hammersley, 1992a; Maxwell, 1990a, 1990b, 1992), critical realism has been largely unnoticed by most qualitative researchers. When it *has* been noticed, it has generally been

dismissed as simply positivism in another guise (Mark, Henry, & Julnes, 2000, p. 166).

Thus, Smith and Deemer (2000) asserted that combining ontological realism and epistemological relativism is contradictory, and that the ontological concept of a reality independent of our theories can serve no useful function in qualitative research, since there is no way to employ this that will avoid the constraints of a relativist epistemology. More recently, Denzin and Lincoln (2005), in their introduction to the third edition of the *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, discussed critical realism as a possible "third stance" distinct from both naïve positivism and poststructuralism. However, they ended up rejecting most of what critical realists advocate, and stated that "we do not think that critical realism will keep the social science ship afloat" (p. 13).

In opposition to this, I argue that realism *can* do useful work for qualitative methodology and practice if it is taken seriously and its implications for qualitative research systematically developed. However, I want to emphasize that I am not promoting realism as an "alternative paradigm" for qualitative research, the appropriate ontological and epistemological stance for conducting such research; this would be a form of epistemological "purism" that is incompatible with the dialogical stance I'm taking. Instead, I devote the remainder of this paper to arguing that there are specific ways that a realist perspective, in dialogue with a constructivist one, can be of value for qualitative researchers.

There are four main issues for which I think that a realist perspective can make such a contribution:

(1) causality: the legitimacy of this concept in qualitative research, and the contributions that qualitative research can make to causal explanation.
(2) meaning (and mental phenomena generally): the value of a realist understanding of these, one that does not reduce them to brain states or behavior.
(3) diversity: seeing diversity as a real phenomenon, rather than as "noise" or "error" that obscures the essential commonalities in different individuals, events, or situations.
(4) validity: how we can assess the value, credibility, and quality of qualitative research.

(1) Causality

At least since the paradigm wars, most qualitative researchers have rejected the legitimacy of explicitly causal explanation in qualitative research, or even more broadly, in the social sciences. A particularly influential statement of this position was by Lincoln and Guba (1985), who argued that "the concept of causality is so beleaguered and in such serious disarray that it strains credibility to continue to entertain it in any form approximating its present (poorly defined) one" (p. 141). They proposed replacing it with "mutual simultaneous shaping," which they defined as

> Everything influences everything else, in the here and now. Many elements are implicated in any given action, and each element interacts with all of the others in ways that change them all while simultaneously resulting in something that we, as outside observers, label as outcomes or effects. But the interaction has *no directionality*, no *need* to produce *that particular outcome*. (p. 151)

Guba and Lincoln (1989) later grounded this view in a constructivist stance, stating that "there exist multiple, socially constructed realities ungoverned by natural laws, causal or otherwise" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 86), and that "'causes' and 'effects' do not exist except by imputation" (p. 44).

A major reason for this rejection of causal explanation has been the dominance within mainstream quantitative research of a Humean or "regularity" theory of causality in the social sciences, which sees causality as simply a matter of regularities in the relationships between events. This view was a key element of logical positivism, which denied that there were any unobservable processes or powers that operated behind the observed correlations between variables, and saw scientific explanation as consisting simply as the fitting of particular events into the "laws" that expressed these regularities. This theory inherently denied that qualitative research can demonstrate causal relationships, and relegated it to the role of providing preliminary insights or supplementary support to "causal" quantitative methods.

Ironically, the logical positivists, following Hume, took an essentially constructivist view of "causality," arguing that it was a metaphysical and unnecessary construct that should be banished from scientific discourse. This is an example of the "ontological/epistemological collapse" described by Guba and Lincoln, reducing the objects of scientific inquiry and theorizing to the sense data from scientific observations and the "laws" that could be logically derived from these, and proscribing any reference to unobservable entities. Theoretical concepts had no real existence; they were simply useful logical constructions that should ultimately be defined in terms of experimental operations and sense data (Phillips, 1987).

More recently, however, a number of philosophers and methodologists (particularly Salmon, 1984, 1989, 1998) have developed a realist alternative to this constructivist account of causation, one that sees causality as explicitly addressing the actual powers and processes that lead to specific outcomes. Thus, Sayer (1992) argued that

> much that has been written on methods of explanation assumes that causation is a matter of regularities in relationships between events, and that without models of regularities we are left with allegedly inferior, 'ad hoc' narratives. But social science has been singularly unsuccessful in discovering law-like regularities. One of the main achievements of recent realist philosophy has been to show that this is an inevitable consequence of an erroneous view of causation. Realism replaces the regularity model with one in which objects and social relations have causal powers which may or may not produce regularities, and which can be explained

> independently of them. In view of this, less weight is put on quantitative methods for discovering and assessing regularities and more on methods of establishing the qualitative nature of social objects and relations on which causal mechanisms depend (pp. 2-3).

This is a realist move in the debate over causality, arguing that there are real causal processes and properties that are responsible for the phenomena we observe. These powers and processes are seen not as universal laws, but as situationally contingent; they are inherently involved with their actual context, which is part of the causal process.

A realist understanding of causality removes all of the positivist restrictions on using qualitative research to develop and test causal explanations (Maxwell, 2004a, b). If causality is seen as referring to processes and mechanisms, rather than regularities, then some causal processes can be directly observed, rather than only inferred from measured covariation of the presumed causes and effects. This reinforces the importance placed by many qualitative researchers on directly observing and interpreting social and psychological processes.

The possibility of the direct observation of causal processes means that under some conditions qualitative researchers can identify causality even in single cases, without any comparison or control group (Salmon, 1998, pp. 15-16; Putnam, 1999, pp. 40-41; Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002, p. 465), something that the regularity theory of causation denies is possible. This ability of qualitative methods to directly investigate causal processes is a major contribution that this approach can make to scientific inquiry.

In addition, realism's insistence on the inherently contextual nature of causal explanation (Sayer, 1992, pp. 60-61; 2000, pp. 114-118; Huberman & Miles, 1985; Pawson & Tilley, 1997) supports qualitative researchers' emphasis on the importance of context in understanding social phenomena. This is not simply a claim that causal relationships vary across contexts; it is a more fundamental claim, that the context within which a causal process occurs is intrinsically involved in that process, and often cannot be "controlled for" in a variance-theory sense without misrepresenting the causal mechanisms involved (Blumer, 1956). These mechanisms are seen not as universal laws, but as situationally contingent; they are necessarily involved with their actual context, and may or may not produce regularities. Thus, causality is inherently *local* rather than general, and general causal claims must be based on valid situation-specific causal explanations (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

I argue that, in combination, these components of a realist approach to causality provide a powerful heuristic strategy for addressing causal explanation in qualitative research, one that allows qualitative researchers, in many circumstances, to develop causal explanations independently of quantitative, variance-theory strategies. In addition, this strategy complements the strengths of quantitative research and emphasizes the potential contribution of qualitative methods to mixed-method research. Sayer argues that "All too often the qualitative investigation is abandoned just at the point when it is most needed – for deciding the status and the causal (as opposed to statistical) significance of whatever patterns and associations are found" (1992, p. 115).

(2) Meaning and thought

The understanding of mind and mental phenomena has been one of the most problematic and contentious issues in the history of philosophy. Both materialist and dualist approaches to mind have serious difficulties in explaining either the immediate reality of our mental worlds or the clear relationship between mind and behavior, respectively. The realist philosopher who has dealt most explicitly with the relationship between mental and material phenomena is Hilary Putnam, particularly in his book *The threefold cord: Mind, body, and world* (1999). Putnam argued for the legitimacy of both "mental" and "physical" ways of making sense of the world, advocating a distinction between mental and physical *perspectives* or languages, both referring to reality, but from different conceptual standpoints.

This approach can be seen as a realist ontological move ("mental" concepts refer to real phenomena) linked to a constructivist epistemological move (these phenomena can be understood in terms of two distinct conceptual frameworks, the physical and the mental). Both of these frameworks are social constructions, but ones that nevertheless address a reality that is independent of our constructions. Putnam stated that "The metaphysical realignment I propose involves an acquiescence in a plurality of conceptual resources, of different and mutually irreducible vocabularies ... coupled with a return not to dualism but to the 'natural realism of the common man.'" (1999, p. 38)

Such a realist move in understanding meaning implies that meanings (including beliefs, values, and intentions) are just as real as physical phenomena, and are essential to the *explanation* of social and cultural phenomena. Sayer, in a critical realist approach to research methods, stated that "social phenomena are concept-dependent ... What the practices, institutions, rules, roles, or relationships *are* depends on what they mean in society to its members" (1992, p. 30). Seeing emotions, beliefs, values, and so on as part of reality supports an interpretivist approach to understanding social phenomena without entailing a radical constructivism that denies the existence or causal relevance of a physical world.

This position is often misunderstood or misinterpreted, because there is a widespread view that realism is the doctrine that "the world is independent of the mental" (Callinicos, 1995, p. 82), and that realism is closely tied to a positivist or even behaviorist stance that sees mental experiences either as irrelevant to science or as merely subjective results of "real" physical entities and processes. However, critical realism treats mental phenomena as *part of* reality, not as a realm separate from it, although it is a part that is understood by means of a different conceptual framework from that used for the physical world.

I see the main heuristic use of this view of meaning as being in conjunction with a process-oriented approach to causality. This combination can resolve the long-standing perceived contradiction between "reason" explanations and "cause" explanations, and integrate both in explanatory theories. Weber's sharp distinction between causal explanation and interpretive understanding (1905; cf. Layton, 1997, pp. 184-185) had a profound influence on qualitative research, obscuring the importance of reasons as causal influences on actions, and thus

their role as essential components of any full explanation of human action. Realism can deal with the apparent dissimilarity of reason explanations and cause explanations by showing that reasons can plausibly be seen as real phenomena in a causal nexus leading to the action. This view of meanings as causes is fundamental to our common-sense explanations of people's actions, and has been accepted by most philosophers (Robb & Heil, 2003; see also Davidson, 1980, 1993, 1997; McGinn, 1991) and social scientists (e.g., Menzel, 1978).

(3) Diversity

In qualitative research and in social science generally, diversity has often been treated (usually implicitly) in constructivist ways, denying that there is any essential character to particular forms of diversity, such as race, gender, or sexual orientation. However, individual diversity as a general phenomenon has often been ignored or misrepresented. Both qualitative and quantitative research have tendencies, both theoretical and methodological, to ignore or suppress diversity in their goal of seeking general accounts, though in different ways (Maxwell, 1995). Quantitative research often aggregates data across individuals and settings, and ignores individual and group diversity that cannot be subsumed into a general explanation (Shulman, 1990, pp. 19, 26). Because of its emphasis on *general* descriptions and explanations, it tends to impose or generate wide-ranging but simplistic theories that do not take account of particular contextual influences, diverse meanings, and unique phenomena, issues that qualitative researchers often emphasize.

However, qualitative researchers also tend to neglect diversity. Theoretically, this is often the result of social theories that emphasize uniformity; such theories include the concept of culture as necessarily shared (Maxwell, 1999), and "consensus" approaches to community and social order (Maxwell, 1995). Methodologically, the sample size and sampling strategies used in qualitative studies are often inadequate to fully identify and characterize the actual diversity that exists in the setting or population studied, and can lead to simplistic generalizations or the assumption of greater uniformity or agreement than actually exists.

The evolutionary biologist Ernst Mayr (1982, pp. 45-47) labeled as "essentialism" the manifestations in biology of this idea that what is shared is most important: the view that the norm or the "typical" individual is the important characteristic of a species. However, the essence of the Darwinian revolution is that it replaced a Platonic view of variation among organisms (that variations were simply imperfect approximations to an "ideal" or "type") with a realist view that saw actual variation as the fundamental fact of biology and the cornerstone of evolutionary theory (Lewontin, 1973; Gould, 1996, pp. 41-42; cf. Pelto & Pelto, 1975, pp. 14-15). Mayr stated that "the most interesting parameter in the statistics of natural populations is the actual variation, its amount, and its nature." (1982, p. 47)

Mayr's and Lewontin's argument can be seen as still another example of the heuristic use of realist and constructivist moves, in this case in biology. Mayr argued that the "type" of a species, as the norm around which variations

occurred, is a long-standing social construction, which interferes with our ability to understand genetic and phenotypic diversity and change. Darwin implicitly challenged this construction, using a realist move that identified diversity, and the differential reproduction in particular environments to which this gave rise, as the real source of evolutionary change.

This sort of move has been widely used in anthropology in debates over the concept of culture. The traditional view of culture in anthropology, which has been widely borrowed by other fields, assumes that culture consists of the shared beliefs, values, and practices of the members of a given community or society. These commonalities are viewed as fundamental rather than superficial, the foundation of social solidarity and cultural coherence, and differences are seen as at best irrelevant to this function, and at worst destructive of it. Wallace (1970), Pelto and Pelto (1975), Hannerz (1992), and others challenged this understanding, arguing that it denies or ignores the existence of substantial intracultural diversity in communities, and misrepresents the actual processes that lead to social solidarity (Maxwell, 1999).

This can be seen as a realist challenge to "culture" as a social construction of anthropologists. Robert Berkhofer, a historian, addressing the use of the "consensus" concept of culture in historiography, argued that

> the modern definition of the concept incorporated a complete theory of culture without a valid foundation in research. By assuming the components of culture in the definition, anthropologists presumed the results of their analyses of various cultures. ... Moreover, they hypothesized the articulation of these components according to the definition, so their research more frequently proved how things related according to the mind of the anthropologist than according to the minds of the people said to bear the culture. (1973, p. 91)

Other anthropologists (e.g., Wagner, 1981) have likewise claimed that "culture" is a social construction that does not validly represent the actual nature and integration of beliefs and values in particular communities.

In addition to opening up the dialogue about the nature and functions of "culture," a realist perspective provides one way to overcome the theoretical and methodological characteristics that lead to the neglect of diversity (Maxwell, 1995). A realist approach can highlight the importance of diversity and heterogeneity as a real phenomenon, rather than simply "noise" that obscures general truths, and can promote the exploration of the actual consequences of diversity.

However, realism also emphasizes the need to pay systematic attention to non-obvious forms and sources of diversity, and can sensitize qualitative researchers to the existence of diversity as a real property of social and cultural systems. Qualitative researchers often use data collection and analysis methods that emphasize uniformity, such as relying on key informants and focusing on shared themes and concepts. Key informants themselves assume greater uniformity than actually exists (Poggie, 1972), and Pelto and Pelto conclude that "there is often a systematic bias in fieldwork data gathered by means of key informant interviewing." (1975, p. 7) Hutchins claims that

> the ideational definition of culture prevents us from seeing that systems of socially distributed cognition may have interesting cognitive properties of their own. In the history of anthropology, there is scarcely a more important concept than the division of labor. . . . The emphasis on finding and describing "knowledge structures" that are somewhere "inside" the individual encourages us to overlook the fact that human cognition is always situated in a complex sociocultural world and cannot be unaffected by it. (1995, p. xiii)

A realist perspective can thus help to address the tendency of qualitative researchers to ignore diversity and focus only on typical characteristics and shared concepts and themes.

(4) Validity

"In the field of research, validity refers broadly to the 'goodness' or 'soundness' of a study." (Miller, 2008) However, many qualitative researchers reject the concept of validity as a positivist idea, substituting credibility, authenticity, or a similar term in addressing the standards for quality in their work. For example, Lincoln and Guba (1985, 2000; Guba & Lincoln, 1989) developed an extensive, influential, and evolving set of alternative concepts to the traditional categories of validity in quantitative research, one that avoids the implications of "objectivity" in this term. Other qualitative researchers (e.g., Kvale, 1989; Lather, 1993) have also created alternative ways of conceptualizing validity issues.

What is striking about these approaches and categories, from a realist perspective, is that they almost completely ignore *ontological* issues involved in validity. This can be seen as one consequence of the "ontological/epistemological collapse" and of the reaction against the quantitative conception of validity as correspondence with reality – that the conclusions are "true." These alternative approaches rely on the acceptance, rigor, or legitimacy of the methods used, the "authenticity" of the findings, or their pragmatic value.

I argue that a realist move in this discourse, asking what kinds of entities and processes actually exist in the phenomena we study, and how we can understand these, could be productive in opening up the discussion (Maxwell, 1992). Not all possible accounts of some individual, situation, event, or institution are equally useful, credible, or legitimate. Making a claim about these implies the possibility of being *wrong*, and thus requires taking seriously the possibility of alternative accounts of these phenomena and how these can be addressed. Validity, from a realist perspective, is not a matter of procedures, but of the relationship between the claim and the phenomena that it is about. While critical realism denies that we can have any "objective" perception of these phenomena to which we can compare our claims, it does not abandon the possibility of *testing* these claims against evidence about the nature of the phenomena.

Becker (1970) argued that much of what qualitative researchers already do in developing and assessing evidence for their conclusions is epistemologically

well justified, and a critical realist perspective is particularly helpful in understanding and supporting this (Maxwell, 2004b). First, evidence for meanings, processes, or causality is not in principle different from evidence for any other sort of conclusion; the function of evidence in general is to enable the researcher to develop, modify, and test conclusions, and many of the qualitative procedures for doing this are applicable to causal investigation. Some qualitative researchers hold, following Weber that assessing the validity of interpretive claims is different in principle from assessing causal explanations. However, Sayer argues that "in so far as reasons and beliefs can be causes of social events, the evaluation of interpretive understanding is not so different from that of causal explanations as is often supposed" (1992, p. 223).

I have discussed elsewhere (Maxwell, 2004b) some of the strategies that qualitative researchers can use specifically for testing and validating their interpretations and conclusions, and will not describe these in detail here; Miles and Huberman (1994) provide a more extensive list of strategies. These strategies include standard qualitative methods such as intensive, long-term involvement, the collection of rich data, searching for discrepant evidence, member checks, and triangulation, as well as less-commonly used ones such as intervention, comparison, and the "modus operandi" strategy (Scriven, 1974). My point is that qualitative researchers already have many of the tools for generating valid interpretations and explanations and the evidence to support these. I believe that a realist approach to validity can help qualitative researchers to use these tools more effectively, and to develop new ways of assessing their conclusions.

To recapitulate, I have argued for the value of using divergent ontological and epistemological perspectives, in conjunction and dialogue with one another, as heuristic strategies for qualitative research. I have provided a detailed discussion of the possible uses of one particular pair of perspectives, constructivism and realism, to illuminate and expand our understanding of some specific issues in qualitative research. With Abbott, I believe that such dialogical activity is actually common, but is rarely recognized as such.

I also believe that such activity can be suppressed, either by a "purist" adherence to a specific paradigmatic stance, or by a "pragmatist" view that sees ontological and epistemological issues as irrelevant to research practice. Epistemological views are not simply theoretical abstractions; they are real properties of researchers, with real consequences for their actions. These assumptions can't be easily compartmentalized or disentangled from our other assumptions or from our actions; they interpenetrate the latter and have important effects on these, ones that we may be unaware of without critical reflection. A conscious reflection on these assumptions, and a deliberate attempt to use divergent assumptions to expand and advance our thinking, can be of benefit to qualitative research.

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Chapter II

The World According to Players of "Killer Games" – a Constructivist Approach to Player Thinking

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Introduction

A TV-report in Germany on brutal computer games and people who use to play them caused a wave of more or less angry reactions from the aficionados in 2004. From altogether 936 threads of communications – containing between 1 and 24 messages each – to the TV station's electronic forum a random sample was drawn by selecting every 10th thread for analysis. Three research questions were guiding this analysis:

(1) How do aficionados of killer games react to critique and rejection of their hobby?
(2) Concluding from their reactions, how does the world look like in which fans of brutal computer games are living, particularly, are there links or borders between their virtual and real worlds?
(3) How do we know that we interpret correctly their reactions/messages to the forum?

The presentation will outline major answers to the questions (1) and (2) and elaborate in more detail on epistemological problems connected to question (3).

The approach of "subjective" or "implicit" theories, based on a picture of man as reflexive subject (Groeben & Scheele, 1977) tries to answer question (3) by suggesting a specific two-step phase of confirmatory research activities following the traditional steps of collecting and interpreting qualitative data, mostly interview texts. The first step ("communicative validation") applies the criterion of dialogue consensus and tests the adequacy of reconstruction of the interviewees' motives, intentions, and aims, while the second step ("explanatory validation") relies on traditional criteria of falsification and tests the interpretations' adequacy to reality, i.e., tries to observe contextual conditions and the interviewees' actions (Groeben, 1990).

From a constructivist point of view there are doubts whether communicative validation can be more than an infinite cycle of interpretations. A dialogue aiming at linguistic confirmation of the researcher's interpretation of an interviewee's thoughts is based on mutual interpretative activities. Both the researcher and the interviewee interpret the other's utterances "always in terms of concepts and conceptual structures, which the interpreter has formed out of the elements from his or her own subjective field of experience" (von

Glasersfeld, 1991, p. 23). In addition, there are serious doubts whether the criterion of dialogue consensus can be conceived of as a "criterion of truth." Again in von Glaserfeld's (1991, p. 23) words: "To find a fit simply means not to notice any discrepancies." Finally, in case of really discrepant orientations like in dialogues with players of killer games, religious extremists, or fundamentalists of any kind, there are doubts, whether a scientific dialogue as a methodological instrument aiming at consensus should be attempted at all: A dialogue should not impose one partners' point of view on the other, therefore the communication should be characterized by symmetry and acceptance. However, the often referred to problem of reactivity of dialogues may cause the partner to feel confirmed and reinforced by the acceptance of his/her position.

If representations of others' world views cannot be constructed in interaction with these others, qualitative-interpretative approaches as preparatory phase to observation and falsification achieve major relevance (see "QUAL-quan" in Morse, 2003). In case of the players of brutal computer games, a two-year longitudinal study including not only frequency of playing, but the school and family contexts as well as personal characteristics of 12 year old pupils demonstrated that heavy players among them were positively more aggressive and more often delinquent at age 14 (Hopf, Huber & Weiss, 2008).

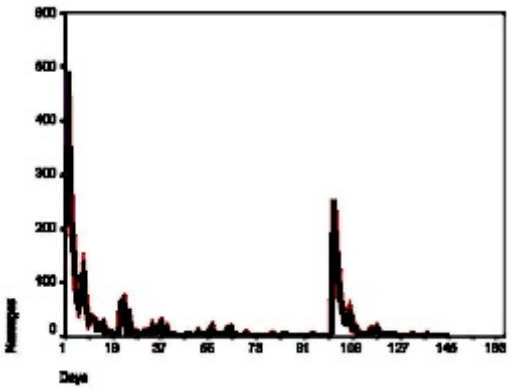

Figure 1: Messages per day

In 2004 a critical television report in the series "Frontal 21" (ZDF) by Rainer Fromm on violent computer games, players of these games, and scientific studies on the development of young players caused a surge of indignant protests among the aficionados of this kind of leisure activity.

During the first seven days after the broadcasting a wave of altogether 1549 messages in 424 thematic threads filled the electronic forum of the TV station. In three more waves over the next eight months altogether 3225 messages in 981 threads referring to this one report were written to the station (see fig. 1).

While the scientific community no longer debates whether media violence has effects (Anderson, 2004), this is still a question in the German and U.S. mass media, particularly in articles by authors related to the computer game industry and, of course, in specialized "gamer" journals. Again and again these circles try to question the consistency of available scientific findings (Bushman & Anderson, 2001; Lukesch, 2004; Spitzer, 2005; Weiß, 2000), following the same strategy as was usual in former days in the world of the tobacco industry and its addicts.

What seemed to be most upsetting for the gamers were the scientific findings summarized by several researchers in this report: Frequent consumption of media violence in television and films causes an increase of aggressiveness and aggressive behaviour by the mechanics of observational learning (Bandura, 1977; Huesmann, 1988), priming and automatization of aggressive schemata (Anderson, Benjamin & Bartholow, 1998; Anderson & Huesmann, 2003), desensitizing of discomfort with violence and emotional habituation (Huesmann et al., 2003; Funk et al., 2004). In the words of Anderson and Bushman (2002, p. 42): "Long-term consumers of violent media, for example, can become more aggressive in outlook, perceptual biases, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour than they were before the repeated exposure, or would have become without such exposure." The report linked this argumentation with then still open questions about the causes of a school shooting that had happened in Germany about half a year earlier. And finally, a well-known German politician expressed his concerns and demanded the prohibition of violent computer games.

(1) How do aficionados of killer games react to critique?

The analysis of the messages to the TV forum was limited to the first wave of reactions, i.e., 424 threads of messages. For detailed analysis a random sample of 43 threads was drawn consisting of the opening thread and then every 10th thread. Some particular questions use all threads of wave 1 as database. Because the reactions were addressed to the Internet forum of the TV station, the texts were directly available in digital form and could be easily analyzed qualitatively with AQUAD Six (Huber, 2004). The headlines of the threads, which were formulated by the writers of messages to the forum, give an overview on their concerns. The topic appears always in the first line of each thread and is repeated for each message belonging to the same thread. Here is an example showing the opening entry of the first thread (original spelling):

1 Frontal bald auf Bildzeitungsniveau?
2 von: salin, Datum: 09.11.2004 - 20:21
3 Die Überschrift des Beitrags über sogenannte 'Killerspiele'
4 ließt sich wie eine BILD-Schlagzeile.
5 Kaum fällt den Politikern in Berlin nichts mehr ein
6 finden sie einen Sündenbock für alles Übel der Welt : Die Killerspiele!
7 Kein Wunder, denn bei den uninformierten Wählern lassen sich so Stimmen sammeln.

8 Und Mitglieder aller Parteien übertreffen sich in unqualifizierten Äußerungen.
9 Nun machen auch noch die öffentlich rechtlichen bei
10 dieser Volksverdummung mit, armes Deutschland.
11 Die Spieler und die Spiele werden dämonisiert und anstatt
12 vernünftige Regelungen zu finden, sollen alle Spiele gleich verboten werden.
13 Außerdem wird zwischen Shootern wie Counterstrike und
14 den wirklich 'harten' Spielen gar nicht unterschieden.
15 Warum auch? Mit Stammtischparolen wie : "Alles gleich
16 verbieten" kriegt auch das ZDF mehr Zuschauer.|
---
1 Frontal soon on the level of the "Bildzeitung" [widespread low-level newspaper]?
2 by: salin, Date: 09.11.2004 - 20:21
4 The title of the programme on so-called "killer games"
5 sounds like a BILD-headline.
6 As soon as the politicians in Berlin do not have any more ideas
7 they detect a scapegoat for all the evil in the world: The killer games!
8 No wonder, thus they are able to collect votes from uninformed voters.
9 And the members of all parties outdo each other in unqualified utterances.
10 Now the public-legal [TV stations], too, participate in
11 this dulling of the people's mind, poor Germany.
12 The gamers and the games are presented as demons and
13 instead of looking for sensible solutions, all games have to be prohibited.
14 In addition, there is no distinction between shooter games like Counterstrike and
15 really 'hard' games.
16 Why at all? With slogans from the table of regulars like "Prohibit
17 everything immediately!" the ZDF [German TV station] too gets more viewers.

The interpretation started by listing the topic lines of all threads included in the sample and interpreting their meanings by short conceptual codes. In one case (thread 100), the topic "Doppelmoral" was used directly as code ("double standards"

- for the evaluation of brutality in computer games vs. everyday TV broadcastings),

3 Irgendwie kommt es mir wie eine Doppelmoral vor. Der
4 ZDF behauptet das solche Spiele zensiert werden sollen,
5 dennoch werden Gewaltdarstellung wie in Doom 3 unzensiert
6 und Lang und Breit dargestellt. Ist das nicht irgendwie bedenklich? (Thread 100)
---
3 Somehow it sounds for me like double standards.
4 The ZDF [TV station] asserts that these games should be censored,
5 but nevertheless violence like in Doom 3 is presented
6 at length without censorship. Isn't this somehow disturbing? (Thread 100)

while in other cases a core paragraph was interpreted as complaint about double standards, for instance

27 Man sollte also nicht als erstes bei den Computerspielen
28 suchen, sondern IHR solltet bei eurem EIGENEN PROGRAMM
29 mal gucken, was denn kindgerecht ist, was eher den
30 Jugendlichen anspricht ... (Thread 120)
---
27 It should not be searched primarily among computer games,
28 but YOU should look into your OWN PROGRAMME
29 what at all is apt for children, what appeals
30 more to young persons ...(Thread 120)

Altogether 14 topic codes were created. In a second round based on a comparison of the contents within the same topic and across topics five meta-codes were introduced:

General critique:
campaign of lies, smear campaign 11
low journalistic level, bad investigation 11
Content-specific arguments:
double standards 4
games don't explain violence 4
ironic comments 3
games as economic factor 1
Complaints about the forum:
lack of organization 2
censuring (links, fowl language) 2
Demands on the TV station:
official reaction, statement 2
Threats:
legal action 1
personal threat (against author) 1

These five topics appear in altogether 42 threads; one short thread had no explicit topic. The majority of threads (22) expresses *general critique* against the mode of reporting about computer games and against the implied aim of the report. Frequent opinions were

- "It's all lies!"
4 ....So einen verlogenen und unwahren Bericht
5 musste ich selten sehen.Dafür muss ich jeden Monat
6 GEZ-Bezahlen, schähmt Euch wenigstens für den Mist
7 den Ihr da gesendet habt.... (Thread 140)
---
4 ....I rarely had to watch such a lying and

5 untruthful report. For this I have to pay every month
6 GEZ-fees, at least you should be ashamed of the trash [literally: manure]
7 which you have broadcasted.... (Thread 140)

- "It's just a smear campaign!"

3 Noch nie habe ich eine solch unsachliche, propagandistisch-einseitige
4 Hetz-Sendung gesehen. Offenkundig wurde in höchstem
5 Maße manipulativ argumentiert, ohne auch nur den Versuch
6 einer kritisch-objektiven Darstellung anzustreben. (Thread 190)
---
3 Never have I seen such an unobjective, propagandistic and one-sided
4 smear broadcasting. Obviously the argumentation was
5 manipulative to the highest extent, without any attempt
6 to strive for a critical-objective presentation. (Thread 190)

- "It's awful journalism!"

33 Hallo. Ich bin selbst Journalist und schreibe für die
34 Lokalausgabe einer großen Tageszeitung. Das habe ich
35 übrigens trotz gelegentlichen Konsum von Killerspielen
36 geschafft. Es steht mir nicht zu, mich über meine Fernsehkollegen
37 zu erheben. Aber sie können sich sicher sein, dass
38 ein Beitrag, der ähnlich schlecht recherchiert und
39 voreingenommen wäre, spätestens nach Eintreffen der
40 ersten Leserreaktionen zu meiner sofortigen Kündigung
41 führen würde. Aber wenn man gebührenfinanziert ist, (Thread 30).
---
33 Hallo. I am journalist myself and am writing for the
34 local issue of a big daily. By the way, that's what I have
35 achieved despite consuming now and then some killer games.
36 I am not entitled to believe myself above my TV-colleagues.
37 But I can assure you that an article based on a likewise
38 bad investigation and full of prejudice
39 would lead at least after the first reactions of the readers
40 to my immediate dismission.
41 But if you are subsidized by fees, (Thread 30).

- "It's a lack of investigation!"

6 Wer sich die Spiele nur ein bisle genauer anschaut
7 erkennt, das viel Taktik und Gruppendynakik zum Sieg
8 führen. Es ist Schwachsinnig, so wie Frontal21 es gemacht
9 hat, die Sache nur von einer Seite zu beleuchten. (Thread 170)
---
6 Who ever looks a little bit closer at the games

7 will see that tactics and group dynamics [original: dynakic] lead
8 to victory. It is idiotic, the way Frontal 21 [the TV series] has done it,
9 to throw light on this issue only from one side. (Thread 170)

Threads with *content-specific argumentation* were second in frequency. The writers complained about

- double standards applied for computer games and daily TV (see thread 100, above),
- explaining unfoundedly youth violence by frequent exposure to violent games:

43 Weil fast jeder jugendlicher ein "Ballerspiel-Guru"
44 ist und somit ein Zusammenhang zwischen Gewaltätigkeit
45 und Computerspielen an den Haaren herbeigezogen ist.
46 Das dieser Zusammenhang immer wieder aufgeworfen wird
47 ist die Schuld dieser einseitiger Berichte wie von
48 Frontal21. Dadurch gibt es immer wieder Menschen die
49 diesen Zusammenhang glauben. ... (Thread 200)
---
43 Because almost every young person is a "guru of shooting games"
44 and thus a relation between violence
45 and computer games is far-fetched.
46 That this relation is mentioned again and again
47 is the fault of these one-sided reports like that by
48 Frontal21. That is why there are again and again people,
49 who believe in this relation. ... (Thread 200)

- and ironic comments:

5 *folgendes ist Ironie*
6
7 Habt ihr schon das neue "Manhunt Rentner verkrüppeln
8 50 +"? Man alda, des is so gierig geil ... (Thread 240)
---
*5 *the following is irony**
6
7 Do you already have the new "Manhunt crippling pensioners
8 50 +"? Man, whow, that's so fucking wicked ... (Thread 240)

- Finally, one thread warned against the decline of the gross economic product, if violent computer games were prohibited. Later, this argument appeared repeatedly in some messages:

3 Liebe Redaktion, Computerpiele sind kein Kinderkram mehr!
4
5 Allein in Deutschald werden jährlich 5 Mrd. € in der

6 Unterhaltungssoftwareindustrie umgesetz un das bei einem Wachstum vom 7,3%!!!
7
8 Durch Bericht wie diese droht Deutschland auch in diesem
9 Markt den Anschluss an die Zukunft zu verlieren!
10
11 Vielen Dank!
12
13 ps: Ich wandere aus, soll doch wer anders eure Rente bezahlen!!! (Thread 240)
---
3 Dear editorial staff, computer games are no longer children's junk!
4
5 Just in Germany every year 5 billions € are turned into cash
6 by the companies of entertainment software and with a growth of 7.3%!!!
7
8 This report threatens Germany to lose in this market, too,
9 the connection with the future!
10
11 Many thanks!
12
13 ps: I will emigrate, just let others pay your pension!!! (Thread 240)

Threads *complaining about the forum* itself caused waves of reactions and many attempts either to prove the validity of the complaints or to circumvent the measures taken by the forum's administration to prevent insulting language and links to third party's web-sites:

- Lack of organization and technical deficits:

3 toll da nimmt man sich ne 1/4 stunde zeit für nene
4 tollen text und dann steh da am ende nichtmal mehr
5 die hälfte, weil das forum nur drei sätze packt, ich
6 schreib den shice nicht nochmal neu, was solls :/(Thread 210)
---
3 Great you take a 1/4 hour for a
4 great text and then finally there is less than
5 half of it, because the forum grabs only three sentences,
6 I don't write the shit again, so what :/ (Thread 210)

- Censoring:

3 Werte ZDF-Online-Verantwortlichen!
4 Ich möchte Sie bitte, nicht weiterhin zu versuchen,
5 die Forenteilnehmer zu bevormunden. Dass Sie die Beiträge
6 editieren und Anzüglichkeiten entfernen ist o.k.,
7 aber dass Sie URL-Angaben löschen nicht. (Thread 390)

---
3 Dear responsibles for ZDF-Online!
4 I would like to ask you not to try any longer to treat the
5 participants in the forum like children. That you edit the messages
6 and eliminate lewdness is o.k.,
7 but not that you eliminate URL information. (Thread 390)

22 auf alle fälle habt ihr nun auch in eurem aktiven
23 handeln deutlich bewiesen, dass ihr der zensur nicht 24 abgeneigt seid. vielen dank, unabhängiges fernsehen.
25 irgendwie habt ihr wohl nicht mitbekommen, dass das
26 in deutschland 60 jahre nach hitler nicht mehr so funzt wie ihr euch das vorstellt :D (Thread 410)
---
22 in any case you have demonstrated clearly now also
23 in your active behavior that you are not opposed to censorship.
24 many thanks, independent TV.
25 Somehow you do not seem to have understood that this does not function
26 in Germany 60 years after Hitler as you imagine :D (Thread 410)

Demands on the TV station referred to official reactions to the complaints of the infuriated viewers:

3 Ich würde mir wünschen, dass die Verantwortlichen einmal
4 offiziel Stellung zu den hier genannten Vorwüfen nehmen. (Thread 220)
---
3 I'ld wish that those who are responsible
4 express an official opinion on these reproaches. (Thread 220)

3 Ich warte seit mehreren Tagen auf eine offizielle
4 Stellungnahme, nicht mal meine E-Mails wurden beantwortet.
5 Geht das ZDF davon aus, dass sie die Sache aussitzen können? (Thread 400)
---
3 I am waiting since several days for an official
4 opinion, not even my e-mails got answered.
5 Does the ZDF assume that they can sit out this affair? (Thread 400)

Threats of various kinds (for instance, frequently the announcement not to pay any longer the fees for the public radio and TV system in Germany or the hope that the author of the report might be dismissed) appeared in many messages, however, only two threats were dedicated

- to threaten the station and/or the author with legal actions (The following question stimulated eight answers, including quotations from law texts.):

6 Was ich wissen wollte:
7
8 Die öffentlich-rechtlichen Fernsehsender sind doch
9 verpflichtet objektiv und neutral zu berichten, und
10 man kann sich über Inhalte des Programms beschweren,
11 wenn Beiträge diese Kriterien nicht erfüllen.
12
13 Wo kann ich mich jetzt (via E-Mail, Telefon oder Brief) beschweren?
14 (und zwar am besten so, dass es für die Verantwortlichen
15 den größt möglichen Ärger verursacht? (Thread 370)
---
6 What I'ld like to know:
7
8 Aren't the public TV stations obliged
9 to report objectively and neutrally, and is it
10 possible to complain about the contents of their programmes,
11 if the broadcastings do not meet these criteria?
12
13 Where can I now complain (via e-mail, telephone or letter)?
14 (and preferably in a way that causes for the responsible people
15 the greatest annoyance possible? (Thread 370)

- to threaten the author indirectly with maybe deadly consequences:

1 ich hoffe nur inständig...
2 von: ... Datum: 12.11.2004 - 14:08
3 ...dass herr fromm nicht in dedinghausen wohnt und
4 dort eifriges mitglied im schützenverein ist (Thread 360)
---
1 I only hope urgently ...
2 by: ... Date: 12.11.2004 - 14:08
3 ...that Mr. Fromm does not live in Dedinghausen and is
4 there an avid member of the rifle association (Thread 360)

Most messages refer to more than one topic of complaints about the broadcasting, however the titles of the threads highlight the main concern of the writers quite well. In almost half of the threads (22) the writers express their anger and formulate extreme critique. In many of these cases they just state their negative evaluation without differentiated justification by reference to particular characteristics of the report. If these writers refer to aspects of content, they avoid to discuss the main concern of the report, that is the fact that brutal computer games, which are restricted according to German laws to young people below the age of 16 years or below 18 years, are on the computers of much younger kids – some of them outed themself in the forum. In addition, they avoid debating the relation between long-term consumption of media violence and aggressiveness. Some of the writers use an "argument ad

numerum" ("There are millions of young people playing violent games without killing their teachers and classmates"; see also thread 200) or the personal argument of their own biography, like the journalist in thread 30 quoted above.

More frequent are logical deviations referring to the principle of "tu quoque" (TV shows cruelties, too; the society demands that young people learn how to use weapons in the army; etc.) or distractions according to the principle of the "red herring" (more or less irrelevant facts are entered, which lead the discussion away from the core problem); in our case on the one hand the fact that sales assistants do not care about the unlawful age of buyers of hard games, and on the other hand the ignorance or carelessness of parents. The message of these writers is: Not the violent games are to blame, but business and parents. Most of the adult writers are angry that their leisure activity seems to be endangered by prohibition because of disregard of already existing regulations and laws.

"Red herrings" are also used to accuse the author of the report to lie or to be ignorant: Rejecting an assertion about the exact age limit (16 instead of 18 years) for a particular game or a statement about the goal of a game (killing people instead of liberating the game's hero) is taken to proof untruthful or ignorant reporting – while the report underlined the message that cruel and brutal games should not be found in children's rooms (no massacres in children's rooms) – independent of the age limit of 16 or 18 years or the number of virtual victims.

Threads assigned to the thematic category of content specific critique also apply these rhetoric strategies to avoid the debate of dangers for social and academic development of young game aficionados. Again many variations of the "tu quoque" argument are used. In four threads the writers express explicitly their doubts that a causal connection can be drawn between frequent exposure to violent games and later aggressiveness/ delinquency of young players. This is a specific form of the "argumentum ad ignorantium": There is no scientific proof that violent games lead to aggressive behavior in children and youth, therefore there is no need to bother the gamers and the game industry. And: Those who are against brutal games have to prove their dangers, otherwise these games and their aficionados should be treated as "innocent."

517 Mein allerliebster Vergleich ist immer noch eine LAN-Party
518 (voll von Killerspielen und Leuten die diese Spielen)
519 und einem Volksfest. Quizfrage: Wo gibt es mehr REELLE
520 Gewalt? Und? Wird Alkohol verboten? Ich glaube nicht.
521 Und wenn Computerspiele (Killerspiele) wirklich gewalttätig
522 machen, wo bleiben dann die Studien die das beweisen,
523 wo bleiben die Verbrechen die eindeutig auf Computerspiele
524 (Killerspiele) zurückzuführen sind?
---
517 My most beloved comparison is still a LAN-Party
518 (full of killer games and people who are playing them)
519 and a fair. Quiz-question: Where is more REAL
520 violence? And? Do they prohibit alcohol? I don't think so.

521 And if computer games (killer games) really make
522 violent, where are the studies proofing it,
523 where are crimes, which can be attributed clearly
524 to computer games (killer games)? (from the whole file of threads)

This strategy is backed in many cases by the "argumentum ad numerum" and/or biographic remarks (see above). Irony is used to ridicule the dangers for the development of kids. In one thread (no. 340) a writer regrets that the report mentioned only "evil games" and not also "evil music," which the culprit in a German school shooting had preferred. This remark instigated many similar arguments. In a number of messages, which question the scientific proof of dangers by violent games, the writers themselves furnish their statement with evidence (of the "red herring" type) to the contrary: They claim that it is impossible to train "real" shooting on the screen with a mouse, however, they write nothing about socio-emotional learning effects by frequent virtual mutilations and killings. Here we meet already an interesting indicator of gamers' differentiation between virtual and real events, which will be described in the next section.

(2) How do fans of killer games differentiate between virtual and real worlds?

The following quotation (lines 557-572 from the whole file of the forum) contains most of the arguments used by the participants in the forum to reject the danger of transferring experiences from their life in the virtual worlds of killer games into real-life environments. In the TV broadcasting it was conjectured that the culprit in a school shooting may have acquired shooting skills while playing shooting games. Here is a reaction typical for many others in this forum:

557 OK abgesehen von einer verbesserten Hand-Augen-Koordination
558 hat das aber mit der realität nichts zu tun. es ist
559 halt was anderes wenn man kreuzchen über ne figur pack,
560 oder eine echte waffe in der hand hat und mit der bösen
561 physik was zu tun hat. also meine maus ist schon anders
562 als eine Uzi (danke Bundeswehr das ich diese erfahrung
563 bei einen Tag der offenden Tür machen durfte). War
564 da nicht auch noch was das er in nen Schützenverein
565 war? Zig Waffen gehabt hatte?
566 Also für meinen Teil kann ich noch Fiktion und Realität auseinander halten.
567 Insbesondere Bei Mortal Combat und Doom III wurde von
568 Realismus gesprochen? hallo? Ich jetzt nicht so der
569 Patologe, aber ich bin mir sicher das Blutfontänen
570 nicht zum normalen unfallbild gehören. Speziell MC
571 greift eine alte Manga Regel auf: Der Menschlische

572 Körper hat 5 Liter Blut. oder mehr.
---
557 OK apart from an improved hand-eye-coordination
558 this has noting to do with reality. It is
559 something else if you put a mark across a figure
560 or you have a real weapon in your hand and this has to do
561 with the evil physics. Well, my mouse is something else
562 than an Uzi (thanks, Bundeswehr that I was allowed this experience
563 during a day of open doors). Wasn't there
564 also something with a rifle association?
565 Hadn't he had umpteen weapons?
566 Well, I for my part are still able to differentiate between fiction and reality.
567 Particularly as regards Mortal Combat and Doom III they spoke
568 about realism? Hallo? I am not truly a
569 pathologist, but I am sure that fountains of blood
570 are not part of the normal appearance of an accident. Especially MC
571 takes up an old Manga rule: The human
572 body has 5 liters of blood. Or more.

The analysis shows five argumentative patterns, which we find in numerous variations in other messages to the forum, which address the reality-virtuality divide and its dangers:

(1) I myself have no problems to differentiate between a game and reality. There are thousands ... millions of other gamers like me.

43 Because almost every young person is a "guru of shooting games"
44 and thus a relation between violence
45 and computer games is far-fetched. (Thread 200, see above)

If a tragic event appears to be connected with the culprit's addiction to killer games, then the true cause is the psychic state of this person, not computer games:

5517 Es ist so einfach die Game-Industrie vorzuschieben.
5518 Der Junge hatte keine Perspektive mehr gesehen. Keine
5519 Freunde, kein Erfolg, keine Liebe erfahren. Der Grund
5520 ist nicht in der Spielewelt zu suchen, sondern in der Psyche des ...

5517 It is so simple to use the game-industry as a pretext.
5518 This boy did not see any longer a perspective. Has
5519 experienced no joy, no success, no love. The reason
5520 should not be searched in the world of games but within the psyche of ...

The grain of truth in this argumentation "ad numerum" is the fact that violence has to be explained by multi-causal models, in which habituation to

virtual violence and brutality is just one factor among others – however an important one. We will come back to this issue in the third section.

(2) Computer games exaggerate reality, therefore it is easy to differentiate between the virtual world of games and the everyday environment:

569 ..., but I am sure that fountains of blood
570 are not part of the normal appearance of an accident. ... (see above)

8180 ... Ich mag keine idiotische gewaltabschwaechung
8181 in spielen (gruenes statt rotes blut), keine Gewaltzensur
8182 (C&C Red Alert cyborgs statt soldaten xD) und erst
8183 recht keine indizierung (bin mir nicht sicher ob das

8180 ... I don't like idiotic toning-down of violence
8181 in games (green instead of red blood), no censoring of violence
8182 (C&C Red Alert cyborgs instead of Soldiers xD) and above all
8183 no banning on grounds of age [German: Indizierung] ...

41467 ... Fantasiegewalt, auch selbstzweckhaft, mit
41468 übertriebenen Schockeffekten und in maximaler Detailtreue,
41469 ist hingegen legitime Gruselkultur, sie zeigt die
41470 Abgründe menschlichen Daseins, die man im realen Leben üblicher Weise meidet.

41467 ... Phantasy violence, even as an end in itself, with
41468 exaggerated shock effects and maximally true details,
41469 however, is legitimate horror culture, it shows the
41470 abysses of human existence, which are usually avoided in real life.

The participant quoted above in lines 569-570 then continues his message by reversing his argument, i.e., he claims that cleaning the media of the details of violence like blood, dead and mutilated bodies is the reason for lower and lower thresholds against acting out aggressive attitudes:

590 dann gewalt nicht was un wirkliches? Schon heute ist
591 das gesamte TV gereinigt. Selbstmordatentäter sprengt
592 sich in Bus in die Luft. Welche Bilder sind im TV/Nachrichten
593 zu sehen? Ein kaputter Bus, vielleicht mal verletzte.
594 Die Opfer will man uns nicht zutrauen. So wird doch
595 erst gewaltschwelle gesenkt. Dadurch das die folgen unabsehbar, mahnend werden.
596 Und zum schluß will ich noch eine Frage stellen, welche gewalt ist schlimmer:
597 Ich töte 3000 "Menschen" auf dem PC,
598 Ich schlage jemanden ein blaues Auge (reallife)?
599 Ändert sich das ergebnis wenn kinder anwesend sind?

---
590 then isn't violence something unreal? Already today
591 all TV is cleaned. Suicide assassin blows himself
592 up in an autobus. Which pictures can be seen on TV/news?
593 A damaged bus, perhaps sometimes wounded people.
594 They don't believe we could stand the sight of victims. That is how the threshold
595 against violence is lowered. By making the consequences invisible, no longer warning.
596 Finally I want to ask, which violence is worse:
597 I kill 3000 "humans" on the PC,
598 I slap somebody and he gets a black eye (reallife)?
599 Is the result different if children are around?

(3) Undesirable transfer (above all: shooting skills) from activities in the virtual world to the real world is impossible, because of the physical differences between handling virtual weapons by means of the typical input devices of computers and handling real weapons.

558 this has noting to do with reality. It is
559 something else if you put a mark across a figure
560 or you have a real weapon in your hand and this has to do
561 with the evil physics. Well, my mouse is something else
562 than an Uzi (thanks, Bundeswehr that I was allowed this experience (see above)

8745 ... Ich habe meinen Grundwehrdienst geleistet
8746 und dabei mehrmals mit Waffen verschiedenen Typs geschossen
8747 und obwohl ich zu diesem Zeitpunkt bereits lange Shooter
8748 gespielt habe war ich keinen Deut besser als die Kameraden
8749 die dieses Hobby nicht teilen. ...

8745 ... I have done my military service
8746 and have shot several times with weapons of various types
8747 and despite having already played shooter games for a long time
8748 I was not a jot better then the comrades
8749 who do not share this hobby. ...

(4) Desirable transfer from activities in the virtual world to the real world is possible:

557 OK apart from an improved hand-eye-coordination

Other messages add to these effects the training of reflexes, concentration and tactic or strategic thinking. Players of internet games mention in addition team competence as a skill promoted by computer games (see also quote from thread 170 above):

2219 Ich spiele UT2004 nicht der Gewalt wegen, sondern um
2220 mit Menschen aus anderen Ländern Europas, und der ganzen Welt, Spass zu haben.
2221 Neben Diskussion über alles mögliche, geht es im Spiel
2222 um Kommunikation, Taktik, Strategie und Teamplay.

2219 I play UT2004 not because of the violence, but to
2220 have fun with people from other countries in Europe and the whole world.
2221 Besides discussions about all sorts of things, what counts in games is
2222 communication, tactics, strategy, and team-play.

One participant summarized his clear distinction between the fictitious world of games and real life in the following statement:

16356 aber nicht aus dem Grund Menschen zu töten! Ich spiele
16357 diese Games aus 3 Gründen. Erstens es macht Spass,
16358 zweitens um mich manchmal abzureagieren und Drittens, welches
16359 der wichtigste Punkt ist, ich bin eSportler, es ist
16360 für mich mehr als ein reines gamen, es ist eine Herausforderung,
16361 sich verbessern zu wollen, dass beste zu geben und
16362 zu gewinnen. Da stirbt man halt, und kommt wieder.

16356 but not because I want to kill human beings. I play
16357 these games because of 3 reasons: Firstly, it's fun,
16358 secondly to calm down now and then, and thirdly,
16359 which is the most important point, I am an e-sportsman,
16360 it is more for me than just gaming, it is a challenge
16361 to strive for improvement, to give one's best, and
16362 to win. Well, you die, and you come again.

(5) Experiences and world views acquired and/or reinforced in long-term practice with violent computer games are internalized and applied to interactions with the real world.

Probably the "gamers" are not aware of this transfer. If the characteristics of their reactions were pointed out to these people, they would probably wonder or reject the statement as unwarranted critique, because their behaviour became habituated over time. Of course, the author of the irritating report is seen as a more or less dangerous opponent, maybe even an enemy. Now how do you cope with opponents in violent games? You "take care of them," that is, you eliminate them – and that is exactly what many of the participants in the forum express explicitly or implicitly, when they wish the author of the report to be dismissed or at least to be prosecuted. Even worse in this process of internalizing the standards of killer games are the consequences for the democratic functions of a free media system. Many of the writers complain that a report like this in the ZDF (public TV) is financed by their fees (see references to the

"GEZ" in the messages) without immediate consequences for the author. They seem to expect that journalists keep in mind where their salary comes from when they do their job. One annoyed gamer and newspaper journalist among the participants in the forum described this selfcensoring "scissors in the head" and its normality in his everyday job routines quite openly:

> *37 But I can assure you that an article based on a likewise*
> *38 bad investigation and full of prejudice*
> *39 would lead at least after the first reactions of the readers*
> *40 to my immediate dismission.*
> *41 But if you are subsidized by fees, (Thread 30, see above).*

What the overwhelming majority of forum contributions has in common is an exclusively adult-centered point of view. Of course, many of the writers agree with the existing classification of computer games into age categories, that is, restricting access to these categorized games for young people under 16 or – in cases of outright brutal games – under 18. Somehow they have a feeling that these games should not be played by children. This was exactly the message of the TV broadcasting. However, to prevent children against the influence of these violent games is seen as the responsibility of parents and sales people:

> 44242 Richtig wütend macht mich (ich wiederhole mich schon
> 44243 wieder), dass unsere Kinder missbraucht werden: erstens
> 44244 weil mittels "Kinderschutz"-Postulat bei unerfahrenen
> 44245 Eltern gezielt Unsicherheit und Angst geschürt wird;
> 44246 zweitens weil mit dem Verantwortlichmachen von "Killer-Spielen"
> 44247 die falsche Ursache bekämpft wird ...
> ------
> *44242 I get really angry (I'm repeating myself again)*
> *44243 that our children are misused: Firstly, because*
> *44244 with the postulate "protection of children" uncertainty and anxiety*
> *44245 are stirred up on purpose in uninformed parents;*
> *44246 secondly, because with attributing the responsibility to "killer games"*
> *44247 the wrong cause is attacked ...*

Most aficionados of killer games do not think or care about emotional damages of children by repeated exposure to virtual violence. If so, they use the "tu quoque" argument and point a finger on violent TV series for children like "Power Rangers." If aficionados of killer games use concepts like "fear" or "anxiousness" in their messages, they refer to the reports' implied propagandistic effects on uninformed viewers (see above) and they refer to a general fear of all new developments.

One contribution to the forum was a remarkable exception. The participant answered to a message, in which another author mentioned studies apparently proving that violent video games are harmless for children:

22053 Die von Dir angesprochenen Studien sind von vorgestern,
22054 tatsächlich ist mittlerweile wissenschaftlich abgesichert,
22055 dass die Beschäftigung mit gewaltätigen Spielen bei
22056 Kindern im Laufe der Zeit die Entwicklung von moralischen
22057 Werten hemmt, d.h. eine emotionale und moralische Abstumpfung ist die Folge.

22053 The studies you mentioned are from the day before yesterday.
22054 As a matter of fact, it is meanwhile scientifically assured
22055 that dealing with violent games inhibits
22056 over the years children's development of moral
22057 values, i.e., they will become emotionally and morally blunted.

Here, aficionados of violent games seem to have a blind spot: They do not (are no longer able to?) notice the danger of emotional and moral damages by long-term exposure to and virtual practice of brutality, mutilation, killing in these games. The author of the last quoted message (lines 22053-22057) is well informed, because more recent studies demonstrate clearly emotional components also as long-term determinants of aggressiveness: Repeated exposure to media violence may lead to desensitization against aversive states in situations of aggression (Funk et al. 2004) and to conditioning of aggressive emotional schemata like hostility, anger, hate, or even a generally negative world view (Eron, Guerra & Huesmann, 1997; Gerbner et al., 1980; Huesmann, 1998).

Of course, there are more dangerous influences of violence on development than just violent media, but the risk factor "consumption of media violence" affects acquisition, training, automatization, and reinforcement of knowledge structures about aggression (Huesmann & Miller, 1994), but also aggressive emotions, which are stimulated by media violence and conditioned by repetition and reinforcement (Hopf, 2004; Huber, 1983; Weiß, 2000).

The cumulative risk model (Masten, 2001) assumes that each additional risk factor increases the probability of developmental problems. A single risk factor such as media violence is not sufficient "to cause children to pick up guns and begin shooting people. However, each additional risk factor children have for aggressive behavior (e.g., being bullied, antisocial friends, gang membership, drug use, poverty, history of being abused, access to guns) adds to the risk of that child acting violently" (Anderson et al., 2007, p. 50).

In the 15-years longitudinal study by Huesmann et al. (2003, p. 215 f) three factors are linked significantly to aggressive behavior of the later adult subjects (average: 22 years): (1) The frequency of consumption of media violence during childhood, (2) earlier identification with aggressive male or female TV-heroes, and (3) the children's conviction that TV violence is real. The prediction of violence in adulthood is *independent* of the subjects' level of aggressiveness in childhood. And finally: Bushman and Huesmann (2006) demonstrated that short-term effects of media violence are stronger for adults than for children, however, the opposite is true for children, that is, long-term effects (e.g. learning of aggressive scripts, habituation of emotional responses to observed violence) are stronger for children than for adults.

In the light of these findings it is most questionable that some institutions count on and promote a general transfer from virtual game worlds into reality. For instance, the American military tries to motivate young people with the violent computer game "America's Army today." It can be downloaded for free from an official web-site. According to "Spiegel online," the Iranian "Institute for the Development of Children and Young Adults" presented recently a violent computer game "Special Operation 85," which will be offered for a low price, because it is popular among children and particularly apt "to mediate ideological values like readiness to make sacrifices and to become a martyr."

(3) How can we validate qualitative analyses of extreme world views?

The approach of "subjective" or "implicit" theories, based on a picture of man as reflexive subject (Groeben & Scheele, 1977) tries to answer this question by suggesting a specific two-step phase of confirmatory research activities following the traditional steps of collecting and interpreting qualitative data, mostly interview texts. The first step ("communicative validation") applies the criterion of dialogue consensus and tests the adequacy of reconstruction of the interviewees' motives, intentions, and aims, while the second step ("explanatory validation") relies on traditional criteria of falsification and tests the interpretations' adequacy to reality, i.e., tries to observe contextual conditions and the interviewees' actions (Groeben, 1990).

From a constructivist point of view there are *general doubts* whether communicative validation can be more than an infinite cycle of interpretations. A dialogue aiming at linguistic confirmation of the researcher's interpretation of an interviewee's thoughts is based on mutual interpretative activities. Both the researcher and the interviewee interpret the other's utterances "always in terms of concepts and conceptual structures, which the interpreter has formed out of the elements from his or her own subjective field of experience" (von Glasersfeld, 1991, p. 23). In addition, there are serious doubts whether the criterion of dialogue consensus can be conceived of as a "criterion of truth."

Again in von Glaserfeld's (1991, p. 23) words: "To find a fit simply means not to notice any discrepancies." The viability of communicative validation must be *questioned specifically* in case of really discrepant orientations like in dialogues with players of killer games, religious extremists, or fundamentalists of any kind. There are doubts, whether a scientific dialogue as a methodological instrument aiming at consensus should be attempted at all.

Lechler (1994) summarized critical arguments against communicative validation as a generally valid method to prove the adequacy of the interpretation, i.e., the reconstruction of meaning of a speaker's text. Above all, he reminded that scientists are used to discuss with the aim of convincing their partners. Thus, the aim of a validation dialogue may be distorted, because in the end "consensus" may be nothing more than approval with the scientist's interpretation. That is why the method of communicative validation needs a frame of conditions assuring an "ideal situation for dialogues," that is a symmetric situation free of dominance of one speaker over the other. The

communication between researcher and his/her partner should be modeled according to therapeutic methods, preferably the client-centered approach. But the researcher's influence can not be excluded: His/her partner learns about the researcher's reactions and may adapt his/her own points of view either to reach a consensus or to refute the interpretations more pronouncedly. Finally, there are content aspects, which do not allow communicative approaches, above all if a speaker is or cannot be aware of the relations of his/her utterances to conditions, which the researcher is particularly interested in. In our case, we have the example of internalized violence as a means of conflict resolution.

According to the demand to follow the guidelines of client-centered communicative therapy, a dialogue should not impose one partners' point of view on the other, therefore the communication should be characterized by symmetry and acceptance. However, the above already mentioned problem of reactivity of dialogues may cause the partner to feel confirmed and reinforced by the acceptance of his/her position. Of course, this effect reaches beyond the traditional limits of scientific investigation, but from a point of view of action research we should think about, whether we tolerate or even appreciate effects of this kind in case of dialogues with aficionados of killer games – at least as regards their "care" about influences of their hobby on the development of children.

As a conclusion we recommend to prefer in studies on world views of extremists of any kind an approach of validating interpretations by examining the statements of a greater number of persons for internal consistency. That is, we should establish clear procedures for interpretation, for instance, clear definitions of the codes used to summarize the meaning of critical data segments and compare similar statements in all texts or files of our data base. This was shown in the first section of this paper for the aficionados' types of reaction to critique. In the second section on world views the categories were illustrated by typical examples of utterances.

Instead of elaborating further on the validity of our interpretations we preferred to work out in more detail wether the world views of aficionados of killer games hold true. In particular we wanted to find out, whether the experiences and habits acquired in violent games really are not transferred to the players' real world – as they claim to be true again and again. Therefore, Hopf, Huber, and Weiß (2008) run a two-year longitudinal study on the relations between frequent consumption of media violence and aggression as well as outright delinquency among young people. The investigation was based on a cross-sectional study by Hopf (2004). Those students, who participated in a test session during the school year 1999/2000 were included in a repeated assessment after two years (2002/2003). While the cross-sectional study investigated above all essential influences of media violence, social environment, and personality characteristics on aggressiveness (readiness for violence) as disposition factors, this study was focussed on the analysis of causes of violent beliefs and behavior (consumption of media violence, violent behavior in school, violent delinquency). The results of repeated assessments after two years were run through complex multi-factorial analyses of the effects of exposure to media violence (TV, films, video-/computer-games) in the context of social and

individual factors. The selection of variables was informed by the approach of risk and protective factors in the development of children and adolescents. Under this perspective, the influences of media are one risk factor among others as, for instance, low social status, parental violence, poverty, drug abuse, etc. (Eron et al., 1997; Farrington, 1994; Lösel & Biesener, 2003; Masten, 2001; Rutter, 2000).

In our study we started out from the assumption of five central areas of risk: media, family, school, peers, and the individual personality. Because of time and space only one of the hypotheses is presented here: Early consumption of violent computer games is seen as the strongest factor to cause violence of students and violent delinquency two years later. The direction of this hypothesis was tested by means of path analyses. This allowed comparing the effects of media with other main effects attributed to the students' social environment or their personality.

Comparative models, which are rare until now in media research, made it possible to evaluate more precisely the relevance of media effects for the development of adolescents. While cross-sectional analyses may produce artifacts in path models, this problem does not exist in time-based longitudinal studies: preceding conditions cause later behaviour. The path models will represent the structure of those effects, which influence the goal variable within the model of variables.

From the point of view of developmental psychology we include the age of first exposure to horror-violence films, because the longitudinal study by Huesmann et al. (2003) substantiated that frequent consumption of media violence in childhood is a causal factor of later aggressiveness. In addition, gender, consumption of violent media (differentiating three types), and aggressive emotional reactions in cases of real violence and media violence were included. The emotion variables permit to check learning processes on an emotional level, which are highly important for anti-social behaviour. Furthermore, influence factors due to family conditions (parents' physical violence, poverty) and the factor "warmth" from a school climate scale were included into the base structure in order to take into account central risk factors in early adolescence. Likewise, the data at time 1 of two goal variables "violence beliefs" and "students' violence and delinquency" were included as moderator variables. To increase the consistency of the models, the path models reported subsequently contain only moderator variables from a coefficient ß => .15 on.

The participants investigated in this study are members of a "problem group," which is characterized by violence problems and social discrimination due to their family background, migration background, outclassing in their school environment, and low career perspectives. All participants attend Hauptschule, i.e. a school track "below" Gymnasium. Several studies of violence among students confirm that Hauptschule is prone to violence.

The sample was composed of students of six Hauptschulen, which were also included in a cross-sectional study (Hopf, 2004): One school was situated in Munich, three schools in the county of Munich, two in nearby small towns. The first test session was administered in 1999/2000 in grades 5-7 to 653 students. 314 students of this group participated in the second assessment in 2002/2003 in

grades 7-9. The decrease in numbers of students is due to parents' moving, absence at the days of test administration (the media questionnaire and the violence questionnaire could not be administered at the same day), and missing data within the questionnaires.

A comparison of the samples' composition during time 1 and time 2 did not reveal any significant differences; thus, at time 2 the subjects form a representative sample of the initial sample. In the one path model of the goal variable "delinquency" presented here (see fig. 2) consumption of violent computer games appears as a direct factor – like the other types of media in two more path models. While consumption of TV violence has the lowest effect (ß = .15), violent computer games have the highest effect (ß = .29) on delinquency. The direct factor's structure of effects is identical in all of these path models:

type of media -> delinquency -> violence of groups (experience of real violence).

Parents' violence influences indirectly delinquency in all models on a second hierarchical stratum. Experiencing aggressive emotions during consumption of violent media increases in all models the consumption of the current type of media, and it influences most powerfully (ß = .41) aggressive emotions during real violence. These effects confirm that consumption of media violence habituates emotional schemata of hate, rage, feelings of power and dominance associated with the motive of revenge. Consumption of media violence in turn is increased by experiences of real violence (in groups).

On a third hierarchical stratum, the early age of initial exposure to H-V (horror video) films has almost the same powerful influence (ß = -.41) on aggressive experiences of media violence, which is important for the development of aggressions B not only from a point of view of developmental psychology.

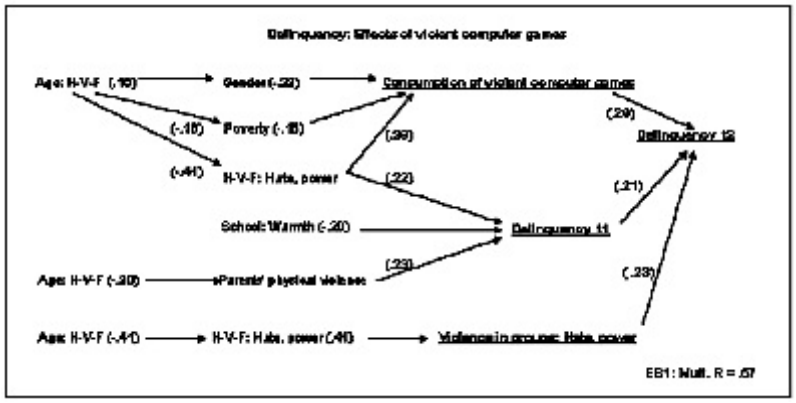

Figure 2: Effects of violent computer games on delinquency.
Path coefficients according to KMSS - Version 7 (Kleiter, 1982-2000).

These are for the first time *longitudinal* results that demonstrate a strong causal effect of violent computer games on 12-14 years old pupils in Germany. We assume that the effect on delinquency will be stronger in the future, because the consumption of violent games is increasing among young people and the games are increasingly more realistic and brutal. Empirical data from 2005 (Mößle et al. , 2006) show an increase of consumption of violent games already among 9-10 years old pupils: 21.3% of boys played violent games, which were permitted only from 16 years on or were not permitted at all for young persons. Despite the fact that the 10-12 years old pupils had relatively low access to computers, our study showed that violent computer games caused most strongly an increase of delinquency, thus confirming their harmful social effect.

Conclusions

The analysis of the reactions of aficionados of killer games to critique against their preferred leisure activity revealed aside of interesting patterns of argumentation an almost complete lack of responsibility for their toys' social-developmental effects on children. They were not aware of effects of emotional desensitization and the vehemently negated any scientific data about detrimental effects of their games on young people.

Given these conditions, an approach to validate the analysis of the aficionados' messages to the forum of the TV station by means of reaching consensus on the adequacy of the interpretation of their messages seems to be useless or may even cause undesired effects. Instead, a longitudinal study rendered results that confirm the basic critique against killer games in the hands of children. These results also show the adequacy of central interpretations of the aficionados' reactions. In addition, the results demonstrate the problem of attempts to reach a dialogue consensus in cases, in which the investigated party accuses the investigating party of prejudice and typical fears of the elder generation of new developments. If representations of others' world views cannot be constructed in interaction with these others, qualitative-interpretative approaches as preparatory phase to observation and falsification achieve major relevance (see "QUAL-quan" in Morse, 2003).

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Designing Research on the Popular Practice of Baby Signing

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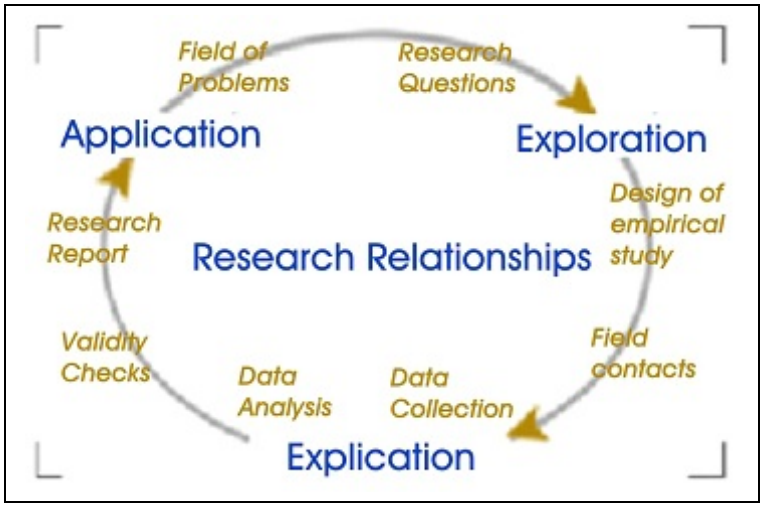
An educational intervention used in families, called "Baby Signing," is becoming increasingly popular, especially in the U.S, U.K and Australia as well as in Germany. To use Baby Signing, hearing parents learn a few signs of a local sign language, or invent idiosyncratic gestures for non- verbal communication with their preverbal hearing children. While the advertisers of courses and learning materials for baby signing claim that research has shown many benefits, little empirical research is available (see Johnston et al., 2005 for a review; Kiegelmann & Günther, 2008). Within the context of special education with mentally handicapped people, the use of signs for supporting spoken language acquisition is a common practice (Wilken, 2008). Yet, when hearing parents teach their hearing children Baby Signing, there are also critics who argue against the practice, especially within the context of lack of resources for sign language education of deaf and hard of hearing children (Doherty-Sneddon, 2008).

In order to close the gap between claims of benefits by proponents of the practice and lack of research, I am working on empirical investigations of the practice baby signings. While my first pilot studies were helpful for testing the research methodology and recruitment procedures for participants, my colleague Günter from the Humboldt University of Berlin and I are currently designing a larger study (Kiegelmann, Müller, & Nottebaum, 2008; Kiegelmann & Olgun-Lichtenberg, in preparation; Kiegelmann & Günther, 2008).

In this paper, I focus on the implications for research relationships in the study design that we are planning, building on the model of research design that G. L. Huber and I presented at an earlier conference of the Center of Qualitative Psychology (Kiegelmann & Huber, 2005, p. 19):



According to this model, research design starts and ends within the context of the application. Therefore the context in which research takes place is key within the whole process of investigation. In this paper I review the context and methods of the study, and then focus on the implications of designing a study by keeping the implications of research relationships in mind.

Field of problems

Baby Signing is a popular practice within hearing communities; many teachers of Baby Signing, as well as parents, are excited about the practice and outspoken in advertising its potential benefits (see http://www.babyzeichensprache.com; http:// www.tinytalk.co.uk; http://www.signingtime.com). Among the arguments against Baby Signing are that it appropriates sign language for commercial purposes within the hearing community while excluding the Deaf community from benefits and profits, that it misrepresents the complexity of sign languages, and that it creates an atmosphere of pressure and fear in parents who do not practice it (see arguments about the baby signing debate at http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/talktoyourbaby/ signing.html). Though it is a topic in media (see below, links to media coverage), currently, there is little empirical research to back up claims in any direction.

Any effort to investigate the potential benefits and harms of a popular and controversial practice is difficult for researchers, because the research results are in danger of being misused to support a biased claim by any side in the controversy. Yet, I argue that it is possible to investigate Baby Signing without first defining which party in the controversy is correct, that is, by going in with an open attitude that allows for new results. By documenting all the procedures

of the research process and implementing validity measures (Maxwell & Loomis, 2003) we can stay open to discovering processes in Baby Signing that might have an impact on child development in either direction, of harm or help or no detectable impact at all. The specific controversy calls for a careful formulation of research results, keeping in mind potential misunderstandings among practitioners. It also calls for ongoing attention to the audience of the research reports, starting from the very beginning of the study.

The popularity of using sign language within a hearing community adds a new dimension to the controversy, because some elements of sign language are being used by parents and lay people independent of professional speech therapists or other special education interventions. How I interpret current problems relevant to the practice of Baby Signing has implications for our research relationships, which are central to the above mentioned model for research design because they touch on all aspects of empirical studies. Any decision about the perspective to choose for interpreting a practical problem has implications for the research design. In our proposed study, Günther and I focus the research interest on finding out useful information for perspective of parents who are interested in making informed decisions about how to best support the language development and overall well-being of their children. When parents are confronted by peers or advertisements or reports in the popular media, they need reliable information about the potential effects of an intervention that is enthusiastically advertised.

Within the contemporary social context of the popularity and controversy of Baby Signing, I take a stand as a curious researcher interested in understanding the social phenomenon of hearing parents using sign language for their hearing children, and also of using psychological language development instruments to analyze whether the intervention does have the potential to influence the communicative development of children as they begin to use spoken language.

Context

This research will take place in Germany during a period of public debate about intensifying early childhood education. In Germany, following the results from international comparative measures of pupils' academic abilities, e. g. Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Internationale Grundschul-Lese-Untersuchung (IGLU), Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMMS), many politicians, educators, and parents are worried that more active teaching of children is required than in the past. Early childhood education programs are begin given more academic focus (Mienert & Vorholz, 2007) and some parents are eager to start teaching their young children skills that might be useful in school later on; an example is programs to teach English in child-care settings (Piske, in Vorbereitung; http://bildungsklick.de/pm/56318/modell projekt-im-tuebinger-kinderhaus-franzoesische-allee/).

There is a critique of the actual Baby Signing boom that focuses on parents' eagerness to drill their young children into a perceived school advantage, while neglecting age-appropriate play and learning opportunities. As we create our

planned Baby Signing intervention with intensive field contacts, there will be ample opportunity to collect data on parents' attitudes about education and about social pressure for lowering the age when children enter formal education. At the same time, however, in this proposed research I need to restrain from perpetuating or enforcing this kind of pressure via the baby signing instructions. We can avoid this additional pressure to formally educate babies by focusing on a very limited intervention within the intervention group. Also, the research question about the psychological relevance of the transition from pre-symbolic gestures to concrete symbolic (baby) signs requires that we also observe communication that is spontaneous. Indeed with deaf children of hearing parents we hypothesize that their communication is marked by richer use of gestural and sign communication than with hearing children. Adding Baby Signing might not make a difference in this context at all (Goldin-Meadow, 2006).

Research Questions

Within the context of scientific controversy and popular debate described above, the research questions for the project have connotations for the practical relevance of the study. That is, the focus of the research questions can influence the relationships with both the research participants and the communities of practitioners who might make use of the empirical findings. Researchers could investigate a wide range of potential aspects of Baby Signing, including language acquisition, early language production, and the social phenomenon itself.

First, from a theoretical perspective of investigating language acquisition, researchers could look at the relevance of (early) gestural communication for overall psychological development (Volterra & Erting, 1990; Goldin-Meadow, 2006**)**. Results from such studies are relevant in general for understanding sign language and spoken language acquisition, and in specific for the bi-lingual development of sign language/spoken language. Since parents implement Baby Signing in a wide range of ways, research on gestural communication in bi-modal bilingual children might be relevant for those parents who become so interested in sign language through the idea of Baby Signing, that they seek contact to the Deaf community and, start learning the local sign language.

On the other hand, those speech educators who are worried about potential harm from the use of sign language might be interested in a close look at the early spoken language production of those children whose parents engage in Baby signing; they could compare the quantity and quality of the language these children produce with that of children who do not go through any language intervention (Johnston et al., 2005)

Further, researchers interested in social phenomena who analyze intergroup relationships and social movements could focus on the reasons why a suppressed language such as sign language is suddenly being endorsed and utilized by members of the mainstream hearing society.

Depending on the chosen focus of a research project, different social groups might benefit from the research results.

My own research interest is twofold. First, I want to investigate, on a descriptive level, what Baby Signing means for parents. By understanding, at a subjective level, why they engage in this "new intervention," we could perhaps draw conclusions about a threshold between a playful parent-child interaction and a practice of drill and overemphasized pressure to learn and demonstrate knowledge. In order to investigate the motivations of parents who do engage in Baby Signing, my colleagues and I at the University of Trier, Germany, are currently conducting a study with such parents who volunteer to participate in our survey after they already chose to practice Baby Signing. (Kiegelmann, Müller, & Nottebaum, 2008). In this survey, there will be only a one time contact between researcher and research participants, i.e. the filling out the on-line survey. Because my other project involves more intensive research relationships, I focus in the rest of this paper on the longitudinal study:

My second research interest I will investigate in a more controlled setting, together with my colleague Klaus B. Günther from the Humboldt University of Berlin. I want to study the development of gestural communication and speech communication by engaging in intensive observation and data collection with children in different intervention and control groups. We will combine a comparative quantitative analysis with qualitative inquiry about language acquisition processes. There will be several groups included in the investigation. The groups we plan to use in a longitudinal study are as follows:

Baby Signing Groups:

- hearing children with hearing parents
- deaf children with hearing parents

Language support group (similar intervention material to baby signing groups, but the DVD and book is without signs):

- hearing children with hearing parents
- deaf children with hearing parents

Non-intervention group:
- hearing children with hearing parents
- deaf children with hearing parents

Control group
- hearing children with hearing parents who participate in a commercial Baby Signing class
- hearing children of deaf parents

Within each group of participants, we will try to attract parents with similar socio-economic backgrounds.

The preliminary formulations of our research questions for this study are the following:

- How do children and parents in the different study groups use gestural communication in the process of their children's early language acquisition? How does this process of gestural communication differ in language acquisition in families that practice baby signing?
- Do any observable differences in cognitive development occur in the groups of children that do and do not experience baby signing? Do the two groups differ in the quality of their parent-child relationships and in levels of parental stress?
- Can differences in gestural communication, speech communication, and cognitive development be observed in groups who differ in the hearing status of the children and of the adults?
- How do the families that do and do not practice baby signing communicate? Are differences observable between the two groups?

Thus, the research questions focus on communication practices and the psychological constructs of cognitive development, language development, parental stress, and relational quality. In cognitive development we plan to focus especially on differentiating between pre-symbolic gestures and concrete symbolic (early) signs. Research has shown that early communication in all children includes gestures. Deaf children use more elaborate gestural communication than hearing children; even if they are deprived of access to a sign language (Goldin-Meadow, 2006). Günther and I hypothesize that adding more gestures to the repertoire of begging language users, the added quantity of gestures might have an effect on the quality of communication (Kiegelmann & Günther, 2008). There might be a more complex use of pre-symbolic gestures in children who are offered baby signing. We plan to use a quantitative-comparative approach, comparing groups depending on the type of intervention (Baby signing, similar language training without signing (see above the detailed plan for group composure) and control groups.

At the same time, these questions are integrated with a qualitative inquiry about language acquisition processes and about motivations and the subjective meanings related to parents' experiences of engaging in communication with their children during the period when the children's' language skills are emerging. Thus we plan on using a mixed-methods approach that combines multiple quantitative measurements and behavior observations with participant observation and interviews about subjective meanings and parents' experiences within complex processes.

Research Relationships

Research relationships are crucial in this design. The study will depend on intensive research relationships within atmospheres of trusted long-term commitment. As researchers stay in contact with families, they need to maintain a balance between open-minded observation and professional distance. At the same time the research relationships need to develop in a spirit of authenticity and mutual trust.

The study will be longitudinal: the children and parents will be followed over a period of three years, starting when the children are six months old. Data will be collected through various means:

- Once a month, parents will be asked to videotape 10-minute parent-infant interaction within their home (Bischoff, Bischoff, & Horsch, 2004)
- Every six months, a non-intrusive language diagnostic measurement will be administered. This will be a German version of the MacArthur-Bates CDI for the younger children (FRAKIS, Szagun, 2004), i.e. a questionnaire parents fill out about their children's ability with language and gesture use. The older children will participate in a standardized language test, such as the HSET (Grimm & Schöler, 1991). In cooperation with colleagues who specialize in sign language acquisition, more specific data collection procedures will be developed by Prof. Günther and Dr. Wolff from the Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany.
- At every contact between the researchers and the research participants, in addition to the language diagnostic data, quantitative data on parental stress and relational quality in the families will be gathered (e.g. parental stress interview, attachment measures, qualitative interviews, and observations about relational quality).

As we are planning a design with intensive and multiple contacts between research participants and researchers, the quality of research relationships will be crucial to the success of the whole study.

We chose to collect data in the home of the families, rather than in laboratory settings, because our research questions focus on a description and analysis of communication and language acquisition as it occurs in every day family life. There is a need to keep the impact of the researchers on the every day experiences minimal, because the research is about the evaluation of the planed intervention by Baby Signings. Yet only in an atmosphere of trust will parents become willing to cooperate with us researchers and will be likely to follow the participation through the whole duration of the investigation.

Since detailed observation within the overall development of the children and the gestural and language development in specific are core to this inquiry, we researchers will need to become familiar enough with the children that we will be able to detect changes and evaluate developmental progress within the context of each individual child's developmental pathway.

Within the context of such intensive and longitudinal relationships that are formed by initiative and for the benefit of the researchers, ethical considerations are very important. As in similar studies, we psychologists need already to be aware in the design stages of a study that exploitation of participants needs to be avoided. Potential conflicts of interests can be anticipated, such as parents hope for help rather than willingness to support research.

I suggest that it is helpful to keep in mind the social context and the general political implications of the project. When studying Baby Signing and entering

the field of Deaf education, as a researcher I need to investigate beforehand who has a stake in the research results. We need to anticipate potential misunderstandings of results. In the example of the here discussed study, we need to deal with potential advertising interests of the edutainment industry that sells Baby Signing products. Also, historically grown social conflicts between the hearing world and the Deaf world are the context of this research and that a non-discriminatory stance is paramount.

The research team will maintain intensive contact with the participating families. Researchers will be careful to create a warm and authentic atmosphere, while keeping a professional attitude. If parents develop an interest in getting specific types of support for their families, the researchers will direct them to specialists and support agencies, but will restrain from intervening themselves. In the intervention groups the researchers will facilitate the Baby Signing teaching only.

The recruitment is an important issue to consider. As we approach families to participate in our study, we need to reflect carefully on their motivation for engaging in the research relationships that we are about to build. In order to avoid later problems due to a conflict of interest, I suggest that researchers take time to articulate specifically what they are asking from potential participants and they are asking for these forms of participation. In addition, those who are interested in participating need the opportunity to reflect on their needs and their hopes from the research relationships. Especially within the field of psychology, there is a possibility that participants expect services from the psychologists who conduct the research, which the researchers are unable to deliver (Kiegelmann, 2002).

In order to avoid both disappointments on the part of participants and confounded research results for the researchers, I argue for a strict separation between research and helping. When engaging in research relationships, I suggest that psychologists focus on their curiosity to find answers to a research question. Even though these questions are embedded within a field of practice that might benefit from the research, the individual participants will not be likely to profit directly from the research results. Because research that is oriented toward theory building requires more time than individual counseling for specific persons, I argue that researchers who want to provide practical service to certain populations should do so, but keep this engagement separate from their work in research. For example, they can conduct a study with those persons who express interest in the topic and want to support the research, and provide referrals for counseling professionals or groups. Researchers might also work as practitioners and provide therapy or counseling to people who are not engaged in research relationships with them (see Kiegelmann, 1997).

For the specific research on Baby Signing, we must pay special attention to understanding the motivations of potential participants. Each group of parents in the planned project might have different expectations. For the Baby Signing group of hearing children with hearing parents, we plan to attract "typical" candidates for the popular practice of Baby Signing, i.e. parents who are motivated to invest extra energy to support the language and overall development of their children. Such parents might be eager to gain access to a

method of giving their children a head start in education. As researchers, we need to be cautious about overzealous parents who will have unrealistic hopes about what they will get from the intervention project.

On the other hand, hearing parents of deaf children might expect help in their decisions about how to best care for their children within the context of Cochlea Implant surgery, speech therapy and decisions for or against learning sign language. We are especially interested in those parents who have decided against using sign language with their children. With these parents we will need to pay special attention, maintaining a respectful stance in the research relationship without trying to change their opinion according to our beliefs about the best education for deaf children.

For the language support group, it will be hard to find hearing parents of hearing children, because a general language support program may appear less attractive than gaining access to material about the popular Baby Signing.

As to the hearing parents of deaf children, they might not be interested in even more speech therapy and appointments than they already face. Similarly, for the two non-intervention groups, we researchers need to motivate parents to participate without offering any support in terms of an educational program. Finally, the parents who are participating in a commercial baby signing program might lose interest in it before our project ends; thus we need to find those families who are willing to provide us with their information for the planned longitudinal study.

In order to attract potential study participants, we will ask pediatricians to be gate keepers. In Germany, parents of young children have regular contact with pediatricians for check-ups and thus can be reached through their offices. Children who are deaf and/or wearing a CI meet with medical specialists regularly and also have regular check-ups with general practitioners. Thus, paying attention to research relationships will be necessary early on in the project.

Validity

In a mixed-methods design like the one we propose, there will be two approaches to validity, for the qualitative and quantitative elements. We will choose the quantitative diagnostic measures according to their usefulness in answering the research questions – and also according to their proven quality standards. We will apply only those measures that have proven reliability and validity). We will check for qualitative validity using procedures described by Maxwell (Maxwell & Loomis, 2003). We will, for example, check for negative evidence that might contradict our conclusions. Also, since a growing number of researchers are interested in analyzing the phenomenon of baby signing from various scholarly disciplines, we will survey the current literature for suggestions for categories that others have found to be relevant and will cross check our results with these suggestions. Combining the various sets of data from quantitative tests and qualitative observations and interviews, we will be able to triangulate our research results to check on validity questions as well.

Research Reports

At present, two bodies of literature exist about Baby Signing: scholarly articles, and popular media reports and parents' guides about the practice. In reporting the results we intend to provide information to practitioners and to interested parents about our knowledge of which approaches to baby signing are more and less useful. We will also describe our results in scientific journals and request peer reviews from colleagues in related fields such as education, psychology and linguistics.

With our reports of the research findings to practitioners and the interested public, we close the circle of applied research as we started and will end within the field of problems in which Baby signing is embedded.

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Chapter III

Qualitative Analysis of Possibilities and Difficulties of Inclusion of Quality

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Introduction

There are two terms that have recently emerged with strong meaning power in education: those terms are "diversity" and "inclusion" (Thomas & Loxley, 2007). Although we could consider ourselves at the top of the watershed in our socio-pedagogical moment, these two terms are advancing towards the replacement of the previous ones with somehow similar meaning: "special educational needs" and "integration."

The whole meaning of all four terms, and particularly the differences among each other are not completely clear; but it is, in general, expressed that "*diversity*" has a more horizontal content, in as much as it does not imply inferiority of any human being at all, because, essentially and in the end, everyone of us, as such human beings, are each other diverse and different. On the contrary, the meaning of "special needs" implies that people suffering from such peculiarity have some personal disadvantage in relation to other human beings of their target group.

The term "*inclusion*", initially proceeding from social contexts, involves the meaning that it creates settings where every human person, no mater his/her *diversity* or peculiarity, can act and behave in a normal way according to their possibilities. On the contrary, integration has the meaning that we should work to facilitate handicapped, deficient, invalid or with special needs people their accommodation to a particular context that, initially, is not prepared for their "needs", which, in the end, imply a personal condition of interiority. Collin (2007, p. 9) considers that "the notion of special needs and fully inclusion provision is a contradiction in terms."

In fact, although there are some disagreements on its full extension throughout the whole educational system, for every student and for any particular peculiarity without considering how intense it is, "inclusion (…) like an inheritance that grows and become more productive from one generation to another, (…) has gained a remarkable foothold in our society" (Warnock, 2005, p. 22). And Cigman (2007, p. xix) stresses this way the advancement towards inclusion: "It is not about 'all versus some'; it is about inclusion as opposed to integration. In particular, it is about advancing historically in our thinking about special education, which was originally shaped by the philosophy of segregation,

was replaced by the philosophy of integration, and has been gradually introducing and refining the philosophy of inclusion."

The advancement of societies with higher sensibility towards human rights for every person, together with progress in welfare societies and in technological development ask for an added effort oriented to create inclusive situations with every person, no matter his/her peculiar diversity, could develop him/herself and participate in our social and productive systems. The importance of this advancement, in a very rapidly transforming world, with an intense emergence of diversity of different types, stresses the relevance of the analysis of this theme of "Qualitative Analysis of Possibilities and Difficulties of Inclusion of Quality".

The "R*egular Education Initiative* (REI)" appeared in the USA is, frequently, mentioned as the origin of the movement towards inclusion (Arnaiz Sánchez, 2005). This movement appeared during the 1990 decade, tried to reach the objective of including in ordinary or mainstreaming schools every student having any difficulty or special need. Some main defenders of this movement (Wang, Reynolds & Walberg 1995) and, together with them, Stainback & Stainback, W. (1991) critic the effectiveness of special education implemented till then and put forward unification of special education and ordinary/mainstream education in a unique system that will include every person, no matter what his/her peculiarity be.

Theoretical background

Diversity

As we have mentioned before, the term "*diversity*," with reference to any human being, means the individual uniqueness that characterizes every person. Due to our personal constitution and to a number of circumstances surrounding us every one of us is different or diverse to any other one. This concept does not imply an idea of superiority or inferiority, but just an individual distinction that deserves respect and, of course, building up situations, context and means to facilitate that each one of us could develop his/her own potentiality and be able to contribute to the improvement of other people and societies where we are inserted in.

Although the term of diversity asks for human rights acknowledge for every person, it also involves the meaning that we are different in many aspects: physical, psychic, social, cultural, etc. Some of the features that characterize a particular persona could come from his/her genetic or innate peculiarity; some others could be due to his/her geographical context; some other ones could be caused be his/her immersion in a particular culture; some other ones could be due to other circumstances.

But apart from the respect due to any person as a human being, the responsible institutions and social agencies have the duty of giving every person the same opportunities to develop him/herself and they have to create the necessary conditions for any person to act and contribute to his/her development and to the other people's progress. Coherent with this term content,

Williams (1992, p. 70) says: "By diversity I mean difference claimed upon a shared collective experience which is specific and not necessarily associated with a subordinated or unequal subject position."

As a consequence, diversity of different peersons, no matter how intense the difference is, should not be considered as inferiority nor should these persons feel ashamed of their diversity: "The concept of difference needs both to shed its shameful connotations and to be retained so that people can use it to affirm who they are and what kind of impairment they struggle with" (Cigman, 2007, p. xxvi).

Inclusion

First followers of the inclusion movement, mainly at the end of 1980 and beginning of 1990, consider that difficulties experienced by some students with special needs inscribed at the educational system are the result of some specific ways or organizing schools and of teaching methodology used by such schools (Ainscow, 2001). In order to overcome such difficulties, the inclusion movement tries to reach equality and excellence for all students and not only for some of them (Arnaiz Sánchez 2005, p. 28).

In summary, this movement tends to extend the desire of having an education of quality for all students, also for those having a profound diversity that could be due to increase or decrease in any particular feature. As Thomas & Loxley (2007, p. 125) declare, inclusion "is about providing a framework within which all children – regardless of ability, gender, language, ethnic or cultural origin – can be valued equally, treated with respect and provided with real opportunities at school."

But in order to adapt to the particular diversity of every student and to obtain the maximum results of every student, inclusive schools not only should adapt their *physical* facilities and their *organizational* structure and *functioning*, but they also need to accommodate their own *curriculum* in order to adapt it to every student's potentiality, learning rhythm and personal style. Specifically referring to this last aspect, Cigman, 2007, p. xv) declares: "Inclusion is a process that maximizes the entitlement of all pupils to a broad, relevant and stimulating *curriculum*, which is delivered in the environment that will have the greatest impact on their learning."

Related to facilitating inclusive access to curriculum, Low (2007, p. 11) declares: "Inclusion is a much about the ethos and social life of schools as it is about access to the taught curriculum. It is essential, therefore, to provide the range of educational and social opportunities that enable children to participate on an equal basis with their peers in order to become fully included members of the community."

As a consequence of the extended entitlement just mentioned, inclusive schools are those "which welcome everyone, remove barriers to learning, combat discriminatory attitudes and so on, as the basis for a just society" (Cigman, 2007, p. xx). Those schools must, therefore, "include children of mixed abilities, not only academically but in the sense of mixed difficulties, physical, sensorial, behavioural and so on" (Cigman, 2007, p. xxi).

Inclusion is, in our days, a world movement of social politics that tries to struggle against exclusion that, at different levels, suffer some human beings who have particular features which diversify them from the majority of other people. In some countries (as in Chile or Brazil), inclusion is connected to assistance to handicapped people and to other marginal persons; in some other ones (from Central Europe or South Africa) it is linked to democratic processes of social and political restructuring (Arnaiz Sánchez, 2005). Coherent to this general extension, "the whole educational system as a whole should be planned and developed to offer inclusive provision for the maximum number of those with special needs who can benefit from it" (Low, 2007, p. 13).

As movement of social politics, inclusion is based on International Declarations of general politics to be followed throughout the world and recommended by world organizations. More specifically, *bases of such movement* could be found out in *international documents* such as the following ones:

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948);
- Convention of Child ´s Rights (1989), particularly its article 2
- Declaration and Action Frame of Salamanca (1994), mainly its article 2

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, proclaimed by United Nations in 1948 declares in its article 2º.1: "Every person has all rights and freedoms proclaimed in this Declaration, without any distinction of race, colour, religion, political opinion or of any other type, national or social origin, economic situation, birth or any other feature."

The Convention of Child's Rights, approved in 1989, states also in its article 2º.1: "Partner states will respect rights enunciated in this Convention and will guarantee their application to every child subject to its jurisdiction, without any distinction and independently of their race, colour, sex, idiom, religion, political or any other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, economic situation, physical disabilities, birth or any other child's, parents' or legal tutors´ condition."

In the *Salamanca Declaration*, approved in this Spanish city on June 10th 1994, delegates of this conference organized by UNESCO (with the attendance of 92 Governments) states: "We believe and proclaim that (…) people with special educational needs should have access to ordinary schools, which must integrate them with a pedagogy centered in the child and able to give satisfaction to his/her needs."

Paradigm of quality

Although educational and pedagogical studies have tried to search for solutions to improve education, educational institutions and initiatives, the emergence of the paradigm of quality is been used as a reference for a new approach of education in today's world. It is true that the movement pro quality paradigm – particularly in its version of totality – has not initially appeared in educational or pedagogical contexts; but apart from being an approach to be used as reference for education, this movement has strongly penetrated education and educational institutions.

Typical of this movement and paradigm evolution is the change of focus from the product quality (predominant until the 1950s) to all the involved persons' participation (appeared from the 1950s to 1970s) and, later one, to the relevance given to the members' satisfaction. Coherent with this evolution is the repercussion on the consideration of what would be the curriculum focus and education aim in the end.

Related to this new focus and aim is the OECD declaration on schools and quality of teaching (1991: 64): "Youngsters join to parents, teachers and entrepreneurs in the general accusation that education fails in attaining non-cognitive objectives, which all those sectors consider among the most important ones." The most useful consequence to be extracted from this statement is that education should be considered as of true quality, must consider educating people not just as machines of knowledge acquisition, but as complex beings with multiple dimensions, which they could develop with educational impulse.

By following this focus of the OECD report, we define education of quality as "the intentional promotion, implemented by inter-relational and participative processes, of integral and integrating values of every human being's full dimensions, for him/her tending to his/her personal satisfaction and to the satisfaction of those who live with him/her in a particular context and environment" (Gento, 2002, p. 76).

Undoubtedly, the extension of the principle of quality is intrinsically associated to the assumption of all human beings equity, as the condition of quality is referred to every human being, independently to his/her personal conditions and particular situation. And, apart from that, the union of the principles of quality, acceptance of diversity and inclusion assumption represents, not only an equitable opportunity for every person, but also a chance of pedagogical renovation for teachers and for educational institutions.

Quality educational treatment of diversity in inclusive settings

As we have mentioned above, inclusion is extending all over the world, as the predominant political decision in relation to educational treatment of diversity. But in order to implement such treatment in inclusive educational institutions, some requirements are necessary to reach a good level of quality.

Some requirements for an inclusive treatment of diversity of authentic quality are mentioned by different authors. We mention here some such requirements (Arnaiz Sánchez, 2005; Booth, 1998; Carrión, 2001; Dyson, 2001; Graden & Bauer, 1999; López Melero, 1999; Sandoval, 2002; UNESCO, 2005; Wang, Reynolds & Walberg, 1995):

- Modification of attitudes and believes of the whole society
- Background equality and equity for everybody, with special attention to those living in vulnerable situations or suffering any type of discrimination
- Insertion of educational activity within a widely extended social, cultural and economic plan with a strong interrelation of school and society

- Increasing the knowledge of all members of the educational community about diversity, mainly the knowledge of teachers and professionals in direct contact with students
- Teacher training including the option of training within educational institutions
- Students with special needs should attend mainstreaming classes and educational institutions together with their target group
- Heterogeneous composition of student groups
- Reduction of the size of educational institutions to facilitate all members' interrelation and participation
- Availability of the necessary aids to students, teachers, and the educational institution
- Curriculum adaptation to every student's personal needs in order to obtain maximum effectiveness of every student's potentialities
- Use of enrichment programs for gifted students
- Participation of all members of the educational community, because inclusion is determined by professionals working together to promote every student's education
- Coordination and collaborative work of all teachers, with interchange of experiences and without isolated and each other separate classes
- Promotion of collaborative learning among students assisted by classmates
- Use of practical strategies to attain education of quality for every student
- Parents' collaboration, as they are impending protagonists of their children's education: teachers (of special and mainstream education) joined work with parents
- Disappearance of competitiveness, which will be changed by supportive collaboration

Lipsky and Gartner (1998) identified six factors as playing an important role in successful inclusion:

- Visionary leadership
- Collaboration
- Refocused use of assessment
- Funding
- Effective parental involvement
- Use of effective program models and classroom practices.

In other words, in order to have a true quality educational treatment of diversity in inclusive contexts, we propose that the following requirements will be necessary:

- Suitable organization and planning
- Resources availability (material, personal)
- Appropriate resources management (material, personal, organizational)
- Accommodated methodology

The empirical study

We have above quoted Warnock's statement (2005, p. 22) that "inclusion (…) has gained a remarkable foothold in our society." And it is also accepted that in order to be successful inclusion in schools should have the corresponding expansion throughout the whole society surrounding the school: "Inclusivity can be promoted both at school and at wider community levels and (…) both efforts operate, as it were, reciprocally" (Thomas & Loxley 2007, p. 144).

But, although the term and concept of inclusion is generally accepted as a progressive social and pedagogical advancement and a principle towards we should advance, there is a question that emerges as we think about the real situation of our educational system, our schools and the professional situation of people working within both the system and the school. The question is: *Is it really possible and appropriate under today's conditions to impose inclusion throughout the whole educational system and at every school?*

Some voices claim that a broad extension of inclusion is, in our current circumstances, an aspiration and a real utopia: "In other words, the prospect of the general education system being geared up in terms of staff, expertise and facilities to cater for every kind of disability as an integral part of its provision is something of a utopian ideal. However, when faced with examples of children failing in the mainstream and having to be rescued by special schools, the proponents of full inclusion are apt to turn this to their advantage and insist that the experience of mainstream was not an example of genuine inclusion at all" (Low, 2007, p. 9).

Considering this and other observations and considering the practical situation of our schools and educational institutions as well as the opinions of educators, we narrowed the broad and radical question to the question about the opinions of professionals and students concerned and involved with educational treatment of diversity. In order to collect information about their opinions and to structure collective thinking on this relevant question, we realized the empirical study described subsequently.

The problem to be studied

The problem that we have transferred to the people participating in our empirical research is: by considering the current situation of the educational system, educational institutions, the involved professionals and other concurrent circumstances, what are the *possibilities and difficulties of implementing inclusive quality educational treatment of diversity in our educational institutions*?

This problem was submitted to university students of the Master on Educational Treatment of Diversity we have implemented in the "Distance Education National University" (UNED), associated with three other European universities. As the course is offered by distance modality, opinions were collected by using this modality. The 65 students registered on the Master course expressed their opinions at a forum opened to this purpose. But in order to contrast their opinions and experience on this problem, they had previously studied and worked with one of the modules of this Master whose theme is

"Educational Integration and Inclusion of Quality with People with Special Needs".

The module was imparted for two weeks. During this time, students had the opportunity of studying, working on and contrasting the contents of this module, structured according to the following units:

- Didactic Unit 1. - The quality paradigm of education as a framework to integration and inclusion
- Didactic Unit 2. - Educational integration and inclusion for the quality of education
- Didactic Unit 3. - Scope and advantages of integration and inclusion
- Didactic Unit 4. - Overcoming obstacles to integration and inclusion
- Didactic Unit 5. - Modalities or types of educational integration or inclusion

Apart from these contents and other sources, we suggested that the participants think of requirements that would be necessary for the educational treatment of diversity in inclusive settings to accomplish the demands following from the quality paradigm.

Methodological approach

For colleting opinions on this problem and to implement our research, we assumed as a basic approach the *phenomenological* one, for the study of phenomena as they manifest themselves in human beings' conscience (Lambert, 1990). The main feature of this approach is that it studies facts and phenomena parting from the consideration of how a group or community members interpret the world and reality surrounding them.

In fact, studies and researches that adhere to this methodological approach make their discoveries by using strategies of qualitative type. Some features of the phenomenological – sometimes called *interpretative-symbolic – approach* are the following ones (Pérez Serrano, 1995, p. 33-39; Taylor & Bodgan, 1986):

- It uses theory as a reflection in and from praxis
- It tries to understand reality
- It considers reality as a whole made up by interrelated parts
- It describes the context where phenomena are produced
- It centers research in phenomena and processes
- It deepens on facts different reasons
- It considers individuals as interactive and communicative subjects who share meanings
- It implies the researcher's involvement within the situation and context.

The researcher acting within this phenomenological approach – sometimes also named "hermeneutic" – does not establish descriptions of a reality placed outside the particular human beings; on the contrary, he/she tries to understand how such human beings create and understand their own spaces of life and

coexistence. As Hoy (1994, p. 264) states: "The hermeneutic model asks for the extension of personal interpretations and its enrichment as they are opened to other interpretations."

Qualitative research

As stated above, the phenomenological approach (sometimes called "interpretative-symbolic" or "hermeneutic") uses strategies of qualitative type to implement studies or researches. *Qualitative research* could be understood as the group of "detailed descriptions of situations, events, people, interactions and behaviours that could be observed, with the consideration of what participant people say, their experiences, their attitudes, beliefs, thinking and reflection, as those are expressed by such participants" (Pérez Serrano, 1995,p. 55). Gottees and Le Compte (1984) declare "The qualitative research would imply inductive, generative, constructing and subjective processes."

In this type of research the grasping of meaning corresponds to the interpretative scope. But, in fact, this meaning grasping is necessary to understand phenomena. Dray (1957) indicates that to understand human beings' behaviours and interpretation of phenomena, the following aspects should be considered:

- Circumstances where acts or phenomena happen
- Meaning of the situation for the protagonists
- Reasons, interests and proposals guiding activities or phenomena.

As typical features of the qualitative research the following ones could be mentioned (Pérez Serrano, 1995, pp. 55-61; Taylor & Bodgan, 1986, pp. 20-22):

- The qualitative research is inductive: it usually starts with vaguely elaborated questions
- People, scenarios or groups are considered with a holistic perspective, which means: they are understood as a whole. Furthermore, such people are placed in a particular context, which should also be considered
- Researchers interact with object of research people, by considering these people's feelings and the emotional effect the research produces on them. The empathetic relationship between researcher and researched people, and among each other the latter ones, is a fundamental aspect of this type of research
- Researchers try to grasp reality as the involved people see and feel it, but this reality is considered as something close to such people. An important feature of qualitative research is the search of how the involved people feel and interpret a specific reality as the face it.
- Researchers try to elude their own beliefs, perspectives and attitudes, by considering fact and phenomena as if they happened for the first time
- Researchers consider that all perspectives are valuable and they accept and search for other people's detailed perspectives

- The researchers, by qualitatively studying every involved people, acquire a better knowledge of such people; but, protection of every person ´s rights, asks for caring each people's particular circumstance and if there is any suitable moment for an appropriate intervention
- The researcher tries to contrast the collected information to the participant people's opinions and activities
- Every scenario and every person can be object of qualitative research
- The qualitative researcher creates his/her own research strategies, as there are not many standardized ones. But researcher's active involvement could represent a partial and biased interpretation that should be avoided in as much as possible.

The technique of colleting data

In order to collect data about possibilities and difficulties of the educational treatment of diversity in inclusive settings we used a technique suitable to the type of qualitative research and the methodological approach. The chosen technique was the *discussion group,* as a variety of conversations or dialogues. A typical group discussion is formed by a reduced group of people (the most appropriate size would be from eight to then people) which for a reasonable enough time (from ninety to a hundred and twenty minutes) offers information in relation to a specific theme that is discussed by the group members (Canales & Peinado, 1994; Ibáñez, 1986; Krueger, 1991; Lederman, 1990; Morgan, 1988; Tempelton, 1987). Some authors (Frey & Fontana, 1991; Watts & Ebbutt, 1987) call this technique "interview in group".

To effectively use this technique and to appropriately collect information, it seems convenient to have a group member acting as moderator or coordinator, to facilitate that discussion is implemented by treating the chosen theme. In relation to this theme, every group member may express him/herself by issuing opinions, beliefs, ideological focuses, interests, expectancies, etc. In summary, through manifestations of the members it could be discovered how they perceive, know, interpret and transfer to activity any particular reality or specific theme.

During the group discussion, the participant members can express similar, different or even contradictory opinions. In some cases, it would be most appropriate to have some homogeneity among the group members (particularly when the purpose is to treat with intensity a specific theme or a matter of great intensity); in some other cases, it could be better that the group will express more heterogeneous opinions (for example, if we try to get information from different sectors in relation to a particular theme they are involved in). In some other cases, it could be more suitable to combine a somehow homogeneous degree in members´ interventions with a somehow heterogeneous one.

This technique of discussion group could be very useful to collect information with intensity and extension in relation to a particular aspect or theme needing opinions from different or from many people (Alvira, 1997). When the group discussion is implemented by using a written document, as a specifically designed project, every member's intervention in relation to its

design, development, adaptation and assessment will express not only the written text value but also the value of a dynamic and relational space (Medina & Blanco, 1994).

A possible sequence of phases to be followed on this technique of group discussion could be the following ones, which we propose as a possible reference for those interested in its implementation:

(1) Determination of the groups number, which are going to participate (preferably among minimum two and maximum ten)
(2) Definition of the number of people who will integrate each group (preferably among minimum six and maximum ten)
(3) Selection of the members forming each group
(4) Setting up of place and time of the meeting (when and where to start and to terminate)
(5) Definition of the moderator's or coordinator's role: basically, creation of a relaxed atmosphere, promotion of participant's intervention, directing the discussion to the theme to be treated
(6) Definition of a system of recording information produced by the group (for example, by tape recording, video, etc.)
(7) Analysis and systematization of collected information
(8) Production of a draft report that will include the basic conclusions
(9) Validation of this report with the participants' intervention
(10) Production of the final report of the group discussion.

The forum on inclusion possibilities and difficulties

As we have indicated above, the participants who gave information on theme under study have been students of our Joint Master Degree on Educational Treatment of Diversity. As this course is implemented by distance modality, we had to adapt the technique of group discussion to the particular circumstances of such modality.

To this purpose we set up an open forum on "possibilities and difficulties of educational treatment of diversity in inclusive settings". This forum was one of the activities, necessary for every student, held during the time we were implementing our module no. 3 on "Integration and Inclusion of Quality for Educational Treatment of Diversity." During two weeks we worked with our students on this module, they entered into the forum and expressed their opinions in favor of inclusion and against inclusion: in both cases, they had to offer reasons or arguments related to advantages and disadvantages of integration and inclusion for the educational treatment of diverse people.

In order to organize discussions and to obtain opinions in favor and against total integration or inclusion, we divided students following the module in two groups: one of them should argument in favor of total integration or inclusion; the other one should express opinions against it. But every participant should express what were the reasons (proceeding from sources of authority, their expertise or knowledge of practical situations) to adopt positions pro or against. The adopted position did not need to be their personal one (as we previously

had decided the group where every participant would be included); but they had to study sources, structure ideas and emit opinions that could represent some people's attitudes and manifestations.

As the forum was an open space where our students should insert opinions and, in some cases, refute other mate's arguments, we did not need a permanent moderator. Nevertheless, professors imparting the module entered sometimes into the forum to promote participation and discussion and to center the debate on the proposed theme. The students' participation was very intense and, as they manifested themselves, they enjoyed the debate provoked by discussions around the matter. The atmosphere of the forum was very friendly and, after the forum, personal relationship improved very much between participants and professors and among the students themselves.

Results

The participants' intervention in the forum indicated that students following the Master are highly committed to educational treatment of diversity, have an excellent previous preparation (a number of them have previous Degrees of the Second University Cycle) and are highly motivated to following this course. Apart from that, it was clear that some of them have a very rich experience that has given them a very profitable expertise. All this factors, together with intervening professors' intense care of following up the forum with enthusiasm and creativity determined the production of very interesting results. We will structures these results according to the following aspects:

- Arguments in favour of inclusion
- Advantages of inclusion
- Difficulties for inclusion
- Causes that prevent inclusion of quality
- Factors that facilitate inclusion of quality

Coherent to the way we had previously planned the debate, contributions were more numerous on the last two aspects, as they represented some opinions existing in favor of inclusion and some other ones against it. Nevertheless, we refer next to contributions on the other three aspects.

Arguments in favour of inclusion

The main arguments expressed in favor of inclusion are:

- A fundamental right of every person
- Social, moral and legal duty
- Consequence of society's progress, which increases sensibility towards inclusion
- An extended and predominant world tendency: there is a general consensus on the need of expanding inclusion

- Demanded by international rules and regulations

One of the students expressed her opinions as follows: "With a stated disability of 86%, I am registered at the UNED as a student of Master on "Educational Treatment of Diversity". For me it is a challenge; but I think inclusion is possible. We all must contribute, everyone in his/her situation, by helping other people and accepting reality that we are different".

Advantages of inclusion

In the forum the students mentioned the following advantages of inclusive educational treatment of diversity as compared to excluded or segregate treatment:

- Is not more expensive than segregation
- Improves self esteem of people with intense diversity
- Improves student's motivation when there are specialized aids and cooperative learning
- Improves students' performance, if there are also specialized aids and co-operative learning
- Improves teachers' motivation, if there are flexible curriculum and team teaching
- Improves educational institutions' educational and social focus, as inclusive the center assumes plurality and diversity existing in society

The opinion that inclusion is not more expensive than segregation is coherent with the results of some studies. In one of them, Crowther, Dyson and Millward (1998) demonstrated that with students of slight educational needs, education at specific segregating institutions was more expensive than inclusive education at mainstream schools.

But perhaps it would be appropriate to consider the statement made by Thomas and Loxley (2007, pp. 128-129): "The social costs of segregation, many disabled people have argued, are high: the cost of exclusion and segregation is the alienation of people who would otherwise had been able and willing to take a much fuller part in society." And, in any case, "the case for inclusion probably rest more much more securely on its social value than considerations of economic efficiency" (Low, 2007, p. 7).

Difficulties for inclusion

The participants' interventions on the forum of inclusion offered some opinions as regards difficulties of inclusion:

- Full inclusion or integration has only been implemented in some few schools
- Some people with particular or intense diversity prefer specific or segregated educational institutions

- In mainstream or ordinary schools inclusion is more difficult in the following cases:
  - At the stage of Lower Secondary Education (in Spain: Obligatory Secondary Education: 12-16 years)
  - With students of strong, multiple or profound diversity
  - With students with behavioral, character, emotional or personality problems
  - With students having communication difficulties (for example: autistic ones)
  - With students proceeding from other languages and cultures (who isolate themselves or who other host students isolate them from).
- Labour or work inclusion is difficult because:
  - Private companies do not facilitate work inclusion of people with strong and profound diversity (such companies do not accomplish the legal duty that entities with more than 50 workers must have, at least, 2% of handicapped ones).
  - There are not enough "Work Assistant Professionals" who help workers with strong and profound diversity

Causes that prevent inclusion of quality

A group of students who participated in the forum on inclusion to express arguments against full inclusion or integration expressed causes and factors that prevent implementation of educational treatment of diversity in inclusive settings. We mention next such causes and factors:

- Social negative attitudes:
  - Welfare state precariousness
  - Increase of differences between rich and poor people
  - Social Consumerism
  - Social competitiveness
  - Egotism
- Environment and social context deficiencies:
  - Architectural barriers
  - Derogative expressions (handicap, deficiency, inability, disability, diminution, etc.)
  - Negative influence of communication and information media (which transmit negative roles, stereotypes, derogatory terms or expressions, etc.)
  - Associationism (which, sometimes, segregates more than include)
  - Some parents' negative attitudes
- Educational politics' deficiencies:
  - Politicized educational decisions, oriented to power acquisition or maintenance
  - Unviable educational political regulations (particularly impossible in rural settings)
  - Educational approaches of just economical effectiveness

- Un-accomplishment of sectoring principle (as some students are taken to other far sectors)
- Volatility of educational legislation (as fundamental educational laws change every four years)
- Lack of attention to people with profound diversity (or difficulties)

- Educational institutions' deficiencies:
  - Students' negative attitudes towards mates with strong and profound diversity or difficulties (these attitudes are less frequent in specific segregated schools)
  - Inappropriate curricula design
  - Lack of collaborative intervention of teachers and parents
- Teachers' and other educational professionals' negative attitudes:
  - Uncertainty to face a reality that overcomes them and that is not foreseen (as for example, strong immigration)
  - Fear of professional failure
  - Excessive concern on academic performance (with unconcern for moral, social and other values).
  - Lack of conviction of inclusion need
  - Inadequate teachers´ selection
  - Teachers' lack of authority (to counteract negative attitudes)
  - Training deficiencies
  - Lack of dedication (sometimes)
- Shortage of material resources:
  - Lack of economic resources
  - Existence of architectural barriers in educational institutions
  - Lack of didactic materials adaptation
- Shortage of personal resources
  - High ratio of students/teacher, particularly in lower secondary education and baccalaureate
  - Lack of aiding services
  - Lack of advisors (in some communities, as on the Canary Islands, each advisor has to advice 800 students)
  - Lack of specialist on language treatment (in some Communities, as in Canary Islands, each language specialist has to assist 1200 students)
  - Lack of multi-professional teams at schools (to promote personalized interventions)
- Inappropriate methodology:
  - Maladjustment of individual adaptations of curriculum
  - Predominance of learning by heart
  - Lack of students' and parents' collaborative intervention

Factors that facilitate inclusion

Another group of students participating in the forum expressed arguments in favor of inclusion. Although their role was to defend inclusion, some of them declared that inclusion is, in general, easier with students of sensorial difficulties (for example, of vision or hearing) and with motion problems. On the contrary,

they coincided with those who mentioned difficulties for inclusion by indicating that this is more difficult with people having problems of communication (for example, autistic ones) and with those having problems of behavior.

The participants in this group expressed, in general, the opinion that inclusion is defendable and appropriate when the necessary resources, organization and methodology are accommodated to the students' type and degree of diversity. They manifested that, in general, our society and educational system are advancing towards improving settings and means suitable to inclusion, although they admitted that there is still much to be done in order to allow for full inclusion in the educational treatment of diversity if that is to be of quality. Factors facilitating inclusion have been systematized around the following categories:

- Increase of social sensibility. Manifestations of such sensibility are aspects such as the following ones:
    - Expansion of the aspect of human rights
    - Extension of equity and compensation principles
    - Consolidation of normalization principle
    - Emergency of more open and supportive societies
    - Spreading of quality of education for every person.
- International organizations doctrine, recommendations and regulations (mainly UN and UNESCO) that suggest that educational treatment of diversity should be done in inclusive settings.
- Legal coverage proposing inclusion.

This coverage appears, for example at the Organic Spanish Law of Education (Law 2/2006 of January 3d.), that in its Title II, article 74, states: "Schooling of students having educational special needs will be ruled by the principle of normalization and *inclusion* (not in italics in the original text) and will secure their un-discrimination and effective equality for the access and permanence at the educational system, which will allow for flexible measures of educational levels, when it will be considered necessary."

On its Preliminary Title, chapter I, article 1.e, the same law admits, as one of the educational system principles: "Flexibility to accommodate education *to diversity* (not in italics in the original text) of abilities, interests, expectancies and needs of students, and to the changes happened in students and society."

- More material resources availability in educational institutions, although physical structures and material means should b still e improved and increased
- More personal resources formed by specialist professionals acting within mainstream classrooms. Nevertheless, professionals should still increase their effort to sometimes compensate shortage of such resources
- More flexibility of the educational system, as it allows for curriculum adaptations, curricular diversification, curriculum accommodation to vocational training, reinforcement and compensatory programmes or transitional classes for immigrant people

- Methodological advances that propose strategies of personalization or individualization, interactive or cooperative learning, parents' participation, teachers' team teaching, etc.
- Associationism, which some students (as it was previously mentioned) considered as a factor preventing inclusion, was by some others estimated as a promoter of inclusion.
- Some Spanish associations that shelter people with different manifestations of diversity were mentioned, such as FIAPAS (Spanish Confederation of Deaf People's Parents and Friends), Spanish Association of Prader-Willi syndrome, ANAMIS (National Association of Supporting Disabled People), ASZA (Association of Deaf People) and ONCE (National Organization of Blind People).

Conclusions and proposals

The theoretical background has shown that educational treatment of diversity is a term that expands and consolidates itself in our country and, in general, throughout the world. This study also has manifested that inclusion is the best approach for this treatment in most the cases; but, for this treatment to be of authentic quality, some resources and requirements are necessary. And, apart from that, educational treatment of diversity in separate settings and with specialized professionals could be justified in cases of extreme difficulty or profound diversity.

The empirical study has corroborated that our societies and educational systems should advance towards the extension of inclusion. But for educational treatment in such settings to be of quality it is necessary to overcome some difficulties, to have available resources, to accommodate curriculum designs and to introduce some specific methodologies.

The team that has worked on this research will try to expand this study and its results: not only among responsible authorities and involved professionals, but also among researchers interested in the matter. It is also the purpose of the researching team to continue studying and researching possibilities and difficulties of educational treatment of diversity in inclusive settings and of quality. We will do it in our own country and in other ones where we have colleagues enthusiastically working with us in the research project and in our Joint Educational Master of Educational treatment of Diversity.

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Links

http://www.europa.eu.int/pol/educ/index-em.htm: Educational Training and Youth in the European Union.

www.enropean-agency.org: European Agency for Development in Special Needs.

http://www.ceapat.org: Centro Estatal de Autonomía Personal y Ayuda Técnica (CEAPAT), del Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales.

http://www.discapnet.es: Discapnet, iniciativa para el fomento de la integración social y laboral de personas con discapacidad, patrocinada por la Fundación ONCE y el Fondo Europeo para el Desarrollo Regional.
http://www.isaac-online.org: ISAAC (International Association of Augmentative and Alternative Communication).
http://www.dfes.gov.uk/search/results: Report on Inclusive Education and Pupil Achievement in the UK.
http://www.nc.uk.net/ld/gg: UK national curriculum adaptation and assessment.
http://www.unesco.org: UNESCO.
(1) Department of Didactics, School Organization and Specific Didactics

Formation of Teachers using their Self Experience: Emergence of Constructional Models of Professional and Intercultural Knowledge

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Practice is the most valuable basis for professional knowledge. Also, this practice creates an intercultural frame that schools share. Interculturality gives tasks to teachers that lead students' formation. Therefore, teachers must be compromised with their role as educational agents.

In a changing society intercultural teachers apply self-reflection and use particular situations in order to solve their daily school problems. Actually, teachers approach these problems by an exhaustive and investigative analysis of each case using own experiences and dialogues with other colleagues. So, teachers use a wide theoretical frame that gives sense to "glocalised" attitudes and to actions dissent from teaching.

Models for creating a professional and intercultural teaching knowledge

Our professional knowledge has a strong practical orientation that is complemented by a dialogue among colleagues. Actually, our social-collaborative Socratic model is supported by several works such as Medina (2002, 2006), Cazden (2002) and Timón (1996).

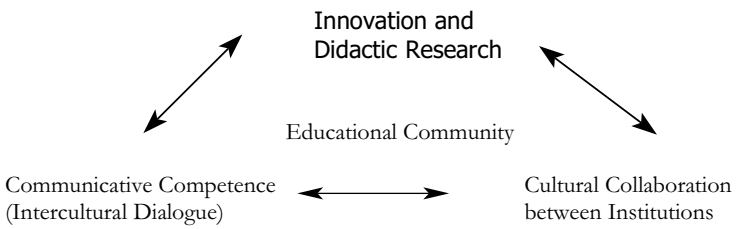

Figure 1: Socratic Questions (between Teacher, Colleagues and Students)

Self-reflection makes teachers wonder about the most suitable tasks for a continuous openness to an educational action. In fact, our model takes as basis the Socratic question, because with this Greek methodology the most relevant questions for our educational model will emerge. They will lead to our aims:

- Explicitness of interrelation among components in a practical quality.
- Emergence of interdependency between didactic models and formational systems.
- Widening questions and real values from the didactic action.

Besides, this Socratic methodology makes teachers feel obliged to their educational action. Teachers wonder about their permanent professional development using a coherent line that must be in concordance with present formational necessities. Here are some questions:

- What kind of questions should teachers make in order to improve their self-training?
- What kind of implication has professional identity?
- What kind of demand has educational action in this complex society?
- Which are the most adequate methods for investigating the formational practice?
- Who are the real collaborators in a collaborative and institutional formation?
- Who represents the learning and t5he innovative practices?
- Which catalyst involves each teacher in the innovative process?

The socio-communicative model

This model is essential in multi.-cultural schools that demand coherent lines for an open and complex society. The model focuses on the value and singularity of each didactic fact. Actually, teachers interact in an open dialogue with students and cultural groups in order to avoid incertitude and to create empathy and closeness.

The construction of this practical model is based on an exhaustive analysis of the discourse and its relevant elements. Also, there is a deep implication of teachers in our didactic field.

Taking a personal experience, teachers discover the keys, basis and quality for a didactic knowledge. Therefore, there is collaboration between teachers and students that include different cultures and ways of living.

Teachers' interactions with others improves the real sense of the explicit and implicit messages and their potentiality for widening the professional intercultural teaching model. The discourse is emphasized and is basic for the reflective process. Particularly, this discourse is analyzed in a semantic, pragmatic and synthatic sense. Also, each dialogue has a code that has different kinds of integration such as verbal, non verbal and meta-verbal.

The collaborative model

Basically, the construction of the formational knowledge is selective, socialized and collaborative due to an interaction between teachers and students. This model is essentially investigative in an open, reciprocal and interrelated process that is shared in creative fields. This model is based on an actualization of interdisciplinar and intercultural works, whose basis are the real problems and necessities of the present educational institutions.

Therefore, the collaboration between teachers and communities obtain new roles and procedures for solving the differences among human beings. In fact, this collaboration created an atmosphere of a continuous search for the most pertinent solution each educational case that will lead to a global cultural understanding. Actually, this methodology looks for the real students' worries and a cooperation atmosphere.

Design of the Investigation: Main Questions, Methodology and Data Analysis

Our main question of our investigation is how to create development models of professional intercultural models using our self-analysis of reflective experience. Besides, there are other questions that complement the main one:

- What kind of implication do teachers have in the emergence of keys and meanings in their professional experience?
- What are the real worries of teachers in intercultural contexts?
- What are the contributions of teachers' biographies in professional intercultural knowledge?
- How is professional knowledge complemented by experiences created in intercultural backgrounds?
- What kind of implications do teachers have in their deep analysis of their practical teaching?
- What are the dimensions of the teaching models that are coherent with the professional al intercultural knowledge?
- How can we take advantage of multicultural experiences that give new educational practical models?

Our investigative methodology is based on different parameters such as:

- Project method.
- Method based on identification and solution of problems from different cultures.
- Shared works among communities, schools, and on life activities.
- Study of relevant cases that are given by educational institutions and schools.

- Collaborations among communities for changing ideas taking into account origin countries.
- Sharing experiences, habits and customs from different cultures.
- Construction of collaborative networks among teachers and students of different countries.
- Innovative workshops for searching new answers for complex realities.
- Analysis of conflict situations and new proposals for collaborative and emphatic atmospheres.

Our data analysis is based on didactic means, some of them are:

- Use of basic texts.
- Adaptation of platforms and websites to the teaching-learning process.
- Complementariness of classical and digital means.
- Construction of means that are linked with socio-community experiences of different cultures.

Analysis of the narration and the study of
conceptual maps produced by teachers

Apart from our methodologies and data analysis, our investigation takes into consideration different parameters such as:

Context of teacher formation:

Most of our institutions are urban, and they have a multicultural population that has come from rural areas. Because of this fact, these schools are enriched with personal experiences from very different geographical areas.

Atmosphere and Institutional culture:

Our atmosphere is emphatic and collaborative in order to create innovative ideas that are focused on human intercultural relationships.

For constructing this atmosphere, institutions should be transformative, reflective and integrative of values and lines of educational compromise. Therefore, the quality of this process pays attention to the diversity of the human beings at schools.

Formational Aims of Expressed Experiences

- To discover the real sense of educational practice and the teaching process.
- To imply teachers to their own professional development.
- To depth the most relevant educational actions that are situated at schools.
- To transform reflection as the basis for a teaching model.
- To widen the professional intercultural knowledge with real successes of the reflective practice.

Innovative Contents of Reflexive Practices

- Identification of senses and values of different cultures.
- Implications in projects for the development of institutions, society and teachers.
- Recognition of the complexity and their possibilities in our educational system.
- Recall of the knowledge, social agents and multi-culture.
- Analysis of the collaborations among colleagues, communities and formational actions.
- Continuous search for a deep spirit of educational conceptions and innovations.
- Creative teachers' role in the reflective practice.
- Self-observation and co-observation of the reflective practice in a formational sense used by hundred teachers.
- Teachers' acceptance of their community in a process of continuous improvement.

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Qualitative Methods in Vocational Education and Work Psychology Research: Results from Expert Interviews in High Technology Vocational Training

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Field description

Vocational education in Germany

Epistemological heterogeneity and multiplicity of qualitative research within the field of vocational education usually means that the different disciplines typically apply different methods. We, therefore, focus on the qualitative-quantitative interdependencies. Typically work psychology is still committed to the use of quantitative methods (of course qualitative methods can be used in a complementary way) whereas vocational education research usually taps the full potential of qualitative methods.

Usually, vocational training in Germany is conceptualized within a dual system, the training in vocational schools and the apprenticeship at the same time. Apprenticeship in this sense means that the apprentices practice their new knowledge at work according to the principles of situated learning (Gerstenmeier, 1999). Vocational schools are an important principle of this dual system.

A second attribute accompanying vocational education in Germany, the national appreciation of the trade or profession, represents the thinking that practicing qualified professions affords a connected educational forming that last at least two years and which exceeds the qualification possibilities of single firms. The third element which constitutes the field of vocational education in Germany, the principle of consensus, describes the interdependencies of federal states and the ministry of economy in line with the ministry of education and research to generate new or change existing appreciated professions and to tune the curricula for these plans. This procedure is multi-layered and assumes consensus.

Since well-trained skilled workers are a key resource for a high-technology location like Germany the ministry for education and research installed a program to meet the threat that they could become a scarce commodity. This would have dramatic consequences for smaller firms in particular. In light of this, the German federal government has the objective of building a vocational training system that fosters the potential of every single person in Germany in the best possible way (http://www.hightech-strategie.de/en/120.php: High-tech-strategy in Germany; 14.2.2008). This objective is being served first of all by the Vocational Education and Training Pact in which industry has committed

itself to providing 30,000 new regular training places plus 25,000 training places for introductory training each year. In the summer of 2006, the partners in the Pact underscored their intention to extend it for another three years starting 2007 and to further develop and refine its content.

In this context the STARregio projekt hotfive (network for vocational training in high technology and research) was funded to establish networks between enterprises, research intitutes, sponsors, and schools.

The project Hotfive

In May 2006 the situation in vocational education has got worse when compared with May 2005. The Agentur für Arbeit (the German bureau for unemployment) noticed 7539 positions[1] less. This also concerns the suited arrangement of positions and applicants which is problematic. Altogether we have counted 134.418 not-assigned positions in vocational education. Table 1 shows the development of not-assigned applicants from 2005 to 2007.

Table 1: *Absolute numbers and percentages of not-assigned applicants from 2005 to 2007* (Quelle: Statistik der Bundesagentur für Arbeit, Nürnberg, 2007)

Year	not-assigned applicants	percentage (%)
2005	40504	5,47
2006	49487	6,49
2007	29102	3,96

The following difficulties have been made responsible for the situation described above: On the one hand, there are lots of young and small firms in the fields of research and development that have not enough or not at all thought about the topic vocational education until now. They see a lot of obstacles and inhibitions to take the responsibility for a young human being. The administrative and bureaucratic effort is also preventing them from generating positions in vocational education.

On the other hand, concerning the applicants, there is a huge information deficit according to positions in the field of high technology and research. This leads to problems in finding in assigning suited applicants to free positions like micro technologist or technical product designer to give an example. Altogether this leads to the above mentioned development (see tab. 1) which could not be improved by a national pact alone but with the funding of projects like the STARegio projekt hotfive.

This project has had a funding period of 24 months. the project executing organization was the "Ausbildungsverbund der Wirtschaftsregion Braun-

schweig/Magdeburg e.V. (ABV BS/MD e.V.)." The project aimed to support young talents in the field of high technology, especially in the lines environment, aviation and space travel as well as vehicle research and development. The project claimed to be a consultant and adviser for all questions that concern the vocational education and to smooth the way to a successful educational training for entrepreneurs. Moreover the project aimed to generate networks consisting of entrepreneurs, research institutes, supporter of economy, and schools in the region Brunswick/Magdeburg, and thus to support communication between economy, research, and schools. A further important topic of the project was the connection to a specific school which is a partner school and which especially informs pupils about the possibilities in high technical positions and integrates such techniques into the curriculum. The project partners, therefore, were experts from the field of economy, science, secondary and vocational school as well as politics. They are illustrated in figure 1 (next page).

The study illustrated below describes the scientific monitoring of the project which consisted mainly of leading guided interviews with different experts from the field of economy, science, secondary and vocational school as well as politics about their beliefs concerning high technology vocational training.

The interview study

The procedure

In order to examine the experts' beliefs and epistemologies we developed a guide and carried out several interviews. Our interview partners were mainly project partners from hotfive who represented the different actors in the field of vocational education (see figure 1). They were representatives from the field of economy, science, secondary and vocational school as well as politics.

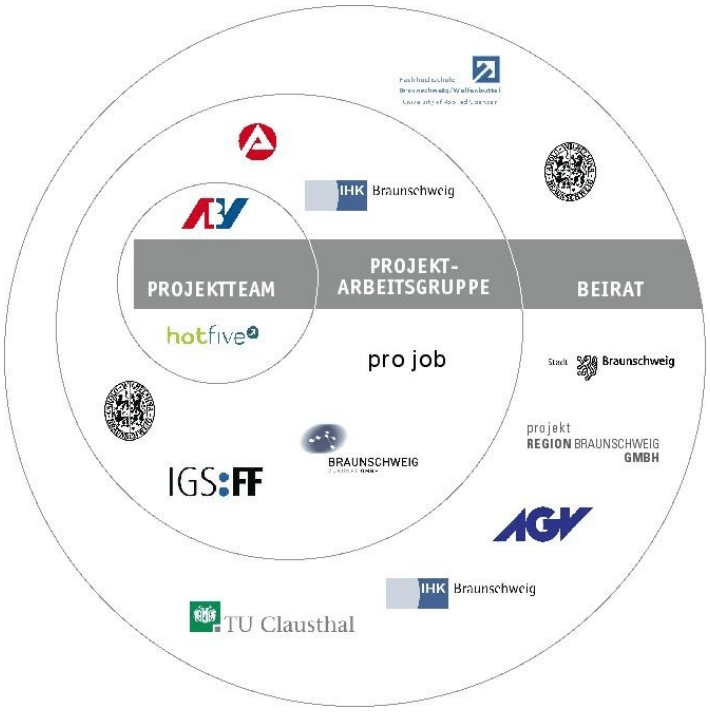

Figure 1: Circles of working teams illustrating the project partners of the STARregio project Hotfive.

The guide for the interview comprised the following questions:

- We are interested in your individual rating from your special vocational perspective. So, our first question is, "What do you think about the vocational training situation in … (High technology/research/ scientific environments…)."[2]
- Do you yourself qualify people?
  If yes: if you think of the field of High Technology what kind of experiences have you gain until now?
  If no: why don't you qualify people? What do you think has to change that you feel ready to qualify people?
- What do you think that a trainee (apprentice) must already know if he or she would start training in your enterprise?
- Seen from your perspective, what mental attitude do you think that a trainee (apprentice) has to bring along to learn a job in high technology in your enterprise.
- What do you expect particluarlyfrom schools, the employment center, joint training systems, etc.?

- What kind of support would you wish – particularly from schools, the employment center, joint training systems, etc. – so that you feel ready to qualify people in new field or to qualify more people than now?
- If you could authorize a research team to investigate mental attitudes in the field of vocational training in high technology, what were your crucial questions?

The questions aimed to determine several needs in vocational education, but also the subjective views and experiences of the interview partners on the specific field (s. also Bortz & Döring, 2005, p. 308). We have chosen this open stile deliberately on the one hand side to create a subjective access to the inhibitions and on the other hand side to test whether existing assumptions get identifiable. Altogether we carried out eight interviews, six individual and two group interviews.

The analysis: the documentary method according to Bohnsack (2008)

We analyzed the taped and transcribed interviews according to the documentary method (Bohnsack, 2008). This method can be understand as a reconstructive method which means that single steps of collecting and analyzing can be elaborated during the research process.[3] They are then systematized in the reflection of the own functioning. Moreover the relation to the research topic itself which is the educational situation is reconstructive since the questions of the interview guide have the function to create self-maintaining momentum.[4] The single steps of the documentary method are described subsequently:

(1) *Formulating interpretations*: The objective of this step is to extract what topics and sub-topics are addressed to during the discourse. Afterwards, in a more detailed consideration, the researcher focuses on such passages, which seem to be especially important. During this sub-categorization summarizing formulations are established.
(2) "Reflecting interpretations"[5]: On the basis of "formulating interpretations" and the attempt to reconstruct the context knowledge necessary for an understanding, a second analysis investigates in what respect a sense of content was expressed as "sense of document" (Bohnsack, 2008, pp. 33 ff.) in a formative, performative and stylistic way.

During this step frames of reference become visible and positions of points are established. This might also come about through contrasting a theme that is established in one group with the statements in other groups.
(3) Description of the discourse: A further step during the documentary method can be seen in the description of the discourse, which flows in a kind of concentrated re-narration. During this step the researcher combines the first two steps and prepares the statements and findings for a broader public.
(4) The fourth and last step comprises the generation (establishing) of types. In this phase the researcher focuses on typical examples which are framed in the subjects realms of experience.

We analyzed the material from the interviews according the first three steps. We have not established types because of methodological considerations.

The results: the role of expectations, the cross-linking and the culture of learning

During our analysis we have found mainly three key issues: the role of expectations, the culture of learning, and cross-linking and communication.

The role of expectations

The role of expectations was one main topic in all interviews, implicitly as well as explicitly. It reached from the expectations concerning professional capacity and performance to the so called minimum standard (e.g. faultless German) and to social skills and social fit. The topic expectation addresses trainees and firms as well as other actors (politics, parents, (vocational) school). The trainers expect assistance from parents, school and vocational school, the schools and vocational schools themselves expect assistance form the politics and the training firms. Thus, a systemic cycle of reciprocal expectations is created which creates itself a deep uncertainty (What do they expect from me?) on the one hand and a huge pressure of expectations and other negative feelings (e.g. Angst) on the other hand.

All actors are more or less speculating who expects what from whom. Thus, some actors have the feeling that cross-linking and communication gets more and more important since these are means to explicate expectations or even absorb them through new learning cultures when they cannot be achieved.

The reciprocal expectations are perceived as high demands and in part as inaccessible. One communication partner said: "*The pupils give something and the others also. There is one point when communicating with economic people when things are departing totally. The young people shall indeed be effective 24 hours a day.*"

Whereas on the one hand the picture of a perfect and complete apprentice at the beginning of the apprenticeship already exists on the other hand the idea that no young person at all could fulfill the expectations continues living.

Another example on the satisfaction regarding the fit between expectations of the training firm and the applicants: "*The young persons don't have the quality which is needed by the firms. There is a great dissatisfaction concerning the quality of the young people nowadays. I am afraid so.*"

The following remark is an answer to the question from which assistance is expected: "*The parents are the first who are interested in the children, who care. The parents are asked, the school is asked. Teachers, parents, perhaps friends, they must look a bit they must show responsibility a bit.*"

Culture of learning

However, the pupils themselves are also expecting something which does not coincide with the view of the other communication partners. They don't want to make a fast buck but they expect their training place to have good atmosphere: "*I think that the atmosphere is also an important factor and the reciprocal respect. That's important to me. I must feel comfortable.*"

The interviewed pupils come from a very challenging and motivating learning environment where they have learned to present and communicate information and where they are used to work in teams. Therefore, they would always ask how high the atmosphere and the team spirit are rated in the training firm if they could. Atmosphere of learning is an important factor of learning culture.

And how do the trainers look at these factors. Only one of the trainers mentioned that vocational training has changed into lust and does not complain about the trainees, he complains only about the lacking learning strategies. His remark about the observations during application interviews: "*If pupils are asked to tell, what experiments they have conducted during the last two weeks, they have a lot of difficulties. …. Teachers should pay attention that they do not teach science but their own techniques. The teaching of learning lacks.* "

To teach the learning is not an expectation that concerns the pupils. This is an expectation which applies to the schools to the system of general education. Vocational education is enjoying this trainer. Perhaps this reciprocal satisfaction emerges from a good atmosphere and through accepting the autonomy of the trainees.

"*You must be interested in the subject. And you must appreciate young people, with their individual appearance. In three days they come with one and then with another fluorescent hair colour. One trainee provoked with piercing here and there, but she was very friendly at all. I have respected that and the n we made fun, sometimes. The important thing is that they can be individuals, I am not an educator.*"

Cross-linking and communication

As mentioned above all actors are more or less speculating who expects what from whom. So, cross-linking and communication between all actors appear really essential to some of the actors. They think that they could explain their expectations to each other.

Vocational training and creating new training places is affording communication at all levels, communication of all actors as well as advertising and information. "*If we are requesting quality we must advertise. We must advertise to get good applicants. Therefore, we spoke in schools and job agencies and presented our ideas in schools. When we told the professors about that advertising they smiled at us. Nowadays it is almost the same for them that they are holding model lectures at the high schools to get good students. We knew those years before.*"

Exchange, communication, and information are seen as fruitful and necessary. However, they are not sufficient: "*We must more cooperate we must cross-link each other, we must allocate resources for this field and give a lot more of information and abolish prejudices and clichés and over-all information.*"

And this is the point of failure since – at least in the view of some other actors – resources are only allocated to a-priorities when work intensifies simultaneously. "*The other thing is that it has not yet reached the minds that this is an important location factor for this region and that all, schools as well as communities, educational institutes, and the economy must together develop something into a location factor and this strikes different self-images of these groups, and this is what needs to be worked on.*"

So far the result of the interviews that we analyzed according to the documentary method.

Beyond the documentary method: Discussion and forecast

In a further step we tried to create another form of foreignness by giving feedback in a workshop. For that purpose we

- invited all interview partners and other interested participants confronted them with the results after the discourse description,
- we asked them to take another actor's view,
- and gave feedback through different materials (e.g. in form of text and cards).

During one step of the workshop we asked the actors to picture the distances between themselves. The picture shows that there are two groups, the group of parents, teachers, schools and pupils, and the group of training firms, vocational schools, politics, and economy people and trainees. The only link between these groups is the group of the pupils the future trainees.

As a further result the actors prepared a package of measures. A first action was a parent-teacher conference which was enhanced by representatives of economy, politics and vocational school.

We understand that workshop as a further module in developing the indicated different self-conceptions as well as for the cross-linking and communication. Furthermore the workshop represents a 360° perspective on the research field and therefore a certain form of triangulation.

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Endnotes

1 Vgl. BMBF (Ed.), 2006, S. 1
2 The specific wording has to be chosen according to the interview partner.
3 In contrast to the hypothetic-deductive testing model, where the communication possibilities are restricted.
4 See Bohnsack, 2008, S. 34
5 Comprehension and Interpretation are two very meaningful concepts as well as conjunctive experience and collectivity. Mannheim (1964a) for example differentiates between the two concepts comprehension and interpretation (see also Garfinkel, 1973). Comprehension is built up by a common ground for example (see also Clark & Brennan, 1996). The concept interpretation refers to the clarification of or assumptions concerning the communicative intent (purpose).

Chapter IV

Bridging the Gap Between Personal and Social Construction: Discourse Analysis and PCP Techniques

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Introduction

Within the past couple of decades constructivism has grown into an influential paradigm of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). One of the more general ways of defining constructivism points to it as an epistemological position which emphasizes the meaning making processes (Neimeyer & Stewart, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). The *metaphor of construction* summarizes some important assumptions underlying constructivist paradigm, which have profound implications for qualitative research.

The metaphor of construction implies that *meaning is always constructed* and does not represent a reflection of the world as it is. In this sense, the metaphor of construction opposes to the *"mirror" metaphor* (Potter, 1996) and the epistemology of realism. This aspect of the construction metaphor meant crossing the boundaries of "traditional" period of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) and led qualitative researchers towards developing qualitative research as a specific research genre, different from quantitative research.

Furthermore, the construction metaphor views *knowledge as unseparable from its knower* – his or her physiology, language, history, culture. This implication views objectivism not an as an epistemological ideal of qualitative research, but as an epistemologically and even ethically questionable endevour. As an alternative to objectivism, participative epistemology (Heron & Reason, 1997; Stojnov, 2005) is offered as a epistemological anchor for qualitative researchers. This meant acknowledging that qualitative researchers co-create the research products with the participants, that they can not "erase" themselves from the "picture" that create and that researcher reflexivity is required.

However, within constructivist paradigm there have been many lines of diversification which brought to emergence of various forms of constructivism (Botella, 1999; Raskin, 2002; Stojnov, 2005). One of the major controversies within constructivist paradigm has arisen between personal and social versions of constructivism. These two versions of constructivism have been contrasted as having different views of origin of construction (Botella, 1995) and of the possibility of human agency (Butt, 2001; Burr, 1992; Burr, 1995). This divide has been even emphasized to such extent as to name the social version differently – as *constructionism*, not constructivism (Raskin, 2008). One of the implications this divide has had in the field of qualitative research boils down to missing the

opportunity of benefiting from synergetic use of different constructivist methodologies. On the other hand, some authors view these two approaches as compatible (Botella, 1999; Stojnov, 2005; Stojnov & Butt, 2002). Even a specific model has been developed in which integration of these approaches has been attempted (Norton, 2006; Stojnov, Dzinovic & Pavlovic, 2008). This integration is based on the notion that PCP and social constructionism represent two systems which refer to "different facets of the same phenomena" (Norton, 2006:16).

This paper addresses the implications of integrating these two versions of constructivism in qualitative research. More specifically, discourse analysis and PCP techniques are seen as complementary tools of qualitative research. In the first part of the paper I review the main aspects of discourse analytic research into social construction. In the second part, I point to personal construct psychology as a resource for qualitative researchers. Finally, I present some of the benefits of integrating PCP techniques into discourse analytic research and I exemplify this integration with a recent study I conducted in Serbian highschools.

Discursive psychology as a resource for qualitative research

Discursive psychology (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Parker, 1992) has become one of the most influential resources for social constructionist qualitative research. The metaphor of construction in discursive psychology refers to the idea of *discourses* as socially available resources, some of which are more dominant than others because they reproduce power relations and give support to institutions. One of the ways of talking about discourse analysis is by pointing to it as a tool for showing *how powerful images of the self and the world circulate in society*, and for opening a way to question and resist those images (Parker, 2005). Discourse analysis is based on the social constructionist view of the person as being "positioned" in the discourse (Burr, 1995). According to Davies & Harre:

A subject position incorporates both a conceptual repertoire and a location for persons within the structure of rights for those that use that repertoire. Once having taken up a particular position as one's own, a person inevitably sees the world from the vantage point of that position and in terms of the particular images, metaphors, story lines and concepts which are made relevant within the particular discursive practice in which they are positioned (Davies & Harre, 1990).

The idea of subject positioning has governed much of the social constructionist discourse analytic research. A conceptual distinction has been made between *interactive positioning* and *reflexive positioning* (Davies & Harre, 1990). While interactive positioning includes discursive production of others' selves, reflexive positioning refers to positioning oneself conversationally. By being surounded by various discourses and by participating in multiple discursive practices, a person gets not only one, but several discursive positions. For example, the same child may be positioned as a *'nerd', 'rebel', 'good pal' or 'puppy'* depending on the discursive practice in which he or she participates. Therefore,

instead of a traditional unitary view, the self is seen as multiple and populated by various "voices" mediated by different discourses.

Positioning analysis may be performed using "ready made text", but also using material produced in research interviews (Parker, 2005). Though interview has been criticized as an instrument of interrogation and a social ritual of disciplinary power (O'Rourke & Pitt, 2007), it is not unusual for discourse analysts to use them in their research. Discourse analytic interview should not represent a tool for "uncovering" information and interrogating participants, but as a tool for learning about power relations and providing space for alternative constructions.

As Parker (2005) suggests, discourse analysts may also use interview techniques from narrative therapy (White & Epston, 1990). The participants are invited as co-researchers in the task of "externalizing the problem" or analyzing the ways of talking about a certain issue and the way subjects are positioned in this way of talking. By identifying the so called "unique outcomes" researcher and participants also map points of contradiction or resistance. During the interview, the analytical process should remain "visible" to the participants using the "reflecting team" model. This type of discourse analytic interviewing definitely differs from traditional format and purpose of interviewing in psychological research and may serve not only as a means of collecting data, but also as a means of preparing the phase of action research that may follow.

Personal construct psychology as a resource for qualitative research

Some of the prominent textbooks on qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Parker, 2005; Bannister et al., 1994) do not even mention personal construct psychology as a possible source of ideas for qualitative inquiry. Even when PCP is mentioned in "new paradigm" research textbooks (Smith, Harre & Langenhove, 1995) it is mainly for the purpose of presenting the repertory grid method as its most influential technique. A much greater likelihood of learning about PCP would be in the area of personality psychology or psychotherapy and counseling. Though there are examples of using PCP methods and techniques in research, it would probably not be wrong to conclude that PCP lies at the margins of qualitative research.

According to personal constructivists (Kelly, 1955) we look at the world through some kind of patterns we create in order to make sense of the undifferentiated homogeneity that would otherwise overwhelm us. These patterns are called *constructs* and considered as "units of construction." The epistemological position of personal construct psychology, *constructive alternativism*, assumes that all our interpretations of the universe are subject to revision. Therefore, a person can change his or her constructions of self if they do not suit him or her. This idea has been most widely used in psychotherapy and counseling. Task of the PCP therapist would be to understand how client's theories function and where they lead them, as well as to facilitate building new theories that would work better for the client. In order to achieve this task, various methods and techniques have been developed within the personal

construct psychology (Fransella, 2003; Stojnov, 2005). In general, these techniques are dialogical tools which enable exploration and transformation of personal meaning systems. On the one hand, they provide a structured framework for understanding the main dimension that other people employ in their construction of themselves and the world around them. PCP techniques, on the other hand, also include a conceptual framework for facilitation of change of these personal outlooks. PCP approach to qualitative research is based on a variety of conversational techniques for exploring personal construction and it requires the art of "skilled conversationalist" from the researcher (Pope & Denicolo, 2001). I will briefly sketch some of the PCP techniques that are particularly suitable for discourse analytic research.

The two most basic techniques include elaboration of hierarchical organization of personal meaning systems. *"Laddering,"* also known as the "why technique" (Fransella, 2003) is used to explore the abstract and value-laden areas of construction. A person is asked to say which pole of a construct he or she would prefer to describe himself or herself, as well as why that pole is preferred rather than the other. These "why" questions are repeated until the person can produce no more constructs. As Fransella (2003) suggests, the end product should be some superordinate construct to do with one's philosophy of life. Here is an example of a laddering conversation from Fransella's (2003) research on stuttering. Laddering started from the construct *"nice personality"* versus *"disinterested in other people."* The interviewee preferred being a nice personality.

Q. What are the advantages for you of being a nice personality?
A. People enjoy being with you.
Q. Whereas those who are *disinterested in other people*?
A. Are not enjoyable to be with.
Q. Why is it important, for you, that people enjoy being with you?
A. They are likely to open up to you—you get to understand them.
Q. Whereas? (*Here one can indicate by gesture that you are looking for the opposite.*)
A. They remain a closed book.
Q. That is very interesting. I'm just wondering why you like people to open up to you?
A. Because it shows people are relaxed with you and trust you and respect you.
Q. Whereas, if they remain a closed book?
A. You never get to know them—people rarely open up to stutterers (Fransella, 2003:119).

The "laddered" conversation can also be directed downwards to constructs by asking "what" questions. In this way, concrete behaviors are explored and linked with more abstract world views. This technique has been termed "pyramiding" (Fransella, 2003) in PCP. In line with the previous example, pyramiding would involve questions, such as "What does it mean to be a nice personality" or "How would you recognize a nice personality." In general, techniques of laddering and pyramiding enable us to understand the relative "position" of a certain construct within this hierarchical organization of personal

meaning system. This way the researcher climbs up the "ladder" of personal meaning system and moves "down" the personal meaning system.

Another PCP tool that may provide as particularly useful in discourse analytic research is the *Perceiver Element Grid* or *PEG* (Procter & Procter, 2008). The perceiver element grid is a qualitative method first used in PCP work with families. Family members are invited to indicate how they view each other. For example, family member A is invited to explore how he or she perceives himself or herself, but also other family members B and C (table 1). The same is done with all family members. Alternatively, if other "perceivers" are not present, the first "perceiver" may be invited to imagine how absent persons would complete it. This alternative use of PEG requires a reflexive act of taking another's perspective and looking at relations from another's point of view.

Table1: *Form of the PEG technique*

		ELEMENTS		
		A	**B**	**C**
PERCEIVERS	**A**	How A perceives A	How A perceives B	How A perceives C
	B	How A imagines B would perceive A	How A imagines B would percieve B	How A imagines B would perceive C
	C	How A imagines C would perceive A	How A imagines C would perceive B	How A imagines C would perceive C

While laddering and pyramiding enable exploration of meaning as hierarchically organized, PEG mainly addresses the issue of construction of interpersonal relations. Also, it is a very useful tool for facilitating reconstruction of meaning in individuals or groups. Though these qualitative PCP techniques have already been used in wide variety of contexts, both in psychotherapy and in research, there have been relatively few attempts to combine them with social constructionist research methods. In this paper I will point to some of the possibilities of integrating PCP methods in discourse analytic research.

Beyond the personal – social divide: integrating discourse analysis and personal construct techniques in qualitative research

Techniques drawing on narrative therapy have been used as tools in discourse analytic interviewing on the grounds that they belong to the "postmodern" camp

of therapies (Parker, 2005). This qualification has also been acreddited to PCP (Botella, 1995; Raskin, 2001), by pointing to the construction metaphor as a common ground for these two approaches.

There are several benefits of incorporating PCP techniques into discourse analytic research: (1) organizing the interview interaction; (2) providing additional tools for positioning analysis; (3) enabling participant reflection. I will further explore in turn these benefits and exemplify them with data I produced in focus groups with teachers and pupils of Belgrade highschools. In this project 23 teachers and 44 pupils participated in nine focus group interviews lasting between 45 and 120 minutes. The project took place in Autumn 2007.

First, PCP tools are a useful in *organizing the interview interaction* in a structured, but flexible manner. The conceptual framework for exploring personal constructions in PCP gives the interviewer some sort of a "map" that governs the interview process even though it may take the shape of an informal conversation with participants. Moreover, there is a basic similarity in viewing the *role of the interviewee* in PCP and discourse analysis. While the interviewee is perceived as a "co-researcher" in discourse analytic interviewing, PCP invites us to look at interviewees as a "scientists" who test their hypotheses about themselves and invites us to take their viewpoints as epistemologically valid (Kelly, 1955). In my own research on discourses of knowledge in Serbian high schools, I made a draft guide for focus groups before the fieldwork itself, in which I "mapped" the main directions for the interview process: issues to "ladder" and issues to "pyramid," points I wanted to frame using PEG, etc. This framework allowed me to conduct the interview sessions in a conversational genre in line with PCP view that understanding another's perspective requires a conversational approach.

Furthermore, PCP tools provide a framework for *elaboration of construction of objects and subjects in discourse*. "Laddering" and "pyramiding," for example, enable understanding the way concrete behaviors are linked with certain worldviews. One of the discourses of knowledge that teachers and pupils relied on in their talk was based on the metaphor of *knowledge as "organ."* In this discourse, pupils talked about knowledge as important and relevant, as if it were a *"part of themselves."* Pupils also positioned teachers as responsible for discursive practices that take place in the classroom. They talked about teachers role of *"reaching"* pupils (excerpt 1).

Excerpt 1. *Metaphor of "reaching" (a conversation with pupils)*

```
1  J.P.*:     what does it mean to be a good teacher
2  Jovana:    well I don't know (.) I think (.)some teachers make
3             me u:m (0.2) do nothing (.) I just sit (.) and watch
4             (0.2) I am bored (0.5) and others really u:m (0.2) I
5             ca::n (.) how to say it (0.5) I can participate in the
6             class (0.3) a::nd comment with the teacher a::nd (0.2)
7             it all depends on the teacher (.) what he or she is
8             like (0.5) how the::y u:m (.) how they talk to us (.)
9             and how they reach us
```

* the author

Being a *"good" teacher* was some sort of a keyword that pupils used to address this issue of teachers' agency. An issue that puzzled me was what they meant by "good" teachers, as well as why it was so important to pupils. Here is an example of "laddering" and "pyramiding" pupils' constructions of "good" and "bad" teachers (see figure 1).

Besides "laddering" and "pyramiding" PEG also provides a useful framework for analyzing discursive positioning of subjects. During the interview with pupils and teachers the issue of their reflexive and interactional positioning represented one of my main research interests. That is why I wanted to explore how they perceive themselves and the "other." One of the dominant disourses of knowledge was based on the metaphor of *knowledge as a "package"* that should be "delivered" to pupils, no matter whether they like it or not. It was particularly teachers who relied on this discourse in their talk. In this discourse, pupils were positioned as "lazy", so teachers were supposed to "force" them to learn (excerpt 2). In other words, the discourse of knowledge as "package" legitimized compulsion as a base of relations between pupils and teachers (excerpt 3).

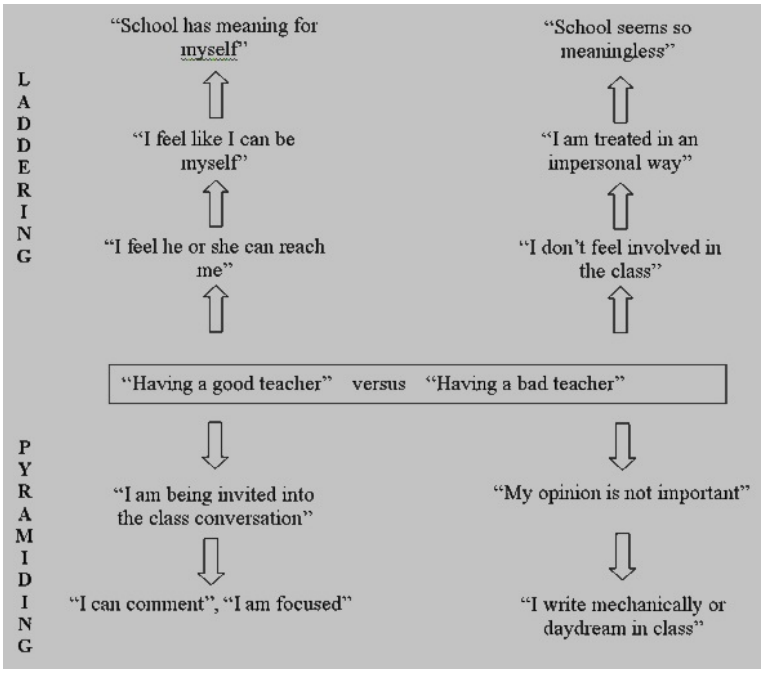

Figure 1: Example of "laddering" and "pyramiding"

Excerpt 2: *"Pupils are lazy and immature." (a conversation with teachers)*

```
1  J.P.:      how do you think pupils see:: u:m themselves
2  Tanja:     °I think they don't think about it at all° .=
3  Milena:    =me too
4  J.P.:      and what do you think (0.5) why um is it so
5             (1)
6  Ruža:      well (.) it bores them (.) to think about it
7  J.P.:      ri:ght .=
8  Ruža:      = °they need more maturity°
9  J.P.:      so (0.5)they u:m think about it (.)because u:m they are
10            immature ↑
11 Maja:      well (0.5) immature (0.5) and maybe: u:m (.) someone
12            said that in the family (.) parent do everything for
13            them (0.5)and think instead of them .=
14 J.P.:      =so they don't have to ↑
15 Maja:      well(.)they don't have to u:m (0.5)simply everything is
16            served to them
```

Excerpt 3: *Knowledge and coercion (a conversation with teachers)*

```
1  J.P.:      a:nd tell me (0.2) how they ((pupils)) see their role
2             (0.3) what it means for them to (.) to be pupils (0.5)
3             wha:t (.)what do they think they are expected to do ↑
4  Danka:     we:ll ↑ I think (.) the:y don't think much (.) about it
5             (0.1) the:y expect to:: huh heh (0.5) parents force them
6             to got o school (0.1) we also force them and punish
7             them.=
8  J.P.:      = >how do they feel about it<
9  Danka:     I think majority sees it a:s (.) some sort of coercion.=
10 J.P.:      =aha.=
11 Danka:     =as some sort of coercion
12 J.P.:      aha (0.5) is i:t (.) uhh (.) a problem for you to::
13            (.) teach knowing that (.) they see school a:s coercion ↑
14 Danka:     well no:: (0.4) as a matter of fact (0.2) °now honestly°
15            I think school has always be:n (.) coercion (0.2) when I
16            went to school to [huhhee
17 Group:     [Huh heh] ((loud laugh))
18 Danka:     =so to say
19            (0.5)
20 Danka:     ye:s (.) well (.) school is some sort of coercion
21            (0.1) coercion bu:t (0.5) .=
22 Ruža:       there is no other choice .=
23 J.P.:      no ↑ .=
24 Danka: →   I am trying to say that everything in life is (.) some
25            so:rt of coercion (.) more or less (.)
26 J.P.:      does it mean that school (0.3) prepared ↑ pupils
27            in a sense (0.2) coercion now (0.3) i a::nd .=
28 Ruža:      =for the rest of your [life  (0.2) .=
```

29 Mira: [so get used to it
30 J.P.: aha:: (0.2) ok (0.2)

The following Perceiver Element Grid summarizes interactive and reflective positioning of teachers and pupils in the discourse of *knowledge as package* (table 2). Teachers perceive themselves as *hardworkers*. They perceive pupils as enjoying a *lazy position* of knowledge being "served" to them. When asked how they think pupils perceive them, teachers began shifting their own perspective and started talking about their position as *coercive*. Also, when asked to imagine how pupils perceive themselves, teachers began to see pupils' position not only as a lazy one, but also as a burdened with their own problems.

Table 2*: An example of using PEG in a discourse analytic study*

	Teachers	Pupils
Teachers	*"Teachers' job is hard, but we wouldn't change it"*	*"Pupils are lazy and inmature"* *"Pupils' position is an easy one... Everything is served to them"*
Pupils	*"Pupils think we are conducting some sort of coercion"*	*"Pupils must think that they are poor, because they have too much schoolwork."* *"They are bored"*

In general, the *Perceiver Element Grid* provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing reflective and interactional positioning. Not only does it give insight into how certain groups perceive self and the "other," but it also invites to the imaginative space of taking another look from the perspective of the "other." In this sense, PEG also allows the discourse analyst to use it as a *tool for participant reflection*. For example, by asking teachers to try to imagine how pupils see them, some sort of a reflective space opens up, in which teachers at least for a couple of minutes "leave" their everyday roles and try to look at the world from pupils' perspective. This shift of perspective which is demanded by PEG may further contribute to discourse analytic aims of challenging the dominant discourses and providing space for alternative constructions.

Conclusion

By using these PCP techniques in the discourse analytic research, it is possible to understand how certain personal constructions are built into social constructions. In the focus group sessions, together with teachers and pupils I made sense of their talk and observed how similar personal constructions allow referring to social constructions. During this process, the boundary between personal and social construction, so much cared for in theory, became somewhat blurred. Both "personal" and "social" became an integral process of meaning construction. Though PCP offers a well developed technology of producing

agency in persons, it may also be seen as one of the strategies for resisting forms of subjection and therefore it could be "orchestrated" with transforming social meaning systems through discourse analytic research (Pavlovic, 2008). Finally, this sort of integration may be seen as a particular example of *bricolage* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) in qualitative research. As Denzin and Lincoln suggest, if new tools have to be invented, or pieced together, then the researcher will do this.

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From Empathy to its Finnish Equivalent, or how Should we Understand Experiences?

Teemu Suorsa

Introduction

Whether it is possible for psychology to create universal basic knowledge, even if its "particular empirical evidence is always unique to the given place, its history and current orientation to the future" (cf. Valsiner, 2006, p. 601), is a continuously topical question. Jaan Valsiner points out in his article *"Dangerous Curves in Knowledge Construction within Psychology "* that

> "the postmodernist ideology of localizing knowledge within social contexts has undermined the task of generalization in social sciences. As a result, science becomes swallowed by society, rather than providing that very society with knowledge for further development." (Valsiner, 2006, p. 609.)

Valsiner (2006, p. 609) figures that psychology should "remain primarily a basic science – aiming at universal knowledge through learning from many different societies." The "pleasurable curvy road to general knowledge", as Valsiner (2006, p. 609) sees it, would run "through respectful investigation of local phenomena." To generalize from the unique and local phenomena is, of course, far from a simple task. It is clear that generalizing requires critique and contributions from the international scientific community. Before we are that far, a few thoughts should be given to what it actually means to investigate local phenomena respectfully.

When we are conceptualizing phenomena scientifically, we do not begin from nowhere. Each discipline has its more or less well-established conventions for conceptualizing its object of study. Quite often it is necessary to know the history of the discipline to understand the current research problems and concepts. In addition to the dimensions of history of science, the concepts we use have also their everyday dimensions. This is particularly true in psychology where everyday language is often interlaced with scientific one. For example "unconscious" has supposedly fully different meaning for a layperson, practicing psychoanalyst, and another expert from different field of psychology.

The history of words and concepts doesn't, of course, end to the point, where they are started being used, justified and studied systematically. In language there are historical layers through which the words can refer to very different forms of life and practices, in comparison to the one(s) in which we find ourselves today. Words have meanings which are nowadays hardly, if at all, understandable (and indeed: recognizable). Do these meanings play a role in psychological research? In science we have good grounds to call for strictly defined concepts from which the obscurities and inconsistencies of everyday language are sealed off. Transparency in relation to the concepts and methods being used belongs to science.

Psychology doesn't make an exception to this principle of transparency. On the other hand the particularity of the object of psychological research – a being determined through, and determining its, circumstances – requires a special attention (also) to the way, this "object" relates to language (as a "circumstance"). If we are interested in somebody's experiences, we cannot seal off the meanings that are obscure or illogical. Neither is the language of the researcher, even if it is marked through his education, something fully under his control. Language, which is older than the individual and more comprehensive than any psychological terminology, determines – together with (personal)history – what in a given situation is understandable. Following allegory should elucidate the lengthy and difficult subject:

> "Let us imagine three concentric semi-circular forms of different sizes, and call these the forest, the garden, and the house, from the biggest to the smallest. The forest is its own, it does what it pleases, regardless of human not to speak of natural laws. It changes slowly. Living in the forest demands knowledge of flows, circuits, connections that span over individual lifetimes and personal capacities. A garden can be cleared and cultivated in the midst of the forest. It takes constant care, attention and struggle to make the garden prosper and not to be overtaken by the forest. One needs fences, pathways and systems of irrigation. Looking from the garden, the forest becomes the wilderness. The garden, in turn, surrounds the house, where things have their place, where the subject is best protected and life at its most economical.
>
> Here the forest illustrates the area of asubjective experience that is un-predictable, unrepeatable and independent of us. The fenced garden is the site of constant struggle between the inseparable flows of the forest and the reified and objectified economy of the house, where weeding, planting and harvesting are needed. In the house devoted to human purposes calculation can start. Here things have their uses, and behavior its rationale.
>
> These three areas form human experience, from the asubjective forest to the economical pinnacle of the subjective and objective. It should be noted that the asubjective is not the same as the unconscious, even though it is not a part of the self. In a similar way, language doesn't belong to the house only .... Language is asubjective when it is not the manipulation of word-objects by a communicative speaker-subject. For example words like 'mother,' 'death,' 'friend,' 'sea' pertain to experiences that do not support a clear subject-object division." (Vadén, 2006, p. 223-224.)

Language, and being human, can be characterized "generally" this way. There is also a local dimension in language. It's connectedness to place, to history, to "current orientations to the future" proposes a question concerning the originality of different languages. This question concerns also the possibility of discussing these originalities over the language regions. Vadén writes:

> "Languages as interconnected networks are not identical with each other. ... Language is inseparably tied with ways of life. Ways of living create systems

> of meaning. Unique, untranslatable language can exist, when unique, untranslatable ways of life exist. If there are ways of life that are in a meaningful way different from other ways of life, then there are possibly (linguistic) meanings that can not be translated without residue. Such untranslatability is relative, not absolute. Translation and learning are often possible, if one is willing to take great pains and use a lot of time: if one is willing and able to experience and live in a new way. However, choosing or adopting a way of life is not something that one person or subject can do at will, and the process of learning to live in a new way can easily last longer than the life-span of a generation." (Vadén, 2006, p. 220-221.)

This would mean, as Vadén formulates it, a nominalistic position. It means we would "have to concede that being human, for instance thinking or experiencing, are not universally same or identifiably similar, but vary both in time and place in possibly incommensurable ways" (Vadén, 2006, p. 222).

This introduction in mind, I will in the following study the concept of "empathy" which names a phenomenon, on the other hand belonging to the object area of psychology, and which, on the other hand, can be seen as a part of a methodical "equipment," which enables the knowledge of this very object area. I begin (1) with describing shortly how the phenomenon of empathy has been conceptualized at the end of 19th century first in aesthetics, and later in psychology. Relative late emergence of the concept of empathy doesn't mean that the phenomenon would have been earlier unknown. The phenomenal field was earlier articulated for example with *Sympathie* and *versetzen* (Pigman, 1995, p. 240, see Black, 2004). Thereafter (2) I will make a historical jump to the end of 20th century, and present two different interpretation of empathy, psychoanalytical and existential, which are still closely related to earlier formulation of empathy in the field of aesthetic, or psychology of aesthetics – which nowadays also corresponds more or less our everyday conception of empathy. In the next chapter (3) I return to everyday concepts, particularly to a Finnish "equivalent" of empathy which in a closer study seems to be articulating (also) a different kind of, and a more profound, phenomenon. Finally (4) I will present some concluding propositions to be discussed.

My aim here is not to give an encyclopaedic answer to the question of the possibility of respectful investigation of local phenomena in psychology. Rather I am trying to present an "example" of how a local originality can contribute in clearing up some more wide ranging problems in methodological or categorical level. This example will hopefully be followed by multifaceted discussion of the possibilities and limitations of this approach.

(1) Einfühlung: Vischer and Lipps

Everyone knows what "empathy" means. Empathy is stepping in someone else's shoes, identifying in someone else's situation. It is possible for me to know how You feel because as a similar being I can imagine myself being in a similar situation.

Despite this simplicity there is a growing number of literature concerning empathy. Respectively the definitions of empathy may seem quite different from each other. For example in psychoanalytic tradition(s) empathy has been characterized inter alia as knowledge, attitude, communication, capacity, process, expression, ability, experience, form of perception and as non-rational way of understanding. (See e.g. Reed, 1984, p. 12-13.)

In this variety however one can recognize how each writer has a feeling of dealing with a very profound phenomenon. Freud, for example, believed that empathy enables the relating to another mental life in general (Freud, 1921, p. 110). Christine Olden, on her behalf, stated that phenomenon of empathy is "as deep and early as the first days and weeks of life," when there was neither "outside world" nor "I". Olden suggests, this earliest experience

> "of unity with the world and the mother may possibly be the root and pattern of our later feeling of comfort when an empathic contact is made, and of discomfort when we have not successfully achieved this." (Olden, 1953, p. 114.)

Empathy was coined in English as a translation of German "Einfühlung" (see Titchener, 1909). To begin with, however, "Einfühlung" was a concept of aesthetics. Robert Vischer used it in winter of 1890 in his presentation *Über ästhetische Naturbetrachtung* in Aachen and Stuttgart when describing the perception of natural objects, as he found it articulated, e.g. in Goethe's poetry. There he finds "sich wiegende Zweige" and "sich bückende Klippen," where, so Vischer, "[d]ieses Sich [...] nichts anderes [ist], als das den Zweigen, den Klippen [...] unterschobene Subjekt, das hineingedrungene Ich des Betrachters." (Vischer, 1927, p. 64.)

It might here seem as "Einfühlung" was for Vischer a simple projection of the "I" into the landscape. It is however noteworthy that this "Einfühlung" of the "observing I" wouldn't be possible, didn't these two have the same origin, "gleichen Ursprung" (Vischer, 1927, p. 75). For Vischer the verses of Byron (transl. O. Gildemeister, cited in Vischer, 1927, p. 57) were something to be taken seriously:

> Sind nicht die Himmel, Meer und Berg ein Stück
> Von meiner Seele, wie von ihnen ich?
> Ist sie zu lieben nicht mein reinstes Glück?

This means for Vischer that his attempt to elucidate "wenigstens das Wesen unserer Betrachtung der Natur" must remain incomplete, "weil die Natur selbst ewig unbekannt bleibt."

> "In Ihrer Fremdheit verschwindet auch unsre Selbsterkenntnis, denn im ästhetischen Akte wirken ja Natur und Phantasie in innigster Verschmelzung durcheinander. [...] Und so sind wir wieder zu unserem Ausgangspunkt zurückgelandet, stehen wieder vor dem Rätsel der Natur und müssen uns

gestehen: Ihr Seelenschein bleibt, wie sie selbst, ein Geheimnis." (Vischer, 1927, p. 75-76.)

In his *Ästhetik – Psychologie des Schönen und der Kunst* Theodor Lipps introduced the concept of "Einfühlung" into a psychological discussion. His conceptualization made a deep impression for example to Freud (see Freud, 1986, p. 235).

As for Vischer's Byron there was no clear difference between the experiencing I and the experienced nature, it was also important for Lipps that in "Einfühlung" – resulting from instinctive imitation – there was no experienced duality, but "volle Einheit" (Lipps, 1903, 122). Lipps elucidates this in his famous acrobat-example:

> "Ich vollziehe in solcher 'inneren Nachahmung' – nicht die Bewegungen, die der Akrobat vollzieht, noch einmal, sondern ich vollziehe unmittelbar, nämlich innerlich, oder 'in meinen Gedanken', die Bewegungen des Akrobaten. Ich vollziehe die Bewegungen, soweit dieser 'Vollzug der Bewegungen' nicht ein äußerliches, sondern ein inneres Tun ist, in dem Akrobaten selbst. Ich bin nach Aussage meines unmittelbaren Bewußtseins in ihm; ich bin also da oben. Ich bin dahin versetzt. Nicht neben den Akrobaten, sondern genau dahin, wo er sich befindet. Dies nun ist der volle Sinn der 'Einfühlung'. [...] Ich fühle mich in der optisch wahrgenommenen Bewegung des Akrobaten, also im Akrobaten, so wie ich ihn wahrnehme, ich fühle mich darin strebend und innerlich tätig." (Lipps, 1903, p. 122-123)

The difference between the acrobat and the observing – and empathizing – I appears only afterwards:

> "Und gesetzt endlich, ich bin aus der Einfühlung völlig heraus getreten. Die Einfühlung fand statt; und ich blicke jetzt auf den erlebten Sachverhalt zurück, dann bleibt immer noch in der Erinnerung das erlebte ich an den Akrobaten unmittelbar gebunden. Es ist also, wenn ich in der Erinnerung den Akrobaten und seine Bewegungen mir vergegenwärtige, immer noch in ihm ein Ich und ein inneres Tun, nur eben ein bloß vorgestelltes. Dies vorgestellte Ich und sein Tun steht aber zugleich gegenüber meinem realen Ich, nämlich demjenigen, das an den Akrobaten sich erinnert. [...] Hiermit erst ist die Scheidung zwischen mir und dem Akrobaten vollzogen." (Lipps, 1903, p. 124-125)

Lipps (1903, p. 125) sees an "Einfühlung" where the differentiation between the I and the observed doesn't appear as "eine vollkommene," that is, as "ästhetische Einfühlung" which he (p. 126) sees as more original form of "Einfühlung". Differentiating experience can, according to Lipps, be "potentiell mitenthalten", but can not in actuality appear simultaneously together with "vollkommenen Einfühlung." (Lipps, 1903, p. 125.) It is noteworthy that in citations above, besides the differentiation between the I and the observed, there is also a differentiation between "vorgestelltes Ich," namely the remembered I

(and its remembered action) and "reales Ich," namely the remembering (as the present activity) I. I will come back to this in the next chapter.

After this short "historical introduction" we can now move to a concept of empathy which is seen more directly in relation to understanding of the thinking, feeling and wanting of the other human being. I will move to the end of 20th century in order to point out that there are elements of "Einfühlung" – as it can be found in Vischer and Lipps in relation to aesthetic experience – also in attempts to conceptualize the psychotherapeutic understanding, where it isn't any more about experiencing natural objects and landscapes, or a plain human body as an aesthetic object.

(2) Empathy: Psychoanalytical and existential interpretation

In Lipps's description seems to be outlined the central difference between emotional contagion and empathy which has been important in psychoanalytical tradition. Louis Agosta points out however, in his article *Empathy and Intersubjectivity* (1984) that despite the differences, there are elements of emotional contagion in empathy:

> "In emotional contagion a representation of the other's feeling is aroused in the subject. That is all that happens. In the case of empathy, in addition to this first representation of the other's feeling, a second representation is mobilized. The subject becomes aware that the other's feeling is the source of his own. Thus, this second representation – which is indeed a representation of the *other* – is conjoined with the first.
>
> This, then, is the crucial and irreducible difference between empathy and emotional contagion. Empathy involves a double representation. [...] Thus, what differentiates empathy from contagion is the emergence, the distinguishing of, a representation of the other as the object as well as the cause of what is being felt." (Agosta, 1984, p. 55.)

Whereas for Lipps "die vollkommene Einfühlung" was still the one without experienced duality, with Agosta we talk about empathy only after the difference has been made. What one concludes from this conceptual differentiation, varies also in the field of psychoanalysis from writer to writer. But whether empathy is seen as a result of "direct intersubjective communicability of emotions" (Agosta, 1984, p. 55) or as enabled through identifications "based on the totality of verbal and nonverbal clues of the object's inner experience" (Tähkä, 1993, p. 118), I would argue that Black articulates the common tendency rather well in the following passage:

> "[B]y empathy we make a trial identification with the other, without losing our secure stance in ourselves, and as a result of empathic contact we can relate our interpretations accurately to patient's internal state." (Black, 2004, p. 580.)

This seems to be still in the spirit of Lipps: there is on the one hand an identifying, "vorgestelltes ich", and on the other a "reales ich" who is reflecting his inner activity. Surely it sounds somewhat more convenient to make a "trial identification" than to get an involuntary "contagion". The "vischerian idea" of "Geheimnis" belonging to "Einfühlung" also comes up in different forms from time to time (see e.g. Bolognini, 2004); usually such remarks appear however in the marginal, and don't really seem to belong to a scientific concept formation. I will come back to the "Geheimnis" in the paragraphs (3) and (4).

Lipps (1903, p. 191) did indeed suggest that "Einfühlung" between persons "ist der gleichen Art, wie die Einfühlung in ein Naturobjekt," for example in to a rock. This gives us of course reasons for doubting such a conception of understanding between human beings. It doesn't seem to be without grounds to suggest that the reasoning should here take substantially different direction.

In the *phenomenological movement* in Germany and in France the question concerning "Einfühlung" has also been of decisive importance since the beginning of the 20th century (see Zahavi, 2001). Here it is quite often the Lippsian conception being criticized. For example for Heidegger empathy was indeed something that phenomenally in the first place characterizes understanding of the other. He stresses however, it shouldn't therefore be taken as something originally constitutive for being with the other. In *Sein und Zeit* he sees "Einfühlung" rather as a substitute for authentic understanding of the other into which one resorts because "die verschiedenen Seinsmöglichkeiten des Daseins selbst das Miteinandersein und dessen Sichkennen missleiten und verbauen." Further he suggests that

> "[i]hre spezielle Hermeneutik wird zu zeigen haben, wie [...] ein echtes 'Verstehen' niedergehalten wird und das Dasein zu Surrogaten die Zuflucht nimmt; welche positive existenziale Bedingungen rechtes Fremdverstehen für seine Möglichkeit voraussetzt." (Heidegger, 1976, p. 164.)

For Heidegger this was a question of not seeing human being as a being among rocks, tables and hammers, but as a special being, whose speciality was to be studied carefully before further arguments could be made. In a Heideggerian sense Zahavi points out that "the very attempt to thematically grasp the emotions or experiences of others is the exception rather than the rule."

> "Under normal circumstances we understand each other well enough through our shared engagement in the common world, and it is only if this understanding for some reason breaks down, that something like empathy becomes relevant. But if this is so, an investigation of intersubjectivity that takes empathy as its point of departure and constant point of reference is bound to lead us astray." (Zahavi, 2001, p. 155.)

Recently the "assignment" – to hermeneutics of empathy – given by Heidegger has been taken into account by Lawrence Hatab, although in a different manner than Heidegger proposed. Whereas Heidegger was trying to overcome the concept of empathy, Hatab is trying to give it a more appropriate,

existential, interpretation. To put it short, Hatab suggests we should understand prefixes both in em-pathy and "Ein-fühlung" as referring to human way of coming into existence, instead of seeing prefixes as referring to a projective activity of the subject. (Hatab, 2002, p. 255.)

This would mean that we should see empathic caring for others a basic structure of social life. Negligence is according to this a flawed realisation of this structure. Thus empathy, interpreted existentially, names a common structure of coming into existence. In empathic experience this way becomes visible to us.

Whereas aforementioned psychoanalytical interpretations of empathy do allow us to see the experiences – and humans – as fundamentally separated, existential interpretation stresses their founding belongingness. If what is experienced in/ as empathy has its "point of reference" in a social structure in question (instead of an ability or quality attributed to a subject), it would seem that also the very attempt to understand gains another goal: Along the question of the experiences of the self and those of the other appears the question concerning a common social structure which is experienced in empathy. This would mean that the experience of the other – as well as my own – is never only about the other world; rather it should be seen as an articulative step toward understanding the situation which is, after all, common to us. To a challenge (and to a possibility) this turns in a situation with conflicting experiences.

(3) On the difference between "empathy" and its Finnish equivalent

"Myötäeläminen" – a Finnish equivalent for "empathy", literally "along-living" – can be seen as a typical word of everyday language which appears in certain contexts, although one might get in trouble, when trying to explain what, and how, is actually meant with it. "Myötäeläminen" is being used as approximately synonymous with empathy, sympathy and compassion. It seems also plausible to assume that the word has not existed independently from these. But whereas in Greece originating "empathy" shares more or less the structure of German "Einfühlung", in a Finnish translation/construct – even if it had its model in German or in Greece – comes along something inharmonious.

In Finnish there are words whose applicability surpasses the sentences with the plain subject-predicate-object structure. In fact, there are words, such as "myötäeläminen", which seem to be "reacting against" such structure. It is grammatically possible to say, for example, "I 'live along' You" or "I 'live along' your joy." In the first case, the Finnish expression would be rather awkward, and one is actually tempted to use the anglicism that reproduces "empathy" in a Finnish form. In the second case the expression gives priority to "the joy": the joy would somehow produce the experiencing "I" in question. Here one is however tempted to see this expression as a "poetical" formulation, meaning actually that I am happy because I can understand that you are having this emotion. Indeed it feels in Finnish too less ambiguous to say one is "empathizing."

Should we conclude then that "myötäeläminen" is a failed word that really should be replaced with another one giving more accurate expression to what we

have in mind? Alternatively we can think that in this word something comes to expression that surpasses or goes below the way we nowadays "piece things together." In any case, we can ask, *what* we can express with this word. We may also suggest that an old word would be utilized in describing previously unknown phenomenon.

The existential interpretation of empathy is here interesting because there empathy – seen as referring to the way of coming into existence – would seem to have the same direction as literal meaning of "myötäeläminen". It should be noted, however, that whereas the existential interpretation of empathy is deconstructing the way the language is being used (or deconstructing a thought that seems to be included in a word "empathy") "myötäeläminen" is already, has already been, *also* beyond the net of meanings which are being reinterpreted in Hatab's interpretation.

"Empathy" is only hardly thinkable without empathizing subject. With "myötäeläminen" it is the other way around: It is difficult to see "myötäeläminen" as something that a subject does. Rather it is something that happens to – or as – someone.

This line of thought can be brought further: "Empathy," both existentially and psychoanalytically, is only hardly thinkable without an object, or dualism between "I" and "the world" – it is indeed a word, whose point is to describe interaction between subject and (other subject as) her object. "Myötäeläminen" seems to leave also the world-side open. The question: Along *what*, and *how*, we are living, then, might have a worthy hint from Vischer: We are standing before an enigma, "*Geheimnis der Natur*". Or with Celan: "*Geheimnis der Begegnung*".

Whereas the concept of empathy seems to carry an answer within – subject empathizes object – "myötäeläminen", living along, brings along an unending question: Along what, and how? And, since "myötäeläminen" is a word that primarily isn't good for describing interaction between subject and his object, one could say, adapting Vadén's allegory (paragraph 1) that in this word is potentially "protected" something that reminds man in his economically organized house of the murmur of the woods, that is, of the possibility of an asubjective experience.

From the possibilities given to thinking in originalities of a particular language one should not conclude that for example etymology or grammar would somehow prove a certain righteous usage or meaning. Appropriating the possibilities of language should rather be seen as one of the steps in concept formation. Thereafter the suggestions should of course be tested from other perspectives. The connectedness of etymology, grammar and meaning can however be seen as "useful" as they are providing already existing nets of possible meaning, also meanings which wouldn't otherwise be attainable. The local challenge would be to appropriate these possibilities when articulating the object of study and research methods.

(4) Concluding remarks

In what kind of a relation, then, are "empathy" and "myötäeläminen", (living along), to each other? Taken that the previous argumentation is plausible – or

that its result is plausible – this seems to be an important question. Obviously we cannot simply abandon the old concept. After all in many cases empathy is indeed the way we "phenomenally and in the first place" understand each other – namely in those cases, where it seems that we don't.

In my master's thesis (2004) I suggested, and tried to show, that it is possible to reinterpret the psychoanalytical conception, particularly that of Veikko Tähkä (1993), of striving toward an empathic understanding as a relevant, although insufficient, step toward the understanding of the "living along"; in other words in attempt to see the experiences, own and those of the other, as articulative steps with reference to the question "along what, and how", that is, with reference to an enigma.

The nature of "living along" might of course be enigmatic only "phenomenally and in the first place," and usually only in situation "giving" conflicting experiences; perhaps analogical to the way the Finnish equivalent for empathy seemed enigmatic in the first place. The nature of this word is however enigmatic and conflicting only as long as it is seen as a translation for an experience articulated originally in a different net of meanings. As soon as one tries to appropriate the meanings that seem to be "included" in the word, it lands to an interesting dialogue with the other, in this case with the other word, and – other phenomenon.

To understand experiences within their proper context is, in a – at least potentially – very multidimensional world, far from an easy task. To me it seems, this would mean that understanding experiences cannot belong solely to psychology but would stand before us as a continuous interdisciplinary challenge.

To see humanity in numerous localities as "not universally same or identifiably similar" but varying "both in time and place in possibly incommensurable ways," as Vadén (2006, p. 222) suggested, doesn't make this task a more simple one. Taking this seriously might also not lead to identical terminology or definitions of objects of study in different language regions. Instead it might eventually, through a "curvy road," lead to more comprehensive understanding of human condition in general.

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The Interview as Procedure in the Practice of Architects

Sálvora Feliz, Tiberio Feliz & Maria Carmen Ricoy

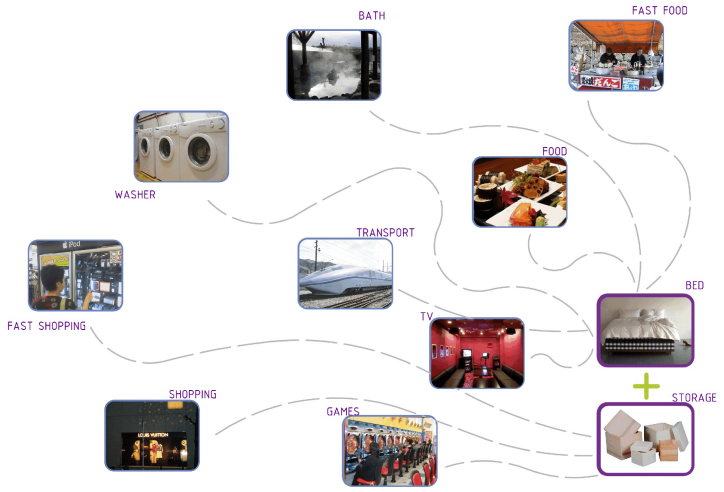
Introduction

The architects are one of the groups of professionals that Donald Schön (1983) studied to develop the features of the reflective professionals. He analyzed how they think in action and discovered that the best ones were able to learn from their practical experience. That means that the theoretical knowledge does not always guarantee this competence.

The most important problem which appears when architects face up to the design of a new housing is to wonder about some changes of the daily habits of life and about some aspects of the housing which have effects on them (see picture no. 01). In this way, the Japanese architect Toyo Ito (2005) states that the indispensable elements of the new housing are a place to sleep and a place to store and other elements could be found in the city, as bathing, eating, washing, shopping, reading, games, cinema, etc. Jorge Almazán (2006) speaks about the same topic, basing it on the city of Tokyo. Another architect – Andrés Cánovas (2007) – maintains that all housings are flexible when their spaces are open and the objects are stored. Then, it is easy to move the storage and to change the configuration of the space. About transport, we can refer to a more recently created town which was designed by Norman Foster (Villarreal, 2008). Masdar (Emirate of Abu Dhabi) is a 100% sustainable town, locating stops of light rail every 200 meters of the farthest points and prohibiting the use of cars.

The evolution of our life habits and technology makes possible so different approaches. As Heraclitus (ca 535-475 BC) said: "Nothing endures but change" (Area, 2008, p.22). If our life changes, our housing should change with it. The reason why the housing follows some organizational schemes in the 20th century is not that the professionals cannot design new distributions, but the users are reluctant to changes in their life focus.

There are new examples of situations which have changed. Tokyo is a city where we can observe this extreme architecture which tries to solve new deficiencies. A common situation in Tokyo is when the head of the family has to move for 3 hours to go to work. In order to avoid these movements, a new model of hotel emerges: the capsule hotel.



Picture 01: A new conception of the housing

We are speaking about a concrete example like the Nakagin Capsule Hotel built in 1972 (Chaplin, 2007), which is composed of the accumulation of cabins. These cabins have a mattress and a television, with optional access to temporary storage cabins (see picture no. 02).

Picture 02: Nakagin Capsule Hotel.

The research question

Every architectural project has to consider the environment, the function, the formal intention, and the methods of construction. Inside the functional field, clients propose a program, which is determined by the users who will occupy the future construction. Due to the relevance of the knowledge about the routines developed in the home space, we decided to collect some experiences of

people's everyday life. For this purpose, we decided to design a research strategy and we selected the technique of the interview. Its goals are to focus the differences among the lifestyles, the gender, and the situation of the home. Our main research question is: how could we consider people's daily life to improve the design of their home? or How to take into consideration people's daily routines in designing their homes?)

Methodology

The interview technique

The interview is an unusual technique in architecture. However, there are some antecedents. Kevin Lynch (1960) is a relevant, significant example. He justified the interest of the interview to know the people's perception:

> *"In applying the basic concept of imageability to the American city, we have used two principal methods: the interview of a small sample of citizens with regard to their image of the environment, and a systematic examination of the environmental image evoked in trained observers in the field."* (Lynch, 1960, pp.140)

Our technique is a half-structured interview and we focus on limited groups of people previously selected among persons of both genders and who live in homes of different locations. The researcher has to guarantee sufficient diversity. Due to its small magnitude, the sample is not statistically representative. However, it allows a prospective research. We develop a qualitative analysis and the most peculiar data are the most interesting ones for us. The interviews have been done in two ways: in person and by phone. When we ask the questions, we stimulate possible answers, with the intention of obtaining a bigger participation of the interviewees.

The interview protocol

The questions of the interview are:

(1) How is your daily routine?
Justification: We want to compile the different activities which are made by the interviewees, during the whole day, starting from waking up until going to bed. Moreover, we establish the different periods of time according to going out or coming back home. We asked also about the location and the time of their activities. As they tell us their daily routine, we understand how their housing is and how its distribution determines specific situations which would be by another way. We try to specify the present function of the housing, the uses that the housing receives, and the influence of the housing distribution in the daily routines.

(2) Which are others activities that you do usually?
Justification: We want to collect the different activities which are usually done at home but not necessarily daily. In addition, we asked for the frequency of the activities: daily, weekly, monthly, annually, or other.

(3) What activities do you realise that transform your house into your home?
Justification: With this question we try to understand how the conception about housing has changed in the last years. We are interested in the new essential elements for which the housing becomes a home. Besides, we would like knowing if the position of Toyo Ito could fit in Spanish housing or if the configuration of our housing needs more elements for being a home.

(4) What qualities transform your house into your home?
Justification: We try to understand the qualities which make this space a home, knowing that the housing is not a functional machine but a space that singles us out and reflects a lot of aspects from ourselves.

Selection of the interviewees

With these questions, we want to perceive how we could change the configuration of the housing to adapt the space to our own daily routines. We do not have to transform our routines when they do not fit the previously designed space. Knowing that these answers are different depending on the profile of the people, we decided to select among four groups, which are characterized according to criteria of age, employed/unemployed, and group/single life.

In this way, we differentiate between university students' life and family's life; between families and singles; and between employed and unemployed. We think that these variables are very important when we speak about housing and we choose them for this reason. We maintain that they are decisively related to the activities realised, their time and duration, and their location. For example, we suppose that lunchtime is not the same for an unemployed person who lives alone, an employed person who lives alone, or a person who lives with his/her family and his/her lunch hour is a social event.

The research groups are:

- Group 1: university students;
- Group 2: workers without children (married or single);
- Group 3: workers with children (married or single);
- Group 4: pensioners (married or single).

The research sample had 31 individuals of both genders as described in the groups (see picture n. 03). The research was carried out in November 2007 and the sample was selected from several places of Spain.

	women	men
group 1	卌 I	卌
group 2	IIII	III
group 3	卌	II
group 4	III	III

Picture 03: Research sample.

Description of the process

The process has six steps:

(1) *Defining the criteria to select the interviewees according to the lifestyles, the gender, and the situation of the home.*
We established four groups according to the lifestyles: students, workers without sons/daughters, workers with sons/daughters, and pensioners. In each group, we were careful to include persons of both genders and people with homes in several locations.

(2) *Designing the interview protocol according to the research questions.*
We selected the half-structured interview starting from four main questions:

- How is your daily routine?
- Which are other activities you usually do?
- What activities transform your house into your home?
- What qualities transform your house into your home?

(3) *Elaborating a list of interviewees.*
We selected thirty-one interviewees according to the criteria that we have described previously and paying attention to careful and mixed selection.

(4) *Realizing the interviews.*
We have done the interviews by phone and in person. We have recorded them and transcribed them after.

(5) *Content analysis of the interviews.*
We have searched and retrieved the main ideas according to the research questions.

(6) *Extracting useful conclusions to design the project.*
The main result is an activity sequence that allows the distribution of the different spaces of the home.

Content analysis of the interviews

The interviews facilitate a non-structured content. It is difficult to predict all possible answers and categories. The content analysis allows us to extract the interviewees' main ideas. Our analysis is based on Kimberly A. Neuendorf (2002) and Mari Carmen Ricoy and Tiberio Feliz (2007). Subsequently we describe the main categories of each group:

Group 1: University students

Picture 04: Categories of group 1.

Content categories

Category 1: Periods of time (times are averages)

Morning:

waking up	20 min.
having breakfast	10 min.
going to the bath	15 min.
getting dressed	05 min.
clearing	05 min.

Midday or night:

getting dressed	10 min.
having lunch or dinner	40 min.
going to the bath	10 min.
clearing time	05 min.
studying	03 hours
leisure	1.5 hours
having a break	20 min.
speaking	10 min.

Category 2: Usual activities

recharging mobile phone
ordering their notes
free time
cleaning

Category 3: Activities at home

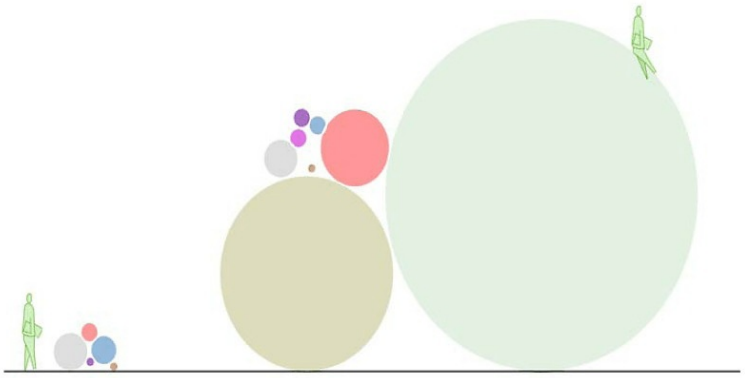
sleeping

clothes, dishes
having lunch
studying
Category 4: Qualities of your home
own order
own elements
comfort
privacy

Main description

The students are for 7 hours at home everyday. They consider two periods: morning and midday or night. It is not possible to determine the sequences of the activities that people realize inside the home in the evening. The students occupy a unique space of home (the bedroom or the study room), whereas workers without children interpret the house like their property.

Students get dressed in the bathroom after having a shower, but they haven't a place where to put the clothes. They have lunch in the sofa while they watch the TV. They watch TV or listen to music while they do others activities. They like sleeping in the sofa after having lunch. The daily storage space is located in the hall, table of living-room, or on the bed. They do not use their room like a bedroom only. The students, who live alone, usually call by phone to their family or friends (see picture n. 05).



Picture 05: Time bubbles of the activities which are made at home by group 1.

Group 2: Workers without children

Picture 06: Categories of group 2.

Content categories

Category 1: Periods of time (times are averages)

Morning:

waking up	10 min.
getting dressed	10 min.
going to the bathroom	15 min.
having breakfast	10 min.
clearing time	05 min.
cleaning	03 min.
preparing their job	15 min

Midday or night:

getting dressed	05 min.
having lunch or dinner	40 min.
going to the bathroom	10 min.
clearing time	03 min.
preparing their job	01 hours
free time	02 hours
break	15 min.
cleaning	30 min.

Category 2: Usual activities

cleaning
free time
washing up

Category 3: Activities at home

sleeping
washing up
having lunch
watching TV
listening to music

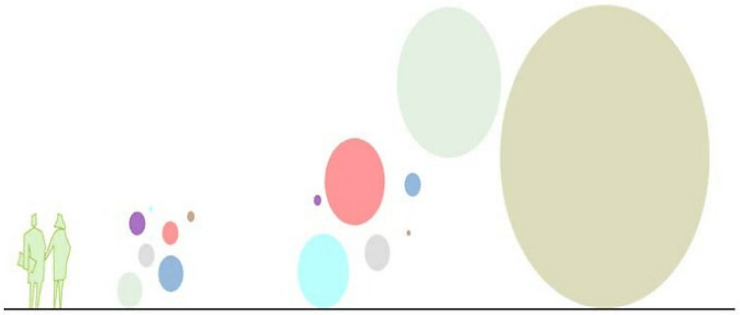
Category 4: Qualities of your home

comfort
privacy

own order
own decoration

Main description

Workers without children are for 6 hours at home everyday. They have two time periods: morning and evening-night. They get dressed after having breakfast. They normally have lunch at home. Women dedicate much more time to cleaning than men. The living room is the room where they stay much more time. They watch television for entertainment. They do not work in their home. Men live less in their home (see picture no. 07).



Picture 07: Time bubbles of the activities which are made at home by group 2.

Group 3: Workers with children

Picture 08: Categories of group 3.

Content categories

Category 1: Periods of time (times are averages)

Morning:

waking up	00 min.
getting dressed	10 min.
going to the bathroom	20 min.
having breakfast	20 min.
clearing time	05 min.
home time	25 min.

Midday:

changing their clothes	10 min.
having lunch	60 min.
going to the bathroom	10 min.
storing time	03 min.

Night:

changing their clothes	10 min.
having dinner	60 min.
going to the bathroom	10 min.
preparing their job	10 min.
free time	02 hours
talking with family	15 min.
housework	02 hours

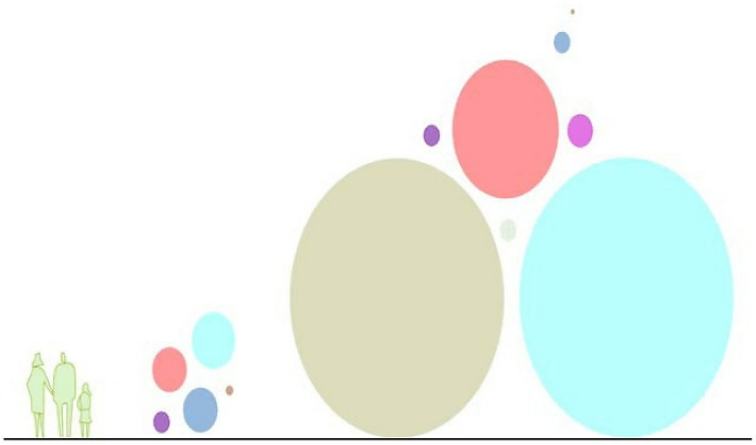
Category 2: Usual activities
- cleaning
- housework

Category 3: Activities at home
- sleeping
- washing up
- having lunch
- being with their family
- watching TV

Category 4: Qualities of your home
- comfort
- privacy
- own order
- own decoration

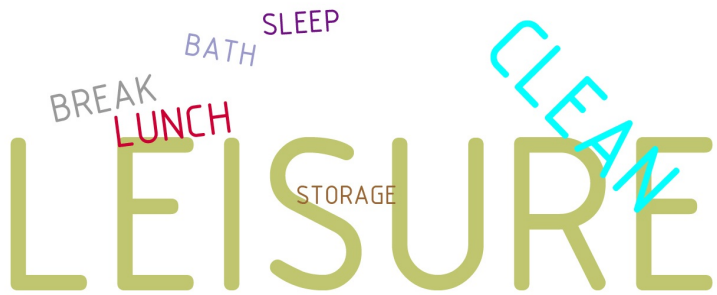
Main description

Workers with children (families with children and single parents) are at home about seven hours every day. They manifest three time periods: morning, midday, and night. They feel that their home has to be useful. They dress up after having breakfast. They cook. They have a better diet (see picture no. 09).



Picture 09: Time bubbles of the activities which are made at home by group 3.

Group 4: Pensioners



Picture 10: Categories of group 4.

Content categories

Category 1: Periods of time (times are averages)

Morning:

waking up	10 min.
getting dressed	10 min.
going to the bathroom	20 min.
having breakfast	20 min.
clearing time	03 min.
cleaning	01 hour

Midday:

changing their clothes	10 min.
having lunch	25 min.
going to the bathroom	05 min.
storing time	03 min.
free time	1,5 hours
break	20 min.
cleaning	01 hour

Night:

changing their clothes	05 min.
having dinner	45 min.
going to the bathroom	05 min.
free time	04 hours
cleaning	45 min.

Category 2: Usual activities
- cleaning

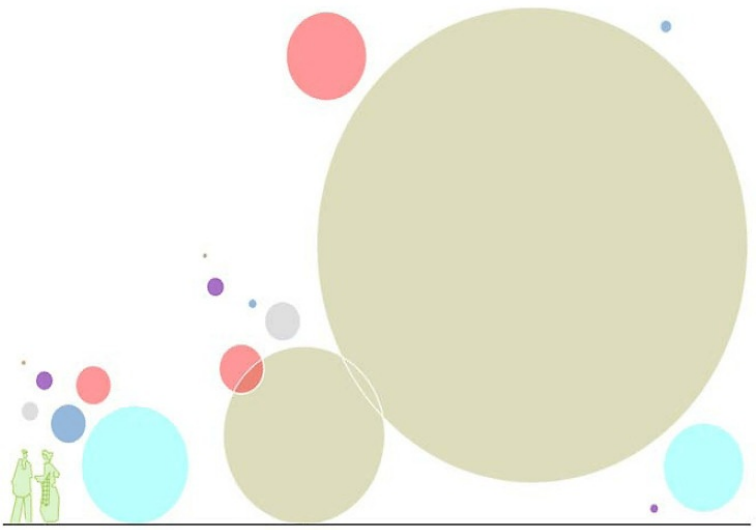
Category 3: Activities at home
- sleeping
- washing-up
- having lunch

Category 4: Qualities of your home
- comfort
- privacy
- own order
- own decoration

Main description

Pensioners are at home about 11 hours everyday. They think about three time periods: morning, midday, and night. They dress after having breakfast. They live for their home. They have a strict diet. They eat alone although they live with more persons. They have a lot of time for breaks.

Women clean the house. Women need a lot of light for their activities as sewing, cleaning, etc. Men watch TV much more than women. They go to the bath a lot of times (see picture no. 11).



Picture 11: Time bubbles of the activities which are made at home by group 4.

Main conclusions

There were four main research questions: How is your daily routine? Which are others activities that you do usually? What activities do you realise that transform your house into your home? What qualities transform your house into your home?

As we have observed, it is possible to determine the different styles of daily routine according to the life habits and others activities that they do usually. Some activities and qualities that they do usually at home transform their house into their home.

Main results

- Each research group has a different perception of their home: students occupy a unique space of the home (the bedroom or the study room), whereas workers without children interpret the house as their property. Workers with children perceive it in a pragmatic way, as the instrument to implement their daily routine. The pensioners enjoy and take care of their home.

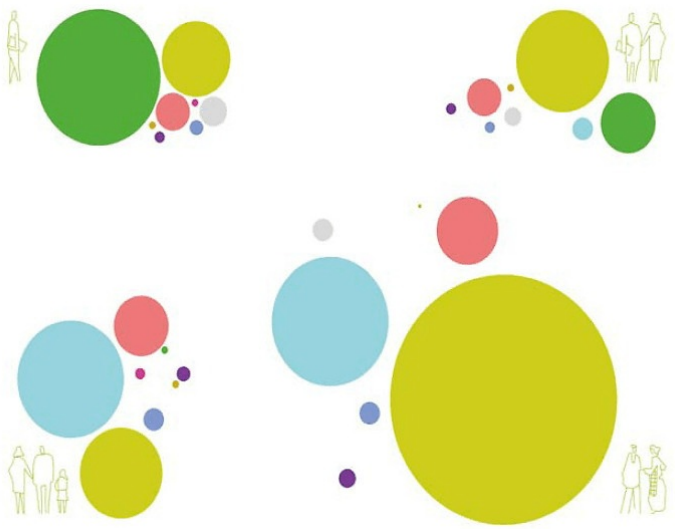
- There are two main conception of the time at home: the students and workers without children consider two periods: morning and evening-night. The workers with children and the pensioners consider three periods: morning, midday, and evening-night.

- Women dedicate much more time to cleaning than men.

- Women's routines change much more during their life than men.

- People who have got their home in the country enjoy it much more and they dedicate much more time to it.

- It is possible to determine some sequences of the activities that people realize inside the home. It could be used to design the project.



Picture 12: Time bubbles of the activities which are made at home.

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Diaries and Self-Reflection in the Practical Training

Maria Carmen Ricoy, Sálvora Feliz & Tiberio Feliz

Introduction

The diary constitutes a common point among Dostoevsky, Che Guevara, and Anne Frank. The diary is already a traditional genre of literature. In his *Writer's Diary,* Fyodor Dostoevsky included a collection of non-fiction and fictional writings from pieces written for a periodical between 1873 and 1881. Che Guevara wrote *The Secret Papers of a Revolutionary* (1940). Anne Frank wrote *The Diary of a Young Girl* from 1929 to 1945. *Zlata's Diary* was written by a young girl living in Sarajevo in 1992. *My Opposition* (2007) is the diary written by Friedrich Kellner to describe Nazi Germany. *The Freedom Writers Diary* (1999) is the story of Erin Gruwell, a teacher who faced her diverse mix of African-American, Latino, Cambodian, Vietnamese, and Caucasian teenagers in rough neighbourhoods in Long Beach. She also used the diaries of Anne Frank and Zlata. The students paralleled their lives to those of these young girls also surrounded by violence.

Some famous diaries are fictional. *Bridget Jones* (1998 & 2000) was firstly a column in *The Independent* in 1995 about the life of a thirty-year-old single woman in London trying to make sense of life and love with the help of a surrogate "urban family" of friends in the 1990s. The column was published later as two novels (1996 and 1999). Both novels were adapted for films in 2001 and 2004. Other diaries are based on fictional journeys as Homer's *Odyssey* (orig. c. 8th cent. BCE, 1967), Dante's *Divine Comedy* (orig. 1321, 1948), Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (orig. 1726, 1955), Voltaire's *Candide* (orig. 1759, 1966), Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas* (orig. 1759, 1962), and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (orig. 1902, 1998). Other books of travels as *The Travels of Marco Polo* (orig. 1298-1299, 1990) are not even considered authentic and could be based on imaginary and/or on accounts of other travellers. Sometimes, a real life journey is transformed into a fiction as the Kira Salak's *White Mary* (2008).

Alaszewski (2006) explains that there are texts which have some of the features of diaries as the Japanese "diaries" and Anglo-Saxon Chronicles (10th century). These texts are time structured and contemporaneous, and have records. In this same sense, we could accept oldest antecedents as the Roman chronicles. However, some writings as *To Myself*, written by the Marcus Aurelius (orig. 2nd century CE; Joad, 1960), show clearly many features of a diary. Some Japanese pillowbooks of court ladies and Asian travel journals offer the characteristics of the diaries. Li Ao (orig. 9th century CE; Barnstone & Barnstone, 1980), for instance, kept a diary of his journey through Southern China.

The same author (Alaszewski, 2006) related the success of the diary to religious reasons as the *Diary of Samuel Pepys* (1886). He related that this writing

increased self-awareness to surveillance of the self both by the diarist and by others. Therefore, the prime motivation of the self-surveillance in early diaries would be religious and, with secularization of society and development of Psychology (especially psychoanalytical theory), diaries have changed their finalities, using them to collect feelings, understand own behaviour, and manage the self. The diary as a professional instrument for monitoring or self-monitoring has emerged in twentieth century, especially in the "reflective journal." As Alaszewski states (2006, p. 10): "*In human services reflective journals have become one way of monitoring and enhancing the personal development and performance of professionals, especially in initial training programmes.*"

Delimiting the field

The etymology of Diary is related to Latin noun diarium (daily allowance or daily food) and adjective diarius (daily). Therefore, the original word is linked to a regular daily activity. That means there is a daily frequency in a series of events or activities. This first approach is useful and must be clarified.

What is a diary?

Diary is a very open word. The on-line Dictionary.com (http://dictionary. reference. com/) defines the diary as:

> A daily record, usually private, especcially of the writer's own experiences, observations, feelings, attitudes, etc.

This definition explicits some interesting terms:

- The action (record): somebody registers something, usually by writing;
- The object (experiences, observations, feelings, attitudes, etc.): perceptions of the author;
- The author (writer's own): about or related to him/herself.

The Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diary) defines the diary as:

> (…) a record (originally in written book format) with discrete entries arranged by date reporting on what has happened over the course of a day or other period. Diaries undertaken for institutional purposes play a role in many aspects of human civilization, including government records (e.g., Hansard), business ledgers and military records. Schools or parents may teach or require children to keep diaries in order to encourage the expression of feelings and to promote thought.

This definition collects some interesting terms about:

- The format (with discrete entries): there are several, independent, differentiated entries;
- The order (arranged by date reporting): there is a sequence in writing and reporting;
- The object (on what has happened): facts and events are the focus;
- The timing (over the course of a day or other period): it is not only a singular event, but along a time period;

- The contexts (for institutional purposes [...] Schools or parents): they could be used in institutions, homes, and schools;

In The Sage Dictionary of Social Research Methods, Scott (2006, p. 68) defines the diary as:

> A document, generally written for personal use rather than for publication, that records events and ideas related to the particular experiences of the author. The definition focuses on:
> - The goal (for personal use): it is for an individual;
> - The object (events and ideas): he opens it to personal contributions (ideas);
> - The source (related to the particular experiences of the author): it avoids the possibilities of the diary to collect observations in a non-participative one.

Some examples of diaries related to literature

According to the use context, some words could be synonyms of diary: account, agenda, appointment book, chronicle, daily record, daybook, engagement book, journal, log, minutes, notebook, or record (see Dictionary.com). Perhaps, the most similar term to diary is journal.

The journal is a psychotherapeutic technique largely developed around 1966 at Drew University and popularized by Progoff (1975) with the name of Intensive Journal Method. The therapist, counsellor, adviser, or researcher ask for a series of writing exercises using loose leaf notebook paper in a simple ring-binder, divided into sections. These different sections are defined according to various areas of the writer's life or writing strategies. As Rozakis (2004, p.50-51) explains:

> "It's clear that a journal is different from a diary. A journal is an idea book, a record of your thoughts, emotions, and reflections. A diary, in contrast, is used to record the day's events, like a Filofax or Day-Timer. Diaries are not used for reflection or experimentations. As such, they don't help you improve your writing skills while you grapple with life issues. A diary can help you make it to that 10 o'clock meeting on Tuesday, however."

Really, the diary and the journal could have similar meanings. Frequently, we use the name of diary as a hybrid of the traditional diary and the journal. In our case, the diary is a notebook the students write in, record the significant events, and place to write ideas, self-reflections, and emotions. Therefore, we do not want to define the diary but our use of the diary, our diary technique.

Nowadays, there are virtual means based on regular writing. The blog (a shortening of Web log) is a web page, usually maintained by an individual with regular textual entries (comments, events, reflections, etc.) or other materials such as photos, videos, audios, etc. Entries are commonly displayed in reverse-chronological order (the last one at the top of the page). Most blogs were textual, though nowadays some of them use other formats as basis of communication as photos (photoblog), videos (vlog), music (MP3 blog), or

audio (podcasting). The main difference with the diary is the public feature of the blog. While the diary is usually a personal, private writing, the blog is written to share it with other readers who could add comments or information.

Another similar web tool is the wiki. It is an on-line tool that enables to contribute or modify the content of a text that is shared in an on-line space. Wikis are often used as collaborative tools. The encyclopedia Wikipedia, to be found under http://en.wikipedia.org/ (Change en. by other initials to change the language: es. (Spanish), de. (German), fi. (Finnish), fr. (French), eo. (Esperanto), gl. (Galician), etc.)) is one of the well-known wikis, but there are others that are used in business, research, or writing to provide collaborative opportunities inside a unique space, situated in a shared website. The main differences with the diary are that it is a shared, non-sequential writing. Several individuals can edit the content at any time and it is useful because it is a collaborative task. The wiki can be public or private, but it allows a collaborative writing on a unique document, avoiding duplicate documents when mailing them from one computer to another among several writers. Google Docs offers free tools (word processor, presentation, spreadsheet, etc.) as wikis (http://docs.google.com/).

Context

The practical training in the workplace in Europe

The practical training has been already included in the curriculum design of the educators' initial training for a long time in the whole Europe. The different curriculum designs consider the practical training with different length, curricular weight, evaluation systems, and kinds of practical tasks. The European Space of Higher Education is oriented to the insertion in the job market. The competence design relates the training to the professional exercise. In traditional designs of Higher Education, the practical training was the part of the degrees that was more related to the work places. Especially in the educational field, where the gap between theory and practice was quite large, students were particularly implicated in the practice through practical training period.

To prepare reports about the different degrees according to the European Space of Higher Education principles, the Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación [National Agency of Evaluation of the Quality and Accreditation] was founded. The Origin of the ANECA is the Article 32 of Organic Law 6/2001 of 20th December on Universities lays down that, by means of a Resolution by the Council of Ministers and subsequent to a report by the Universities Coordinating Council, the Government shall authorise the setting up of the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA). ANECA was set up as a public trust on 19th July 2002. The ultimate goal of the Trust is to contribute to the quality improvement of the higher education system through the assessment, certification and accreditation of university degrees, programmes, teaching staff and institutions. (Quoted from http://www.aneca.es/ingles/what_origin.asp).

This institution, also known as ANECA, asked specific teams of specialists in different fields to analyze the situation of each degree in Europe and to design its set of competences. These reports are called white books. The White book of the Degree in Teaching (ANECA, 2004) focuses the practical training in Europe. There is a large diversity, though they distinguished three types of contents in the initial training of teachers in Pre-school Education and Elementary Education or the First Cycle of the Basic Education (Levels ISCED 0 and ISCED 1 according to the *International Standard Classification of Education* (UNESCO, 1997), also known as ISCED97 (http://www.unesco.org/education/information/nfsunesco/doc/isced_1997.htm)): the psico-pedagogical training (30%), the training in the different areas of knowledge (40%), and the practical training (30%). The practical training in work centres adopts converging models (integrating it in the initial training) or consecutive ones (adding it at the end of the initial training) and tends to spread several months as we can see:

- 1 to 2 months: Belgium.
- 2 to 3 months: Czech Republic, Spain, and Poland.
- 3 to 6 months: Austria, Denmark, Estonia, France, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, and Luxembourg.
- 6 to 12 months: Cyprus, Finland, Greece, Holland, Italy, Latvia, Malta, Portugal, United Kingdom, and Sweden.
- More than one year: Germany and Slovakia.

As in proportion, as in length, the practical training is an important part of the initial teaching training in Europe. It is also a classical topic in educational research. For instance, Schön (1983) is one of the wellknown international authors who has studied the practical experience and the reflection about it. Zabalza Beraza (1991) researched on the use of the diary in the educational field. Huber & Roth (2004) analyzed its use in the practical training. Medina et al. (2005) developed a research on the possible techniques to improve the learning during the practical training. Feliz y Ricoy have analyzed the evaluation of the resources in the practical training of the social educators as a generalization process (2005) and the practical training in the professional contexts in the competence approach for the implementation of the Bologna process (2006).
In Spain, the real present-day law has a part that is designed by the central Ministry of Education and that is common for all Spanish universities. This training is called trunk training and it is compulsory for all the students of all Spanish universities. One of the trunk topics is the practical training. Thus, it is a mandatory training for all the students of all Spanish universities. In the Social Education degree, this practical training in work centres implies 350 hours in a total of 1,800 hours for the whole degree. This situation is changing according to the Bologna Process, usually increasing the length. This structure is now changing according to the Bolonia pocess.

The experience and the practical training

Experience is an important source of knowledge. As internal one, as external one, it is the motor of reflection and development. The professionals learn starting from their experience and it is really an important competence that provides a motor of growth, evolution, and advance. The students could develop this competence as a central one in their preparation for the professional activity. The practical training is an opportunity to develop such a competence. The students are participating in an educational context where they are experiencing the real worker's situations and events day by day. For Lucarelli (2006), in the Higher Education, the practical training is also an excellent space to reflect further the university politics and the academic perspective in the social and educational areas.

In our perspective, there are several techniques to promote the practical learning. According to the contexts, the needs, and the goals, we could propose several ones such as:

- The participant observation: It is an active procedure that implies the perception and interpretation of the events, happenings, and facts of personal situations.
- The memories: They are structured reports that the participants produce starting from their experiences in a context or situation and their interpretation.
- The field notes: They allow a writing process to collect the perceptions of the events, happenings, and facts by an open procedure.
- The recordings: They could be audios, photos, or videos about the personal experiences, activities, or actions.
- The diaries: They imply a regular writing process to collect the perceptions of the events, happenings, and facts.

The diary use that we have suggested is an eclectic use of the notebook, integrating the traditional diary, the journal, and other formats as removable notes, realia (*realia* are the objects of the reality that we use as didactic resources, though they have not been created for this goal; cf. Gonzalo Fernández, 2008), cuttings, photos, etc. that combine the recording and the self-reflection, differentiating them between opposite pages or with different colours. It has a lot of elements from the "antenarrative" that Boje (2001) defined as:

> The fragmented, non-linear, incoherent, collective, unplotted, and pre-narrative speculation, a bet, a proper narrative can be constituted.

Our design of the practical training in the Social Education

The design of the practical training in the Social Education degree is planned in three steps (planning, implementation, and conclusion). This election is intentional according to three analogies:

- The professional intervention of educators: they plan, they act, and they reflect on their practice.
- The places of their activity: home, centre, and home / university (The portfolio is sent to the university and they have also to pass an exam there).
- The activities realized in each moment: the planning, the action, and the reflection.

The three phases of our curricular design of the practical training are:

First phase:
The students have to prepare their practical stage in a work centre. They have to contact the centre and collect the main data to elaborate an Initial Plan of Practicum (in Spanish, PIP: Plan Inicial de Prácticum). The university tutor (a teacher who meets students once a week in their town to advise and to give orientation), who is responsible of the student, organizes seminars during this period, advises to solve problems, and monitors him/her, has to approve the PIP before beginning the practical period.

Second phase:
During the second phase, the trainees develop the process of intervention, interacting in real contexts with users, learners, educators, and other professionals. They gain experience and share it with other students in the regular seminars. This process of participation in a professional context has to generate other results than the diary. The diary supports the students' action and reflection.

Third phase:
At the end of the practice period, the students have to review the whole process and recapitulate their acquisitions. They have to become aware of the construction of knowledge and their learning. To reach this goal, they have to analyze the diary with a simple methodology and they redact the final report (in Spanish, IFP: Informe Final de Prácticum) that includes also the balance of the initial plan and the register of their timescale during the practical continuance. They gather all their documents in a portfolio that includes a self-questionnaire. The evaluation is based mainly on this portfolio combining it with an exam, the scale-report of the professional who was responsible for them during the practice, and the scale-report of the tutor.

The use of the diary

The students of the Practicum of Social Education have a large guide (Equipo Docente [Teaching Team], 2006) where the teaching team describes step-by-step the whole process that they have to follow along the course of their practical training in a work centre. Epistemologically, there are four steps – diary, synthesis, analysis, and conclusions – that alternate a concrete level (diary and analysis) and an abstract one (synthesis and conclusions) in a dialectic *process*.

The Diary

The first step is the writing process. In this guide, there are also specific orientations to write the diary. The diary is defined as a qualitative, narrative technique that helps to understand the processes that are being developed in intervention contexts, describing facts and including reflections and valuations. The guide offers a procedure of writing in four steps:

(1)In the beginning

The writing of the diary must be systematic, after each practice session. In the first sheet, the student has to indicate his/her personal data, the institution where he/she is realizing the practice, as well as the date and the signature of the tutor of the Associate Centre (the University centre).

(2) During the writing

The student must narrate and interpret his/her intervention in the work centre, gathering the diversity of situations in which he/she takes part. The student will write every day his/her experience during the practices, gathering both the description and the interpretation and the analysis of the facts.

Every day, in the beginning of the writing, they will include the date (day and month), as well as the length of staying in the centre (hours). To develop the writing, a basic scheme of questions that they will keep in mind is recommended:

- When did it happen?
- Where?
- Who has participated?
- What happened?
- What means were used?
- Why did it happen?
- How was it solved?
- How did you participate?

(3) Reading again

Once a week and writing with another colour, the experiences have to be valued. Before, it is suggested rereading slowly the text. The annotations about reflections will be outlined in another colour. Other aspects that were not reflected in the first moment will be able to be added.

(4) At the end

Once the diary is concluded, the date will be included, as well as the signature of the tutor.

The recommended support for diary is a small notebook (A5) and it must be paginated before the beginning. The diary will be included in the Portfolio and sent to professor.

Synthesis

The synthesis is a whole summary of the diary. Once writing is finished, the students have to read it again and to summarize it in two pages maximum. This step allows the student to refresh the first memories and to relate the facts since the beginning. This effort facilitates an opportunity to link, integrate, contrast,

reinterpret, and clarify the facts, perceptions, experiences, reflections, and feeling. It forces them to go through the text and get a whole picture of their experience before analyzing the concrete elements.

Analysis

In another part of the guide, the analysis process is described. For its development, the relevant elements as events, persons, situations, resources, etc. will be identified in the diary. The elements could be considered as relevant in any dimension: social, professional, institutional, or personal. It is recommended to use a table to arrange the analysis. In this table, every column is a step of the analysis and every row an element. The table increases the systematic routine. This analysis is developed in five steps:

(1) Identification of the element:

Each element will be identified by the key data that allow the reader to identify and to analyze them.

(2) Justification of his/her relevance:

The reason of the choice of this element has to be explained. The diary gathers a lot of elements (information, data, events, persons, situations, resources, etc.), though only some of them will be analyzed. Their relevance or significance has to be justified from any dimension: social, professional, institutional or personal.

(3) Interpretation/explanation of the facts or explanation of the element:

The interpretation or explanation is related to the chosen element. If they are persons, their features and their relationship with other participants will be indicated. When they are resources, the space, the time, etc., their characteristics and their role in the program or centre will be indicated. In the case of events, the interpretation could include an explanation of the origin or causes, the development of the facts, and their consequences.

(4) Valuation of the element:

This valuation must be realized from the social, educative point of view. Stating the agreement or disagreement with the fact or element is not enough. However, social, pedagogical reasons have to be given to consider their relevance or not. To achieve this step in an adequate range, arguments, reasons, references, etc. have to be given to sustain the statements.

(5) Proposal for improvement, if needed:

When the valuation offers an opportunity, a proposal for improvement has to be suggested. Sometimes, it could be a solution, a proposal for change, any arrangement, the inclusion of new strategies, etc.

Conclusions

Finally, the students will elaborate a synthetic list with the main personal, learning, and professional conclusions derived from the whole process: their experience, the developed process, their analysis of the diary, and their self-evaluation.

State of the art

Schön (1983) examined five professions (engineering, architecture, management, psychotherapy, and town planning) to inquire how these professionals solve problems. The author maintains that best professionals know more than they can put into words and they use less the learning of the graduate school than the improvisation learned in practice. Schön shows how *reflection-in-action* works and how this vital creativity might be fostered in future professionals.

Schön (1987) & Liston & Zeichner (1996) evolved the potentiality of the diary as instrument to promote the self-reflection in several contexts. Riley-Douchet & Wilson (1997) defined the diary as private means of self-reflection. To promote autonomy and self-direction of nursing students, they suggested the use of reflective journal writing. The three-step process of self-reflection was critical appraisal, peer group discussion, and self-awareness. This process of self-reflection was supported by the diary.

Atkins and Murphy (1993) have done a large review of the literature on reflection. The purpose was to unravel and make sense of the complex literature, and to identify the skills required to engage in reflection. They found several differences between authors' accounts about the reflection as the terminology and the hierarchy arrangement. They concluded that reflection is an important learning tool in professional education. The main skills are self-awareness, description, critical analysis, synthesis, judgment, and evaluation.

Wong, Loke, Wong, Tse, Kan, and Kember (1996) developed an action research project to find out how to prepare nurses to be reflective professionals. They involved a group of students who enrolled in the first year of the nurse degree studies at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. They combined several techniques as observation, interview, students' written material, and teacher reflection. The teachers and students were partners in the promotion of reflective learning. The teachers reflected on their teaching arrangement and the progress of student learning, offering them the appropriate guidance. They observed how the students learned to develop different perspectives about the professional nursing practice and eventually reconstruct their conception of nursing.

Cross (1997) applied the diary to the professional development of a cohort of physiotherapy students. The purpose was to record systematically the formal and informal learning. The learning was analyzed focusing especially the critical incidents. The students collected their main learning, the way how they acquire them, and the way how they applied these learning in their practice.

Fonteyn & Cahill (1998) studied the improvement of nursing students' thinking strategies (cognitive awareness). They wrote in a clinical log at the completion of their clinical day, reflecting upon client problems, the data used to identify them, their interventions, and their results. The students valued better the reflective log than writing nursing care plans. The logs improved their metacognition ability (thinking about thinking).

Ladyshewsky & Edwards (1999) studied the use of journals for curricular purposes. They proposed a resource based on the collection of thoughts and feelings. The interest of their study is that they stand out the relevance of the purposes of the journals.

> *Learning journals are a personal document in which learners describe their thoughts and feelings about their involvement and experience in a course study. (...) Learning journals are useful experiential learning devices and they should be linked in a purposeful way to the curriculum. Learning journals can be used for a variety of purposes. (*Ladyshewsky & Edwards, 1999, p. 90)

Paget (2001) conducted an empirical research in a retrospective, three-phase, multi-method study in a nursing department. There was no significant influence according to the years of experience, specialty, or academic level of students, though the effectiveness of the facilitator was an important factor. They identified significant, long-term changes to clinical practice resulting from the reflective practice.

Zabalza Beraza (2004) stated that the writing allows the development of a whole, aware perspective of the activities done and their sequence. This periodic writing provides an opportunity for students to identify their difficulties and achievements, due to the self detection of the problems and the self-revision of their successes.

Bulman & Schutz (2008) collected several works about the potential of the reflection to help nurses develop and learn from their practice. They highlight the strategies to promote the knowledge, and skills for reflective practice and writing reflectively. Some authors commented the difficulties and doubts about the diary caused by the lack of time and the distractions of the practice. The students that record and describe events may therefore enhance their descriptive abilities. The diary improves self-awareness of the students. Some experiences emphasize that not all of what is written in a reflective diary may be used for formal assessment purposes. The structure of the process of reflection needs to be formulated to give an opportunity to students to have both a public and a private version of their reflective thoughts.

As synthesis, the studies on diaries and journals are linked to the learning in the practical contexts, the role of the reflection, and the assessment in the initial training. The nature and the effects of the writing is also a useful focus to understand the benefits and limits of this technique for the professional practical training.

The content analysis of the diaries

Our experience for six years in this degree using the diary in the practical training allows a balance of the possibilities of this technique to promote the learning starting from the experience. To help to learn during this practical training period, we recommend some instruments as the diary. The diary is a technique to help the students to compile their experiences, their memories, their perceptions, and their feelings, and to verbalize them. Both actions are the nuclear activities of the diary: collecting and verbalizing.

However, the goal of the diary is not only the accumulation of data but their interpretation and comprehension, to allow the learning starting from them. This last phase is very important because they are students and their activities at

the University are searching the learning. That causes the introduction of the content analysis to extract the most relevant elements and to convert the analysis in the source of learning. Our instructions to write the diary are quite open in our guide book. This causes some diversity in the redaction results and makes more difficult a general content analysis strategy. The other side of this phenomenon is the rich diversity that is emerging and personalizes the results. To have a whole vision of the diaries, we have analyzed also the formal aspects as the support, the instrument, the form, the language format, and the writing.

In our content analysis, we explain the main codes and their subcodes. The main categories are the support, the instrument, the form, the language format, the writing, and the content.

The support

Most of them use a notebook or an exercise book. The pages have to be bound to avoid their elimination, insertion, or movement. In the beginning (six years ago), they used more expensive books as the accounts ones but we have softened the position. The goal is to guarantee the sequence in the writing. Any exercise book without rings or spiral-bound is allowed. Their main features are:

The size:

The size is also a secondary term. Some students prefer A4 and others A5. Very few choose a smaller size as agendas or pocket-size.

The page format:

The white pages without line are very unusual. Usually, they choose squared, lined, or ruled pages with or without margins.

The page orientation:

Most of them prefer the portrait orientation of the pages instead the landscape one.

The number:

Some of them have to use several notebooks, though most of them do not finish up the whole notebook.

The instrument

About the instrument that they use to write, we could consider two main features:

The type of instrument:

Usually, they prefer the ballpoint or pen; very few use felt-tip pen, marker, or fountain pen. Occasionally, some students use fluorescent markers to underline some relevant or significant ideas. Usually, this underlining is done at the end when they read again the whole diary to summarize it and to detect the most relevant elements to analyze them.

The type of ink:

Most of them use blue ink as the main colour; some of them use black; and very few use other colours. We ask them to alternate pages to link the narration of facts, events, or objective data and the explanations, reflections, or critics that they do about the facts but maintaining the identification of each kind of writing. Sometimes, they alternate colours to differentiate the facts and the reflections.

The form

In the beginning and at the end, we ask for a signature of the person in charge or the professional who is monitoring the student, but it is not a requirement.

The formal organization is very important. Usually, they maintain the alternation between facts and reflections (on the right / left pages). The content is usually organized by sessions that are identified by the date. Therefore, most of the diaries have a date on the top of the left page, a redacted text in this page and another one with another colour in the opposite page.

The length of the text of each session usually varies. The page size forces frequently the writing, as to fill it, as to limit it. However, sometimes, the most concise students can include two sessions per page and the most prolific ones use several pages per session.

To understand realistically these differences, we have to consider that a practice session has not always the same length. The social educators do not usually take part in formal schools and have not always a regular timetable. Therefore, the duration of a session could be from one hour (for instance, a talk or a workshop with young people) to eight hours or much more if they are in a shelter or refuge for street urchins, migrants, or vagrants.

The language format

As expected, the greatest part of the diaries is a regular writing text. Unusually, we found loose notes, enumerations, schemes, or mind maps. The text is formally redacted though there are unusual creative elements as in the discourse, as in the language. Usually, a text page shows a structure in paragraphs, with whole words, whole sentences, and punctuation. Contrary to other kinds of writing, the headlines organization is unusual.

There are also graphical elements inserted in as drawings (resources, means, objects, etc.), sketches (rooms, classrooms, centres, playground, etc.), photos (places, people, objects, resources, etc.) or other small documents related to their activity or the work centre activity as stickers, leaflets, cuttings, clippings, photocopies, etc. (see images 1 to 8).

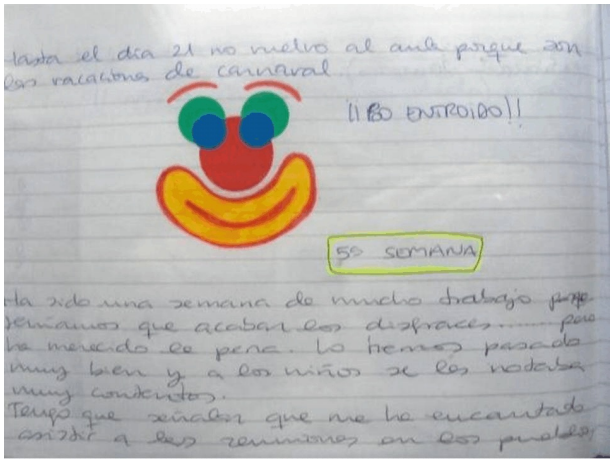


Image 1: Including drawings

Image 2: Including origami.

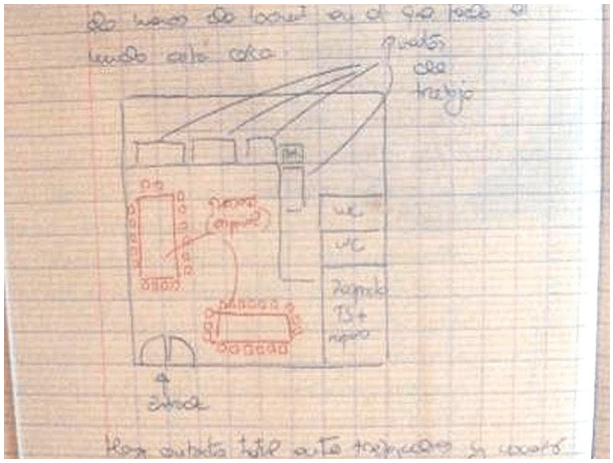


Image 3: Including sketches

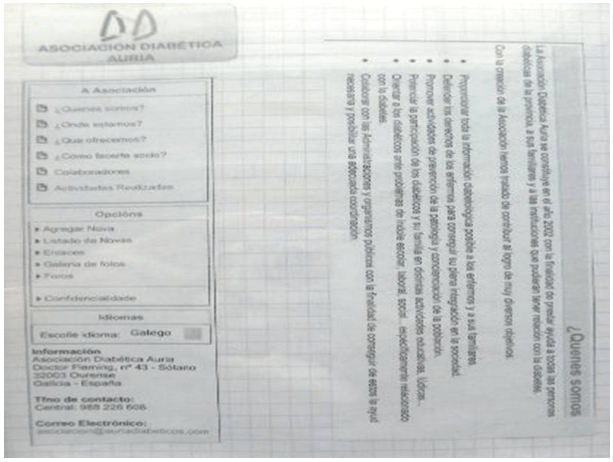
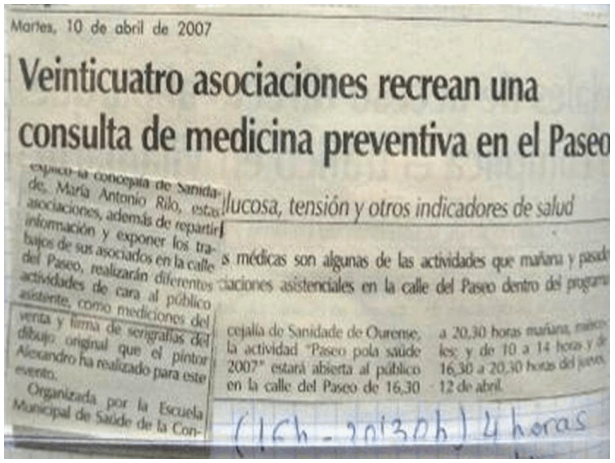


Image 4: Including reproductions of documents



Martes, 10 de abril de 2007

Veinticuatro asociaciones recrean una consulta de medicina preventiva en el Paseo

lucosa, tensión y otros indicadores de salud

s médicas son algunas de las actividades que mañana y pasad
ciaciones asistenciales en la calle del Paseo dentro del progra

expuso la concejala de Sanidade, María Antonio Rilo, estas asociaciones, además de repartir información y exponer los trabajos de sus asociados en la calle del Paseo, realizarán diferentes actividades de cara al público asistente, como mediciones del venta y firma de serigrafías del dibujo original que el pintor Alexandro ha realizado para este evento.

Organizada por la Escuela Municipal de Saúde de la Con-

cejalía de Sanidade de Ourense, la actividad "Paseo pola saúde 2007" estará abierta al público en la calle del Paseo de 16,30 a 20,30 horas mañana, miércoles; y de 10 a 14 horas y de 16,30 a 20,30 horas del jueves, 12 de abril.

(16h - 20'30h) 4 horas

Image 5: Including news

Image 6: Including photos

Image 7: Including realia

Image 8: Including jokes

The writing

The discourse is different if they write about their observations as facts, events, individuals, resources, data, etc., or if they do about their interpretations, reflections, feelings, etc. The observations are redacted in a narrative style, describing events, bodies, spaces, etc. in a sequential development. That means that there is usually a clear chronological development, even if they use flash-

back to come back on previous facts in this own session. In this style, they usually objectify the facts and use the third person to refer to their observation. Unusually, they talk to an addressee as the expected reader as the professor (*Dear Professor...*) or own diary (*Dear Diary...*). When they refer to their own actions, they use the first person and they express them in past tense. They use usually the indicative mood, the active voice, and the perfective aspect. The descriptions are quite superficial. The absence of a framework, a table, some steps, or a scheme to analyze events, persons, or objects causes a perception of false security and redundancy about the events. They think that the reader could perceive an excessive quantity of details and data, and they omit them deliberately. When they mention talking, speaking, or dialogues, they use usually the indirect speech. Very few students use direct speech and quotes.

The feelings are expressed in the first person. They do not always express their feelings during the facts but after them. As a consequence of their actions, they could feel anger, sadness, frustration, joy, satisfaction, etc. These are feelings that they usually record. They express them in past tense and indicative mood. It is difficult to write about emotions during the action. When the feelings remain, they express them in present tense.

The reflections are also personal and expressed in the first person. The style of the reflections is not argumentative but they use to consider, to value, to judge, to express opinions, etc. They express them in present tense. They use *I think, I believe, I suppose, I don't understand,* etc. In facts, they use to use the indicative mood. Therefore, they do not give arguments, reasons, examples, alternatives, comparisons, references, etc. that could support their opinions. This is the reason why we ask them to use a framework to analyze the content of the diary. Then they have to identify the most relevant elements (element is a generic name to include everything that could be relevant to analyze as facts, events, persons, spaces, times, data, information, rules, resources, etc.), justify their relevance, interpret or explain them, value them, and give a proposal for improvement if needed (see image 9).

Image 9: Analysis process in the report.

When you read the diaries, you find frequently corrections, rectifications, crossings out, adding, etc. Sometimes they are in the text, in the margins, or also added with a removable piece of paper or a stuck one. Besides the spelling corrections, they usually complete the information with new data, features or details that they have remembered after and considered necessary to understand the descriptions or narrations. This is the revision process and I like it because it is a way to improve the text, mature it, and look through it. That means that the student is learning and improving his/her thinking and knowledge.

The content

The content analysis shows the main elements that the students focus in their diaries. We have distinguished three dimensions: the kind of elements, the components of the description/narration, and the components of the reflections.

The kind of elements:

Our orientations facilitate an open perspective: anything is a possible focus for writing in the diary. The question is to find relevant elements, not their nature. Therefore, the main elements that we could find with their descriptions, features, details, data, information, etc. are:

- Institutions
- Professionals
- Rules and routines
- Organization
- Spaces
- Activities
- Events
- Special events
- Social Education
- Participants
- Means
- Personal feelings

Components of the description/narration:

According to the kind of elements, they need different components to describe them. For each one, we describe the components that we find. We group them in situational data, people, events, and resources.

Situational data are usually described with:

- Location
- Descriptions
- Measures
- Organization
- Furniture
- Decoration
- Stable means
- Sketches
- Diagrams

People are usually defined with:

- Identification
- Descriptions
- Technical details
- Behaviours
- Psychological terminology
- Medical profiles
- Functions
- Relationships
- Tasks
- Learning realizations

Events are usually explained with:

- Identification
- Narrations as:
  - Generic ones
  - Synthetic overviews
  - Step-by-step ones
- Regularity:
  - Routines
  - Idiosyncrasy
  - Peculiarities
  - Contingencies
- Facts:
  - Real events
  - Prospective style
  - Flash-backs
  - Self-reviewing
- Focus:
  - Conversations
  - Actions
  - Activities
  - Techniques
  - Instructions
  - Orientations
  - Conflicts

Resources are usually explicated with:

- Focus:
  - Didactic means
  - Documents
  - Reports
  - News
  - Realia
- Descriptions
- Uses
- Problems
- Applications
- Origin

Components of the reflections:

The reflection is not very good but we find several categories that we describe. That means that the students interpret the reflections as:

- Valuations
- Questions
- Generalization
- Analysis
- Arguments
- Comparisons

- References
- Interpretations
- Conclusions
- Proposals
- Synthesis
- Detection of significance
- Internal dialogues

Discussion and conclusions

The main categories that we have found are related to the Zabalza Beraza's (2004) characteristics of the diary: the writing format, the implication of the interpretation, its expressiveness and references, and its historical and longitudinal character. Our main features are the support, the instrument, the form, the language format, the writing, and the content. This manifests that students use deliberate strategies which have a positive effect on knowledge acquisition (Gilar, Martínez Ruiz & Castejon, 2007). These researchers used the diary as a tool to assess the learning strategies and compare the results obtained with those using an inventory.

The formal aspects are not usually studied in the research about the diaries. Our study reveals that the support could be defined by the size, the page format, the page orientation, the number. The instrument could be shown by the type, the type of ink, and the form. The form could be explained by the formal organization - usually organized by sessions - and diverse lengths. The language format could be characterized by the structure in paragraphs and, more rarely, graphical elements inserted in as drawings, sketches, photos, or other small documents.

The writing is the essential way of expression and could be coded by different styles in their observations or in their interpretations, reflections, feelings, etc. that is manifested in the syntax characters and discursive features. Based on Schön's work on reflection-in-action, Richardson & Maltby (1995) studied thirty undergraduate nurses using the reflective diaries during a period of community health care practice. According to the Mezirow's levels of reflectivity (1981), the 94% of the reflections occurs at the lower levels of reflectivity (affective reflexivity). That means the level of reflexivity is low but it could be identified according its writing style. T hese specific skills of reflective writing need to be learnt with specific strategies and help the trainee to develop analytical and critical abilities which facilitate their own personal and professional growth as Jasper (1999) discovered exploring the nurses' writing techniques to facilitate and support their development in practice with two groups involved experiencing nurses of a professional course which included reflective writing. His research was based on Grounded Theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1997). In this way, Spencer & Newell (1999) designed an educational package for practising nurses based on Boud et al. (1985) model of reflection in learning. With a pre- to post-test comparison, they evaluated the effectiveness of their strategies to improve the practitioners' reflective ability when it was low and it resulted in a significant improvement. Glaze (2001) researched on the advanced nurse

practitioners' experiences of reflection too. Using a qualitative approach, they collected the data with interviews and reflective learning contracts and analyzed them using the Colaizzi's seven-stage model (1978). Most of the students indicated that the development of their reflective skills had been positive generating changes in their thinking and behaviour.

Bruner (1997) maintained that writing the life in a diary meant for a student the development of an interpretative, valuable sharpness. As we have observed, the students learn to describe the content by the kind of elements as institutions, professionals, rules and routines, organization, spaces, activities, events, special events, social education, participants, means, personal feelings; the components of the description/narration as situational data (location, descriptions, measures, organization, furniture, decoration, etc.), people (identification, descriptions, technical details, behaviours, psychological terminology, medical profiles, etc.), events (identification, narrations, regularity, facts, and focus), and resources (focus, descriptions, uses, problems, applications, and origin); and finally the components of the reflection. Gibbs, Costley, Armsby & Trakakis (2007) concluded that the diary is useful to capture information and for the personal, professional development, though the reflection does not always imply a change in the action.

The reflections reveal a great diversity – valuations, questions, generalization, analysis, arguments, comparisons, references, interpretations, conclusions, etc. – that could be ordered as Teekman (2000) discovered in three hierarchical levels of reflective thinking: thinking-for-action, thinking-for-evaluation, and thinking-for-critical-inquiry. He used a qualitative research method to obtain and analyze data from interviews with ten registered nurses in order to study reflective thinking in actual nursing practice. He showed how the reflective thinking was observed manifestly, especially in moments of doubt and perplexity, and consisted of several cognitive activities. These activities were comparing and contrasting phenomena, recognizing patterns, categorizing perceptions, framing, and self-questioning in order to create meaning and understanding.

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